



## Dossiers

**Anthropology in times of intolerance:**  
challenges facing neoconservatism

**Flows, Circulations and their Opposites:**  
Ethnographic Perspectives and Theoretical-Methodological Challenges

**Caribbean Routes:**  
Ethnographic Experiences, Theoretical Challenges, and the Production of Knowledge

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# Reason and Sentiment in Normative Disputes

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## Abstract

In the last fifty years, anthropology has engaged in intense debates about the rational grounds upon which ethnographic understanding rests. Whatever the particular stand taken by the respective interlocutors in these debates, the main reference shared by all interventions is the symbolic character of anthropological data and understanding. If that is so for any ethnographic context, the importance of focusing on the symbolic pre-structure of the lifeworld is even more significant when we look at normative disputes. This is because differently than assertoric statements about facts in the world, the meanings of norms exist prior to the research interests of the interpreter and lie first and foremost in the world views of the subjects who share them. My research about dispute resolution has shown that reason and sentiment often become entangled in these processes and their proper articulation is a condition for making the respective conflicts intelligible.

**Keywords:** reason; sentiment; disputes; United States; Australia; Brazil.

# Razão e Sentimento em Disputas Normativas

## Resumo

Nos últimos 50 anos a antropologia tem se envolvido em intensos debates sobre os princípios racionais que fundamentam a compreensão etnográfica. Qualquer que seja a particularidade da perspectiva adotada nesses debates, a principal referência compartilhada por todas as intervenções é o caráter simbólico dos dados e da compreensão antropológica. Se isso é sempre assim em qualquer contexto etnográfico, a importância do foco na pré-estrutura simbólica do mundo da vida é ainda mais significativa na análise de disputas normativas. Pois, diferentemente das locuções assertóricas sobre o mundo dos fatos, o significado das normas precede os interesses de pesquisa do intérprete, e se situa acima de tudo nas visões de mundo dos sujeitos que as compartilham. Minhas pesquisas sobre processos de resolução de disputas revelam que razão e sentimento estão frequentemente embaralhados, e sua articulação adequada é a condição para tornar inteligíveis os respectivos conflitos.

**Palabras chave:** razão; sentimento; disputas; Estados Unidos; Australia; Brasil.



# Razón y sentimiento en disputas normativas

## Resumen

En los últimos cincuenta años la antropología se ha involucrado en intensos debates sobre los principios racionales que fundamentan la comprensión etnográfica. Cualquiera que sea la línea particular tomada por los respectivos interlocutores en estos debates, la referencia principal compartida por todas las intervenciones es el carácter simbólico de los datos antropológicos y de la comprensión. Si eso es así para cualquier contexto etnográfico, la importancia de centrarse en la pre-estructura simbólica del mundo de la vida es aún más significativa cuando miramos las disputas normativas. A diferencia de las declaraciones asertivas sobre hechos en el mundo, el significado de las normas es anterior a los intereses de investigación del intérprete y se encuentra ante todo en las visiones del mundo de los sujetos que las comparten. Mis esfuerzos de investigación sobre los procesos de resolución de disputas han demostrado que la razón y el sentimiento a menudo se enredan, y su articulación adecuada es la condición para hacer que los conflictos respectivos sean inteligibles.

**Palabras clave:** razón; sentimiento; disputas; Estados Unidos; Australia; Brasil.

# Raison et sentiment dans les différends normatifs

## Résumé

Au cours des cinquante dernières années, l'anthropologie s'est engagée dans d'intenses débats sur les fondements rationnels sur lesquels repose la compréhension ethnographique. Quel que soit le volet particulier pris par les interlocuteurs respectifs dans ces débats, la principale référence partagée par toutes les interventions est le caractère symbolique des données anthropologiques et de la compréhension. S'il en est ainsi pour n'importe quel contexte ethnographique, l'importance de se concentrer sur la pré-structure symbolique du monde de la vie est encore plus significative lorsque nous examinons les différends normatifs. Parce que, différemment des déclarations affirmatives sur des faits dans le monde, la signification des normes est antérieure aux intérêts de recherche de l'interprète et réside avant tout dans les visions du monde des sujets qui les partagent. Mes efforts de recherche sur les processus de règlement des différends ont montré que, ici, la raison et le sentiment s'emmêlent souvent, et leur bonne articulation est la condition pour rendre intelligibles les conflits respectifs

**Mots clés:** raison; sentiment; différends; États-Unis; Australie; Brésil.

# Reason and Sentiment in Normative Disputes<sup>1</sup>

Luís R. Cardoso de Oliveira

In the last fifty years, anthropology has engaged in intense debates about the rational grounds of ethnographic understanding. These include the exchanges that marked the so-called rationality debate in British anthropology, started by Winch's critique of Evans-Pritchard's interpretation of Zande's witchcraft (practices and thought). Debates also surged in response to Geertz's definition of ethnography as thick description, in an interpretive stance that was then critiqued by postmodernists. There are also the discussions over the recent ontological turn, which claims to radicalize the previous debates by emphasizing reflection, conceptualization, and experiment (Holbraad & Pedersen 2017). Whatever the particular stand taken by the interlocutors in these debates, the main reference shared by all interventions is the symbolic character of anthropological data and understanding. Drawing mainly on Merleau-Ponty's vision of anthropology (1960: 112-123) as a discipline focused on the symbolic concreteness of practices and ways of life, I have argued that ethnographic description is basically dependent on an anthropologist's ability to apprehend and convey this concreteness in order to make it intelligible (Cardoso de Oliveira 2013a: 409-435). If that is so for any ethnographic context or fieldwork experience, the importance of focusing on the symbolic pre-structure of the lifeworld, or on the fact that social life is linguistically encompassed, is even more significant when we look at normative disputes. This is because, as Habermas (1990: 43-115) has pointed out, differently than assertoric statements about facts in the world, the meanings of norms exist prior to the research interests of the interpreter and these meanings lie primarily in the worldviews of the subjects who share them. Moreover, my research on dispute resolution processes has shown that reason and sentiment often become entangled. In such situations, as I will argue, the opposition between reason and sentiment is not only apparent, but its proper articulation is a condition for providing rational interpretations and making the respective conflicts intelligible.

Despite the fact that one often hears expressions emphasizing that emotional states or reactions obscure reality and must be overcome to make things intelligible, there seem to be experiences that do not make sense if we do not consider the emotions they provoke and/or the meaning they convey. This clearly contrasts with sentences such as: "she finally came to her senses" or "he was just letting out his spleen, and could not think properly," meaning that he was acting with anger, and we should not take seriously whatever he was saying.

The insightful aspect of sentiments and emotions comes wholeheartedly to the fore in conflicts or disputes in which moral aggressions play a major role. These disputes affect rights of an ethical-moral nature, which cannot be easily translated into material evidence, and whose assessment is beyond reach of the judiciary. Moreover, the breach of such rights is usually combined with a denial or devaluation of the dignity of the aggrieved. I have called such aggressions acts of inconsiderateness or *moral insults* in my ethnographies of small claims courts in the USA, experiences of citizenship rights in Brazil, and demands for recognition in Quebec (Cardoso de Oliveira 2005). In all of these cases, demands for respect, considerateness or recognition share a focus on the quality of the relationship between the parties, which acquires an unacceptable character because this quality is perceived to be imposed on the victim or outraged citizen by the opposing party. As I have argued elsewhere, the demanding party rejects what is perceived as an inferior status in the realm of citizenship, and that denies her or his dignity, and most Western courts are not adequately prepared to deal with such claims (Cardoso de Oliveira 2018: 34-63).

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<sup>1</sup> Paper written for the 10<sup>th</sup> **BirthDay conference of the Collegium. Institute of advanced studies of Lyon: Rationality in the Transnational World — New Perspectives**, through April 9-11, 2019.

By the same token, it is interesting to note that in many traditional societies where conflict resolution is conducted by means usually considered not rational, or objective, like the consultation of oracles (as the Zande do), the hiring of the services of *unwitchers* (as in Bocage, France), or by performing ordeals (as among the Kabyé in Togo) the outcome could always be interpreted as an assessment of the quality of the relationship between the parties.<sup>2</sup> Such an assessment is exactly what is screened out of legal cases in Western courts, where cases are usually narrowed down to their legal considerations. On one hand, the parties often have difficulty adequately formulating their complaints against the quality of the relationship that is perceived to have been imposed upon them. On the other hand, the judiciary usually considers their emotive reactions to be nonsensical and at times as a sign of mental disorder.

The moral content of the expression of sentiments has been a classical theme in anthropology since the seminal essay by Mauss (1921), but its importance to understanding normative disputes first came to my attention when I analyzed small claims in Massachusetts (Cardoso de Oliveira 1989). These were always civil disputes, in which indemnities were sought for breach of contracts or torts. Claims for under \$50 did not really make sense if we supposed that the main objective of the plaintiffs was to receive the amount sued for. This is because, given the minimum expenses required to pursue such claims in court, a successful claimant would, at best, recover the amount spent to file the claims. As successful claimants rarely got the full amount of their claims, winning these cases often resulted in a monetary loss.

Inspired by Strawson's discussion on experiences of resentment (1974), I suggested that the respective moral aggressions are more easily identified in the attitudes or intentions of the actors than in their actual actions or behavior (Cardoso de Oliveira 2005).<sup>3</sup> Therefore, not being able to present material evidence of the aggressions suffered, the plaintiffs in these claims took the opportunity of a court hearing to complain about one of two things. One was the insulting attitudes of the defendants, which they had difficulty to demonstrate and were not intelligible to the judge on legal grounds, and did not receive any effective compensation for the main aspect of their claims. In the other types of cases the plaintiffs sought some sort of indirect relief by obliging their opponents to respond in court. But, in this case they would also not receive any actual compensation.

However, these were not the only claims in which the sentiments of the parties or the expression of their emotions were an important aspect of the disputes. In addition to the dimensions of rights and interests that are regularly addressed by courts, I have argued that legal disputes often have a third thematic dimension, which is *recognition* (Cardoso de Oliveira 2007a; 2007b), characterized by the parties' demands to be treated as worthy citizens: with respect, considerateness and fairness. When the failure to satisfy such expectations is perceived as a denial of the plaintiff's worthiness or dignity, placing the aggrieved party in a condition of inferiority, the latter often reacts with anger and outrage, strongly showing his or her rejection of the respective humiliation. As mentioned above, such moral insults constitute objective aggressions to rights of an ethical-moral nature, the violations of which may be difficult to prove with material evidence, but may actually be significant aspects of all kinds of disputes, like the one in the following narrative.

This concerns a dispute between tenants who were room-mates who sued their landlady for not returning the security deposit after the room-mates vacated the rented apartment.<sup>4</sup> The case is particularly interesting because the landlady, who was a successful businesswoman plainly functional in her daily businesses and activities, was considered by the court to be a completely unreasonable person, who was said to have lost her mind in court. At the time of my research (1984-1986) tenants were required to make a security deposit when signing their lease, after co-signing a statement with the landlord about the conditions of the rented premises. If, when leaving the apartment, the landlord could identify damages beyond regular conditions of

2 See Evans-Pritchard for the Azande (1937), Favret-Saada for Bocage (1980), and Verdier for the Kabyé (2013).

3 Perhaps we should consider these attitudes as pregnant actions, given that they convey an objective meaning to the respective interactions.

4 The security deposit was equivalent to one month rent.

wear and tear, and having the statement as reference, the landlord could use the security deposit to repair the damages. However, if no statement had been agreed upon and signed by both parties at the beginning of the tenancy, the landlord could not demonstrate the alleged damages and would have to return the deposit, along with the interest accrued from the savings account where the money should have been placed. These were rules of strict liability, and if the landlord did not return the security deposit, the tenants could issue a “30-Day Demand Letter” which, if not observed, would allow the tenants to sue the landlord for treble damages.

That is exactly what happened in this case, which came to my attention when it was being tried on appeal to the Middlesex County Superior Court in Cambridge, Mass. after a Small Claims Court decision ordered the landlady to pay her former tenants three times the amount of their security deposit. Although she did not have the signed statement about the conditions of the apartment before the tenants occupied her property, the landlady alleged that not only had they damaged the apartment far beyond wear and tear, but that they had done so on purpose, because of the many disagreements that they had in the last months of their tenancy. Not having hard evidence to make her case, she made only ungrounded accusations and was absolutely outraged when the judge decided to suspend and postpone the trial until she found herself proper legal representation to handle her case. She had been granted permission to represent herself in the trial but not knowing the rules for presenting evidence, she was completely immobilized by the opposing lawyer, and the judge had to stop the session.

Since she challenged the judge with improper vehemence, he threatened to charge her with contempt of court to curtail her outburst and ordered her to leave the room escorted by a bailiff. As she left, she complained aloud and insistently about the judge. His clerk left her alone affirming: “I’ve had it...I’ve had it...” When commenting on this case, he and the other clerical workers said that “she just wanted to have her day in court”, which is an expression with double meaning. While it emphasizes an important right of citizens to be heard in court (by the state), it also refers to claims that do not make sense, but which the claimants insist on pursuing.

Having lost the case in Small Claims Court for not being able to demonstrate the alleged damages, which the tenants refused to acknowledge, she became furious when the court awarded them treble damages and could not accept losing the case on a technicality, as she perceived it. The perception of not having been properly heard twice (that is in small claims and superior court where the case was suspended) stimulated a sense of unfairness and abuse that could not be argued in court, given the lack of admissible material evidence to support her claims according to court procedure.

In addition to the material loss that she could not demonstrate, she could not accept that the alleged abuses by the tenants were accepted by the court. The fact is that these alleged abuses were not even discussed, given the lack of adequate means to deal with them, as if they were not real aggressions,<sup>5</sup> having been completely dismissed by the court. This explains her outrage as she left the court. But, the difficulty to pursue such claims in court and the lack of legal and judicial measures for dealing with the expression of emotions and sentiments is not limited to US courts or to the common law tradition, as we will see below, when we discuss “unusually persistent complainants” in Australia and a civil case in Brazil.

The invisibility of moral insults is widespread in Western courts, where emotional reactions and the mobilization of sentiments tend to be pathologized. A case in point is the work of a group of Australian psychiatrists who sought to revive the category of the querulant or paranoid litigant (Lester et al. 2004), which they claim has been out of usage since the second half of the last century, but which seems to fit well a significant group of persistent complainants who were tracked down by a number of complaints organizations, which receive secondary referrals after an initial attempt to resolve the problem is unsuccessful. Besides having tried to clearly distinguish the unusually persistent complainants from a control group with the help of complaints

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<sup>5</sup> In an important essay, Berger (1983: 172-81) calls attention to the near impossibility to sue people for insults to honor in countries like the USA, where, given the lack of material evidence, they appear to be unreal aggressions.

officers from six ombudsmen's offices in Australia (Idem: 353), the authors claim that different from other complainants, the persistent complainants are seeking vindication and retribution, which would go beyond the aim to deliver reparation and compensation that characterize courts and complaint organizations.<sup>6</sup>

But, should we not consider the fact that, given the difficulty to characterize the rights that actually have been injured, the allegations about which are usually not properly heard, certain complainants are left without many options. Being unable to obtain legal recourse or compensation, doesn't it seem that these complainants resort to retribution and vindication out of despair?

The complaints officers were asked to respond to a questionnaire about those they had identified as unusually persistent complainants from a sample of non-active cases and then to select control cases from their files that came right after each of the former ones, involving subjects of the same gender, about the same age and with similar complaints, whose case was also closed. An identical questionnaire was used for the control cases as well. However, these questionnaires were basically limited to inquiring into external aspects about how the claims were filed or processed. In terms of the perception of the parties, the material is organized according to excessively formal criteria. As I will argue, such criteria are not conducive to an adequate apprehension of the meaning of demands associated to the dignity of citizens, or to the respective demands for recognition, which are significantly dependent on processes of symbolic elaboration. Therefore, the material presented does not allow one to distinguish between would be pathological or nonsensical actions and meaningful and plainly logical emotional reactions, motivated by a failure to convey the aggressions or moral insults suffered that fall under the thematic dimension of recognition.

Thus, the study found that demands by the persistent complainants took an average of 35 months to reach an outcome, while the average time for the control group was just 8.3 months. Only 23% of the cases filed by the persistent complainants were considered to be resolved at the end of the process, while in the control group 87% were considered resolved. Moreover, persistent complainants visited the ombudsmen's offices without an appointment much more frequently (31% vs 4.5%), and used more forms of communication (e-mail, fax, letters etc.), considering that 60% of these complainants sent more than 10 letters, compared with 9% of the control group. And 25% of the letters sent by the persistent complainants have more than 100 pages, against only 2.7% of the letters sent by the control group. Moreover, 52% of the persistent complainants requested to change their case workers during the process, compared to 19% of the other complainants.

All these indices show significant differences between the two groups in terms of the efforts of the complainants when pursuing their causes, or the emphasis with which they state their claims and their respective complexity, in view of the amount of time spent in pursuing them. However, they say nearly nothing about the causes themselves. Although the data on the nature of the injuries and on the objectives of the reparations sought reveal very similar figures in certain aspects, the tables below also show important differences that must be explored beyond the behavioral stereotypes examined until now in this article.<sup>7</sup>

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6 The discussion of these Australian cases draws greatly on my former analysis of them that is partly reproduced here (see Cardoso de Oliveira 2013a: 422-26).

7 The two tables were designed by me, using the data and the indices presented in the paper (Lester et al. 2004).

**Comparative Table I**

Type of Injury or Damage	Persistent Complainants	Control Group
Financial loss	71%	72%
Damaged personal relations	25%	18%
Damage to physical health	15%	5%
Social & economic damages in everyday life	35%	9,5%
Damages to self-esteem	40%	14%
Damages to health in general	44%	23%

**Comparative Table II**

Demands for Reparation	Persistent Complainants	Control Group
Financial compensation	61%	58%
Improved services	42%	47%
Apologies and acknowledgement of mistreatment	67%	32%
Acknowledgement of social implications	39%	9%
Public recognition	25%	0%
To prosecute the case worker or have them fired	43%	11%
Public exposure and humiliation	14%	0%
Justice based on principles	60%	18%
To have a day in court	25%	4%
Reasons for the claim that vary over time	31%	0%

In fact, there is no significant variation in the percentages for the two first items in each table, but the differences in the other items are quite suggestive. While there is not much difference in the perception of material damage (financial loss) between the two groups or about the appropriate reparation (financial compensation), the consequences, suffering and encompassing demands for reparation present major differences between the persistent and the control groups. The last three items in the table on types of injury or damage are particularly meaningful concerning the experience of suffering affirmed by the respective complainants, and suggest differences in the very definition of the rights involved. The persistent complainants not only felt much more injured or impaired by the socio-economic impact of the damages and the respective consequences for their health, but they also indicate a broader impact related to their self-esteem (40% vs 14%), which constitutes one of the most sensitive aspects related to demands for recognition. Self-esteem directly affects a person's dignity, and as I have indicated in a few publications, has an important role in claims for the right to be treated with respect and considerateness (L. Cardoso de Oliveira 2005; 2007a; 2007b; 2013b).<sup>8</sup>

As I see it, the second table makes clear that the ombudsmen offices have considerable difficulties in understanding the significance of the persistent complainants demands that are related to the thematic dimension of recognition that I mentioned above. With the exception of the seventh line, which demands public exposure and humiliation of those responsible for the damages — revealing a clear motivation to achieve vengeance, which was present in 14% of the demands made by the persistent complainants — while nothing of the kind is found among the control group, all the other items in the table may be interpreted as measures to repair the parties' dignity, which was perceived to be threatened in the disputes.

<sup>8</sup> Demands of rights for recognition have gained a great deal of attention in the literature since the 1990s, with particularly important contributions by Taylor (1994), Honneth (1996) and Fraser (2003), in which dignity, self-esteem and identity gain central relevance in the respective formulations.

But such claims and their significance are usually invisible to the courts and complaints organizations. This clearly seems to be the case regarding the demands for apologies and an acknowledgment of mistreatment, and for public recognition of the need for reparation.

The demand for justice based on principles is similar, as well as the request “to have a day in court” in either of the two meanings usually attributed to the expression, as mentioned above. The apparent confusion identified in just some of the cases filed by the persistent complainants, who changed the nature and the grounds of 31% of their claims during the process, could also be recognized as an effort to make oneself understood in a context adverse to acknowledging rights associated to the dignity of the citizen.

The indices that express the perception of the officers who receive the claims strengthen the argument that the Australian ombudsmen offices have difficulty adequately addressing the demands for reparation from the persistent complainants, and which I would associate to the dignity of the parties and the invisibility of moral insults, as suggested above. In 31% of the cases filed by persistent complainants the officers believed that there was no substantial loss, compared with 9% of the cases filed by the control group. Only 10% of the claims filed by persistent complainants were considered coherent and rational in the interviews, whereas 82% of the claims in the control group were described as rational and clear. By the same token, the data about the difficulty the officers have interacting with the persistent complainants are even more impressive: a) in just 12% of the cases was the relation with the persistent complainants classified as positive, compared with 86% of the cases in the control group; b) in 52% of the persistent cases the officer sought help from a more experienced colleague, but in only 2% of the other cases; and, c) in 48% of the persistent cases the officer avoided contact with the claimant, which was not identified in any of the control group cases.

Other characteristics in the presentation of the demands highlight major differences between the two groups and contribute to exoticizing the persistent complainants. These include very lengthy texts that are difficult to follow (95.5% vs 17%), “various oddities of writing also on occasion rendered parts of the letters from the persistent group unintelligible” (Lester et al. 2004: 354); rhetoric about having been treated in an unacceptable manner; “endorsements of their good character and personal diaries”; excessive use of different colored highlighters to accentuate certain words and others. Moreover, certain behavioral aspects are almost exclusively confined to the persistent complainants: direct or indirect threats to the officers (made in writing, on the telephone or in person), threats of suicide, and the use of excessively dramatic expressions. I would like to call attention to the fact that, with the exception of the threats against the officers and the demands for vengeance, which only appear in the cases of persistent complainants, all of the other indices (except for the demand for public recognition in Table 2) are also present, to a certain extent, in the control cases, suggesting an important area of intersection between the demands articulated by the two groups of complainants.

I understand that this area of intersection encompasses the thematic dimension of recognition and the rights associated to the dignity of the citizen that do not have the same importance in the control group cases as they do in those of the persistent complainants. I recognize that some complainants in the persistent groups may have had psychological problems of a diverse nature and seriousness, but that, probably, in most of the cases classified as persistent, the main problem of the complainants was that the ombudsmen offices were completely lacking in adequate procedures to deal with the respective demands. This might be true even in the cases where the complainants could be clearly diagnosed, through clinical examination, with paranoia or another form of psychosis. At any rate, irrespectively of the proper classification of these complainants, the fact that their claims could not receive an adequate response from the respective institutions, due to the entanglement of reason and sentiment, shows a significant institutional deficit for dealing with moral insults and suggests very interesting sociological problems.

I would like to finish this paper with a brief reference to a civil case brought before a local court in Curitiba,<sup>9</sup> the capital of Paraná state in Brazil. This is a case in which the plaintiff, a low-income urban worker, bought a small piece of land on the outskirts of the city from a real estate company that owns a large area designated for low-income housing, and built a shack. He moved in and a few months later the area was completely flooded by a storm, causing major losses for him and his neighbors. Most of his furniture and appliances were damaged and he visited the company office to undo the transaction, expecting to get back his down payment - but this request was denied. He had bought the property on a sunny day and was led to believe that the area had a good drainage system and was not subjected to floods. Given the company's refusal to return his down payment he first went to the consumer protection agency, but found no help there and filed a claim in court. The company then agreed to return almost the entire down payment, but he only received it nine months later and during this time he filed another claim for moral damages and the series of losses he had incurred during the time elapsed.

However, once in court, the plaintiff had difficulty to present his case without telling the judge about all his suffering and hardship since the flood and the beginning of the conflict with the company, and did not present clear evidence from the point of view of the court, and the judge could not understand his narrative. His unusual manner in presenting his claim, already noted in the manuscript he presented when the claim was filed, did not allow the judge to connect his story to the alleged incidents that supported the claim. The judge suspended the hearing and conditioned the possibility of a second hearing on the plaintiff's agreement to undergo a mental health evaluation by the district attorney's office psychologist. The plaintiff agreed, and the psychologist affirmed that the plaintiff's actions and perspectives were completely compatible with his situation, and emphasized that the plaintiff has a firm "belief and hope in the functioning of the judicial system and shows respect for the existing norms".

Nevertheless, the plaintiff did not perform as expected in the second hearing as well and engaged in intense discussions with the new judge, who also did not understand the plaintiff's narrative and dismissed his case. The plaintiff did not give up and filed two other claims. Since in his fourth attempt the company had changed its position, given the necessity to resell the disputed piece of land, it agreed to pay a larger indemnity to have the plaintiff off the property. The interesting thing now is that, in spite of this final legal victory, the plaintiff did not feel that the indemnity was adequate compensation for what he had been through and built a new shack on the very same lot after cashing the company's check for the returned down payment and an indemnity.

Irrespective of the legal aspects of the case, the fact is that because at no time in the process did the court properly address the objective abuses the plaintiff suffered from the company, he continued to fight for the recognition of the breached rights that never received proper repair. In a way, his behavior may also be interpreted as an act of vengeance, given that he inverted the roles with the company, which may have to file a suit to remove him. But I would argue that, similarly to the unusually persistent complainants in Australia, litigants or complainants have few options because aggressions to rights related to moral insults remain invisible in most Western courts. In addition, the complainants' actions and attitudes make it very difficult to distinguish acts of vengeance from demands for repair and recognition.

No matter how we look at the cases discussed above, it is clear that understanding the respective claims and repairing the eventual acts of disrespect to these rights, characterized as moral insults, requires an articulation between reason and sentiments or emotions. This is true for disputes between tenants and landlords in the USA, those involving persistent complainants in Australia, and low-income plaintiffs trying to get indemnities in Brazil.

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<sup>9</sup> "Juizado Especial Cível" (Special Civil Court), whose procedures are somewhat similar to Small Claims Courts in the USA, and the parties do not need legal representation. The case is taken from a very interesting ethnography on consumer claims by Ciméa Bevilaqua, which has a detailed description of the case (2008: 159-173).

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# From food to offspring: engagement between humans and sea turtles in two communities on the north coast of Espírito Santo

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## Abstract

This article is the result of a research conducted in the villages of Regência Augusta and Povoação, in the State of Espírito Santo, Brazil. The objective is to contribute to knowledge concerning biodiversity conservation projects and the relationships between these, local communities and emblematic species in the midst of socio-environmental conflicts. We intend to highlight some of the ways that human agents interact with each other through the relationship with other non-human agents, developing conceptions and actions in and with the world around them. The empirical analysis addresses the case of sea turtles and the environmental agents who deal with them. Those who patrol the beach are prominent in this text, but we will also consider the way in which these works form an ambiguous relationship with other knowledges and practices. The region is going through political, economic and environmental divergences related to resources and the local landscape, aggravated by the arrival of Samarco's *mud*.

**Key words:** Sea turtles; Tamar Project; socio-environmental conflicts.

# De alimento à prole: engajamentos entre humanos e tartarugas marinhas em duas comunidades do litoral norte do Espírito Santo

## Resumo

Este artigo resulta de uma pesquisa realizada nas vilas de Regência Augusta e Povoação, situadas no Espírito Santo, Brasil. O objetivo é contribuir para o conhecimento sobre projetos de conservação da biodiversidade e as relações entre eles, comunidades locais e espécies emblemáticas, em meio a conflitos socioambientais. Apontamos algumas das maneiras pelas quais agentes humanos interagem entre si, através da relação com outros agentes não-humanos, desenvolvendo diferentes concepções e ações no e com o mundo. Abordamos empiricamente o caso das tartarugas marinhas e dos ambientalistas que com elas trabalham no litoral norte do Espírito Santo. Os que realizam trabalhos de monitoramento da praia receberam o maior enfoque no texto, mas também a forma como esses trabalhos constituíram-se em relação ambígua com outras práticas-e-conhecimentos. A região passa por divergências políticas, econômicas e ambientais relacionadas à utilização de recursos e da paisagem local, agravadas pela chegada dos agenciamentos da *lama* da Samarco.

**Palavras-chave:** Tartarugas marinhas; Projeto Tamar; conflitos socioambientais.

# From food to offspring: engagement between humans and sea turtles in two communities on the north coast of Espírito Santo<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

This article forms part of our reflections on research conducted since 2011 in Regência Augusta, State of Espírito Santo, Brazil, with special attention given to two field immersions that the first author undertook in two different sea turtle spawning seasons, March and November 2015. They took place in the villages of Regência Augusta, and Povoação, in the municipality of Linhares, also located in Espírito Santo.<sup>2</sup>

Regência Augusta is located on the right bank at the mouth of the River Doce and houses a main base of one of the most famous of Brazilian conservation projects, the Tamar Project, which has been active since the 1980s. The Tamar Project considers this base to be the second among the top three, the other two are in Pirambu, Sergipe, and Praia do Forte, Bahia (Tamar 2000).<sup>3</sup> The project has a visitor's centre in the Comboios Biological Reserve (ReBio Comboios), as well as an administrative structure and ecological centre in Regência Augusta. On the other side of the river, there is a seasonal research base, less well known than that of Regência Augusta and less sought after by volunteer interns. It includes a relatively large house, three kilometres from the community, between Monsarás Lagoon and Povoação Beach. It is possible to reach it by crossing the River Doce and following a well-developed sandbank path by jeep, quad, or even on foot. The Povoação base is a mixture of accommodation, materials' storage, an office, and a laboratory.

The overall objective of the article is to contribute to knowledge concerning biodiversity conservation projects devoted to species that are emblematic for environmentalism, through which human and non-human relationships are constructed based on management and protection initiatives: specifically, that of sea turtles and/in their spawning areas. The article explores the manner in which environmental agents construct themselves, individually and institutionally, around this actuation with species that have become charismatic, and with which they frequently establish material and symbolic relationships beyond the working relationship. Examples of these include relationships of affection, such as those of mushroom researchers in Tsing (2010)

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2 For further details on the field research and immersions conducted in 2015, see Fontinelli (2016). We opted to differentiate between the terms “field research” and “fieldwork”; the former refers to periods in which presence in the field was more closely linked to the first author's research, and the latter to periods in which the second author has operated more freely in the field, from 2011 to the present. The fieldwork took place both within a research format, and in university extension activities, and included individual and collective immersions. Information on the funding for this research is explained in footnote 1.

3 Currently, the project is present in nine Brazilian states. According to the project's official website and information obtained in the field, 1,100 kilometres of beaches are monitored in all 23 research bases. In Espírito Santo, it was present in six locations according to data from May 2018 (website: [www.tamar.org.br](http://www.tamar.org.br)), but the bases have been reduced since then.

and primates studied by Silva and Sá (2013). The case discussed here also involves asymmetric relationships (Suassuna 2005), and numerous socio-environmental conflicts and uncertainties that involve the initiatives and consequences of economic development, particularly mining, together with series of environmental restrictions, such as those related to fishing.

In this sense, the crime-disaster that hit the coastal area of Espírito Santo at the end of 2015, following the rupture of the Fundão dam, operated in Mariana-MG by the companies Samarco, Vale and BH Billiton, was dramatic: the mining tailings were, and continue to be, drawn down the River Doce, and first reached the coast of Espírito Santo and the ocean waters at the end of 2015. The arrival of the tailings at the mouth of the River Doce occurred when the first author was at the end of his last field stay, and we will return to this event in the final section of the article. The second author also followed part of this process in extension and research activities conducted between 2016 and 2017 (Amboss et al. 2017; Creado & Helmreich 2018; Creado et al. 2018; Trigueiro & Creado 2018; Silva 2018).

The article combines the participant research of the first author inside the Tamar Project and semi-structured interviews conducted by the second author with residents of the region and members of the Tamar Project, which were conducted more intensely and systematically, especially between 2013 and 2014, in individual research activities or in the company of other researchers and interlocutors (see: Trindade de Freitas 2014; Campos 2014; Torres et al. 2017).

Although we chose not to provide an extensive history and contextualisation of the region at this time, we would emphasise that before the Samarco crime-disaster, pressures to develop the mouth of the River Doce and its surroundings were already present, from the oil and gas industry, from eucalyptus trees used in the production of cellulose, and the establishment of a port structure (Torres et al. 2016; Creado 2018). Likewise, other changes brought about by development were already present, though more subtle, influenced by an environmentalist bias in income generation initiatives focused on the conservation of sea turtles and nature tourism. In addition, similar to other conservation projects, the Tamar Project establishes links with other partners and companies that are not strictly local in order to sustain itself financially, including Petrobras (Tamar 2000; Torres 2016; Trigueiro & Creado 2018).

For this article, we identified movements, trends, conventions, categories and divergences shared, or otherwise, by the participants of the space-times in which relationships with sea turtles were mediated by activities of the management, research and conservation of the species present at the mouth of the River Doce, prior to and immediately after the arrival of the *mud*, without delving too deeply into the post-*mud* context, given this has been addressed in other works (Amboss et al., 2017; Creado & Helmreich, 2018; Creado et al., 2018).

Our starting point was the discussion already presented in Fontinelli (2016), with greater focus on the human agents who carry out the work of beach monitoring, especially the interns, and the way in which this work was constituted in an ambiguous relationship with other practices and previously existing knowledges in the area, (re)inventing them, which has also been explored in a different form in Campos (2014).

In the first section of the article, we reflect on the (dis)continuities between the human and non-human, in dialogue with different theoretical influences – authors devoted to studies on science and technology, authors associated with symbolic anthropology or analysis of social conflicts, as well as Brazilian authors who study relations between humans and animals – and some of the concepts and relationships established with the sea turtles at the mouth of the River Doce, illuminated by the environmental initiatives. In the following section, we deal with the work-and-affection relationships fulfilled in the beach monitoring by the Tamar Project. In the penultimate section, without going into too much depth, we discuss some of the changes brought about by the Samarco *mud* at the mouth of the River Doce, which made it easier for researchers to listen to voices critical of the project's actuation, since the project and the federal environmental management acted as important mediators of environmental management in the aftermath of Samarco's technological disaster.

## **(Re)inventions and theoretical-empirical dialogues**

The concept of humanity and, by extension, that of animality, shared in most Western societies is what prevails in the Tamar Project. They are human agents associated with modernity, in the manner in which it is portrayed (and deferred) by Latour (2000). However, to study their relations with marine turtles, we also seek inspiration from authors who have studied other, non-Western peoples,<sup>4</sup> including Wagner (2010), Descola (2012; 2014) and Strathern (2011; 2014), and in Brazil, Sautchuk (2016).

One of the motivations for this stems from the fact that the boundaries between humanity and animality established and transgressed by the human agents are not considered to be the only ones in the region studied, and, moreover, are not valid in all instances of actuation, even their own, since individual and situational oscillations exist. Likewise, these agents work alongside other human agents, who are not necessarily or exclusively guided by the concept and conception of species, nor by knowledges and practices of an environmental inspiration. Our goal is not to fix different ontological categories, but to show how they can serve as evidence that even individuals educated and immersed in a naturalistic logic transit in different forms of conception, awareness and action in the world, even if momentarily and without being fully aware of this.

The conservationist human agents of the Tamar Project, who we can more broadly call environmentalists and who carry out the monitoring of the beaches, for the most part, have training in biological sciences, ecology, oceanography, veterinary and related disciplines. For them, the predominant concept of humanity is linked to that of the human species, in other words, that which is not part of the human species is generally considered non-human, such as non-human animals, objects, machines, wind, sand, etc. In the relationships which we highlight here, the main alterity from the interspecific point of view is the animal (Ingold 1995), while the main alterity from the intraspecific point of view is the fisherman; however, these two references are not constituted as absolute and static poles. In dialogue with Descola's approach (2012; 2014), more typological in nature, we generically affirm that the environmentalists from the Tamar Project are predominantly naturalist in their mode of identification.<sup>5</sup>

Other authors, in turn, reinforce the entanglements and bonds between beings, in a non-dichotomous way, emphasising the existential continuities between them, including Haraway (2016), Stengers (Pinheiro Dias et al. 2016; Stengers 2015 and Swanson et al. (2017). In contrast, Sautchuk (2016), and the authors with whom he aligns, defends the use of the notion of domestication, because it is more dialogical with other areas of knowledge outside of Anthropology, and provides greater temporal extension to the analyses and greater power to the doing of ethnography.

In the current approach, we consider that the work of agents of the Tamar Project occurs through different forms of material and symbolic engagement that are not reduced to interspecific relationships with the sea turtles that spawn on Comboios Beach – which extends from Barra do Riacho to Regência Augusta –, even with regard to beach monitoring in the strictest sense. Thus, at the same time that they are guided by the classification of species present in naturalism, the ordering principle of research, bibliographic production and academic training, they also subvert it without this becoming an absolute counterpoint, or the principle ceasing to exist: rather, in the field, as in other cases, there is a lot to deal with. Indeed, according to an environmental analyst involved in the coordination of the project, in an interview in January 2011,<sup>6</sup> the beach monitoring was the historical origin of the project's work in Regência Augusta, recorded in the myth of the project's origin which assumed a textual form (Tamar 2000; Rodriguez 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Western and non-Western qualifiers are used here in general terms to facilitate communication; however, without ignoring the existence of variations, some of which we discuss below.

<sup>5</sup> For Descola (2012; 2014), there are four different modes of identification: naturalism, animism, totemism and analogism, in order to schematise experience in the world, according to the arrangement of existing beings and their ontological properties. The author also discusses the relational modes, considered to be closer to the empirical than the identification modes, namely: exchange, predation, gift, production, protection and transmission.

<sup>6</sup> In an interview with E. Creado, P. L. Trindade de Freitas and C. C. A. Torres.

In this myth, it is evident that the encounter with the fisherman, in the 1980s, and his own manner of relating to sea turtles, regarded as predatory, was a crucial element for the origin and identity of the project (Tamar 2000). Thus, in terms of Donna Haraway's (2008) becoming-with, we affirm that these human agents, among whom we found scientists and governmental and non-governmental technicians, often (re)invent (Wagner 2010) the relationships with the sea turtles, their own relationships and those of other human agents, recreating themselves in this process (Campos 2014): sometimes, through confrontations, impositions, and even through alliances and compromises. Precisely because relationships between these humans and non-human animals occur among other humans, in addition to those that occur among other non-humans.

We also assume that they take place in the midst of different knowledges and practices, in line with other authors. Osório (2015), for example, pointed out that ethology is not the only valid source of the material existence of non-human animals, while Velden (2015) highlighted the importance of the knowledge of technicians and field agents about animals, specifically, chickens in an indigenous context.

Using the idea of symbolic (re)invention, from Roy Wagner (2010), also allows us to consider objects as symbols, whose meanings are the product of relationships and the ways in which symbolic contexts are created and experienced, which frees us from an excessively typological use, as well as from an opposition between the material and the symbolic. The uses of symbols extend their associations and allow the meanings of different symbolic contexts to undergo innovations, in individual and collective spheres. This is what occurred regarding the beach monitoring over time (Rodríguez 2005; Tamar 2000; Campos 2014), such that the *carebar*,<sup>7</sup> that exist on Comboios Beach, underwent a symbolic (re)invention (at the very least).

It is also worth emphasising that the project focused more intensely on those whose *locus* of action occurs in the same territory, namely the residents of the region, and, in particular, the fishermen. Other bonds were created as part of these relational entanglements, some of which truncate, without necessarily breaking, the relationship the Tamar Project has established with the residents and fishermen; and some of the other links can be triggered in times of socio-environmental crises.

Regarding the (re)invention of *carebar*, we re-examined the book that narrates the story of the project (Tamar 2000), to comprehend the management and conservation activities conducted on the beach; furthermore, we indicate the work of Campos (2014) for her ethnographic descriptions. The book on the project focuses mainly on the initial studies on turtles in Brazil at the end of the 1970s and in the early 1980s, while emphasising the history and formation of the first three research bases (Rodríguez 2005). The project is considered to have arrived in Regência Augusta in 1982, and from 1985 onwards, the team lived there all year, not only during the reproductive cycle of sea turtles from September to March. The federal government created the Comboios Biological Reserve (ReBio Comboios), which protects some of the spawning areas on the beach that the reserve is named after, on September 25<sup>th</sup> 1984 (Tamar 2000; Trigueiro et al. 2018).<sup>8</sup>

In contrast to the community of the Faia Brava reserve and the members of the Rewilding Europe project (Silva and Sá 2017), at the time, no promises were made regarding a new approach to nature, to rebuild with the intention of repopulating the area with non-human animal species. However, there are similarities, in that the Tamar Project aimed to reinvent human practices, as a way to rehabilitate a prior natural state, allegedly destroyed by excessive predatory practices. Like that described in Silva and Sá (2017: 61), the project presented the option of the symbolic exploration of sea turtles, which would result in resources for the region and employment for members of the community (Silva and Sá 2017: 61).

7 Locally, the sea turtles that spawn in the region were called *carebas*: (1) soft or leather *careba* (*Dermochelys coriacea*); (2) yellow or hard *careba* (*Caretta caretta*); (3) Green *careba* (*Chelonia mydas*) (Tamar 2000: 54; see also Campos 2014; Trindade de Freitas 2014; Rodríguez 2005). Hence the verb *carebar*, and the name given to those who performed the most intense extractivist activities, *carebeiros*, related to turtles in this region.

8 For a more complete history of this protected area, which has progressively lost territorial area since it was initially considered in the 1950s, consult Tamar (2000) and Duarte (2018).

In this narrative, the project sees itself as the emissary of the most valid way to approach the worlds of the sea turtles, compared with the previous forms of knowledge and practice among the fishermen and residents who live in the regions of the first three bases (Tamar 2000), which involves commensality. It is as if, from their naturalist position, the distance from these other knowledges and practices and the personal worlds of other animals allowed for better access to the ontologies of sea turtles. Despite this, the sea turtles' agencies took researchers by surprise. However, as we verified in Regência Augusta and the literature, part of what the project does in the field and on the beach was elaborated from the very techniques performed by the fishermen before the arrival of the Tamar Project agents, and it is often called by the same name. According to the naturalists' version, *carebar* was 'the right verb to define the *carebeiros* practice of searching for and killing the *carebas* during spawning on the beach, to eat the meat and for their shells' (Tamar 2000: 55-56; see also: Campos 2014; Trindade de Freitas 2014; Rodriguez 2005).

Sautchuk (2016) has made a series of observations and considerations concerning the processes, concepts and benefits resulting from domestication, without pre-determining it and highlighting the particularities of its occurrences. The case raises reflections concerning the ambiguous character of the interaction between two carnivores, fishermen and piranhas, which involves commensality, to ponder and challenge dichotomies like domestic/wild or protection/predation. The author exposes the controversy over issues of mutual domination or domestication that involve reproductive and territorial issues, and he questions even intermediate approaches like familiarisation.

In Regência Augusta, the place where the Tamar Project has a stronger presence, the commensal relationship between fishermen and sea turtles used to be present, but with the arrival of the project it was first controlled, then later avoided or eliminated by the residents. Thus, the reinvention of *carebar* was an attempt to unilaterally protect sea turtles through reproductive, territorial and symbolic control, which made them a flagship species<sup>9</sup> and a taboo food, such that today, the relationship between the turtles and the environmentalists is also manifested within the sphere of familiarity, a theme discussed in the next section. However, there are limits to this, due to the broad cycles of territorial and seasonal reproductive behaviour of sea turtles, and the project needed to adapt to these limits, even with regard to its physical structure, which it does through locating its bases and the actions of human agents in certain places favourable for the spawning and birth of individual sea turtles.<sup>10</sup>

At present, in Regência Augusta and Povoação, turtles can still be killed in fishing nets, but even when this happens, they cannot be consumed or foraged by fishermen, who either hand the dead turtles over to the project or simply discard them in the sea.

In an interview conducted in 2013, an elder *carebeiro*, employed by the Tamar Project, said that, in the past, 'the turtle was only caught for consumption, for ourselves, we salted the turtle meat; the more you caught, the more you had'. This was different to the fish they caught, which have been sold for a long time. His reference to abundance was related to the species *Caretta caretta*, also known as the loggerhead or yellow turtle, 'but this other one, the leathery one [*Dermochelys coriacea*], was more difficult to find'.<sup>11</sup>

Previously, *carebeiros* killed the turtles. Although this was criminalised and/or gained a clandestine connotation over time, the technique of locating the nests used by the project is still the same as that used by the elder *carebeiros*. As one of them who worked in Regência Augusta explained to us in 2013, the procedure is basically this: follow tracks in the sand made during spawning; locate the eggs by sticking a short stick in the sand, digging and marking the spot; the presence of the nest is confirmed by the softer sand at the bottom.

9 Sea turtles are considered flagship species in conservation projects, since they are charismatic, they raise funds and raise awareness for their cause. They are also key species, since their preservation leads to the preservation of other species in their ecosystem.

10 Turtles usually spawn on the same beach on which they were born.

11 Walking interview with E. Creado and A. C. O. Campos.

Even today, as it was for the elder *carebeiros*, it is more difficult to perform the procedure with the giant turtle, as explained by other *carebeiro*, working with the Tamar Project, in 2013, in the Comboios Indigenous Territory (IT), where the consumption of sea turtles and their eggs for food remains legal:

‘... only the giant turtles are more complicated, even some biologist friends of mine can’t figure out where she’s gone. It’s because she lays her eggs very deep, not like other species where it’s very shallow...’<sup>12</sup>

There is a meeting of agencies here, because, as shown in Felipe Sussekind (2016) in the context of cattle raising in the Pantanal, you need to know how to read the marks left by sea turtles, so you can enter into and participate in the world of these non-human animals, which, like humans, are agents in their own right. The human agents often use such readings to implement their own actions, such as management aimed at conservation. Thus, the *carebeiro* continued to exist, but was (re)invented through the monitoring of Comboios Beach, with distinct characteristics in each of the three stretches. The nests found both on the left bank of the River Doce, on the Povoação side, and inside the Comboios IT were transferred to the vicinity of the base at ReBio Comboios. The view was that they were subject to anthropic or other risks: regarding the left bank, in Povoação, the problem was the instability of the river mouth; regarding the indigenous territory, it was the consumption of eggs. In 2013, and for at least two years after, part of that work was performed by two of the elder *carebeiros*, who, on their walks at dawn were responsible for the initial identification of the nests and beds. Later they notified the beach interns, who, in turn, conducted the removal of the eggs to the vicinity of the base inside the biological reserve.<sup>13</sup> The same concerns and measures were not undertaken in the middle section, between the right bank of the River Doce and Comboios IT, which was accessed and covered several times during the day by the beach monitoring interns, but more frequently at night and at dawn during the spawning and hatching of the baby turtles. There, the beach monitoring are performed more intensively by project agents, interns and the seasonal trainee;<sup>14</sup> they take turns on the quadricycles or jeeps – when the quadricycles break – at night, at dawn, and in the morning, during the spawning and hatching period of the young. Considering all three stretches, we can affirm that monitoring became an activity performed and controlled by the project, and is no longer being passed on to the new generation of *carebeiros* (for details on the Tamar (*neo*)*carebar*, as experienced and described by its authors, see also: Campos 2014; Trindade de Freitas 2014).

This is a historical contrast, since the elder *carebeiros* were initially very important for mediating relationships between the residents of the village and the Tamar Project. By ceasing to kill sea turtles or collect their eggs, or, at least reducing these practices over time – not without causing some difficulties for themselves – and being inserted in the field activities of the conservation project, they began functioning as examples of environmentally positive conduct. The material and symbolic mediation of relationships is still performed by some of the third and fourth generation descendants of the elder *carebeiros*, who, if on the one hand were not affected by the same negative connotations, having changed their practices, also had not lived through the experience and prestige of the knowledges and practices of the elder *carebeiros*. These descendants grew into adulthood having had no immediate physical engagement with the sea turtles, and there was a certain resentment towards those who hold university knowledge.<sup>15</sup> Without further application of the idea,

<sup>12</sup> Interview given to E. Creado, A. C. Campos and C. Llanes, at the Comboios IT in December 2013. Even where the extraction of sea turtles is legal, the subject is talked about with caution.

<sup>13</sup> Sea turtles usually spawn at night and early in the morning. The *carebeiro* from Regência Augusta, active on the left bank of the River Doce, retired about two years after the interview. Unfortunately, we have not returned to Comboios IT, so we do not know whether the indigenous *carebeiro* has also retired, but it is very likely given his age in 2013.

<sup>14</sup> The trainee is an intern who participated in a previous sea turtle breeding season, and is considered more experienced.

<sup>15</sup> During field activities in 2013, we met two grandchildren of a former *carebeiro*, elder Aloy, who were attendants at the Tamar Visitors Center. The Tamar Project book (2000) mentions Aloy, who we did not meet, because when we began visiting the region he had already died. He is also mentioned in the work of Rodriguez (2005). Among the oldest *carebeiros* in Regência Augusta and Comboios IT, the second author met only those she interviewed in 2013, having had more contact with a resident who still lives in Regência Augusta.

because it refers to another context (Africa) and other types of conflicts (colonial), we emphasise that the belonging of individuals in relation to multiple affiliations has already been highlighted in the literature as a means of mediating conflicts (Van Velsen 1987; Gluckman 1970; Ferreira 2004).

Another point of distancing is related to parental care among the sea turtles themselves, which exist, according to fishermen, but do not exist according to the Tamar Project and naturalistic, technoscientific knowledge (Rodriguez 2005). From the project's point of view, the lack of parental care allows for the spatial rearrangement of the nests; based on this perspective, after leaving the eggs and the nests, the hatchlings proceed to the sea and no longer seek out their parents. Even so, transferring the nests began to be avoided, based on another argument: it can lead to an increase in the genetic malformation of the hatchlings and the number of stillbirths, depending on how and when it is done. It is somewhat paradoxical, as we examine below, that in some manner, parental care has (re)appeared in the relationship of some members of the project with the spawn nests on the beach, though through more individualised and interspecific relationships.

### **A family of workaholics with interspecific parental care**

During his stays in the field, Fontinelli prioritised everyday conversations and dispensed the performance of the anthropologist who writes down everything he observes and hears. He conducted a few formal interviews, when these proved to be indispensable, and used a small pocket notebook to write down the information he considered most important and likely to be forgotten later.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, writing in the field diary was a mandatory and unavoidable activity, even on days that involved a greater demand for activities in the Tamar Project, when he performed beach monitoring and worked at the two bases. One thing that should be highlighted is that, whenever he asked about the onset of research on turtles in Brazil, he was commonly told, in slightly different forms, that it was linked to the creation of the project and the expedition conducted in 1977 by a group of oceanology students at the Federal University of Rio Grande (FURG), in Rio Grande do Sul, as recorded in the book on the project (Tamar 2000).<sup>17</sup>

Some of the points highlighted in the book and in everyday conversations served to (re)work symbolic-material engagements with project managers and volunteers, such as the passion and self-sacrifice for conservation work. Annually, during the spawning season between September and March, the Tamar Project marks, monitors and records of the number of nests, eggs and hatchlings produced. The interns were recruited on a voluntary basis and were mostly undergraduate students linked to some course in the natural sciences. The selection and subsequent allocation of students were made after analysing the 'candidate's profile', performed by the base manager in each season. The trainee, from the 2014/2015 season, said that trainees would not even question the few hours of sleep and almost 16-hour days during the reproductive season, if the need to commit to the work had been assimilated. Indeed, the majority saw their duties as a privilege, given that volunteers paid to do similar quantities of this quality of work at other turtle management centres around the world.<sup>18</sup> However, the trainees at Povoação were more critical regarding Tamar than the trainees from Regência, they did not view the many hours of work with such joy and were often irritated when they went out in the field, not due to dissatisfaction with the quality of the work, but due to its intensity.

It is possible to draw some observations on this issue, based on the work of Roy Wagner (2010: 57-58), who distinguished between concepts that separated the issues of work and family in Western American culture:

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<sup>16</sup> Between 2013 and 2014, with regard to beach monitoring, the second author conducted interviews with five interns and two base managers from Regência Augusta, and followed a quick nest opening in Povoação and other openings in Regência Augusta.

<sup>17</sup> The second author knew about the publication before going to the field, and through Rodriguez (2005), who analysed the book as a narrative of the genesis of the Tamar Project.

<sup>18</sup> He had worked on monitoring fisheries and handling turtle nests in Tortuguero National Park, Costa Rica.

**Table 1.** Hegemonic dichotomies about work and family in Western American culture, according to Roy Wagner (2010):

<b>WORK (PRODUCTIVITY)</b>	<b>FAMILY</b>
PUBLIC	PRIVATE
MONEY	LOVE
FAMILY INCOME	NOT BASED ON MONEY OR WORK
IN EXCHANGE FOR CREDIT	SHARING RELATIONSHIPS
“DUTY IS ABOVE PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS”	“LOVE IS THE ONE THING MONEY CANNOT BUY”

**Source:** Fontinelli (2016)

The two columns in the table above did not always seem so different during the two stays that Fontinelli made in the field and that took place at two different stages of two reproductive seasons: the first in 2014/2015, during the nest opening phase, during March of 2015 in Regência Augusta; and the second in 2015/2016, at the peak of spawning, during November of 2015 in Povoação.

He found very different relationships of familiarity regarding the relationship with sea turtles. In Regência Augusta, the ‘perfect family’ predominated, with romanticised visions of work, declarations of love for the turtles, in which they appeared as members of the family, statements that the trainees would not choose to do anything else with their lives and that the money was not important as long as they could ‘save’ turtles. On the other hand, they also shared the belief that project members should do everything possible to ‘tag’<sup>19</sup> the turtles and get as much data as possible. This included turning them in the opposite direction, using the shell, so that they could not return to the sea, confusing them with flashlights so that they became disoriented, and even ‘mounting’ them to add weight and tire them out. They believed that this did not result in any harm to the animals and that these were brief moments of stress after which the turtles would be monitored by the Tamar Project, which would have more data available to conduct their conservation and management plans.

Fontinelli did not see any turtle spawning in Regência Augusta, but he did in Povoação, because at that moment in his stay it was a period of nest opening. Creado saw none, because when she did her most extensive field research, she was on maternity leave, alone and with a four-month-old baby, and was unable to accompany the beach monitoring. They also wrote, based on what they were told in Regência Augusta, for example, by one of the interns from the 2014/2015 season, Gisele,<sup>20</sup> who became a trainee in Povoação, which was one reason for disagreements in the ‘family’ of Povoação and made it possible to discern differences between the two models.

In Povoação, the scenario was different: the base manager sought to spare the turtles from any stress. Even when he occasionally used some of the disorientation techniques, like the flashlight, he never used the ‘mounting’ technique when dealing with an unmarked giant turtle, for example, and recommended that the remaining interns follow suit. Thus, in addition to personal differences, variations in management practices were at stake, with their respective forms of engagement.

When we think about Donna Haraway’s (2008) becoming-with, the interesting thing is that, in the first situation, the stimulus for body contact was aligned with the act of ignoring the subjectivity of the sea turtles, with being more radical and forcing the turtle to collaborate with the collection of supposedly objective

<sup>19</sup> Tags are small pieces of metal with an engraved number; preferably attached to the front flippers to identify different individuals, if caught more than once. The tag is attached to the rear flipper in giant turtles. Tags are placed on both flippers, in case one of them comes loose.

<sup>20</sup> Names have been changed throughout the text to protect the identity and privacy of the individuals concerned.

scientific data. In contrast, avoiding body contact and letting the turtle move as it pleased, at most using a flashlight to direct it, meant giving up some potential data so that the turtle had a less stressful experience with the researchers.

The coexistence between the trainees of Povoação was as good on a personal level as it was in Regência Augusta. However, in relation to fieldwork and the manner of handling the turtles, things were different, and thus we can consider them to be a ‘maladjusted family’, in the sense that they partially contested the discourse of the Tamar Project: in short, the former accused the latter of being ‘insensitive’ and the latter accused the former of being ‘lazy’. In this sense, therefore, the relationships of gift between interns and other project members were sometimes established with a view to future exchanges, such as recognition and future recommendations. The trainees from Povoação said they were aware that, for Tamar staff linked to the ICMBio or Fundação Pró-Tamar, they were no more than a labour force for field data collection. They said that their names would not appear in future articles and scientific publications produced with the data they collected during the season. We also translated the situation as a cutting of the network (Strathern 2011), accomplished in the project’s publications.

Regarding the researchers housed in these bases, their presence represents an expansion of networks, as they are commonly linked to post-graduate programmes. However, not all researchers are particularly fond of the Tamar Project – the majority of the criticisms were related to the fact that the project does not share its database, while some say that the project ‘does not do research, only marketing’, and that some of its members have gotten rich at the expense of the charisma of the sea turtle. However, there are those who claim that the project does conduct scientific activities, that most staff have good intentions, and the charisma of the sea turtles has been constructed precisely due to the conservation project, through a lot of effort. The most shared criticism concerns resistance to the sharing of data with the wider scientific community. Thus, when a researcher gets involved in the project, to a certain extent, they become a cut-off point in the network (Strathern 2011), in relation to scientific research with reptiles; at the same time, they become a possible point of expansion, by taking the project with them to the university environment, despite the criticisms highlighted, such that the work with sea turtles depends, in good measure, on good relationships with the conservation project. In general, researchers who are authorised to use the infrastructure and accompany project activities need to share their data and help with fieldwork. Thus, these relationships are considered asymmetric.

On a daily basis, working with sea turtles was associated with love unrelated to questions of a financial nature, in forms of relationship close to the relational modes of protection or gift (Descola 2012). This does not mean that financial issues do (or did not) exist, nor that they are irrelevant, but that they are erased within the daily dimension of the beach monitoring by interns. It is as if individuals set out with feelings of love and sharing to arrive at results that represent ‘duty over personal considerations’. Good results were associated with the successful conservation of sea turtles for the next generations, and with future financing for the conservation project for these species. However, even the interns who proclaimed their affections for these non-human animals seemed, from time to time, more interested in a good letter of recommendation, capable of resulting in future exchange relationships, mediated by labour relations.

Another episode caught Fontinelli’s attention in the field. In the main room of the accommodation in Regência Augusta, there was a table with the name of all the interns of that season. Serial numbers were placed in front of each name, referring to certain nests found by the respective trainees. During a lunch break at the lodge, one of those involved in the beach monitoring in the 2014/2015 breeding season said that he was very anxious about a particular nest that he had transferred, due to expectations regarding the birth rate of this nest. These expectations were common to others, and he said that some interns spent weeks talking about a specific nest, and were either very happy or very sad, depending on the results. This is because the transferred nests tend to generate a greater number of stillbirths and hatchlings with malformations, because the embryo cannot be

rotated in the period between its fixation on the inner wall of the egg and its advanced stage of development. In addition, the transfer is a source of local controversy, because fishermen claim that it prevents parental care of the group of sea turtles over their young, information that is considered to be without scientific merit by the staff and technicians of the Tamar Project (see also Rodriguez 2005).

The success rate of births from the nests also influenced the hierarchical status of the interns. Those whose nests always showed a high rate of births were considered the most skilled in management practices, while the least skilled trainees were those whose nests involved many stillbirths. Irrespective, the emotional aspect was present and reflected back to the care and bonds established between the interns and the nests for which they were responsible, which was associated with the condition of maternity or paternity.

The pattern of a feeling of pride in relation to a particular nest transferred by a particular trainee was repeated in Povoação. Apparently, the transfer of nests and their consequent success attests to the competence of the trainee who carries out the transfer. There were particularities, however. In Povoação, where criticism of the intensive management of turtles in the sand was established, the aim was to transfer as few nests as possible; some of the more active staff in Regência Augusta believed that nests near the sea would be destroyed by the tide if they were not transferred, while others would be destroyed by onlookers, when they were very close to the villages. Once again, one of the groups was accused of being 'lazy', Povoação, and the other of 'wanting to appear busy', Regência Augusta.

In Povoação, only nests at high risk were transferred. Fontinelli asked an intern if this type of nest management was a way of fixing negative behaviour – that of spawning in risky places and not being able to leave the nest alone – in the turtle populations in Brazil. He agreed, and pondered that the project defends this type of management with the argument that the population is small and at risk, and that if that were not the case, the right thing would be to allow the nests to be carried away by the tide and the hatchlings that remained to serve as food for other animals in the ecosystem.

Thus, considering the symbolic (re)invention (Wagner 2010), but not this alone, these (human) individuals constantly (re)categorise the symbols without realising that they are doing so. At times, the sea turtles are scientific data that, in the form of numbers, indicate the success or failure of the Tamar Project; at others, they are beings that have survived the extinction of the dinosaurs and should be considered very resilient (Creado 2017; Fontinelli 2016) or they are in danger of extinction and need protection – and here, they can be the 'children' of the trainees; at the same time, for other human agents they constitute or have constituted a source of food and the bond of closer relationships with neighbours (Rodriguez 2005).

Despite the predominance of the naturalistic identification mode (Descola 2014) in the Tamar Project, for brief moments and without realising it, beach trainees raise sea turtles to a level of familiarity (Sautchuk 2016), referring to relationships of kinship different from that commonly expounded in books on biological evolution. Knowledges and practices concerning the behaviour of sea turtles emerge from the trainees' contacts with these non-human animals, and we highlight the importance of physical-emotional engagement present not only in the beach monitoring, but also in the exhibition and rehabilitation tanks. Thus, although the knowledge associated with beach monitoring is guided by protocols assembled over time, and based on the knowledges and practices of the fishermen, they are continually tested in the field and experienced idiosyncratically by each of the interns (Fontinelli 2016).

Regarding the beach monitoring, the bonds are more prolonged with the nests, while encounters with female turtles during spawning are more ephemeral, although especially impactful for interns, particularly encounters involving giant turtles. These are combinations that allow sea turtles to pass, at certain times, from endangered species to entities that deserve dedication and unconditional love. Love that can be recorded on the body of the interns, in the form of tattoos and other inscriptions, or through the use of artefacts inspired by non-human animals, especially marine animals (Campos 2014; Trindade de Freitas 2014; Torres 2016).

In a less radical manner than the Rewilding Europe project proposal, the Tamar Project conveys a feeling that we are, as humans, morally responsible and that we have the competence to intervene positively and actively in the recovery of the environment, just as we affect it negatively (Silva and Sá 2017: 64).

### **Relationships and(in) critical situations**

In Regência Augusta, between January and February 2013, we heard very little criticism of the Tamar Project, similar to other briefer opportunities for field research that occurred up to 2015. One or two things were mentioned, but when the person was asked explicitly about the subject, the discourse often changed. This demonstrates people's caution in talking about the project, as well as a distrust of researchers in general. As indicated above and in Rodriguez (2005), the gift relationships between Tamar and the Regência residents were (and remain) very strong.

However, when mining tailings reached and stained the mouth of the River Doce and the Atlantic Ocean in late 2015, they brought changes. To understand these changes, we will take a step back in time, since we believe that these are due both to the critical event (Das 1999) and to other non-innocent relations constituted by the project (Haraway 2016), commonplace in the period called Chthulucene, Capitalocene or Anthropocene by several authors (including: Latour 2014; Haraway 2016; Tsing et al. 2017; Kolberth 2015). Links in which we are all enmeshed, even though in different ways.

Throughout its 40 years of existence, the Tamar Project has expanded in terms of infrastructure and areas of activity and has undergone changes related to its governmental/institutional links and in its strategies and means of financing. In 1988, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) was created, the Foundation for the National Centre for Research and Conservation of Sea Turtles (*Fundação Centro Brasileiro de Proteção e Pesquisa das Tartarugas Marinhas, Fundação Pró-Tamar*). From then on, the Tamar Project has officially presented itself as a hybrid configuration of State-NGO (Suassuna 2005: 522). The project has been based at the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio) since its creation in 2007, maintaining the prior relationships with the State. Regarding the structural positions within the project, the coordinators we interviewed were also employees of the ICMBio.<sup>21</sup> In addition to the employees, the leadership positions of ReBio Comboios, occupied by an ICMBio employee, and that of 'base manager', a term used then in reference to employees hired sometimes by the Fundação Pró-Tamar and who supported the intensive, daily patrols of beach monitoring, were also important. The latter position was generally held by more experienced young adults who dealt with the interns and trainees during the reproductive period of the sea turtles.

The creation of the Fundação Pró-Tamar allowed the project to diversify its funding sources. Sponsorship by Petrobras, for example, has been received regularly since 1983:

'Twenty years after being founded the Tamar Project aims to be self-sustaining, a concept that fits perfectly with its reality and philosophy. It has been begun to find new ways to raise funds, including through ecological tourism and the commercialisation of services, in addition to products. All the resources are fully invested in priority actions for research on and the conservation of Brazilian sea turtles – including the salaries of the fishermen and residents of coastal communities directly involved in the Project's activities.' (Tamar 2000: 92)

Fundraising inserts the project within the capitalist logic and turns nature into a product to be sold (Silva and Sá 2017), in different material and symbolic degrees. Similar to the issue of the relationships with researchers and/or interns, the trends of expansion and contraction are also present when the project assumes such links. This is particularly problematised in critical events/situations, and can curtail the relationship between the

<sup>21</sup> Four semi-structured interviews with two project coordinators, employees of the ICMBio at the *Centro Tamar*, have been conducted by the second author since 2012.

conservation project and other (socio)environmentalists, local residents and fishermen, while raising doubts concerning the influence of these links on the actions and intentions of the project as a whole. This raises the question regarding the extent to which the project controls these relationships or these relationships control the project (Strathern 2011).

Until 2015, fishermen were very cautious about how they positioned themselves regarding the project and the environmental management bodies. Only one, very articulate fisherman assumed an incisive, confrontational position in an interview conducted in 2013. His position was widely known, in part due to the seizure of some of his gillnets, when, it should be highlighted, project members acted as mediators. In 2013, the fisherman criticised the fact that the project and environmental agencies treat the fishermen and large enterprises operating in the region differently. The latter include Petrobras, which operates exploration and logistics in the vicinity, and Fibria (now Suzano Aracruz), whose vessels can damage fishing gear when operating in the vicinity of the mouth of the River Doce. The material-symbolic commercialisation of the sea turtles has been criticised, in contrast to the subjection of fishermen to environmental regulations, which concern not only sea turtles, but other species like shrimp and fish:

‘they use the turtle to do business, which sells clothes, sells, I don’t know, t-shirts, and whatever (...) they don’t want us to catch them but they also use the turtle as a means of business for themselves (...) So, if you can’t catch them, you can’t tell anyone about them either (...) And today man, God forbid, I don’t eat turtle anymore, I don’t, I don’t really care, if it’s on the beach, if it’s dead, or it’s free, for me, no, it doesn’t matter anymore, I have resources, I have a supermarket next to my house, there’s a butcher shop in the supermarket, there’s choice, I don’t need turtle anymore, not for me’<sup>22</sup>

During Fontinelli’s two field stays, during the sea turtle breeding seasons of 2014/2015 and 2015/2016, almost the entire community perceived the researcher as one of the members of the Tamar Project, even though he rented a house in the village of Regência Augusta and did not board with the interns. The impression was more intense in Povoação, where he stayed at the accommodation, participated in *carebadas* and environmental education activities, when he was sometimes asked to wear the project uniform.<sup>23</sup> Generally speaking, he did not hear many opinions from community members about the project, but, as mentioned above, he heard internal criticism from the Povoação interns; these confirmed the impressions gleaned by Creado, in 2013 and 2014, that the gift relationships and the daily presence of the project were comparatively lower in Povoação.

Despite this, two people reported criticisms more intensely to Fontinelli, both residents of Povoação. One of them, Benjamin, was contacted in both villages, and the other was a former project employee, Rodrigo, born in Povoação. Both knew that Fontinelli was not part of the Tamar Project, while they were also not closely related to the conservation project at the time.

During the first meeting with Benjamin, in Regência Augusta, he asked not to be identified. He commented that the sea turtles received more care than the inhabitants, and that the project used the funds for environmental constraints to expand its own infrastructure, instead of training the community. He added that the jobs offered to residents consisted of subordinate activities, such as seamstresses, attendants (the ‘new *carebeiros*’) and support staff, that the village had numerous problems with the project and that the interns barely communicated with the residents. Despite this, when the first author stayed at the base in Povoação, he realised that some residents were more critical than others, there were dissatisfactions and complaints, as well as positive coexistence and friendship.

<sup>22</sup> Interview given to E. Creado and P.L. Trindade de Freitas, in February 2013.

<sup>23</sup> The Tamar Project places as much value on environmental education activities, especially with children in the communities, as on its beach monitoring activities.

Fontinelli's second stay took place just as the Samarco *mud*, as the mining tailings drawn down the River Doce are called locally, arrived in late November and December 2015, and covered a period in Regência Augusta and later, in Povoação. He met with Benjamin again, in Regência Augusta, who criticised the project again: he said that new environmental initiatives, such as conservation units would not work in Regência Augusta because of the 'trauma' that the Tamar Project had inflicted there, due to ReBio Comboios, and that the resentment was greater in Povoação, because after the installation of the project and ReBio Comboios in Regência Augusta, Povoação had lost its prominence in the region. Regência Augusta had received an Ecological Centre, investments and more tourists, while for Povoação, merely a research base outside the community. In his opinion, this explained Povoação's support for large developments, such as Port Manabi (now MLog) (see Torres et al. 2016).

As for Rodrigo, he worked for the Tamar Project for many years, and was generally regarded as the person with the greatest practical knowledge of the field in Povoação. However, he requested a leave of absence due to disagreements with some of the coordinators. Despite this, he was a field consultant, respected for his knowledge, which demonstrates the breadth of knowledge production beyond the laboratories and scientists (Velden 2015), also present in another conservation project devoted to charismatic animals (Torres 2016).

He could be considered a (*neo*)*carebeiro*, a bearer of local knowledges and practices and mediator of relationships. Moreover, in the same manner as the presence of the project's older staff and graduates in Regência Augusta, he influences local interns to see themselves as part of a family. Rodrigo's presence and comments on the project were partly responsible for the critical sense that permeated the discourses of the interns from the Povoação base. He criticised the hierarchy within the Tamar Project and how the village served as a large support group for the project to function. Even so, he praised it, saying that in the 1990s, throughout the State of Espírito Santo, around 300 turtles were found per season, and that currently, 500 were found at the mouth of the River Doce alone. Regarding the feeling of distrust in Povoação in relation to the conservation project, he associated it with the closing of bases in the region between 1998 and 2002, attributed to the economic crisis, which resulted in the maintenance of bases only in Regência Augusta and Guriri. According to Rodrigo, nowadays, Povoação tries not to depend on the project for fear of something similar happening again.

In the Tamar Project beach monitoring accompanied by Fontinelli, concern for the collection of data that associated problems in the conservation of sea turtles with large developments was only perceived after the arrival of the Samarco *mud*, in late 2015; a lack of problematisation highlighted in Creado (2017). In the context of the post-crime-disaster, beach monitoring included the installation of nets to prevent tailings brought downstream from entering the mangrove, and some researchers and veterinarians from an institute based in Vitória, partners with the Tamar Project, came to the region to collect blood and eggs from turtles in order to analyse the effects of the mud for the next two years. The direction of the wind directly affected the direction in which the mud moved, momentarily uniting the terrestrial, marine and aerial worlds (tailings, marine currents and wind currents, respectively), reflecting the influence of the climate on the movement of humans and non-humans (Azevedo & Schroer 2016). Thus, the turtles avoided the beaches with the highest concentration of mud, determining at that moment whether it was worth crossing a wall of tailings to reach the sand. All the logistics, the transport of equipment, personnel and infrastructure, were contingent on the agency of the sea turtles.

Thus, with the arrival of the *mud*, the region endured a moment of intense and abrupt changes that contributed to the incitement of wide-ranging controversies and conflicts. In this context, the Tamar Project and ICMBio exercised an important role in the initiatives of the context of the post-crime-disaster, including the mediation of judicial initiatives that Samarco and its partners had to implement in the area,

and that attempted to mitigate the socio-environmental changes in the region. This included a ban on fishing along part of the coast of Espírito Santo, which began in February 2016 and which also affected Regência Augusta and Povoação.

Following the crime-disaster, between 2015 and 2017, Creado heard more incisive and explicit problematisations regarding the links between the Tamar Project, environmental managers and large companies.<sup>24</sup> Project Tamar's gift and exchange relationships in the Regência Augusta community have been weakened, at least temporarily, at the same time as the project's networks have strengthened on a broader scale outside the community. In contrast, in Povoação, these gift and exchange relationships were not even that strong beforehand, which when added to the crime-disaster further contributed to the criticisms heard by the first author in the field.

The non-innocent relations of the Tamar Project and ICMBio in this new context allowed for the inclusion of a provision of financial support for the creation of a new conservation unit at the mouth of the River Doce, among the measures to be implemented by Samarco and its partners in the area. A project that has existed since 2002, but that had been paused. This revival contributed to intensify the problematisations compiled here (Amboss et al. 2017; Creado et al., 2018; Duarte 2018; Trigueiro et al. 2018).

## Final considerations

This article analysed the relationships established between the technicians/scientists of the Tamar Project and the sea turtles and communities of Regência Augusta and Povoação, located on opposite banks of the mouth of the River Doce, on the northern coast of Espírito Santo. The main focus was the period prior to the arrival of the mining tailings, resulting from the rupture of the Fundão dam (MG), at the coast of Espírito Santo, which occurred on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015, and in the period immediately after, particularly regarding the beach monitoring. This past context was already marked by political, economic and environmental divergences concerning the use of resources and the local landscape, in which sea turtles could (and still can) be seen as diverging and converging poles of innumerable relationships that are, directly or indirectly, pertinent to the understanding of these tensions.

In this sense, it was possible to perceive changes in the relationships between the parties, related to different material-symbolic and physical-emotional engagements practiced in beach monitoring (though not only there). The relationships established by human agents – environmentalists, on the one hand, and fishermen and residents to whom the mediation actions of coexistence are directed, on the other – and sea turtles are not static and/or homogeneous. Among the project's staff and interns, there were disagreements regarding the field approach and the forms of engagement that should be used. Some prioritised data collection and liked to touch and handle sea turtles and their nests, like those in Regência Augusta, others just preferred to contemplate them from afar and let the nests develop on their own, in an attempt to save them the stress caused by field protocols, even though this resulted in a reduction in data collection, like those in Povoação.

Therefore, the conservation project interns that we exemplify as guided mainly by a naturalistic identification method, according to Descola (2012; 2014), modified this orientation, often without realising it, through small material and symbolic (re)inventions (Wagner 2010), in association with individual actions and trajectories. They thought and acted at times as if humans constituted a species apart from all others, at times as if everything in the universe connected non-hierarchically, with oscillations between a defence of human singularity as a species and a realisation that we are nothing extraordinary, doomed to oblivion within the immense scale of geological time.

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<sup>24</sup> With the GEPEDES-UFES: The Research Study Group on Fishing Communities and Development (GEPEDES) of the Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES).

Interns are also important from the point of view of the networks they establish between the Tamar Project, ICMBio, researchers, universities, laboratories and civil society, based on sea turtles. Strathern (2011) talks about moments when networks expand and when they are cut off. Interns are, simultaneously, points of network expansion and cut-off. Expansion, because they come from different locations in the country, go through different experiences at different bases and then return to their places of residence and studies, where they share the knowledges and practices acquired at the bases. At the same time, they are mainly responsible for the field collections, translation and registration of the data, and form the lowest level of the Tamar Project hierarchy, and the majority do not even participate in the production of technoscientific texts.

When we consider the residents, including the fishermen, from the villages of Regência Augusta and Povoação, the impasses shift to the field of local management and the alleged centrality of sea turtles in the environmental restrictions to which they are subject. Some appreciated the presence of the conservation project, and the sea turtles, due to the increase in tourism and the income generation initiatives brought by the project, along the lines of gift relationships, according to Descola (2012) and Rodriguez (2005), even while criticising the project. Others believed that the project and consequently the sea turtles, as a charismatic species, only brought regression and that the region would be better, more developed, without them. Thus, when a developmental enterprise sought the support of the villages, it found those who quickly accepted it (Torres et al. 2016), while a proposal for a new area for conservation brought divisions and positions against it.

The villages can also be seen as a simultaneous point of cut-off and expansion of the networks constructed around the sea turtles. When the Tamar Project describes itself, in scientific conferences and congresses, one of its great assets is the involvement in the community and the alternatives for income generation, which sets them apart from other conservation programmes. These relationships of gift and exchange are presented as substitutes for other relationships, in which engagements between the human residents and sea turtles took place without the project's mediation and in the form of commensality. However, many residents complained that the project did not qualify them for less subordinate and more qualified activities and functions, and that the greatest beneficiaries of the work with sea turtles were the members of Tamar Project itself.

Richards (2000: 97) says that scientists who work with chimpanzees in Sierra Leone should be aware that they work with a stigmatised animal in the region in which they work. In our case, sea turtles are also occasionally stigmatised. For a long time they were seen as a source of food, and according to one of Fontinelli's interlocutors, when the Povoação base was deactivated, some people returned to the capture of females and eggs for a brief period. There are also those who say that they are still a food at Comboios IT, south of Regência Augusta. There were residents who blamed the sea turtles, accusing them of receiving all the investments in the region because they are a charismatic species; we also heard some reports about fishermen who, angry at the restrictions on fishing of certain species of fish, especially in the summer, threatened to kill sea turtles that got entangled in their nets.

There is mistrust on all sides, coexisting with strong gift and exchange relationships, which were more pronounced in Regência Augusta up to the end of 2015. The arrival of the Samarco *mud* at the mouth of the River Doce has aggravated the mistrust, and this event can be viewed as representing broader ontological conflicts (Almeida 2013).

Some of the project's not-so-innocent relations, aimed at financial self-sustainability, are also triggered in the sense of highlighting the potential social injustices. The Tamar Project are associated with environmental inspection acts, due to historical issues and functional proximities with the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA), as well as for relationships about (and with) the fishermen. The Tamar Project and its managers are sometimes also seen as the biggest beneficiaries of the environmental constraints, rather than the residents of the region.

Here, as with the actions in the Samarco post-mud context, there are relationships that extend the project's actuation to less localised areas, while curtailing relationships at the local level. Bearing in mind that non-innocent relations, like those with sponsors and other agents, in the terms of Haraway (2016), are not the privilege or exclusivity of those who work with sea turtles, but of all cohabitants of Chthulucene.

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# Neo-ethnic Self-Styling among Young Indigenous People of Brazil: Re-Appropriating Ethnicity through Cultural Hybridity

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## **Abstract**

This article examines a conspicuous, vastly disseminating cultural practice among the young Indigenous people of Brazil to hybridize their ethnic motifs with global fashion in order to classify their glocal mode of being. Young Indigenous subjects generally perceive the modal practice to be ethnically appropriating in their own generational right. Through ethnographic observations coupled with theoretical reflections on cultural hybridity, the authors will highlight how neo-ethnic fashion enables initially marginalized category of Indigenous ethnicity to be brought to public attention on a global scale. Neo-ethnic self-styling operates as a means to re-appropriate heritage in trans-traditional ways at a time when ethnicity itself is increasingly becoming a globally trendy subject. Social networking service plays a crucial role in disseminating the phenomena across different ethnic groups.

**Keywords:** neo-ethnic fashion, indigeneity, cultural hybridity, Indigenous people of Brazil, postcolonialism.



# Auto-estilização Neo-étnica entre Jovens Indígenas do Brasil: a reapropriação da etnicidade por meio do hibridismo cultural

## Resumo

Este artigo examina uma prática cultural conspícua e amplamente disseminada entre os jovens indígenas do Brasil para hibridizar seus motivos étnicos com a moda global, a fim de classificar seu modo glocal de ser. Os jovens indígenas geralmente percebem que a prática modal é etnicamente apropriada em seu próprio direito geracional. Através de observações etnográficas, juntamente com reflexões teóricas sobre o hibridismo cultural, os autores destacarão como a moda neo-étnica permite que uma categoria inicialmente marginalizada de etnicidade indígena seja trazida à atenção do público em escala global. O auto-styling neo-étnico opera como um meio de reapropriar o patrimônio de maneiras trans-tradicionais, numa época em que a própria etnia está se tornando cada vez mais um assunto globalmente na moda. O serviço de rede social desempenha um papel crucial na disseminação dos fenômenos entre diferentes grupos étnicos.

**Palavras-chave:** moda neo-étnica, indigeneidade, hibridismo cultural, povos indígenas do Brasil.

# Neo-ethnic Self-Styling among Young Indigenous People of Brazil: Re-Appropriating Ethnicity through Cultural Hybridity

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## **Introduction**

We wish to address an emergent, wide-spreading cultural phenomenon of ethnic self-ornamentation, which we call “neo-ethnic self-styling” or “neo-ethnic fashion” alternatively, so as to discuss traditional styles of ethnic embodiment vis-à-vis cultural appropriation.

In the light of Kaja Silverman’s remark that clothing “draws the body so that it can be culturally seen, and articulates it as a meaningful form” (1986: 145), and critically applying Homi Bhabha’s (1994) notion of “cultural hybridity,” signifying the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities, as well as the strategic reversal of such a power and identification through disavowal (1994: 111), we are commissioned to uncover the motives behind neo-ethnic self-styling, as well as the purpose (if any) of such an embodiment. Fashion (popular style) itself is a site of cultural, class, gender, and ethnicity contestations (Steele 2005: xv-xvi). By combining theories on fashion, body and cultural empowerment with ethnographic observations as well as interviews, we argue that neo-ethnic fashion enables its enactors to play with global/local and colonialist binaries that signify the classification of ethnicity.

This new Social Networking Service (SNS)-promoted trend is a collectivizing practice conducted by and for young Indigenous people from various ethnic backgrounds to publicly empower themselves by means of the hyperbolic mode of self-styling. SNS enables a new connectivity among the neo-ethnic practitioners who, albeit from different ethnic communities, mix their rooted positionality in Brazil with Indigenous multiplicity assembled by transnational cyber networks. More significantly, the phenomena of neo-ethnic styling make visible the tensions between indigeneity, as it is expressed by native practitioners, and indigenism, or the ongoing treatment of Indigenous people in our supposedly postcolonial world order. In the paper, we use the term “postcolonial” as little as possible because, as our own work demonstrates, postcolonial may be used as a historical reference but the history of colonialism is far from over. It is important to remember that although we focus in this article on ethnic self-styling, ethnic manifestations are not just simply questions of fashion, and have emerged through tense complex and conflictive processes in which ritual performances and the use of cultural ornamentations make up a critical political component of empowerment and affirmation of alterity as shown, for example, in the collection of essays on ethnicity politics and cultural reelaboration in the Northeast of Brazil, organized by Pacheco de Oliveira (1999).

In an anthropological overview of the world through a dress, Hansen, for instance, draws on Zorn's (2004) research of the Sakaka, an Andean group in northern Bolivia, to argue that the complex dress styles of the Sakaka, financed mostly by migrated members of the group, "comprise a distinctive Indigenous fashion system, a self-conscious choice in the face of white and mestizo control of the Bolivian state" (2004: 374). SNS adds an entirely new dimension to Indigenous fashion semiotic: a group of authors have shown how "electronic empires" of communication technologies at the same time enable media imperialism and empowerment (see also Thussu 1998). We integrate such a point with Comaroff and Comaroff's (2009) pioneering study on ethnic fashion and body-styling that suggests the need to generate a new "ethno-episteme" that "inscribes things ethnic, simultaneously, in affect and interests, emotion and utility and fashions cultural identity both as a consumable object of choice and self-construction and the manifest product of biology, genetics, and human essence" (2009: 1).

Today, the globally penetrated commodification of culture is more than a manifestation of the modern "march of the market, where otherness is *merchandized to and by alienated actors*" (2009: 22, emphasis added). Ethnicity is now "ontologically both ascribing and instrumental, innate and constructed, or blood and choice, as the ethno-commodity flows in the market as the blending of authenticity and replication, the material and the immaterial, the cultural and the economic, or the private and the public" (2009: 46). Comaroff and Comaroff list plenty of examples from Africa to demonstrate that the logic of modern circulation of capital and commodities, which emerged with the "Age of Expansion," was the rationale for those native African merchants to commodifying their "third world ethnicity." This seems to hold especially true today when, paradoxically, heterogeneous ethnicities are being accepted and promoted as individual cultural expressions of the globalized world, but remain defined by the capitalist logic, or the homogenizing force of the market. Hansen (2004) and Rabine (2002), on the contrary, understand African fashion as a semiotic system that comprises both economic and symbolic exchange, "imbuing the products with meaning" through artisanal production that emphasizes aesthetics and creativity rather than uniformity and standardization (Hansen 2004: 377). Importantly, this artisanal production falls outside the institutional framework. Hansen argues, "Conventional analytical dichotomies of traditional/modern, African/Western, and local/global fall short in capturing the many diverse influences on contemporary style dynamics in Africa" (ibid).

We agree on the significance of pursuing the new ethno-episteme, which raises the issue of ethnic nations in reference to influences of the global market and rightly depict how business-minded natives of the third-world nations managed to "modernize" themselves by capitalizing on their symbolic- and material cultures, as well as their identities. This also concerns the current debates on cultural appropriation which, although not the focus of our paper, featured in our informants' attitudes toward incorporating ethnic motives in their own and their peers' fashion. However, we are uncomfortable with Comaroff and Comaroff's reduction of the subjectivity in the "third world" nations to culture industries that economize on their ethnicity – a phenomenon they named as Ethnicity Inc. Based on our empirical research among the Indigenous youth in Brazil, we wish to offer two original contributions to the better comprehension of ethno-episteme: discussing neo-ethnic self-styling as a form of cultural hybridity, rather than a form of institutionalized exploitation of cultural identity; and exploring the ways that this praxis relates not only to the market and global economy but to the complex and locally-situated sociocultural matrix which enables enactors to simultaneously challenge and depend upon it in making sense of their current Indigenous existence.

To accomplish this, we will treat the body as a system of signs and look at how the semiotics of neo-ethnic fashion is acted out. Such a bodily performance can be best explored through images that the Indigenous subjects of neo-ethnic fashion in contemporary Brazil upload onto the SNS – a defining media-instrument for exploring, exchanging, and disseminating their cultural identity. As Roland Barthes indicates, media-disseminated fashion as a system of signs communicates ideologies, alternative meanings,

and attitudes at the same time (Barthes 1990). We incorporate Barthes' binary framework of fashion, which joins dress (*la langue*) and dressing (*parole*) in order to demonstrate the social role of neo-ethnic fashion, and analyze how its structure is related to the state and postcolonialism (2013: 8). Fashion is not a static system: on the contrary, it interacts and actively produces symbolic messages as much as material forms and contents. One of the most important semioticians of our time, Umberto Eco, argued that, "in imposing an exterior demeanor, clothes are semiotic devices, machines for communication" (1986: 195). We will blend this perspective with a focus on what Goffman (1956) called the presentation of self in everyday life in order to demonstrate that the young Indigenous people of present-day Brazil perform their cultural identities through neo-ethnic fashion, and by doing so, they use their costumes, or "costumized ethnic identities," in order to address the audience's Indigenous expectations – whoever their audience on SNS may be.

The subsequent discussion is developed in reference to ethnographic surveys that spanned over the past three years. We began our observations and interviews on SNS in the fall of 2015, which continue to this day – cumulating data from 106 young Indigenous informants whose age ranged between seventeen and twenty-six, in addition to eleven elders whose age ranged between forty-seven and eighty-three. Based in Brasília, authors conducted ethnographic fieldwork in three different Brazilian communities including Indigenous people from the Xingu and Xokleng between April 2018 and March 2019, while speaking with informants with other ethnic origins and identifications. Pseudonyms are substituted for all of the names of participants who are mentioned in this paper.

Our sampling qualifications for Indigenous interlocutors, mentioned above, do not signify much more than the fact that we managed to encounter and engage in a series of ethnographic conversations with actors of neo-ethnic self-styling with Indigenous heritage and/or identification in the progression of our fieldwork. After all, getting in touch with every "authentic" Indigenous youngster in Brazil and conducting participant observations among more than two hundred of their officially recognized communities, let alone countless number and gradation of mestizos who identify themselves as "Indigenous," were impossible and unnecessary within the context of our research. This is not to say that neo-ethnic fashion is facilitating an omnipresent movement of some kind, but any Indigenous youngster who became interested in neo-ethnic mode of self-stylization through their internet connections could very well pop up at any point as a local subject of the new mode of Pan-Indigenous identification with the potential of self-empowerment.

For us, those interlocutors who responded to our interview invitations reconfirmed that Indigenous identification was recreated by actors from different places, groups, communities, and backgrounds who came together in cyberspace with their demonstrations of neo-ethnic fashion. It was the online network involving neo-ethnic stylization that connected them – regardless of their ancestral origins, where they resided, or how urban/rural-, traditional/modern-, or pure-blooded/mix-blooded they were. What mattered more for these enactors of neo-ethnic fashion was having a constant access to the Internet, and being part of the online media communities, networks, and forums such as Facebook, Line, and Instagram by means of which they could continuously communicate directly or indirectly with each other and, in the process, absorb global trends and inspire their modes of dressing with Indigenous identification of their own. On a global scale, such a new mode of being is not omnipresent, but it is a new kind of connectivity in which one does not need to be everything to be something. This, then, is about power emerging out of nobody, nowhere, but at the same time power coming out of anyone and everyone who possessed a good reason to represent indigeneity.

## Can You See My Hybrid Body?

“This is the way our generation of our People do things,” explained Josephyi, a male Xingu in his late-teens, as he tried to justify his stance as not breaking the tradition, but reconstructing the tradition in his own manner to suit his generation:

Every Indigenous thing that I put on is strictly traditional. My Missanga represents our ancestral spirit in a strictly traditional way! My body painting is undistortedly designed, and it represents a snake in our culture! Blending of these designs into the way I dress up enables me to maintain the sense of tradition while having to blend myself with the city way of life, which was imposed upon us by the White people. We didn’t choose to be that way, you know!

Marina, a twenty-two year-old female university student from a southern community, offered a similar explanation when she was asked about her feathered earring and beaded bracelet she frequently wore on campus:

These are markers of my People and my pride. Of course, I wear them to make myself appear fancier, but wearing these together with Western fashion doesn’t mean that my identity is Westernized. Even though “fanciness” may be a Western word, the idea is not of the West alone! We have always loved to dress up fancifully in our own way, and if we weren’t forced into the Western lifestyle, I am sure that I would be walking around in our own ways of dressing!

Thus, Marina demonstrated fanciness to be the meaningful tie between Western- and native elements in her neo-ethnic styling: ethnic elements in her way of dressing acted as markers of her ethnic identification, while Western counterparts signified the postcolonial condition in which she was situated.

Neo-ethnic fashion typically appears as a blending of Indigenous- and Western elements into one’s mode of self-ornamentation. Our informants used specifically terms “Western” and “White” showing, explicitly and implicitly, how they play with Bhabhian dualisms in order to simultaneously challenge and belong – two seemingly contradictory desires in the process of hybridization. For that reason, we adopted our informants’ vocabulary and dualistic frameworks throughout our analysis. Indigenous elements may include red- and blue body paintings, feathered earrings, bone-ornamented necklaces, and beaded bracelets. A paste made from seeds of *urucum* (annatto tree) is used to create blood-red body painting, while a paste extracted from *Genipa americana*, is used for dark-blue painting. These ethnic elements are combined with faddish signifiers of Western fashion including hairstyling, facial makeup, and body postures (including camera angle) made to appear sensual, classy, and/or cool (hip). Designer T-shirts are popularly worn, and in many instances these T-shirts bear Indigenous motifs while others signify non-Indigenous patterns (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** An Example of Neo-Ethnic Self-Styling (Courtesy of Kamilyi)



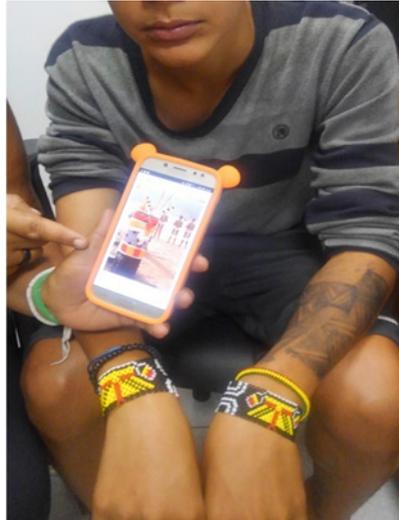
In Figure 1, nineteen year-old Kamilyi is wearing a commercialized ethnic-style T-shirt with Indigenous motifs, coupled with a white snail shell necklace and an elaborate, eye-catching feather earring. Her T-shirt is additionally decorated with a dream-catcher as the central piece, alongside red-and-green decorative patterns on the sleeves. Dream-catcher has origins in Native North American cultures and, after being taken as a symbol of unity in the Pan-Indian Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, it became a popular global commodity as one of the most culturally appropriated Indigenous objects – especially by the New Age movement (Snavely 2001). Her pose suggests a sensual selfie with subtle emphasis on her lips, the so-called “duck face photographic pose,” although without obvious make up.

Her photo is completed with many pink hearts, indicating cuteness which, rather than asserting her sweetness in the Western sense of the term, strengthened the contrast between cute decorative elements and her posture which conveyed Indigenous power. At the same time, her neo-ethnic self-styling was much more glocal, with present but subdued elements of her Indigenous fashion: so subtle that it is not readily identifiable as belonging to any particular cultural space. Bearing in mind that our informants make a strong division between the global (Western, White) and the local (their own Indigenous community), using the dichotomy as a strategy for empowerment and resistance, we emphasize that the term “glocal” captures hybridization between universalizing and particularizing cultural movements. Global-local dynamic is neither linear nor unidirectional. The term here also encapsulates the tension between sociocultural centralization and homogenization, and decentralization and heterogeneity. In other words, global and local are in continuous interaction and are mutually transformative. However, our informants took it as a fixed binary with imbued power dynamic that they decided to upset with their fashion.

In the case of neo-ethnic self-styling in Brazil, the dynamic between the identity, body, and fashion demonstrates a revival of traditional culture. While “traditional culture” is fluid, with its own changing temporality and spatiality, for each informant, youngster or elder, “traditional” was a fixed point of reference that they associated with their community. Rendering it into transnational and trans-traditional aspects by the young Indigenous practitioners both depends on and defines the projected cultural identity. A parallel can be seen in the Indigenous political movement in Brazil, to resort to international legislation to defend Indigenous rights, when the state does not respect national legislation for the protection of Indigenous rights.

Whereas Comaroff and Comaroff saw the trend of Indigenous embodiment in Africa as economized fitting into the Exotic, and therefore as the assertion of the global world order by means of self-commodification, we see the emergent neo-ethnic fashion phenomenon in Brazil as a resistance to the dominant economic and political orders. This is evident in the DIY (Do It Yourself) approach of the enactors of neo-ethnic self-styling, as what Brent Luvaas (2012: 4) calls “a rather typical example of the reach and influence of digital culture, global capitalism, and the new creative economy. “By choosing DIY – making and crafting their decorations; clothes and accessories by themselves rather than purchasing ready-made products – young Indigenous Brazilians avoid being “hegemonic devices” (Black 2002: 606) as well as being subjected to imposed cultural constructions while maintaining their status as “cool and trendy.”

**Figure 2.** An Example of Neo-Ethnic Self-Styling (Courtesy of Kenny)



For example, eighteen year-old Kenny shows a serious and defiant facial expression (partly identifiable) with tightly closed lips, as he displays his neo-ethnic style beaded bracelets juxtaposed with ancestral symbols displayed on a smart phone signifying his ancestral affiliation, which apparently inspired his fashion choice (Figure 2). This juxtaposition of Kenny's accessories with the ethnic symbol on a phone screen played the role of legitimizing his fashion choice and establishing a link between his personal ornamentation and the Indigenous legacy that inspired it. By implying that this was his own culture and legacy in this photo, he also conveyed a sense of pride and legitimacy – as one of the principal themes of Indigenous rights movements to invert racist stereotypes and value indigeneity – over what might otherwise be seen as cultural appropriation – a point that was also stated in the display of the Indigenous-pattern body painting on his left arm. While his bracelets, body painting and the screen image were meant to be the focus of the photograph, creating a semiotic of his cultural identification, his sporty hip-grey clothing stood out in contrast to the colorful neo-ethnic accessories, maintaining the glocal dynamic in his self-styling.

On the other hand, there are young Indigenous practitioners of neo-ethnic fashion such as Chica, a self-proclaimed hip-hopper from Amazonia in her mid-twenties, who indicated the symbolic instrumentality of neo-ethnic fashion:

I'm not as thoughtful as you expect me to be, but I can tell you that I do it because it's there – I mean, like tattoos, you know! I wear them because I am an Indian, and I wear Western clothing and makeup because they are cool and timely! When I combine them together, I can better reach out and represent the voice of those Indigenous members of the audience in a hip way!

She also revealed that her neo-ethnic self-styling, as much as her music, played an important role in generating a new wave of Indigenous cultural appropriation – by and for the Indigenous people at large:

All of what I do – my clothing, my music, and my performances –allow me to empower myself and the people I represent – our culture, our tradition, and our existence as historically oppressed but equally human beings!

Such a statement reconfirmed the creative effect of DIY ethos: that the ethos provided this artist with a means to re-appropriate the culture of her people, wherein neo-ethnic fashion played a visual part. Through “DIY ethos,” as Luvaas (2012: 4) puts it, “we (as in, the global “we” of contemporary consumer capitalism) have crossed the line from a “Read Only Culture” to a “Read/Write Culture” (quoted in Lessig 2009: 28), or from a “sit back and be told” culture to a “making and doing” culture (Gauntlett 2011: 8). DIY ethos thoroughly

pushes into the mainstream the once marginal practices of cutting and pasting, mashing up, and remixing (see also McLeod 2005; Mason 2008). In this shift to a “Read/Write Culture” that we see in the neo-ethnic protagonism, we identify not only an alternative mode of cultural production but an attempt to “costumize” the body to challenge dominant social- and cultural norms, among others. Eugénie Lemoine-Luccioni writes that the human body becomes culturally visible through ornamentation and clothing (quoted in Ryan 2014: 1). Furthermore, enactors of the neo-ethnic fashion use media technologies to recreate and publicize their identities: SNS, mobile phones, and personal computers are essential to their modal presentation.

For Rafael, a twenty-six year-old university student and political activist, neo-ethnic self-stylization clearly signified the current state of Indigenous resistance against the ongoing Brazilian colonial domination, or what he called the “continuously White-supremacist order of the Brazilian nation-state.” Indigenous elements in neo-ethnic fashion demonstrated his indestructible will to play his role in preserving ancestral culture, while Western motifs identified his inevitable existence in our contemporary world “endlessly dominated by the White invaders.” Hybridizing these two elements further signified his political stance to “stand firmly at the border where two cultures collided, and to fight on behalf of his People against any forms of unjust intrusion.” As he elaborated:

Marching in front of the Congress in the Federal District is one thing, and in doing that I will dress up traditionally. I will take my spear with me and aim at the Congress building to demonstrate my rage against the government, which is ruled by the White people who continue to ignore us, segregate us, exploit us, and even kill us when they think we the Indians of this country stand in the way of their national interests. Elsewhere, I may wear T-shirts, jeans, and caps, but I will never forget to put Indian accessories on me. Those garments produced and marketed by the White intruders constitute the reminder of my mastery of their culture: that I have acquired not their values, but their ways of thinking and doing things to the extent that they cannot fool me and my People! We aren't anymore naked-, wild-, ignorant Indians – as those White politicians and their followers continuously wish to see us and treat us that way!

For Rafael the political significance of his neo-ethnic self-styling is a hybridized code of Indigenous resistance against the colonial oppression as represented by the current government as well as the nation-state of Brazil. His juxtaposing of White garments against the naked Indian body highlights the Bhabhian dichotomy played out in the hybridized body semiotic.

In all these cases, fashion transformed from garments in order to cover up one's body to a political statement; a form of protest, agitation, and assertion of one's cultural identity and Indigenous human rights. The hybridization of Western and Indigenous clothing for informants became simultaneously a form of emphatic distinction. Rafael's reference to “White intruders” was clearly anti-colonial while at the same time he acknowledged that his appropriation of Western clothing was, in a Bhabhian sense, empowering him through cultural hybridization. The glocal identity of young Indigenous people in Brazil points to the defining notion in Bhabha's postcolonial theory: cultural hybridity. For Bhabha, the colonial subject inhabits a cultural space – space of utterance and translation, and therefore a transformative space – between two cultures. In this space, the colonial subject gains agency to transform their colonial mode of being by incorporating elements of diversity (Bhabha specifically writes about two cultures – a binary between the colonizer and the colonized). This practice reconfigures the authority and power of the colonizer, and gives visibility, agency and power to the colonized (Bhabha 1994: 58, 111).

Benita Parry, a defining scholar in literature of colonialism, imperialism, and postcolonial studies, and one of the most vocal critics of Bhabha's concept of cultural hybridity, disagrees with Bhabha's optimistic notion of hybridity: Parry claims (2004: 25-26) it diminishes the importance of struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed (among other things) and seemingly neglects the resistance of the colonized.

Spivak, on the other hand, thinks that the colonizer/colonized binary obscures how heterogeneous colonial power can be (1994: 128). While we partially agree with Parry and Spivak on Bhabha's dualistic colonial worldview and acknowledge heterogeneity and transnationality of colonial relations, our informants advise us that, in practice, Bhabhian dualism is a methodology to challenge colonial and neo-colonial regimes of power. The fashion that the youth appropriates is West-centric, according to their own words, and it is a conscious and purposive choice. Especially when our youthful informants demonstrated their native identity versus Brancos ("White people"), they took on this dichotomous distinction to show how they are cleverly and tactically mixing the two incompatible elements into one as a hybrid means to adopt and adapt to the inevitably globalizing world – for which Brancos are to be blamed. In other words, our informants appropriated the dichotomy as a framework to identify and challenge colonial regimes of power, and define their own identity, the history of which they see as inextricably linked with the White people.

Bhabha points out the resistance of the colonizer to cultural hybridity and evaluates that the colonizer is anxiously resisting cultural hybridity because it erases the difference between the colonizer and the colonized, allowing for mingling and mixing into one, hybrid culture. In this regard, Brazil has been contradictory and ambiguous in attitudes to mixing, since mixing is often seen as "bad" as it contradicts ideas about "racial purity." In the case of young, Indigenous practitioners of neo-ethnic fashion in Brazil, we see such configuration in cultural hybridity – reflected in the fact that their fashion is not only Indigenous; that it draws on the world-scale circulation of meaningful forms, and that it fuses, symbolically and materially, global elements and local signifiers.

While Bhabha's ideas provide a lead, we use our ethnographic research to expand and go beyond Bhabha's concept and theorize the neo-ethnic Indigenous fashion in the specific context of contemporary Brazil to demonstrate this point. By fusing symbols of belonging to both cultures through garments, Rafael created a cultural space where he felt he could gain agency and enact resistance against the colonizer. He assumed fashion as an expression of his "mastery of culture" as opposed to "being naked in wild nature," consciously playing with that historically constructed dichotomy through his neo-ethnic glocal self-styling to contest the imposed hegemonies. We are conscious of the cultural and political baggage of the term "global," being aware of the West-centrism and dualism embedded in it and in the term glo-cal. These dualisms, however, our informants use consciously, resonating with Bhabha, who never "meted down" hybridity but rather highlighted the significance of exposing the reversal message through cultural hybridization, which operates as ironization in the very dichotomy set by the colonists, and recognized by the colonized. In this sense, dichotomous distinction is embedded in hybridity and therefore should not be analytically avoided.

Chica, Marina, and Josephyi seemed to be equally aware of the power and responsibility that they gain through their fashion choices. By hybridizing their Indigenous and global identity, they spoke both to their ancestry and global culture. In the previously mentioned critique of Bhabha's postcolonial theory, Benita Parry asserted that imperialism for Bhabha was reduced to a discursive and epistemic moment alone, neglecting material realities: Parry finds Bhabha to be emphasizing disjunction, liminality, and hybridity while turning colonization into an enunciatory struggle that confines postcolonial theory to semiotic terrain" (Robinette 2006: 207). However, in the praxis of neo-ethnic fashion in Brazil we see quite the opposite: a material moment combined with body semiotic in a struggle against the oppression, visible not only in young Indigenous people's strategies, enacted and materialized through fashion on a daily basis, either in collective events or on SNS.

What the young neo-ethnic practitioners challenge is beyond fashion: it speaks to the imposed global world order and definition of civilization: clothed versus naked; fancy versus rough. Marina, for instance, made a poignant remark that Western words and ideas imposed themselves on other cultures, rendering invisible or illegitimate local expressions of the self. For her, "fanciness" became a territory to question the hegemonic norms of the West as she asserted that "fanciness" did not belong to the West alone and therefore

should not erase the alternative modes of being fancy in an imposed cultural and intellectual hierarchy. As our informants pointed out, their bodies and performativity are speaking to modernity, while situating their glocal self-styled bodies in “in-between” spaces of cultural hybridity. When acknowledging that their fashion is an expression against modernity, they do not define modernity as “progress” but as West-centric rationality, industrialization, and the values of civilization and enlightenment, imposed on Brazil’s Indigenous peoples through colonization.

### **(Neo)ethnic Body – (Post)colonial State**

Among a national population of around 211 million (2019), the Indigenous population makes up only about 0,47% of the total population of Brazil. This contrasts greatly with other Latin American countries such as Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Guatemala where the percentage of Indigenous population is much higher in the national population. Pacheco de Oliveira examines the Indigenous presence in the National Censuses, and comments that “Despite being comparatively of little significance on a numerical scale, the Indigenous presence has a great importance in the formation of the Brazilian State and in the process of the construction of a national identity” (1999: 125-126). Pacheco de Oliveira (1999a) demonstrates that the categories used in the National Census determine the results of the Census, the category “pardo” (brown) having different meanings in different regions of Brazil, including people who might classify themselves as Indigenous or black. The National Census in Brazil thus serves an ideological aim to homogenize Brazilian society, making many Indigenous people invisible. What is clear is that national ideologies about indigeneity strongly influence the public visibility or invisibility of Indigenous people in any nation state (Miller 2003).

In such a sociocultural context, Ramos explores why Brazil’s “Indians” receive more attention from the state and media institutions, and have a greater presence in the national consciousness than in any other country in the world, and asks whether this indicates the privileged status of Indigenous communities in Brazil (Ramos 1998: 4). Accordingly, Ramos introduces the idea of “indigenism” as a political phenomenon whereby the Indian peoples are incorporated into the nation-state, but also as the “popular and learned imagery among the national population onto which are carved the many faces of the Indian” (1998: 6). For Ramos, however, the subject of study is not the nation-states’ manipulation of the Indigenous ethnicity, but rather the Indigenous communities’ self-Orientalizing and the media-Orientalizing for their political ends. She argues: “when Indians seize the notion of “culture,” and artefacts of Western thinking about the Other, to further their cause for ethnic recognition and self-determination, they contribute significantly to the design of Indigenism” (1998: 7).

Ramos directs her attention to deliberative practices by the Indigenous people to assert their ethnic identity. In this constant process of Orientalizing and self-Orientalizing as elaborated by Ramos, the dynamic of cultural hybridity does not seem to play out because the boundaries and distinction between the two cultures are firmly set and enacted. In effect, indigenism preserves the status quo in a seemingly indigeneity-positive environment where the institutionalized uses of the projected imagery of Indigenous ethnicity assert the boundary by avoiding hybridization. Naming indigeneity-positive practices as “pulp-indigenism” (1998: 99). Yet, as Ramos herself admitted upon our interview with her, the book was written more than twenty years ago, and her Indigenous subjects are now those elders who, as mentioned in the abstract of this article, wish to conserve tradition as such. Indigenous practitioners of neo-ethnic fashion belong to the younger generations that act out indigeneity, even if they do not necessarily accept the idea wholeheartedly. These youngsters practice a very different form of ethnic expression. Thus, we argue that the appearance of the neo-ethnic fashion movement enables the paradigm shift in the discourse of cultural identity and appropriation in postcolonial Brazil.

As Ramos has so well demonstrated, the Indigenous people of Brazil have in the past mobilized indigenism to pursue their rights as politically visible and empowered subjects. Indigenism has been all-too-long posed upon the Indigenous people for more than five hundred years of colonial history to characterize them at the convenience of dominant interests by the “Branços.” By proclaiming indigeneity, Indigenous people in Brazil can together demonstrate themselves and their properties to the world reflexively in their oppressively integrated and post-colonized (continuously subalterned) current socio-political setting (or the state of being) in Brazilian (and other) nation-states – in tie with Bhabha’s indication of how hybridity can speak back to the dominant culture. Although we emphasize Indigenous empowerment through fashion semiotics, we also show that, while neo-ethnic self-styling is an outcome of cultural hybridization, it is necessary to acknowledge that neo-ethnic ornamentation with Western signifiers has a dialectical potential both to reproduce indigenism and cultural appropriation, as well as the power to challenge the global world order by appropriating “universal” signifiers and incorporating them into ethnic fashion. We see this dialectic and fluidity as a fundamental aspect of Bhabha’s notion of cultural hybridization, ready to upset boundaries with its inherent multiplicity and ambivalence of cultural semiotics.

Young Indigenous people of Brazil are appropriating their own ethnic culture, reproducing cultural modes of their people, and promoting visibility, and they are also speaking to their Indigenous identity through fashion. Simultaneously, their self-representations incorporate globalist conventions of SNS selfie-culture. They, therefore, hybridize the global order and literally embody the forms of self-representation borrowed from the global, SNS-reliant, representation of the self. They do not do this, however, in an institutionalized way which sets them apart both from Ramos’ idea of indigenism and Comaroff and Comaroff’s Ethnicity Inc. Instead, the neo-ethnic self-ornamentation enables these young subjects to transcend the borders of the nation-state and directly address transnational cultural space, opening up a space in which the glocal mode of being is configured outside the institutional framework of the nation-state.

Neo-ethnic self-styling is about controlling both input and output: it aims to externalize one’s trans-traditional culture as a means of internalizing the global semiotics in neo-ethnic fashion as well as to stop the global semiotics from imposing itself on Indigenous cultural identity. Cultural hybridity, as proposed by Bhabha, exists not only as a space for metamorphosis and mimicry between two cultures, the oppressed and the oppressor, but between the oppressed and the global West-centric structures. The cultural space of hybridization is thus expanded and diversified beyond Bhabha’s intra-state situatedness, and locates itself in a more “universal” cultural space.

This observation is similar to Aoyagi and Yuen’s (2016) finding in reference to the case of *erokawa* fashion, a phenomenon in contemporary urban Japan where women adopt erotic-cute styles as a way of empowering themselves in the public domain through hyperbolic self-styling (2016: 99). The Indigenous youth of Brazil similarly empower themselves through public transformations from passive objects of colonialism to neo-ethnically self-empowered actors, which we may call neo-ethnic protagonism. SNS provides a public space for the Indigenous youth in Brazil, that enables them to confront the dominant institutional forces that, paraphrased from the *erokawa* case-study, otherwise impose on them a material, relational, and cultural matrix of self-reconfiguration (2016: 107). Body semiotic shows that text, inscribed onto one’s body through dress, garments, apparel, and make up, is both discursive and material practice that challenges the dominant oppressive apparatuses.

Observations of selfie images from our 106 informants on their SNS photo albums revealed that these informants combined neo-ethnic self-stylization with alternations between ethnic- and Western modes of dressing in the form of code-switching – wherein strictly traditional mode of self-styling tended to occur on ceremonial occasions, while neo-ethnic- and Western modes of self-styling occurred more privately and on SNS (Figure 3).

**Figure 3.** Alternation of stylization seen in one- and the same subject (Courtesy of an informant)



In Figure 3, twenty-two year-old Waichi's conscious choices of the camera posture revealed a styled body that conformed with the gaze of the global fashion consumer. In collective, public displays she painted her body and face with pervasive strong body paintings which conveyed a resolute statement of her Indigenous cultural belonging. Her clothing and accessories likewise conveyed a much stronger Indigenous presence.

There is a multitude of ways in which dress could be considered, and has been considered as “an important and necessary social tool that acts as an interface between our bodies and society” (Barnard 2014, quoted in Mackey, Wakkary, Wensveen, Tomico 2017: 2). Mackey et al, for instance, researched ways that wearable computing impacts one's socio-cultural identity and presence (2017). Others looking into how technology changes body through garments, through wearable technologies (Ryan 2014), see not only cameras and cell phones but also make up and clothes as normalized “technological extensions to our biological bodies” following Marshal McLuhan's (1964) study of information technologies (Farren and Hutchinson 2004: 462). In the cyber space of SNS, neo-ethnic fashion is further hybridized through body postures and facial expression – performativity – in front of the camera lens. SNS thus actively contextualizes the presentation of self in such a way that the neo-ethnic Indigenous fashion movement is inextricably embedded in the global socio-technical networks.

How one blends Indigenous elements into their hybrid self-ornamentation may become a matter of serious debates and mutual evaluations between enactors. These may include the issue of cultural appropriation – a cultural politics of exploitation and assimilation of marginalized culture by the dominant culture. Morsiani (2018) and Rogers (2006) propose instead a term “trans-culturation” in which a culture is composed of multiplicity of cultures with hybridity as its essence (Morsiani 2018: 1-2).

During our interviews, most of our informants had something to say about ways other dressers of neo-ethnic fashion ornamented themselves, and their comments often reflected how envious they were about each other. One interview question we posed to all of our 106 informants was whether or not they considered other enactors of neo-ethnic fashion to be potential rivals who competed with their own styles accordingly – to which all responded positively. Ninety-four of these informants confirmed that they were constantly referring to their rivals for hints and inspirations to redesign themselves, and nineteen of them suggested that the modal competition between practitioners contributed to the personal creativity and the overall refinement of neo-ethnic fashion.

When Juan, a twenty-four year-old university student from the state of Santa Catarina, saw an image of Luis (presented anonymously) in his neo-ethnic style, he questioned the propriety and amount of knowledge that Luis had about his ancestors, his People and/or his culture:

To me it is not simply the question of incorporating traditional elements into your fashion, but more the question of how personally qualified you are as their incorporator! Just because one comes from an Indigenous culture doesn't automatically justify this person's ethnic entitlement, right? How much does this young man know about his heritage? Is he recognized by his people to be the authorizer of those ancestral motifs? ...In my culture, external applications of ancestral motifs are strictly prohibited, and you don't dare to use these ethnic motifs for your personal interests.

Juan presented himself as more culturally informed and therefore better qualified than Luis in authorizing the authenticity and propriety of his Indigenous motifs, but such a stance of cultural appropriation was apparently more impressionistically professed than factually positioned. In this and other examples, we could see that claims to legitimacy over symbols of indigeneity indicated the claims over a cultural space, both ethnic and global. The dissonance and a strong sense of competition seemed counterintuitive, especially when they were predicated on stereotypes about Pan-Indianism and the natural unity of the Indigenous groups in Brazil that rendered invisible their multiplicity and heterogeneity.

In other words, as the multiplicity of indigeneity cannot be reduced to one monolithic voice, idea or category, as it has been during centuries of colonization, seeing the current neo-ethnic fashion as a homogenous and univocal phenomenon also reduces the representations of indigeneity to a single, easily controllable and easy to demarcate phenomenon that does not threaten the dominant power structure. As Bhabha noted,

Hybrid hyphenations emphasize the incommensurable elements – the stubborn chunks – as the basis of cultural identifications. What is at issue is the performative nature of differential identities: the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually, contingently, “opening out,” remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular’ or autonomous sign of difference – be it class, gender or race (1994: 219).

Yet, these enactors of neo-ethnic fashion also managed to earn a sense of empowerment in the space of cultural hybridity and therefore of redefining the cultural space and the identity of the oppressed against the global culture of the White people.

## **Colonial Brazil – A Contextual Outline**

The Indigenous population of Brazil has been greatly reduced over more than five hundred years of colonization. Estimates of the population before European colonization vary greatly, but there were certainly several million Indigenous persons in Brazil at the time when colonization began in the early sixteenth century. Epidemics of introduced diseases, together with centuries of massacres and slavery expeditions reduced the Indigenous population from several millions to a low point in the mid-twentieth century, estimated to be at the most 99,700, or 0.2% of the national population (Ribeiro, 1979: 431), followed by a rapid recuperation of the populations of some of those Indigenous societies which survived, thanks to greater access to basic medical services, especially vaccinations. Even if Darcy Ribeiro underestimated the size of the Indigenous population in the mid-1950, there has certainly been a very rapid increase over the past sixty years (Censo, IBGE, 2010).

Indigenous people in Brazil today make up more than 240 peoples with different cultures, of greatly varying populations, spread over a country of continental size, many being small groups of people reduced during colonization. Many have been subjected to forced dislocations and forced miscegenation, often biologically and culturally mixed with Afro-descendant slaves, and many have been made invisible as Indigenous people and have been re-identifying as Indigenous, especially over the past thirty years. Since the 1970, the Indigenous political movement, influenced initially by the “Red Power” movement in the USA (Cardoso de Oliveira 2000: 221), and by Indigenous political movements around the world, has significantly changed the situation of Indigenous people in Brazil, after centuries of genocide and ethnocide, with a great increase in

ethnic reaffirmation and Indigenous protagonism, especially since the 1988 Brazilian Federal Constitution, leading to a political reorganization of many Indigenous peoples. These institutional changes, however, did not mark the end of racist discrimination against the Indigenous people, often driven by economic interests in contemporary Brazil.

We shall very briefly highlight the history and context of Indigenous people in Brazil, although a detailed discussion of a very complex phenomenon, undertaken by others – for example, Pacheco de Oliveira (2016); Pacheco de Oliveira & Freire, (2006); Ramos, (1988); Souza Lima, (1995) – is beyond the scope of this article. Historically, attitudes toward Indigenous people have been contradictory and ambiguous. Brazil has presented ambiguous discourses on miscegenation: some being encomiastic, others repudiating it (Baines 2003). However, violent racism has characterized the history of interethnic relations, and centuries of attempts to enslave Indigenous people and wipe out Indigenous societies through integration policies aimed at transforming them into a national slave labor force, which has led to enormous cultural changes.

The nineteenth century figure of the “noble savage,” an idealized concept of so-called “primitive man,” who symbolizes the innate goodness of humanity not exposed to the corrupting influences of civilization developed historically in European literature. A romantic stereotype projected onto real Indigenous people, it has been used in Brazilian literature, shaping popular ideas about Indigenous people. “Indianism” (in Portuguese: *Indianismo*) was a Brazilian literary and artistic movement that reached its peak during the first stages of Romanticism. It was represented in the nineteenth century literary works of José de Alencar e Gonçalves Dias. One of its most common manifestations in recent decades has been that of the Indigenous person seen romantically as being a “natural ecologist and conservationist,” in attempts to forcibly mold Indigenous people into Western environmentalist ideologies (see also Ramos 1998). Many other racist stereotypes have marked the history of interethnic relations in Brazil, usually depicting Indigenous peoples as “treacherous,” “lazy,” “violent” and a series of other pejorative qualities which aim to justify the violence perpetrated against them (Luciano, 2006).

From a historical anthropology perspective which reveals the complexity of the imaginary about Indigenous peoples over time, João Pacheco de Oliveira (2016) examines the diverse constructions made about the Indigenous peoples in the formation of the history of Brazil, thought of through various regimes of memory. The contemporary situation of the Indigenous peoples in Brazil is far from romantic or literary imaginary: it reveals violent racist discrimination. The current president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro (in office since 2019) has made many racist remarks about the Indigenous peoples, including that “The Indians are evolving, more and more they are human being like us” (UOL Notícias 2020).<sup>1</sup> In such context, the Indigenous youth is looking for new modes of empowerment and resistance. Some use fashion primarily as decoration, while others see it as a powerful political tool, reclaiming their humanity.

A plethora of ethnographic literature has been produced over the past decades by anthropologists working in Brazil, focusing on Indigenous movements and organizations, rendering important discussions which are beyond the aims of this paper, such as, to name just a few, Maria Helena Ortolan Matos (2006) on the Indigenous political movement, and about women in this movement (2012), Sidnei Clemente Peres (2013), who writes about associativism and the Indigenous political movement, João Pacheco de Oliveira (2011, 2016) who approaches the Indigenous movement from a historical anthropology perspective, and a growing academic literature is available written by Indigenous anthropologists, on the struggle of their peoples, such as Tonico Benites (2018), Luiz Henrique Eloy Amado (2020), and Daniel Iberê (2015) about the violent impacts of large-scale development projects on Indigenous peoples. The Indigenous rights activists such as Alessandra Korap Munduruku are also continuously contributing to these discussions.

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<sup>1</sup> “Com toda a certeza, o índio mudou, tá evoluindo. Cada vez mais o índio é um ser humano igual a nós.”

In sharp contrast to the literary movement of Indianism, the concept of indigenism has been widely used in Brazil to describe what some people refer to as government and non-government Indian policy, including policies formulated by government bodies, non-government organizations, and religious missions and churches for Indigenous peoples. Alcida Ramos presents a useful definition, starting from a definition by Antônio Carlos de Souza Lima, for whom indigenism is “a set of ideas (and ideals) concerning the incorporation of Indian people into nation-states” (1991: 239). Ramos, referring to Antônio Carlos de Souza Lima’s definition of indigenism (1991), emphasizes,

But we differ from him in that we expand the concept well beyond state incorporation of indigenous people to include the vast realm of both popular and learned imagery among the national population onto which are carved the many faces of the Indian (1998: 6).

In another line of thinking, more pertinent to our specific discussion, the term indigeneity, derived from the term Indigenous,

has long been used as a designation distinguishing those who are “native” from their “others” in specific locales and with varying scope. In recent decades, this concept has become internationalized, and “indigeneity” has come to also presuppose a sphere of commonality among those who form a world collectivity of “indigenous peoples” in contrast to their various others. The principal institutional home of international indigenism is within the UN system. In the global expansion of indigenist activity, it has become evident that a variety of claims and a diversity of situations are now being related to emergent international conceptualizations of it. There have been acceptances, rejections, and strategic uses of the concept of indigeneity (Merlan 2009: 303).

Merlan adds:

Indigeneity is taken to imply first-order connections (usually at small scale) between group and locality. It connotes belonging and originariness and deeply felt processes of attachment and identification, and thus it distinguishes “natives” from others. Indigeneity as it has expanded in its meaning to define an international category is taken to refer to peoples who have great moral claims on nation-states and on international society, often because of inhumane, unequal, and exclusionary treatment. Within some of these contexts, there were considerable historical similarities of settlement, colonization, and marginalization of native peoples. But indigeneity in the first-order sense of local connections and belonging is a very general concept, with diverse moral shadings, that has been applied much more broadly than to just those we might understand as “indigenous peoples.” As a general concept, indigeneity is susceptible to arguments for greater or lesser inclusiveness, with a variety of possible (and often contested) implications (Merlan 2009: 304).

In this paper the term “indigeneity,” as an internationalized concept is relevant to discuss neo-ethnic self-styling of young Indigenous people, as it refers to peoples who have “moral claims on nation-states and on international society,” (Merlan 2009: 304) from their colonial histories and present-day neo-colonial situations.

## **Opinions from Elders**

While neo-ethnic self-styling is becoming a widespread customary practice for some young Indigenous people of Brazil, allowing these youngsters to enjoy their DIY mode of hybridizing native- and Western fashions in order to creatively decorate themselves on personal bases, elders who care about the conservation of tradition are generally concerned about their potential destructivity. Our interviews with eleven elders revealed that all of them considered neo-ethnic fashion as reflecting the current state of mind of the young members of their Indigenous community: a postcolonial mind-set that can easily deform and alter what has been carefully

preserved and passed down from their ancestors. “It’s not the fashion itself,” said Kuina, a fifty-seven year-old Xingu leader, but the “attitude of these young people that can easily be distracted from the tradition path” – which was the point agreed by the rest of the elders around him during our interview. He added:

When we were young, there was no access to global trends. No access to Internet. But now, young indigenous people are surrounded by new communication technologies of the White people, which are captivating their souls and disturbing our traditional way of life. Our children are constantly touching cell phones instead of attending rituals. For these children, cultural heritage is becoming more of a curious display than a natural way of life because they are now more comfortable with the urban lifestyle, which were brought to us by the White people.

Thus, Kuina classified neo-ethnic fashion into the influx of Western culture and stated his concerns about its negative impact on the traditional way of life. When we pointed out that neo-ethnic fashion was not solely “Western” but a creative integration of Western elements with Indigenous fashion, Kuina gave us a wry smile and said that the fashion to him appeared nothing else but “Western” – thus signifying a force of change rather than cultural conservation or re-appropriation.

For another informant, Yati, a Xokleng woman in her late forties, neo-ethnic fashion symbolized the inevitable change of Indigenous lifeway in our contemporary world. Good or bad aside, the postcolonial erosion of Indigenous cultures is accelerating, and she felt that the new hybrid fashion which integrated Indigenous motifs into Western garments represented one of the ways in which young Indigenous people adjusted to their irreversible positioning in a globalizing world. We proposed a view that tradition could be the subject of constant exposition to the outside world, and thus continual change, rather than that of conservation, and asked Yati whether her traditional culture has been changing over time. To this, Yati stated that constancy versus change was not really the point of concern for the kind of problem she and her people were facing on the verge of global influx. As the following excerpt illustrates:

As our people have been so careful about preserving our tradition – precisely in the way it was handed down from our ancestors – that altering it never came to anyone’s mind. Even a slightest change created by an individual had to be acknowledged by everyone in our community, and nobody in my generation thought about freely mingling traditional- and Western elements together in those ways young people are doing in the way they dressed up.

Thus, Yati criticized the general mind-set of young Indigenous people – and the corresponding postcolonial social environment of today – which enabled them to practice the DIY mode of neo-ethnic self-styling. Our young informants had varying understandings of “tradition.” Some defined it as heritage, while others as a fixed legacy of their ancestors. No matter what the understanding of tradition, the view all our informants shared was that tradition, whatever that may be, is being invaded by the culture of “Branços”. Seemingly contradicting the purpose of neo-ethnic fashion, this shared understanding in fact reveals the process of shifting from a passive colonial object to an empowered actor; from being inscribed onto to actively, selectively and consciously engaging in the process of inscription.

These evaluations of the Westernized ethnic self-styling by young Indigenous people and their reliance on Internet - and other communication technologies constituted another revealing layer of struggle in the space of cultural hybridity. They projected wishes of elders to annul this hybridizing space altogether and therefore maintain the symbolic boundary used by Indigenous political movements to reinforce their claims, between the urban, White, Global, Modern, and technological on the one side and the traditional, Indigenous on the other. For the elders too, these dichotomies seemed more comfortable than the heterotopias of Indigenous cultures. There seemed to exist anxiety about erasure of the well-established historical subjectivity, or, even worse, of it becoming homogenous with, and unrecognizable from, the modern society dominated by the

White people. The source of the Global, defined hierarchically by a unified set of beliefs and values shared across the planet (Castells 2009: 117), was now predominantly shaped by mass media and communication technologies.

While the young Indigenous individuals tended to see their SNS identity as Indigenous and traditional, the elders saw such identification as a potential threat in the traditional cultural space: its tendency to “unify” at a global scale at the cost of their traditional culture, and its ability to erode social relations through the use of technology. From their point of view, the historical subject became fragmentary in the in-between space through the common understanding of the “correct” way to self-style and thus self-represent.

### **The Non-Industrial Nature of Neo-Ethnic Fashion in Brazil**

In conducting our field research in Brazil, we wondered about the conditional difference between the Comaroffs’ commercially ambitious subjects in South Africa and elsewhere versus our subjects in Brazil, for the most of whom commercial homogenization of neo-ethnic fashion was not an active choice since commercialism itself stood in contrast to, thus in conflict with, indigeneity. The DIY mode of self-styling fitted perfectly in the Brazilian setting, making neo-ethnic self-styling a widespread modal phenomenon that nevertheless operated on the principle of self-indulgence. Our interviews, part of which we emphasized above, tended to point out the loose senses of stylistic expression and symbolic competition as mediated through SNS. The presence of well over two hundred different recognized Indigenous societies in Brazil (in addition to unrecognized ethnic groups) may have been another major factor that made any attempts to industrialize neo-ethnic fashion under a unified system of management impossible. Upon asking whether any of our informants ever thought about marketing their neo-ethnic self-styling, none of them provided us with a positive reply. Seven of our 106 youthful informants indicated that the idea of marketing implied commercial monopolization, which was disgusting from the standpoint of indigeneity and would be met with hostile reactions from many native societies.

We thus wish to expand the phenomenology of the neo-ethnic chic as the economized consumable indigeneity to include ethnic fashion movements that are outside the industrial praxis. Whereas neo-ethnic fashion in our case studies is a form of consumption – of DIY materials, garments, accessories, and make up as well as of SNS, it is not an institutionally-shaped form of production and consumption of neo-ethnic indigeneity. Moreover, while this representation of indigeneity might be ethnically, nationally and/or globally bound, its modes of being and purpose are in contrast with, say, the Zulu nation in South Africa, for whom the Comaroffs evaluate that “ethnic incorporation rides on a process of homogenization and abstraction... withdrawn from time or history, congeal into object- form” in order to make them into marketable commodities (2009: 12). Among the neo-ethnic Indigenous youth in Brazil quite the opposite is true: ethnic incorporation is both heterogeneous and locally and historically specific. It is not withdrawn from time or history but critically engages with it through spaces in-between and cultural hybridity. This is apparent from the symbolic/semiotic competition over neo-ethnic self-styling and the practitioners’ consciousness about the motives and aims of their praxis.

Whereas *Ethnicity Inc.* focused on critique of the praxis of consumable indigeneity, potentially emptied of their historical legacy, we propose to expand an understanding of this praxis as it unfolds in extra-industrial and extra-institutional frameworks to which SNS flows are crucial. Based on our fieldwork, we propose an alternative to “the intensive marketing of ethnic identity” which, we have demonstrated, does not occur in neo-ethnic fashion of the young Indigenous Brazilians, and which is what *Ethnicity Inc.* represents. But we agree with the Comaroffs, and our research has shown that re-fashioning identity, re-animating cultural subjectivity

and thereby transforming collective self-awareness has the potential “to forge new patterns of sociality” albeit not “all within the marketplace” as the Comaroffs presume (2009: 26). There is a crucial difference between their South African examples and our own case studies: SNS.

The new techno-social infrastructure allows for reclaiming agency over one’s cultural identity and tradition rather than losing agency in the face of market and institutional forces. There is apparently a bottom-up cultural movement of the young generations to utilize techno-social networks to reclaim their Indigenous identity – through modes of self-representation that are beyond even the Indigenous elders’ influence and power. They do not speak *for*; they speak *against* while asserting their own, re-invented legacy.

## Concluding Remarks

We have shown through our ethnographic observations and theoretical reflections that the practitioners of neo-ethnic fashion in Brazil are symbolically and pragmatically re-fashioning themselves as Indigenous subjects against colonial forces, simultaneously fusing with the Global in order to reposition themselves as both historical subject and contemporary self-aware actor. These enactors of neo-ethnic fashion do so in a non-commercial, extra-industrial way, where self-styling is a tool of reclaiming one’s cultural space and therefore any attempts at commodification are perceived as undesirable and even offensive in the identity-building process. Their practices also render them into actors of a new kind of indigeneity: DIY indigeneity. Beyond the institutional frameworks of any organization, including their own communities, SNS enables them to play with colonial and civilizational binaries, in an act of self-empowerment in the social space between the state and their Indigenous cultures; and the “universal” world order of the White people. In other words, the young Indigenous people in Brazil hybridize with the world order through their conscious fashion choices, not in an institutionalized or corporate manner, but through a glocal DIY mode of individuated self-representation.

We used Bhabha’s concept of cultural hybridity to describe the paradigm shift in the discourse of cultural identity and cultural appropriation in (post)colonial Brazil and define neo-ethnic self-styling as a form of control over flows – of both trans-traditional and global culture – to take, recreate, and reclaim spaces in-between, spaces that are now defined by techno-social networks. SNS, introduced in the postcolonial discourse, shows how young people translate themselves into global circuits of power and claim their voice as the Other not locally but transnationally; not by asserting the boundary between cultures but by blurring it. Such an act of blurring may, however, in fact reinforce the boundary rather than erase it. Elders may perceive this technological- and glocal mode of fashion consumption as steering away from the traditional ways, but to young Indigenous Brazilians it is an alternative, self-made, mode of being Indigenous: that they refuse and are refused acceptance by that world as Indigenous people, due to racism. This is where the glocal self-styling becomes immensely important: it signifies belonging to the world, but in one’s own, heterogeneous way – demonstrated by the symbolic competition and multiplicity of forms of hybridity.

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# The domestic, the wild and its interstices: what can a dog do in Tierra del Fuego

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## Abstract

This study examines dogs that pull sledges in tourist activities in Ushuaia (capital of Tierra del Fuego province) and their relations with their breeders (the *mushers*) and with the tourists they both work for. Nevertheless, during my field research I also came across other dogs in other contexts, among them the numerous companion dogs abandoned in the city and the so-called “wild dogs”, who live in rural areas and are thus seen by Fuegians as “harmful animals” and an “invasive alien species” – that is, a problem to be solved. In this paper I consider sled dogs and wild dogs, and the different statuses that dogs can assume in these different contexts in which animals and humans relate, considering that in Tierra del Fuego canine work operates as a domesticity regime.

**Key words:** human-animal relations; animal work; sled dogs; feral dogs; domesticity.

# O doméstico, o selvagem e seus interstícios: o que pode um cão na Terra do Fogo

## Resumo

O tema deste trabalho são os cães que puxam trenós na atividade turística em Ushuaia (capital da Província da Terra do Fogo/Argentina) e suas relações com seus criadores (os *mushers*) e com os turistas, para os quais ambos trabalham. No entanto, durante minha permanência em campo deparei-me também com outros cães em outros contextos, dentre eles os inúmeros cães de companhia abandonados na cidade e os “cães selvagens”, que habitam as zonas rurais e constituem, para os fueguinos, “animais daninhos” e “espécie exótica invasora” – ou seja, um problema a ser resolvido. Destarte, neste artigo proponho-me a pensar, com atenção especial aos cães de trenó e aos cães selvagens, quais são os diferentes estatutos que os cães podem vir a assumir nesses contextos diversos em que animais e humanos se relacionam, tendo em conta que, na Terra do Fogo, o trabalho canino opera como um regime de domesticidade.

**Palavras-chave:** relações humano-animal; trabalho animal; cães de trenó; cães ferais; domesticidade.



# The domestic, the wild and its interstices: what can a dog do in Tierra del Fuego

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## From work to ostracism, dogs in Tierra del Fuego

This paper presents a multispecific ethnography with dogs that pull sleds for tourist activities in Ushuaia, the capital of Tierra del Fuego province in Argentina, based on research completed in 2019.<sup>1</sup> The discussions focus on the relationships of these animals with their breeders (who are also sled drivers) and with tourists, for whom both work<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, during my first weeks in the field, in addition to sled dogs, I unexpectedly encountered a myriad of other dogs, including companion dogs abandoned on city streets and so-called wild dogs<sup>3</sup>, which constitute, according to farmers and much of the Fuegian population, “jaurías<sup>4</sup> dañinas”<sup>5</sup> [dangerous packs] that are economically harmful to the province. These wild dogs attack and kill sheep and rams, which are essential to Fuegian livestock, and threaten certain tourist activities due to the risk they pose to tourists, and to sled dogs when they attack *criaderos*<sup>6</sup>.

The Tierra del Fuego archipelago is formed by the “Isla Grande” (48,000 sq kms) and more than 200 small islands. Isla Grande has three cities – Ushuaia, Tolhuin and Río Grande – with a total of around 127 thousand human inhabitants according to the 2011 Argentine National Census, and more than 50 thousand canine inhabitants (according to Ushuaia’s Zoonosis Department).

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2 This article is the result of a paper presented at the VII ReACT – Anthropology of Science and Technology Meeting, which took place in Florianópolis (Santa Catarina/Brazil) from May 7 to 10, 2018, entitled “About sled dogs and perros salvajes: what can a dog do in Tierra del Fuego”. I am therefore very grateful to the coordinators and debaters of the Working Group, for their careful reading and many suggestions.

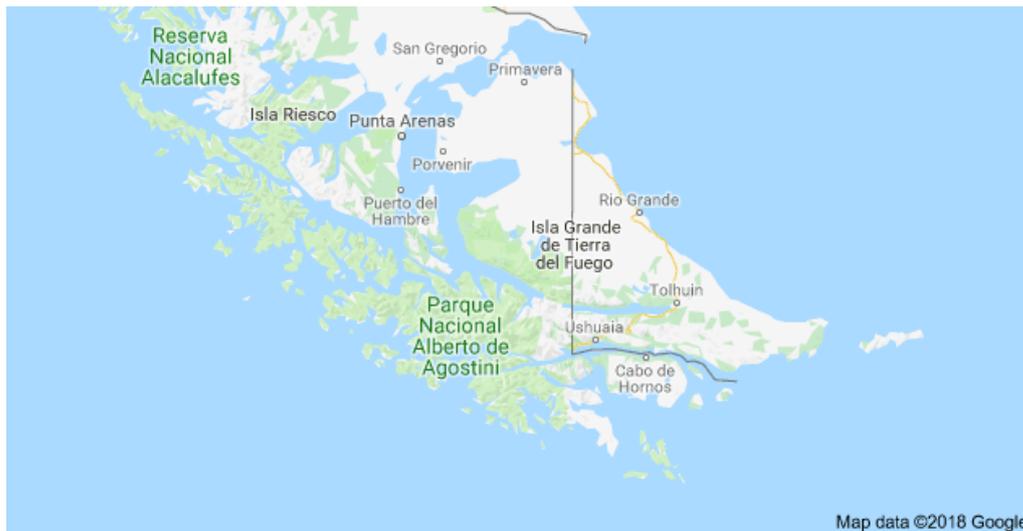
3 In Spanish, “perros salvajes” or “perros asilvestrados”.

4 “Jauría”, in the *Diccionario mini de la lengua española Larousse*, is defined as a “set of dogs that hunt together”. In this context, the term has a negative connotation, something like canine “gangs”, as suggested by Santos (2018) among the Guarani-Mbya in Jaraguá (São Paulo/São Paulo/Brazil). The Portuguese translation, in the *Dicionário Michaelis*, is “pack”.

5 Linguistic note: in this article, all direct quotes from my interlocutors, in addition to some terms in Spanish, were transcribed and kept in the original language. The indirect quotations, in turn, were translated and left in quotation marks. Finally, terms in other languages, as well as nominal terms, were left in italics – both in text’s body and in footnotes.

6 *Criaderos* are places where sled dogs are bred and sled tours take place. An English translation would be “breeding place”, but in this article I chose to leave the term in its original language.

**Map 1.** The Tierra del Fuego archipelago



Source: Google Maps, 2018

Dogs in Tierra del Fuego may be companion animals, sled pullers, “runaways” and even abandoned animals – not by law, of course, but the many animals roaming the streets of Ushuaia, as well as the statements by humans that I met during the field research, point to certain “slovenly” conditions or “inefficiency” in “solving” the problem of abandoned domestic animals. Similar to what was suggested to Osório (2013: 157), who worked with animal protection groups, in Ushuaia I often heard that “street animals are abandoned animals, and animals with owners that have access to the street are animals that are not managed by responsible ownership”. This “responsible ownership”, however, which involves affection and care for dogs and therefore their control – be they companion animals, sled dogs or stray dogs – is not extended to wild dogs that inhabit rural areas and regions uninhabited (by humans) in Tierra del Fuego. It seemed that the Fuegian population tends to be more concerned with the “perros aselvajados” and the economic and social problems they supposedly provoke than with dogs abandoned to the streets.

In Ushuaia, those who dislike the practice of dog sledding, who proclaim that “perros no son caballos, no son animales de carga” [dogs are not horses, they are not draft animals] (and who said horses are draft animals?), are the same as those who defend the control (read extermination) of wild dogs and demand solutions for the “poor” dogs that live on the city streets. On the other hand, for those who practice mushing<sup>7</sup> and work directly with sled dogs, that is, who do not consider canine work to be mistreatment or exploitation, wild dogs also represent a threat that must be “controlled”, since they can put their dogs and tourists at risk. Except when a wild dog ceases to be wild; when, for instance, a wild dog pup appears alone near a *criadero*, and is “adopted” and trained to be a sled dog – in other words, a working dog. In this sense, from the moment dogs learn to pull a sled, that is, when they learn to work, they abandon their conditions as “wild” dogs, as an “animal dañino” and as an “invasive alien species” (Schiavini & Narbaiza 2015) and becomes a working dog. Conversely, let us not forget, wild dogs owe their status to the fact that they do not work: as Porcher and Nicod (2019: 255) wrote, “putting animals out of work is putting them out of their relations with humans and sentencing them to a costly freedom with many consequences”.

<sup>7</sup> “Mushing” is the term that refers to the practice of sledding. There is no translation into Portuguese.

Why are dogs that are not under human control not considered as companion animals or work animals but as “invasive alien species” and a threat to economy, as has been happening in Tierra del Fuego with feral dogs? And why do these dogs, when trained to be sled dogs by both humans and other dogs, as I will discuss later, regain the status of domestic animals and, consequently, become eligible for commiseration, appreciation, care and other (human) feelings? In short, why, in that context, is there no compassion for wild dogs? It is worth pointing out that the classification of these dogs as “wild” was determined by humans, since the first packs of wild dogs in the region arose due to the numerous abandonments of domestic dogs in uninhabited areas of the province. So, the question is: what do Fuegians mean by “wild”? It seems in this scenario what is considered “wild” is more of a human product than a “natural” condition.

In this paper, I suggest that the lines dividing sled dogs and feral dogs in Tierra del Fuego particularly concern animal work – and the practices and techniques involved in the *assemblage* of mushing. Work, here, as well as its learning and execution, seems to be the aspect that allows dogs to enter (or be excluded from) the domain of what, apparently, is exclusively human. Sled dogs are born, grow and spend their lives in the *criaderos*; day in and day out, they wake up, eat, work, play, eat again and sleep. As Piero Leirner suggested (in a personal communication), their routine resembles that of English workers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Apart from criticism about canine work, mainly from tourists but also from the Fuegians themselves – for whom, as a rule, dogs are not “draft animals” – I propose here to use my ethnographic context to particularly consider the domestic/wild dichotomy and its porosity. Moreover, since sled dogs and their relationship with humans – mushers<sup>8</sup> and tourists – are the main theme of my research, I also intend to explore these relationships to reveal the different techniques and practices that involve them. Roughly speaking, “novice” sled dogs learn to pull a sled from both the mushers and the “veteran” dogs. They learn, on one hand, because they are “natural” sled pullers; they are, in the words of Hugo Flores, the owner of *Criadero Siberianos de Fuego* and my main contact in the field research, “entrenados con genética” – and human control over canine reproduction is central to this line of reasoning. On the other hand, however, sled dogs learn by doing, “tirando un trineo”, and watching other dogs doing the same activity; they learn mainly because of the discipline demanded by other dogs (with barks, growls, looks and bites) that they experience in practice.

Working dogs, for Cummins (2009:119), are those that “are bred and trained for specific functions for human kind”. In this sense, dogs that do not occupy any social “position”, such as feral dogs, cease to be “man’s best friend” and become an “invasive alien species”. It doesn’t matter how they became feral – in this case, because they were abandoned. What really matters, for those humans who work in the *criaderos* and for tourists and the Fuegian population, is that the “problem” be solved – except in cases where puppies of feral dogs join and are incorporated into the “team”<sup>9</sup>, that is, are trained to be working dogs. Unlike sled dogs, which for mushers are strictly working animals and which many tourists see as companion animals or family members that shouldn’t be draft animals, feral dogs are unanimously seen as trouble. As suggested by Digard, “the boundary between the wild and the domestic is not always *between species*, but also *within species*” (2012:212, italics in the original).

This article has two sections. In the first, I consider feral dogs, their status as “harmful animals” and their “impacts” on the Tierra del Fuego economy. Secondly, I explore *Siberianos de Fuego*’s 137 sled dogs – *Siberianos* was the main site of my research – in an effort to reveal what animal work, in this case, reveals about the domestic/wild dichotomy. I also try to identify the concept of domestication held by the *mushers* who work in *Siberianos*. For these mushers, domestication involves practices that are mediated by a technical artifact – the sled – and are part of a working relationship that involves, in addition to control and domination, love and care. As Tsing (2012:141) pointed out, “domination, domestication, and love are deeply entangled”.

8 At least in tourism and sports, “musher” is the term used to designate the human who drives the sled. There is no equivalent term in Portuguese.

9 “Equipo” (in English, “team”) is the term used by mushers to designate the encounter between dogs, sleds and humans: thus, musher, sled dogs and sled make up “un equipo”.

Moreover, recognizing that there are many forms of work (Vatin 2019), even animal work (Sigaut 2007), and that it goes far beyond the human – as Porcher and Nicod (2019:252) wisely noted, “animals actually work” – allows us to think of the working relationship between humans and animals as relationships that go beyond production, market and exploration:

Let us remember that the concept of labor does not refer only to relations of coercion, exploitation and domination, even if the working relationships between bosses and workers and between humans and animals are asymmetrical. Working with humans as with animals is first of all living together and being engaged together in a productive activity of value (...) animals engage their subjectivity and their affectivity in the work. They demonstrate their agentivity (Porcher & Nicod 2019:255).

As stated by Swanson, Lien and Ween (2018:13), relationships of domestication “are not always captured by classic notions of human mastery and control”. In this paper, I suggest that in *Siberianos de Fuego* dogs and mushers domesticate each other through coexistence, observation and an “education for attention” (Ingold 2000). Driving and pulling a sled are practices that require constant training in paying attention (Grasseni 2005): on the one hand, dogs must always be attentive to the commands of mushers and the signs from their canine companions (their barking, growling and even looks), to pull the sled correctly and work as a team. On the other hand, to “genetically train” the animals, mushers must know how to perceive in them (when they’re pulling a sled,<sup>10</sup> of course) the morphological and behavioral traits they want to maintain, and this requires a skillful vision, acquired and perfected day to day – as Grasseni (2005:44) pointed out in her research context, “skilled vision is invariably the result of training”.

To domesticate, therefore, is to codomesticate: as Fijn (2011) suggested in her ethnography with shepherds in Mongolia, I propose here that sled dogs and mushers in Ushuaia domesticate each other through mutual teaching and learning practices. In a “continuous action” (Digard 2012), together, humans and animals make such a working relationship possible: as Grasseni (2005:45) affirmed, learning is a social process of co-participation. In South America’s extreme south, work domesticates.

As a guide to the ethnographic case presented here, one of the suggestions made by Swanson, Lien and Ween (2018:4) in “Domestication gone wild” is that in multispecific studies we need to decentralize the traditional domestication narratives and recentralize our analyses in the “continuous domestication practices”. In this paper’s final remarks, I return to these questions in an attempt to seek address the many ambiguities that arise when we think about these dogs in Tierra del Fuego through a reflection on animal work, which involves different dogs at different conjunctures – and reveals how different material semiotic practices related to dogs produce different statuses of dogs (Lien & Law 2011). I suggest that the lines dividing sled dogs and feral dogs (which separate, after all, the domestic and the wild) – as well as other types of dogs, such as stray dogs and companion dogs – have a particular relation to animal work and to the practices and techniques involved in this very particular *assemblage* – the mushing, at least in Tierra del Fuego. Work thus defines the status of dogs (of all types) in this region of the planet.

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<sup>10</sup> Like Grasseni (2005) in her ethnography with dairy cows in Italy, I suggest here that the sled, in relations to humans and dogs, acts as an artifact for technical mediation, since it’s through it, for instance, that the mushers train their “selective vision” – or, as Ingold would say, their “skills” – and become able to perceive which dogs are good pullers and, consequently, “good for breeding”. In addition, the sled also operates as a communication vehicle, a translator, so to speak, between human and canine languages – in a general semiosis, in Kohn’s sense (2013), and as a word-tool (Ingold 2000).

## The abandonment of dogs in Ushuaia and wild dogs: dogs classified as “invasive alien species”

I landed in Ushuaia on the 5 August 2018, around nine in the morning. In my first days in the city, it was nearly impossible not to notice the many dogs roaming the streets, whether downtown or at the outskirts. Do these dogs have owners? Are they abandoned dogs? Talking to Aixa, my landlady in Ushuaia, and Ariel, the gentleman who drove me to the “winter centers”<sup>11</sup>, I discovered that most of these dogs are abandoned dogs, “perros callejeros”.

According to Aixa, Ushuaia has a big problem with abandoned dogs, since civic projects and municipal ordinances aimed at maintaining and caring for these animals have not been successful. Free services offered by the city’s Zoonosis Department, such as sterilization and chip implantation, as well as fines for those who leave their dogs loose on the streets, are not sufficiently employed and enforced. Her dog Negro, a seven-year-old Labrador, for example, was abandoned before she adopted him. Moreover, as Ariel told me, “Ushuaia es una ciudad con mucha gente en tránsito, gente que vino a trabajar, se queda sin trabajo y se va. Y dejan sus perros tirados”.

The problem of abandoned dogs in Ushuaia is not recent: the first records of attacks by wild dogs date back to the 1970s (Schiavini & Narbaiza 2015). Both Aixa and Ariel mentioned, in addition to stray dogs, the “jaurías de perros salvajes”. They said that the “jaurías” are composed of very aggressive dogs that constantly kill animals on farms, such as horses, sheep and cows, and also attack humans. According to Ariel, these are dogs that descended from abandoned city dogs, which have been breeding alone for many generations, and are born and live without human contact and control:

La gente los lleva de la ciudad y los tira, porque ya no los quieren. Los llevan al campo, los tiran, y el animal, después, sobrevive, y se hace salvaje, se conforma una manada, busca a un macho alfa.

Lo que pasa es que en la isla hay una zona llamada Península Mitre. Esta zona está deshabitada prácticamente, es salvaje. Entonces hay mucho animal que ha ido a este lugar y se criado solo. Hay no solo perros, hay caballos salvajes, hay toros y vacas salvajes. Ocho mil cabezas de ganado asilvestrado, de acuerdo con los estancieros. Y ellos se van reproduciendo. Y lo mismo pasa con los perros. Una vez que ellos se adaptan al lugar, también van se reproduciendo de manera exponencial (Ariel).

According to Argentina’s 2011 national census<sup>12</sup>, Tierra del Fuego has around 127 thousand inhabitants, of which 57 thousand live in Ushuaia, 66 thousand in Río Grande, three thousand in Tolhuin and 1,200 in rural areas farther from the urban centers. On the other hand, Ushuaia’s Zoonosis Department<sup>13</sup> estimates that there are more than 18,000 dogs in town, although it is not known how many have owners and how many do not – in Río Grande there are around 33,000 dogs. During my field research I visited Tolhuin, approximately 100 kilometers from Ushuaia, where the abandonment of dogs and the lack of a municipal kennel has led to an overabundance of animals in terrible health conditions wandering hopelessly in the streets.

In Ushuaia, the Zoonosis Department provides free castration, registration and animal identification through microchip implantation (which is mandatory for domestic dogs)<sup>14</sup>, adoption assistance and broad spectrum antiparasitic agents. Moreover, the Department is also responsible for control of unaccompanied dogs on public roads and spaces. Municipal Ordinance No. 4800, sanctioned on December 10, 2014,

11 Winter centers are large tourist complexes that offer a variety of activities – such as dog sledding, snowmobiling and snowshoeing. Each activity is usually administered separately by individuals or tourist agencies.

12 Available in: <<https://www.indec.gov.ar/>>.

13 For more information: <<https://www.ushuaia.gob.ar/zoonosis>>.

14 For cats there is a charge for the same service, which is optional.

regulates the “responsible ownership of domestic species (dogs and cats) that humans use as company”. Beyond National Law 14.346<sup>15</sup>, which states that a pet’s owner must provide “food, drink, healthcare, and the basic facilities for physiological needs”, the ordinance stipulates, among its 41 articles:

7<sup>th</sup> Article – It is expressly forbidden: a) the circulation of DCA [domestic companion animals] on public thoroughfares unaccompanied by their owners; b) the circulation of dogs accompanied by their owners but without collar and leash<sup>16</sup>.

Although non-compliance results in fines and other penalties, these measures in practice do not appear to be effective for solving the issue of dogs on streets. Furthermore, according to Ariel, dogs in Ushuaia are very much “runaways” because “sus dueños no dan cuenta de mantenerlos presos [en sus casas]”. For instance, Negro, the Labrador dog, spent hours every day loose on the streets without his owners – in addition to frequently escaping, he was often deliberately released. Therefore, the issue goes far beyond what we commonly call “abandonment”, since Negro was not an abandoned dog, nor was he mistreated.

As mentioned, dogs in Tierra del Fuego are also often abandoned in rural and uninhabited areas:

The domestic dog is an integral part of urban and rural communities. However, loose and abandoned dogs worldwide do not have the necessary food, shelter and health care, and generate impacts on society affecting public health, the environment and productive activities. In rural areas the problem is exacerbated by the conversion of loose dogs into feral dogs, which do not depend on man for livelihood, shelter and reproduction (Schiavini & Narbaiza 2015:1).

Feral dogs, more than a social problem – and which in fact did not seem to be a significant cause of concern to civil animal protection associations – seem to be an economic issue in Tierra del Fuego, since “the impact of feral dogs has forced most of the ecotone establishments to convert livestock activity from sheep to cattle” (Schiavini & Narbaiza 2015:4). Due to frequent canine attacks on livestock, farmers are unable to breed sheep, a species that “traditionally” characterizes Patagonia – but are also animals that were introduced like sled dogs! – and are beginning to raise cattle. Furthermore, these dogs came to be classified as “invasive alien species”, alongside other non-native animals, such as beavers, muskrats and gray foxes:

More recently, in October 2014, the Provincial Environment Council issued a Dictate declaring a social-environmental emergency in Tierra del Fuego due to problems generated by loose and feral dogs, characterizing them as an “invasive alien species” (Schiavini & Narbaiza 2015:5).

Therefore, the dog as “invasive alien species” ceases to be a pet, “una mascota”, or a work animal, which leads us to believe that the definition of “invasive alien species” has nothing to do with the origin of animals, but is determined by their effects and how these effects are seen by humans. As Sordi (2017) suggested in his research with wild boars in the *Campanha gaúcha* region (Rio Grande do Sul state, Brazil):

what is the “native” of a certain ecological orthodoxy if not a particular regime of domesticity, an imaginary ecumene where each species occupies its own niche and plays a determined role in maintaining an *oikonomy* (Agamben 2011) of nature as a harmonic totality? Conversely, what is the “exotic” if not an exteriority that threatens this ecumene through the dangers of intrusion and condemnation? (Sordi 2017:287-288).

As such, what is (and what is no longer) “exotic”, in the context of dogs in Tierra del Fuego, depending on their social-economic role (or the absence of such a role)? Sled dogs, although non-autochthonous, are a tourist symbol; loose dogs, those with no human control, are harmful animals, pests.

15 Available in: <<http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar>>.

16 Available in: <<http://www.concejoushuaia.com>>.

Fuegian sheep breeders even use guard (working) dogs to defend their flocks from attacks by feral dogs!<sup>17</sup> These dogs are bred and trained for that task, and although the number of guard dogs in Tierra del Fuego is still very small, we see a situation in which dogs are especially trained to protect herds and attack (even eliminate) other dogs. Furthermore, Ariel, who is retired from the military, told me that when he was working in the Argentine Army and training in remote regions of the Island, farmers told him that if or when he saw a wild dog, or a pack, he should shoot and kill them immediately.

**Figure 1.** Warning sign on a farm in Tierra del Fuego



Source: La Nación, 2018

What's a dog without a human? It seems in this context that dogs that breed and live without human control become “trouble”, “infractors” and “omnivorous predators and scavengers”, as well as a risk to tourists who enter the Fuegian forests (Schiavini & Narbaiza 2015). According to Porcher and Nicod (2019:253), “this reversion [by domesticated animals] to their wild status is in fact the consequence of the release of these animals from labour”. In this paper, I suggest precisely this. Moreover, dogs without work (whether in family homes, the countryside or the *criaderos*) are expendable dogs.

I propose here that the feral dogs in Tierra del Fuego are, as suggested by Sordi (2017) and Digard (2012) in other contexts, animals that have gone through a process of feralization or *marronage*. Like Sordi, I suggest that wild dogs in Tierra del Fuego indicate not a dichotomy between the domestic and the wild, but the porosity of domesticity (from which these animals were apparently excluded):

the feral isn't the opposite of the domestic – a role played by the wild – but the indication of its fissures and contradictions. Thus, more than anything, *the feral is the way in which the wild inhabits domesticity from within*, and not the encounter or hybridization between two distinct domains (Sordi 2017:288, italics in the original).

Morey (2010:199) affirmed that “dogs simply do not thrive when deprived of regular human care and interaction”. Following this logic, the mushers in Ushuaia say that feral dogs cease to be feral the moment they learn to pull a sled – *the moment they learn to work*. For instance, *Siberianos de Fuego* has Lonely, a wild dog that was found alone when still a puppy near the *criadero*, and was trained to pull a sled, and Bigote,

<sup>17</sup> Because I lack enough data, I will not discuss protective dogs in this paper.

who is the result of a cross between a female Alaskan Husky<sup>18</sup> from *Siberianos* and a wild dog, which had managed to invade the enclosed kennels in which females in heat are confined. However, contrary to what was suggested by Morey and by the *mushers* in Ushuaia, the growing number of feral dogs in Tierra del Fuego seems to be pointing to another outcome. In 2012, more than 1,200 feral dogs were registered, and it's estimated that the numbers are even larger (Schiavini & Narbaiza 2015). Dogs, then, do not (necessarily) need human companionship to “thrive” (Morey’s words).

Just as Old-World farm animals thrived in the “Neo-Europes”, in a “wild” and “semi-domestic” state (Crosby 2011), and beyond the control of Europeans, feral dogs, gray foxes and beavers currently thrive in Tierra del Fuego – even if, contrary to what the “myopic” idealism (Digard 2012) of animal welfare movements (Porcher & Nicod 2019) suppose, their lives are not easy. For instance, although they are constantly chased by humans, wild dogs maintain “commensalism interactions with the gray fox<sup>19</sup>, another exotic species, and with scavenger birds” (Schiavini & Narbaiza 2015:3).

**Figure 2.** Bigote, part Alaskan Husky, part wild dog. *Criadero Siberianos de Fuego*



Photo by the author, 2018

In Ushuaia, if on one hand feral dogs place some economic activities at risk, such as husbandry and tourism, on the other, there's the enthusiastic fomentation of mushing – tourists love it! In this sense, the status of a dog derives from the set of different material and semiotic encounters and practices between humans and non-humans: as suggested by Lien and Law (2011:70, original italics), “if an object (...) emerges in the relations of practice, then we need to remember that there are *many practices*”. Wild dogs became “wild” through abandonment by humans. In Tierra del Fuego there seems to be no room for them. It seems that the idea of a “perro salvaje” does not make sense (considering that dogs are man’s best friends) and, therefore, must be (or is likely to be) eliminated. Sled dogs, in turn, despite being an exotic species (like the sled itself), are a very profitable tourist symbol. As mushers suggested to me several times, these dogs are (or are in the process of becoming) native animals. They already are, like the mushing, “part of the Patagonian culture”.

<sup>18</sup> The Alaskan Husky is the canine breed most used to pull sleds today, either in tourism or competitions. It is not an officially recognized breed by the international cynological federations.

<sup>19</sup> The gray fox was introduced in Tierra del Fuego in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As the main theme of my research, sled dogs are the subjects of the next section. From being considered “invaders” and “pests” to having their images on T-shirts’, snow globes and other souvenirs, what are the possible statuses of dogs in Tierra del Fuego?

### **Sled dogs: between the innate and the acquired, the ability to pull**

Dogs’ roles have been multifaceted, and they have not been passive raw material to the action of others. Further, dogs have not been unchangeable animals confined to the supposedly ahistorical order of nature. Nor have people emerged unaltered from the interactions. Relations are constitutive; dogs and people are emergent as historical beings, as subjects and objects to each other, precisely through the verbs of their relating. People and dogs emerge as mutually adapted partners in the naturecultures of lively capital (Haraway 2008:62).

My mornings at *Criadero Siberianos de Fuego*, one of the four sled dog *criaderos* in Ushuaia, always had a resounding start. Around ten o’clock, after the dogs were fed and the kennels cleaned, the mushers were in charge of preparing the five sledges for the tours that would soon begin with the arrival of the first tourists. Simultaneously, the 137 sled dogs who live there began to bark uninterruptedly in an unusual canine symphony. For Hugo Flores, the owner of *Siberianos*<sup>20</sup>, the dogs were enthusiastically saying “I want to run!”, “Let’s run!”

**Figure 3.** The *Criadero Siberianos de Fuego*



Photo by the author, 2018

For Flores and the four other mushers who work there – his two sons, Leonardo and Nahuel Flores, as well as Jorge and Hernan –, the “nature” of these dogs is defined by work. From the mushers’ perspective, these are dogs that “genetically” and “ancestrally” love to run – and therefore, to work. For the mushers, what defines these dogs as work animals is their “natural need” to run and pull: pulling a sled (i.e., working), is thus seen as a way to satisfy a “natural” canine need. Moreover, training these dogs consists mainly of preparing them genetically – as much as the idea seems paradoxical – so that they’re good sled pullers.

<sup>20</sup> According to Hugo, the tourist practice of mushing in Ushuaia began in 1991, and he has been working there since 1999, when he moved from Río Grande (Tierra del Fuego province) and had a team of only 27 dogs. Furthermore, *Siberianos de Fuego* is the only *criadero* in Ushuaia in which the owner cares for the dogs and leads this care.

To do so, the mushers spend months observing the animals, to select for the crossings those that have the best traits (such as stamina, strength, intelligence and concentration) – that is, those who can generate good sled pullers. *Siberianos de Fuego* is thus like a large open-air laboratory. This was also noticed by Leal (2018:39) with cattle and cattle breeders in Brazil: “in zootechnics, it was the practitioners – breeders – who opened the way for the theorists. The farms, in this way, were the biggest laboratories of the zootechnicians”.

On the one hand, mushers and dogs need, for the mushing to be possible, a close relationship based on “trust”, “feeling”, mutual understanding and incessant communication – mushers through not necessarily verbal commands and dogs through grunts, barks and body signals. Sled dogs and mushers get to know each other especially by living together and observing each other’s actions. On the other hand, the use of mushing as a tourist activity is an economic activity, and the dogs are thus, in Miguel’s<sup>21</sup> words, “parte del negocio” [part of the business]. However, even “goods” can be loved and cared for (Vander Velden 2018), and the commercialization of animals is a fundamental issue for the discussion of animal work (and, here, especially for dogs), since these animals are not just goods, with use and exchange value, but also types of capital goods – “lively capital”, as suggested by Haraway (2008) –, since they make (and are worth) money. In the words of Porcher and Nicod (2019:255), even though the relationship is asymmetric, “working with humans as with animals is first of all living together and being engaged together in a productive activity of value”. But note that no one is affirming that working relations between humans and animals are symmetrical, or that they are free from exploitation, domination and control.

In contrast, the relationship between sled dogs and tourists is characterized both by a market fetish and the dogs’ “humanization” as the mushers say. Tourists may see the dogs as “poor wretches who work all day” and therefore as victims of “inhumanity”, but they are also seen as beautiful and “exotic” animals. As I often observed, many tourists were extremely disappointed when they discovered that their sleds would not be pulled only by the beautiful and (apparently) “untamable” Siberian Huskies. Among tourists, therefore, the most important factor is the animals’ aesthetics – their value comes from their “exotic” traits, since Siberian Huskies are one of the oldest known breeds (Fogle 2009) and are very similar to wolves. In the field, I often heard tourists extolling Siberian Huskies’ beauty: “I want this one for me, he has blue eyes, look!”; “This is just to decorate the place”; “Poor guy, so beautiful, and he’s here to work”; “Take a picture of this one, he’s wonderful!”; and so on. In this context, whether dogs are “part of the team” or the product of “genetic improvement”, fetishized goods or “pets”, they assume, in their relations with both mushers and tourists, different roles – as Vander Velden affirmed (2012), dogs by definition have an ambiguous status<sup>22</sup>.

Mushers and dogs form a “team”, which according to Hugo needs to be “siempre en sintonía, siempre en comunicación, es necesario que haya un feeling, una relación de confianza entre perros y mushers”. This relationship, moreover, must be built on a daily basis: it’s through continuous coexistence, through “living together”, that dogs and mushers get to know each other. One of the mushers told me that between them and the dogs “la relación es metafísica, no se explica con palabras”. The relationship is more than corporal and, for this reason it is necessary to create (dogs and humans, together) a new form of communication that transcends verbal language – that is capable of capturing, for instance, the animals’ likes and dislikes in just one look. As Brandt (2004) proposed in her research context with horses, I suggest that in Ushuaia sled dogs and mushers co-create a third language, a “language of their own”:

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<sup>21</sup> Miguel was another musher that I had the opportunity to meet during my field research.

<sup>22</sup> For the purposes of this article, and because of a lack of space, I will not focus on discussions about the relationship between sled dogs and tourists, or those between the animals and the mushers. I will develop these reflections in another paper (forthcoming).

animals communicate their feelings and desires to their human partners in a myriad of ways, lacking only the capacity to do so through the spoken word. By recognizing non-verbal forms of communication, an exploration and understanding of how humans and their nonhuman animal companions can come to know the “subjective presence of the other” becomes possible (Brandt 2004:302).

At *Siberianos de Fuego*, the day begins at eight am, when the dogs are fed balanced food rations and scraps of lamb. Around ten, when the first tourists arrive, the sled tours begin. The animals are attached to the sleds (six to ten dogs per sled, depending on the amount of snow on the trail), and the route, of approximately four-and-a-half kilometers, takes about twenty minutes. Dogs rest for about ten to fifteen minutes between each tour; they lie down, play, bark, and sometimes fight. Mushers, on the other hand, keep constantly checking the animals and the sleds, making sure the dogs are comfortable and the sleds in shipshape. Furthermore, they only replace dogs on the sleds if they get hurt or do not want to run anymore (when they lie down and do not show any desire to get up), when they're tired or take the maximum six daily turns. Leonardo told me that “el musher es como un director técnico, y por eso necesitamos estar siempre atentos con nuestro equipo”. It is very interesting to think about the notion of “team” in this context and the relationship between dogs, mushers and sleds. For the practice of mushing to be possible, mushers and dogs must correctly coordinate this very particular “dance of encounters” (Haraway 2008).

As good and experienced as a musher may be, a sled without canine traction does not move – on the other hand, a sled can travel with canine traction and without human guidance: but why would dogs pull a sled without human presence? Who would they be pulling the sled for? Agency, therefore, takes place in the performance of the trio; it emerges and is distributed in the relationship. It is, after all, a cyborg, who must always follow a very and (multi) specific choreography to achieve what it sets out to do. Technique is not just about a technical object; rather, it concerns an objectification of the technique – from a cooperative relationship at work:

No work collective is efficient without the coordination that stems from procedures, but, additionally, no collective is effective without cooperation. Cooperation cannot be imposed, it is a conditional on individual freedom. An animal that does not want to cooperate cannot be constrained to do so. It can be forced by threats or by violence, but it can obey, as industrial farm workers know very well, while refusing acquiescence (Porcher 2014:6).

According to Jorge, the only consensus among the mushers is that all of them “necesitan conocer a sus perros muy bien, y siempre entender lo que quieren decir con sus gestos” – and this knowledge emerges, as already mentioned, from living together and observing each other. The importance of knowing the dogs, the respect for their abilities, the two-way communication that's established between dogs and humans and the importance of trust and partnership in the relationship were some of the themes explored by Kuhl (2011: 22) in her research with mushers and sled dogs in the Northern Hemisphere. All the aforementioned aspects, which emerged in Kuhl's conversations with the mushers, also arose in Ushuaia. As I was told in *Siberianos*, each dog has a personality – and therefore it is essential to know them individually, the “character” of each one, and each one's likes and dislikes, their friendships and enmities, in order to achieve a good relationship between dogs and mushers. There are “jealous”, “smart”, “silly”, “good” and even “deceptive” dogs. In this sense, for mushing to occur mushers and dogs must get to know each other and make themselves known, establish a relationship of mutual trust and a communication that's intelligible to both. As Kuhl (2011: 26) also stated, “because the mushers felt their dogs to be individuals with personalities, ‘you need to get to know them’ was a phrase I heard often when mushers spoke of the elements of a good musher-sled dog relationship”.

According to Hernan, you're not taught to be a musher, and to learn the practice "el principal es gustar de perros y que ellos te acepten". Furthermore, it's through observation that the practical foundations of mushing are transmitted, just as happens among dogs themselves when learning to pull a sled: they learn mainly by observing each other, but also through barking, grunting, growling and biting. As Vander Velden (2016) pointed out, the idea that you learn by doing is something that often emerges in hunting contexts with dogs – for instance, the Karitiana in Rondônia: "Human hunters must make their dogs good hunters, through a set of procedures (...) 'do', more than 'teach' – as we think of the training of dogs among us – because dogs actually learn to hunt in practice" (Vander Velden 2016: 28).

Besides, unlike what usually happens with pet dogs, "adiestrados específicamente por los humanos" (according to Jorge), sled dogs learn the technique from each other. As Joel, a musher in another *criadero* in Ushuaia told me:

Para enseñarles, colocamos los cachorros<sup>23</sup> en el trineo junto con perros experimentados, para que éstos enseñen a los principiantes. Es a través de miradas, olores y ladridos que los perros se enseñan unos a otros. Nosotros enseñamos los comandos, los perros enseñan a tirar. Y formamos un equipo (Joel).

The mushers also told me that when the dogs are about one year old, when they're both physically and mentally developed, they're attached to the sled with experienced dogs and trained to pull, both by the musher and by the "veteran" dogs. They learn to work as a team. Furthermore, according to Hugo "los perros-guía<sup>24</sup> más viejos y experimentados, como Luna [a nine-year-old Alaskan Husky], enseñan y nos ayudan a enseñar a los perros jóvenes a convertirse en perros-guía". In this context, when the mushers speak of "entrenamiento" and "entrenar", they're referring to the sled rides themselves, since the practices of training and mushing are simultaneous: you (whether you're a human or a dog) learn by doing. As Vander Velden suggested about hunting dogs among the Karitiana, "training, in fact, seems to take place only in the forest, during hunts, and not only with human hunters but, above all, with other dogs already experienced in the techniques of searching, chasing and killing" (2016:30).

This "canine education" is also present in the relationship between "retired" dogs and those who still work. For instance, Sara, a twelve-year-old Alaskan Husky, was retired. One day she was released and began to run among the other dogs. According to Hugo, she was "greeting them":

Mira, Sara fue suelta y está feliz, saludando a los otros [cães]. Ellos están agitados, ladrando. Y cuando se acerca, siempre feliz y sacudiendo la cola, ellos se tranquilizan, ¿ve? Pero cuando empezaren los paseos ella tendrá que ser nuevamente presa, sino va a correr detrás del trineo porque quiere tirar también. Quiere participar (Hugo).

She, Hummer and Gema, who are also retired Alaskan Huskies (ages thirteen and fifteen, respectively), are dogs whose task is, according to Hugo, to "enseñar a los demás perros a ser tranquilos unos con otros":

Gema y Hummer son los dos perros más viejos. Ellos tienen como función enseñar a los otros perros a socializar. Andan entre todos, sueltos y tranquilos, y transmiten buenas energías y tranquilidad. Así los perros aprenden a pelear menos y quedarse tranquilos entre ellos (Hernan).

However, Hugo told me that this teaching – or, as Ingold suggested (2000), this "education for attention" – results mainly from the dogs' ancestry. According to Hugo, they're dogs that genetically and instinctively like to and are inclined to run: it's as if the dogs' tastes and habits are in their genes and came from their ancestors. So, for the mushers, the very "education for attention", the practical teaching that takes place among the dogs

<sup>23</sup> In Spanish, the puppies of any mammal (including dogs, of course) are called "cachorros".

<sup>24</sup> Leader dogs, or guide dogs, are those who go in the front positions of the sled. According to the mushers, they're the most intelligent dogs since they have to guide the other animals behind them.

themselves, is, at least in part, a consequence of the genetic makeup – and also the genetic manipulation – of these animals. In Hugo’s words, “entrenamos los perros con genética, y entrenar con genética es como hacer un plan previo”. He then takes responsibility for maintaining the “nature”<sup>25</sup> of these dogs that are “originally” sled pullers and have an “instinctive need” to run and pull.

In *Siberianos*, training sled dogs consists mainly of preparing them genetically for sled practice – this relationship would be close to what Leach (2007:91) called the “third stage of domestication”, in which “methodical selection pressures were added as breeders learned how to improve and ‘fix’ breeds”. Nevertheless, the relevance of this manipulation of canine genetics revealed in the mushers’ statements and practices, as well as the empirical results of this technology (namely, the animals’ controlled reproduction), differs from genetic laboratory technologies – although they are equally complex and efficient. While the statements and principles used are basically the same, the *criaderos*’ experiences are supported by observation – of the “observed talent” (Coppinger & Schneider 2017:24) – and conviviality, not by laboratory research. Although the language (the framework) of the *Criadero* is that of a genetics’ laboratory. This was also noticed by Leal (2018) with cattle breeders in Brazil.

The mushers told me that dogs, whether Siberian or Alaskan Huskies<sup>26</sup>, are dogs that “ancestrally love to run”. I emphasize, for my purposes, that the term “genetics” in this context refers both to a “genetic improvement” (a technique to optimize the dogs’ performance in the work of pulling a sled) and to the animals’ “nature” (their “inherent characteristics” and “ancestral past”). Phrases like “abrimos la genética de los perros” and “es su naturaleza, su herencia de los lobos” were constantly repeated by the mushers. Thus, in this context, the “relational dimension” (Sautchuk & Stoeckli 2012:228) of the term “genetics” and, consequently of domestication, as well as its ambiguous condition, is something worth noting. On one hand, the sled dogs’ “original past” is a past in which they were already domesticated. On the other hand, the dogs are “morphologically domesticated” (Ingold 1980:82) through genetic improvement and controlled reproduction – that is, “selective pressures” (Fijn 2018; Stépanoff & Vigne 2019).

According to Hugo, due to dogs’ lupine ancestry – especially “Nordic dogs”, a category used by Hugo to refer to “pure” sled dogs, such as the Siberian Husky – the behavior of these dogs is “similar to wolf behavior”. For the mushers, to live as a big family, to enjoy running (what is to enjoy running for a dog? Or a wolf?), demarcate territory and have an alpha leader (who in this context is human) are all genetically inherited traits of wolves. To be “wild” in this case, differently from that of the *perros salvajes*, adds value; “el aullido de los perros de trineo es un legado de los lobos”, and, like wolves, these dogs, when they return from a sled run, like to demarcate territory, “como si estuvieran en un nuevo lugar, aún inexplorado”:

La línea de los perros nórdicos, lo único que les interesa es vivir en jauría, estar en un lugar en que ellos puedan disfrutar, correr, les gusta mucho correr. Hay toda la línea de decanos lupus, los lobos, los chacales, los perros primitivos y después las subespecies, que el hombre hay ido cruzando, haciendo mutaciones. A mí me gusta mucho trabajar con el nórdico porque vendrían a ser la esencia, el principio de todo, todos los demás son razas que el hombre ha inventado (Hugo).

25 “Nature” was one of the terms used by the mushers to refer to dogs’ aptitudes for the work – running and pulling a sled.

26 Alaskan Huskies, although not an “original” breed, result from a mixture of some of these “original” breeds. Alaskan Malamute, Siberian Husky, Pointer, Saluki and Anatolian Shepherd were the main breeds that initially made up the Alaskan Husky genetically (Huson et al. 2010:1).

**Figure 4.** Photo sequence. Hernan and his dogs out for a ride. *Criadero Siberianos de Fuego*



Photos by the author, 2018

Hugo once told me: “así como los perros de trineo sienten la necesidad de correr y tirar, el border collie es un perro que siente la necesidad de agrupar, y es por eso que es un perro pastor tan bueno”. For him and the other mushers, sled dogs are predisposed to run, and this is genetically explained. In this context, dogs learn to pull a sled in practice, but they only learn because running is one of their natural, instinctive and inherent characteristics:

El perro de trabajo se puede clasificar en distintas modalidades. Por ejemplo, un perro pastor. Un perro que es pastor es un perro de trabajo. Y un perro rescatista es un perro de trabajo. Y un perro de búsqueda, de sobrevivientes, de explosivos, de droga, también es un perro de trabajo. El humano tiene un objetivo. Y hasta que el perro tenga un año, tiene que haber una conexión entre el entrenador y ese perro para lograr este objetivo, y lo va seducir con premios [comida]. El perro vaquero [pastor] nace siendo vaquero. Le gusta juntar animales. Instintivamente nace con esa particularidad. Y el perro de trineo es un perro que también es un perro de trabajo, también tiene concebido dentro de su genética, su instinto ancestral, los aborígenes los concibieron para esto, para tirar (Hugo).

According to the above narrative, sled dogs have “inherent characteristics” that make them “natural pullers”. However, what I would like to highlight here is the fact that these dogs are also defined, by the mushers, as “natural” working animals – as if they were, *de facto*, born to work. For the mushers, sled dogs are predisposed to run, and this is genetically explained. Although the dogs learn to pull in practice (between themselves and with the mushers), they are only capable of learning because running is one of their natural traits:

El trineo también remete los perros a su pasado, pero ellos pueden y les gusta mucho tirar otros objetos, cómo un esquí, una bici o un carro. El trineo es algo milenario, es especial, pero no es el objeto en sí, es la práctica, la acción de correr y tirar, que los encanta. Es su trabajo (Hernan).

This was also pointed out by Kuhl (2011) in the Northern Hemisphere:

While it was not always stated explicitly in the interviews, it was clear that the dog's role in the partnership was to work/pull. This idea came through when participants explained that sled dogs are instinctually driven to run, love to pull, and are naturals at pulling from birth (Kuhl 2011:32).

Moreover, it is interesting to note that, for Hugo, when pulling a sled, dogs return to their "origins". This "origin" is an already domesticated origin, since it alludes to the first dogs that for millennia pulled sleds in the Arctic, dogs of the Inuit and Siberian peoples. For the mushers in Ushuaia, the origin of these dogs is sled pulling, to be working! It is curious that when they place sled dogs in an "ancestral past", they also place Inuit and Siberian peoples in that same "ancestral past" (erasing, in the same act, the history of these native groups from the North and the indigenous people in Tierra del Fuego). Furthermore, according to the mushers, the sled has this same effect on the "ancestral memory" of these animals; similar to the act of running and going "always forward", the sled itself also reports these dogs to this original, domesticated past. It's as if the dogs, in addition to being "born to work", were born knowing the sled:

El trineo hace parte de este pasado ancestral, porque era y aún es una herramienta de trabajo muy importante y presente en la vida de los pueblos originarios. A los perros les gusta tirar otras cosas también, como bicicletas y esquís, pero a ellos lo que más les gusta es correr, sin duda. Esto es el más importante. Pero vuelven a sus orígenes con los pueblos esquimos cuando tiran un trineo (Hugo).

It seems, then, that an "education for attention" and an "anti-education for attention" coexist in a single relationship. At the same time that they learn through practice, by doing, among themselves and with the mushers, the sled dogs are already "born" knowing how to pull a sled, as if this competence was natural to them. According to mushers' statements and practices, the dogs' abilities appear to be both innate and acquired. How can this ambiguity be understood? Hugo and the other mushers refer to the dogs' ability to pull a sled to their genetics, to their "nature"; and yet, deprived of sleds, these dogs would never develop this ability. How, then, could it be innate? I propose, as did Ingold (2000:366), that "the capabilities of action of both human beings and non-human animals are neither innate nor acquired but emergent properties of the total developmental system constituted by the presence of the agent (human or non-human) in its environment". Without a sled and without the practice – that is, outside the *Criadero* – would these dogs be draft animals? I do not think so.

Furthermore, something curious to think about: sled dogs, despite appearing to be more culture than nature, are not so considered by the mushers since they're "naturally" prone to running and pulling a sled. Indeed, these dogs seem to be naturally "made" to pull, since they've "emerged" pulling a sled. Unlike wild dogs, which have gone through a feralization process, the sled dogs are perfect natural-cultural hybrids, because it seems that at their origin nature and culture are not distinguished; they have emerged attached to the sleds. This kind of "origin myth" of these dog breeds is very interesting: the most "ancestral" seem to be the most adapted to an action designed by human beings. How do dogs manifest "ancestral" actions and how are they "genetically made"? The narratives in this context seem to combine nature and culture in a unique way: these dogs are simultaneously nature and culture, and the mushers apparently operate with this discursive ambiguity without realizing it, or without caring about it. Perhaps (and most likely), for them this ambiguity does not even exist.

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Relations of domestication are not necessarily unidirectional, nor do they follow rules (Cassidy & Mullin 2007). In the context of *Siberianos*, dogs and mushers affect each other and are affected in their ongoing practices. Dogs have their bodies and behaviors continuously “perfected” through “selective pressures”. However, we cannot simply ignore that mushers are also “made” in practice, from living with these dogs and sharing the same environment. The mushers, precisely because of the kind of relationship they cultivate day after day with the dogs, learn and develop certain skills, such as a “selective vision” at the expense of others, about which Grasseni (2005) wrote. Skills, according to Ingold (2000:360, original italics), “are developmentally incorporated into the *modus operandi* of the organism [human or non-human] through practice and experience in an environment”. In that sense, among sled dogs and mushers the domestication relationship must be thought of as a process of mutual affectation (Swanson, Lien & Ween 2018):

Domestication has a social and relational, but also technological and somatic impact on humans, which often is neglected but is, in fact, symptomatic of the fact that humans are just as much subject to the domesticatory interaction as animals and plants are (Stépanoff & Vigne 2019:13).

Therefore, besides the “traditional narratives”, that is, in a purely techno-economic approach (Stépanoff & Vigne 2019), in our multispecific ethnographies we must start thinking about relations of domestication from a co-evolutionary perspective and as a continuous process:

“Domestication” refers to a becoming, a process set in time which causes living beings to go through different states, between the outside and the *domus*, between far and near, between predation and familiarity. Domestication does not simply cross these boundaries; it blurs them and questions categories, whilst at the same time adding its own apparent order by describing a succession of changes as oriented stages (Stépanoff & Vigne 2019:3).

As Haraway (2003) suggested, it is from coexistence with companion species’ that we must think about biopower, biosociality and technoscience in the world. Because of her close relationship with dogs and canine agility competitions, Haraway’s reflections apply especially well to dogs and the relationships that we humans weave with them. But besides dogs, her arguments (Haraway 2003, 2008) address connections between species: above all, she is concerned about overcoming human exceptionalism and considering technology as a part of our relations with other humans and non-humans.

For mushing to succeed, a certain “operational harmony” is necessary between mushers, dogs and sleds. The challenge is always, according to Haraway (2008), to find coherence between incoherent worlds. And this harmony, in the context of this paper, is only achieved through coexistence and mutual observation and respect – that is, through the co-creation of a third language (Brandt 2004) and a human-canine participation in the process of co-domestication (Fijn 2011, 2018). As Fijn affirmed (2018:74), “human-canine relations involve different processes of development in both an ontological sense and an ontogenetic sense”.

### **Final considerations: work as a domesticity regime**

Animal work, despite being a relatively debated topic in the humanities (Cf. Barreto 2015; Coulter 2016; Cummins 2009; Haraway 2003, 2008; Hobgood-Oster 2014; Losey, Wishart & Loovers 2018; Morey 2010; Porcher 2014; Porcher & Nicod 2019; Warren 2013), still needs further consideration: “diverse and complex realities of human-animal work relations remain relatively underexamined” (Coulter 2016:1). What do we know about working dogs (and working animals in general)? Moreover, Ingold (1980:88) has affirmed that “the domestic animal in the service of man constitutes labor itself rather than its instrument, and hence that the relationship between man and animal is in this case not a technical but a social one”.

I found it very interesting to reflect in this paper on the relations established between dogs (sled dogs, feral dogs and abandoned dogs) and humans (mushers, tourists and other inhabitants of Ushuaia) by considering animal work. It was from that category that I was able to unveil the fluidity of the different “statuses” and “becomings” of these dogs – or the different “products” of different material and semiotic relationships (or engagements) – in Tierra del Fuego, as well as the ambiguities of what, for these humans, would be natures and cultures, wild and domesticated:

By recognizing the nature-labor nexus and animal work, we are encouraged to think about entire species and individual animals. We recognize but move beyond boundaries like “wild” and “domesticated”, and “the environment” versus “animals”, in favor of a more integrated approach. By using animal work as a conceptual engine, we also complicate other binaries like “urban” and “rural”, as humans and animals live, work, move, are moved, and are killed across spaces in a more fluid dynamic (Coulter 2016:12).

It is very curious, for instance, that mushers affirm that the sled dogs’ natural “vocation” for work – which, as Marx stated, is social and therefore human – is the result of these dogs’ genetic inheritance from wolves and their “ancestral” canine genes, in addition to genetic manipulation. While on the other hand, while defining mushing as the exploitation of animals, tourists do not hesitate to pay for the tour. It’s a constant interplay of categories, and it seems that mushers, tourists and Fuegians do not perceive the ambiguities of the conceptual combinations they use in their reflections. Perhaps “this is because the dog is perceived as being neither fully of nature (being a domestic animal) nor of culture (being essentially a wolf, sharing that species’ DNA)” (Cummins 2009:99).

**Figure 5.** Leonardo and his dogs arriving from a ride. *Criadero Siberianos de Fuego*

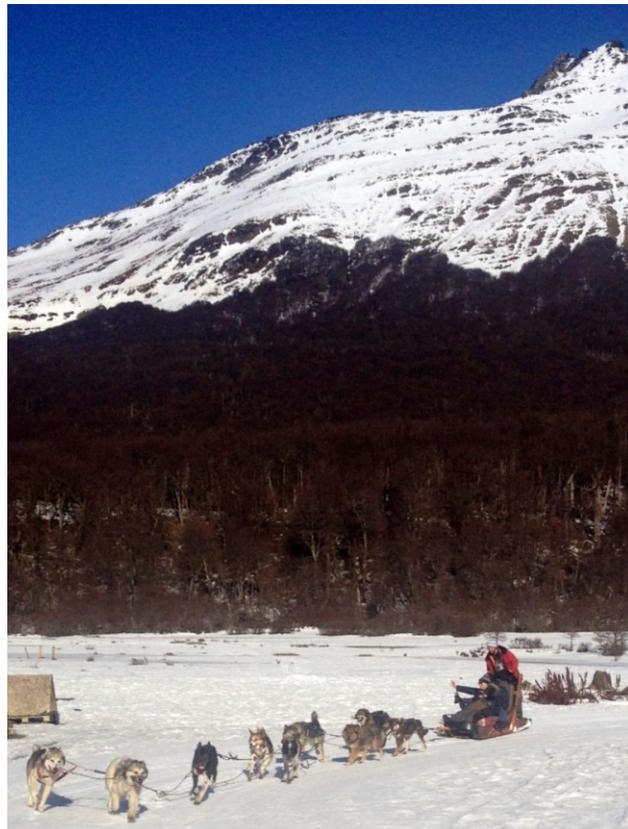


Photo by the author, 2018

Work, in this context, seems to operate as a domesticity regime. Piero Leirner, in an unpublished manuscript, suggested that “the consumption of the animal labor force (...) is as productive as that of the human labor force”. Furthermore, for Leirner “oxen came out of the condition known as ‘wild pets’ precisely because they pledged as a condition of their domestication their engagement in the form of (...) producers of their own conditions of production”. It seems to me that sled dogs in *Siberianos* are also producers of their own production conditions: without them, there would be no economic touristic practice of mushing in Ushuaia. As parts of the same production system, dogs and mushers work, live together and cohabit the same environment. Tourism work itself is, at least in part, an alternative for those (humans) interested in this kind of relationship. As Porcher suggested in relation to other contexts, I propose that the main gain (in a pecuniary sense) from this economic practice in Tierra del Fuego serves, perhaps mainly, to preserve this very particular cohabitation of dogs and mushers: “Living together is a founding rationale of work. (...) Animals do not serve just to generate income; it is income that serves cohabitation with livestock” (Porcher 2014:4).

On the other hand, there are animals that are outside the realm of humans – and therefore beyond the power relationships and structures that would give them any degree of significance. Here I am thinking exclusively about dogs and their different statuses. In Tierra del Fuego, it’s the so-called wild dogs that best reflect this condition. As far as they are concerned, these animals left their condition of “domestic animal” precisely because they lost their condition as “work producer” – either pulling sleds or working “informally” (Coulter 2016:77) in Fuegian homes as pets. And yet, despite occupying a position as an invasive alien species, “the feral is the element that makes every set or regime of domesticity an unconscious totality, a structure that is necessarily hollow and porous, permeated by multiple lines of escape” (Sordi 2017:288).

In turn, dogs on Ushuaia’s streets are located in transitory categories, between those who have owners and those who live in “jaurías” and attack Fuegian sheep flocks – the feral dogs *par excellence*: “perros callejeros” may be abandoned dogs, “runaway” dogs, and even dogs deliberately released by their owners for a short (or long) period. Yet, as among animal protectors with whom Osório worked, in Ushuaia “the domestication process only makes sense if the animal becomes property” (Osório 2013:157) – or may become, as is the case with stray dogs. For those who have already lost their status as “domestic animal”, “wild” and “feral” are the most common adjectives.

On the one hand, feral dogs have become feral as a result of abandonment; they therefore owe their “nature” to a “cultural” practice. On the other hand, sled dogs are, according to the mushers, “naturally” good workers. Meanwhile, for tourists, they’re either “poor things” who shouldn’t work (because dogs are pets, not workers!) or they arouse interest and fascination for being very similar to wolves – in other words, for being (almost) wild. Maybe they arouse interest precisely because of their condition as “almost wild”, because they represent, in a certain way, the domestication of the wild (through work). About the Patou (a herding canine breed), Cummins wrote that “while domesticated, the Patou reminds us of the wild” (Cummins 2009:120). In a sense, it’s as if the very idea of work – and in the case of wild dogs, of feral – was intuitive, independent of experience and practice, as if it originally had nothing to do with humans.

It was from this abundance of canines – and the fluidity of these animals’ statuses – that I was able to reflect in this paper on the existence of a spectrum that ranges from domestic to wild, passing through interstitial categories. Among the Fuegian dogs, the domestic/wild and nature/culture dichotomies tend to be more inter-related than separated domains. As Vander Velden suggested (2018:43), recognizing “the richness and porosity of the boundaries between nature (wild/sylvan) and culture (domestic/domesticated)” leads us, for example, “to rethink domestication as a continuous and permanent process”.

There has been much discussion in anthropology about dogs as pets (Oliveira 2006; Segata 2012; Pastori 2012; Teixeira 2016), while largely ignoring dogs in other contexts – including work, sport, the market and their condition as feral animals, themes that are dear to this paper. This has limited our understanding of what a dog is and what a dog can do and the relations that connect them to human collectives, since there are different ways of being with dogs (Fijn 2018) and different ways of being a dog. Thus, throughout this paper the relationships between dogs, sleds and humans, as well as between feral dogs, humans and other non-humans, were thought of as naturecultures (Haraway 2003, 2008), which are connected through work (and the absence of work), in an attempt to reveal what dogs can do and what they are in Tierra del Fuego.

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# Exchange, Friendship and Regional Relations in the Upper Xingu

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## Abstract

The aim of this work is to describe and analyze the different types of relationships established between the peoples of the Upper Xingu through their regional rituals. Starting from a description of the *uluki* exchange ceremony, we will discuss how this ritual, by mobilizing Xinguano ideas about friendship, produces contexts of interaction in which characteristics of intra-village sociality are extended to regional sociality. At the same time that the *uluki* defines, together with other regional rituals, a certain “Xinguano interiority” (the world of multi-community rituals), it is also one of its main forms of opening, having the potential to attract to the Xinguano world not only singular persons, but entire groups.

**Keywords:** Amerindian peoples, rituals, exchange, friendship, Upper Xingu.

# Troca, amizade e relações regionais no Alto Xingu

## Resumo

A intenção deste trabalho é descrever e analisar os diferentes tipos de relações estabelecidas entre os povos do Alto Xingu por meio de seus rituais regionais. Partindo de uma descrição da cerimônia de trocas *uluki*, discutiremos como este ritual, ao mobilizar ideias xinguanas sobre a amizade, produz contextos de interação no qual características da socialidade intra-aldeã são ampliadas para a socialidade regional. Ao mesmo tempo em que o *uluki* define, em conjunto com outros rituais regionais, uma certa “interioridade xinguanas” (o mundo dos rituais multicomunitários), ele é também uma de suas principais formas de abertura, tendo o potencial de atrair para o mundo alto-xinguanas não apenas pessoas singulares, mas grupos inteiros.

**Palavras-chave:** Povos ameríndios, rituais, troca, amizade, Alto Xingu.

# Exchange, Friendship and Regional Relations in the Upper Xingu<sup>1</sup>

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This article considers how the *uluki*, a regional ritual concerned with the exchange of objects, contributes to the constitution of the Upper Xingu regional system. Starting with a description of the ritual and comparing its formal aspects to two other inter-community rituals, the Quarup and the Jawari, we discuss how the diverse aspects of the *uluki* engage Xinguano ideas of friendship, producing interactional contexts within which the characteristics of intra-village sociality are broadened to regional sociality (Hugh-Jones 2013). While a significant number of authors focus on affinity (considered through enmity and warfare) as the main characteristic of supralocal relations in Amazonia, we will here show how, in the Upper Xingu, such relations can also be enacted on a collective scale through a category of ‘para-kinship’, that of ‘friendship’. This article thus contributes to an understanding of the place of ritual in producing multi-ethnic social formations in Amazonia.

The region known as the Upper Xingu (Mato Grosso State, Brazil) is composed of eleven peoples, speakers of three of the main language families of South America (Arawak, Carib, Tupi), as well a linguistic isolate (Trumai)<sup>2</sup>. Despite the specificities of each of these groups, a dense web of relations and a shared pacifist ethos have contributed to the characterization of the region as a “regional society”, or, even, a “moral community” (Basso 1973). The Upper Xingu comprises a multi-ethnic and multilingual system, solidly articulated through multi-community exchanges, marriages, and rituals. The ritual system, in fact, defines the limits of humanity: to be a person in the Upper Xingu is, among other things, to participate in regional rituals, most of them sponsored by (and for) chiefs and their kinspeople.

Studies of Xinguano ritual have paid careful attention to, on the one hand, the main intertribal rituals that celebrate chieftaincy (such as the Quarup or the Jawari<sup>3</sup>), and, on the other, the “spirit feast” rituals<sup>4</sup> that foreground relations between humans and non-humans, such as the mask rituals described by Barcelos Neto (2008) and Piedade (2004). However, not much has been written on the main exchange ritual in the region, the *uluki*, or ‘Moitará’<sup>5</sup>, as it is most commonly known. This ritual merges aspects of the chiefly rituals and the spirit feasts, without being exactly coterminous with any of the two ‘styles’.

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2 There are the Mehinaku, Wauja and Yawalapíti, speakers of Arawak languages; the Kalapalo, Nahukua, Kuikuro, Matipu and Naruvotu, Carib-speakers; the Kamayurá and Aweti, speakers of Tupi languages and finally the Trumái who speak an isolated language.

3 Both are ritual cycles of variable duration carried out “in honour” of the illustrious dead, and centred on the production of different types of mortuary effigies, as well as in sportive competitions, such as Upper Xinguano wrestling in the Quarup, and javelin-throwing in the Jawari. Both will be discussed in more detail later.

4 In this article, we use feast and ritual as synonyms, to cover all events in which relational forms seen to be antagonistic are superimposed, producing complex interactive contexts specific to ritual action, from which the latter draws its effectiveness (Houseman & Severi 1998).

5 For some ethnographic descriptions of this ritual, see Basso (1973), Ball (2007) and Quain (1966).

As well as common participation in regional rituals, another characteristic of humanity among Upper Xinguanos is exchange, whether through marriage, knowledge transmission, rituals, or, in the case we will analyse here, objects. Among the Wauja, for instance, Piedade (2004: 22) translates *putakanau* (a term equivalent to “people”) as “people who lend”. Dole (1958: 125) has described the Kuikuro as being “constantly preoccupied with the exchange of goods and services and with equalizing accounts”, a fact also emphasised by Fausto (2016). Among the Kalapalo, this characteristic is narrated in a version of the creation myth registered by Basso (1987: 29-81). Here, the mother’s sister of the twins Sun (Taügi) and Moon (Aulukumã) was magically impregnated after walking over arrows left on the ground by Taügi. She gave birth to the ancestors of the “wild Indians” (*ngikogo*, non-xinguanos), the ancestors of Xinguanos peoples and the ancestors of the whites (*kagaiha*). Taügi gave each of them distinct objects: clubs for the first, bows, gourds, belts, and necklaces of *inhu* (*Megalobulimus* sp.) shells to the second, and clothing, knives, axes, scissors, etc, to the ancestors of the whites. Taügi also told the ancestors of the Xinguanos that “When you need things in the future / You can visit other villages / You will exchange your objects with each other / When you need to / You will give your things”<sup>6</sup>.

Exchange being a central element in the constitution of Xinguanos “people”, our aim is to understand how the *uluki* contributes to the constitution of this “regional system” – that is, to the establishment of a multi-ethnic constellation which identifies as a common humanity in opposition to its neighbours, and which extends out toward the scale of inter-community relations elements that, elsewhere in Amazonia, seem to be the preserve of the sociality of local groups (Hugh-Jones 2013; Andrello, Guerreiro, and Hugh-Jones 2015). If, as Menezes Bastos (1978) proposed, the ritual system is the *lingua franca* of the Upper Xingu, then it may be possible to think of the *uluki* as one of the main sources of creativity/innovation (in Leach’s [2004] sense) – and of overture – in the regional system. The *uluki* is, after all, one of the few rituals that allows for the inclusion and active participation of non-Xinguanos, whether these be other peoples who live on the frontiers of the Upper Xingu social world (such as the Kĩsêdjê and Yudjá, for example), or even the whites.

Our discussions here are based on field observations among the Kalapalo, who, alongside the Kuikuro, Matipu, Nahukwa and Angaguhütü, are one of the five Carib-speaking people of the Upper Xingu. The Kalapalo number a little over 900 people, distributed among 11 villages, most of them on the banks of the Culuene River (main tributary of the Xingu). The ethnography that follows focuses on events that occurred at different times<sup>7</sup> among the Kalapalo of Aiha, the largest of their villages, situated on the right bank of the Culuene River. Let us start, then, with the ritual.

## The *uluki*

The *uluki* can be an intra-village ritual, in which men of different houses exchange with each other and women of different houses exchange with each other, or an inter-village ritual, involving a visiting people in which men and women exchange together.<sup>8</sup> In the latter case, the ritual of exchange occurs alongside rituals which do not occur in the intra-village *uluki*. As we mentioned above, it is likewise not uncommon

6 Loose translation provided by Jeika Kalapalo, based on the original audio recording, referring to lines 1985 to 1990 of the narrative published by Basso (1987: 78).

7 This article results from long-term research among the Kalapalo of Aiha, begun in 2006, and distributed over various stays in the village. The only inter-ethnic *uluki* we attended during this period, and which is the basis for the description that follows, occurred in February 2015.

8 Basso (1973: 136) claims that, during her research, only men participated in inter-village events and that female *uluki* within villages was quite rare. This is very different from the situation we have found at Aiha since our very first visits. At present, women follow men and actively take part of events that engage more than one people. During the ritual, they activate their own circuits of exchange. Furthermore, exclusively female inter-village *uluki* are frequently organized, throughout the year, whenever a woman is interested in holding one (which, it must be said, is more often than men). The decision to hold *uluki* may be spurred by a specific event, such as families who were in town returning to the village, or simply because they “like holding *uluki*” and use it as means to pass the time. This fondness for the *uluki* is shared by girls, who often hold “play” *uluki*. Unlike Basso’s (1973: 137), we did not witness any *uluki* held exclusively between boys. On the relationship of women to *uluki*, see Novo (2018) and Franchetto (1996).

for dignitaries of Upper Xinguano people to visit villages that are not integrally part of this system, such as those of the Kĩsêdjê (Suyá) or Kawaiwete (Kayabi)<sup>9</sup>, in order to hold *uluki*. The main motivation for these events is the chance to acquire specific objects offered by these peoples (particularly feathers and jaguar claws or coats from the Kĩsêdjê, and tucum and annatto necklaces from the Kawaiwete), or else the opportunity to visit their villages, see their rituals, and, perhaps, to dance with their women (in these cases the rituals which are performed depend on knowledge of their respective repertoires). Simplified versions of the *uluki* are also carried out with whites who visit the village, and they are an important aspect of relations with the non-Indigenous people who work in the Indigenous Territory. Despite these many possibilities, we will here focus on inter-village rituals that occur within the “Xinguano system”, so as to engage in comparison with other regional rituals in which different relational forms are stressed.

Unlike other multi-community rituals, *uluki* has no marked origin, and lacks a designated origin story (*akinha*) that registers its beginnings.<sup>10</sup> According to the main storytellers (*akinha oto*) in Aiha “It was Taügi [the Sun, demiurge who created humanity] who made *uluki*. It was not *itseke* [...] Taügi made *uluki* so that we might attend *uluki*”. Thus, unlike most of other rituals, *uluki* was not learned from the *itseke*, the hyper-beings, nor from other Xinguano people.

Another characteristic that distinguishes the *uluki* from other Upper Xinguano rituals is the fact that it lacks an owner<sup>11</sup>. The rituals carried out during inter-village *uluki* (which will be described below) have specific owners, but *uluki* itself does not. They do have *ugihongo* (literally “the one who goes on the stool”), who “conduct their people to rituals in other villages” (Guerreiro 2015: 160), a function present in all multi-community rituals. The implications of lacking an owner will be discussed below.

Finally, like other exchange rituals, such as the *dabucuris* of the Upper Rio Negro, or the Melanesian *kula*, the *uluki* does not only provide a context for exchange, but is, itself, a gift: every *uluki* demands a return, and the visiting village will later receive the host village (thus inverting their respective positions), even if this takes a few years. The demand for a return generates a virtually endless cycle of relations between villages that alternate as guest and host.

The word *uluki* has an Arawak origin, *huluki*, and it refers to the ‘swallow’ (*kugupiso* in Kalapalo)<sup>12</sup>. This name registers the fact that inter-village *uluki* always occur during the rainy season, which is when flights of swallows can be seen above villages. The Kalapalo also believe that the *uluki* is capable of halting rains, an idea present among other peoples of the region (such as the Yawalapití, cf. Viveiros de Castro [1977: 108], and the Kĩsêdjê, cf. Coelho de Souza, pers. com.).

In every other multi-community ritual, the host group is responsible for sending messengers to formally invite the chiefs of other groups, a key element in Upper Xinguano diplomacy. For the *uluki*, in contrast, visitors are not invited; instead, they initiate the event. An inter-village *uluki* is always an initiative of the visiting village, which decides to carry out the event some time before it occurs, allowing for their own wrestlers to get ready. These preparations involve training sessions for the wrestlers, and scarifications followed by the application of remedies, the ingestion of emetics (made from specific plants and roots), as well as rehearsals

9 By this we mean that although these people maintain relations with Upper Xinguanos, to different degrees, they do not fully take part in their ritual system and are not considered *kuge*, “Xinguano persons”. This distinction is important, because while the Xinguano relational network is heterogenous and dynamic, ritual life is responsible for continuously buttressing the difference between Xinguano and non-Xinguano people (*kuge/ngikogo* in the Kalapalo language).

10 Menezes Bastos (2001: 344) notes something similar for the Jawari: “The ritual (*toryp*) itself does not have a mythic origin (‘from the beginning’ plainly given”. However, in this case, the ‘absence’ of a mythic origin is, for the author, linked to a “historical” memory of its acquisition, since the ritual was introduced into the Upper Xingu through the Trumai, and spread throughout the region by the Kamayurá. *Uluki*, in contrast, seems to have neither a mythical nor a properly “historical” origin.

11 Barcelos Neto (2008: 180) claims that, for the Wauja, the exchange ritual is owned by someone who became ill due to the *Huluki* spirits. Vanzolini (2015: 114) also describes a similar situation among the Aweti (who call the ritual *joro’jyt*). However, we have never heard anything similar among the Kalapalo, who, in contrast, explicitly told us that the *uluki* did not have any owner.

12 Despite the existence of this term in Carib, people rarely use it, always referring to *uluki* to designate more or less ritualized exchanges.

for the ritual that will be performed. It is only a few days before the scheduled date that the hosts are informed, via radio, that the ritual will take place. This catches their own wrestlers unprepared, weak and “smelling of sex”<sup>13</sup>, which makes them into potentially weaker adversaries.

As with other rituals involving more than one people, and, consequently, bringing together residents of different villages, the *uluki* enlivens those who participate in it. The event we accompanied originated with the Wauja, who wanted to hold a ritual in Aiha. The potential visitors informed their intention about one week before the day they were due to arrive in the village, but a few days later they cancelled the visit because one of their chiefs had to be hospitalized. Kalapalo frustration was widespread, considering that even people from other villages (who identified as being Kalapalo) had already arrived at Aiha only to participate in the ritual. It was precisely because of frustrated expectations that the Kalapalo decided to go to the main Kuikuro village of Ipatse. Having made the decision, and informing the Kuikuro only three days before the date they were due, they began to worry over the logistics of transporting everyone (and all their goods) to Ipatse.

Alongside logistical matters, the preparation also involved “rehearsing” the rituals to be performed. These rehearsals are part of the preparation of all rituals, particularly those involving different peoples, and they can be repeated over a long period of time – up to a year in the case of the Quarup, for example. But, unlike the chiefly rituals that involve longer preparations and frequent rehearsals, the *uluki* are little-rehearsed. The main reason for this is the short time between when the event is decided upon and when it is set to occur, but also the fact that the *uluki* is marked by improvisation and little formality, characteristics that mark relations of friendship in the Upper Xingu.

### **From hierarchy to symmetry: hosting chiefs and exchanging with friends**

Following Houseman and Severi (1998), we understand rituals as specific relational and interactive contexts, marked by a sequence of acts that condense “opposing modes of relationship” (Houseman and Severi 1998: xii). We will see how the sequence of *uluki* sometimes privileges the distinction between groups (by stressing, on the one hand, the hierarchy of chiefs and commoners, and, on the other, the symmetry between chiefs themselves), and sometimes their approximation, thus creating the conditions for the exchange of objects to occur.

In the morning, a small flotilla of five boats and dozens of people left the port of Aiha headed for the main port of the village of Ipatse. In a clearing, close to the entrance to the village, the recently-arrived visitors began to paint and adorn themselves, shouting *küu*, and thereby informing the hosts of their arrival and indicating joy and casualness. From where we were, we could also hear the same shouts coming from the host village.

When preparations were through, the visitors went in single file along the main path that accesses the village patio, led by three chiefs – the *ugihongo*. During the walk, these chiefs spoke<sup>14</sup>, referring to the hosting chiefs, saying that they brought with them “a group of friends made up of your brothers” (Guerreiro 2015: 352)<sup>15</sup>. Upon nearing the centre of the village, the *ugihongo* were taken by the hands by Kuikuro men to take a seat in stools placed before the men’s house (a small house erected in the village patio, situated slightly to the west, and forbidden to women). The remaining Kalapalo positioned themselves behind their chief-dignitaries. The positions of the *ugihongo* are defined hierarchically by age: the eldest, considered the principal *ugihongo*, sits in the middle, followed by the one who sits to his left, and, finally, the one who sits to his right.

13 Applying remedies and ingesting emetics involve dietary and sexual restrictions, since the taste or odour of some foods, as well as the odour of sex and menstrual blood, disturb the spirit owners of the plants to be used (which confer “strength” on the wrestlers). Disturbed in this way, the spirits can cause harm on those who do not observe the restrictions, which can culminate in death. On Kalapalo wrestling, see Costa (2013).

14 In the *uluki* we witnessed, none of the *ugihongo* knew this speech, which was therefore proffered by Tühoni, the second chief of Aiha.

15 For lack of space, we will not reproduce here the complete speeches, but a version of these speech (which we take as our reference) was published by Guerreiro (2015: 352-353).

Then, the main Kuikuro chief, considered to be the “owner of the village” (*ete oto*), left his home donning the chiefly insignia – jaguar skin-hat, snail shell-necklace, jaguar claw-necklace, holding a black bow and its arrow – and began to speak, standing before his house, looking towards the village centre (we were unable to register the speech at that time, and we do not have a Kalapalo version). When he finished, the Kuikuro chief walked to the village centre and, turning to the house of another chief, spoke again, beckoning him to the centre. He repeated the procedure again, facing the house of a young chief, who, along with two others, made up the trio of Kuikuro *ugihongo*-chiefs, which will henceforth be called *imünhilo*, “opponent”, which is how the Kalapalo refer to the *ugihongo* of the host village. The two *imünhilo* called up by the Kuikuro chief made their way to the village centre and spoke to the one who called them. After this, each of the *imünhilo* in turn, beginning with the main one, addressed the Kalapalo *ugihongo* while bending towards the ground and spoke, while the *ugihongo* in front of him proffered his own speech.<sup>16</sup>

In the Kalapalo version of the speech we registered<sup>17</sup>, which they only perform when they are the hosts of the *uluki*, the chiefs do not refer to one another as ‘friends’ or ‘brothers’, as they do when they are visitors, but rather by the term of address *tongisa*, a synonym of *anetü* (‘chief’) but conveying a more respectful tone (Guerreiro 2015). This can be explained by the fact that Upper Xinguano people worry considerably about “hosting well” those in their homes (or, in this case, their village), which means that hosts should not only offer porridge and other foodstuffs, but also “speak well” with the guests, displaying “[the] noble demeanor, which in the Xingu centers on the conceptual cluster of shame, respect and humility” (Ball 2011: 96). Thus, for example, every time a guest is welcomed in the home (excepting very close kinspeople), they should be offered a stool or some other object that can function as a bench, which will be placed close to the door of the house, where they should sit, along with the host(s), to talk. Something similar takes place in the *uluki*: visiting chiefs are placed on stools and the hosts “talk” with them through welcoming speeches, treating them with respect through use of the vocative *tongisa*.

When the speeches were over, the women of the *imünhilo*’s houses (their wives, daughters, daughters-in-law, and granddaughters, depending on each case) brought out large pans with porridge, cooked fish, as well as roast fish and manioc bread, which were given to the *ugihongo* by the *imünhilo*. Both the performances of the welcoming speeches and the quantity and quality of the food offered are later commented by the visitors among themselves (never directly to the hosts), as an important part of the hospitality of the hosts and, consequently, of the ritual itself.

After they have received the food, the *ugihongo* handed the gifts they had brought over to the *imünhilo*, who were obliged to later reciprocate them. Other inter-village rituals contain the expectation of gifts offered from the chiefs of the guests to the owner of the ritual, but always at its conclusion. In the *uluki*, this offering occurs at the outset, generating an initial disequilibrium which impels partners to exchange. Gifts offered should be reciprocated by something defined by the one who offers the initial gift. This payment (*hipügü*) is decided on the last day of the ritual, when the farewell speeches take place. The gifts offered by the *ugihongo* are always items of high value, ideally items that are representative of the regional productive specializations, such as Kalapalo snail shell-necklaces, Wauja ceramics, Kamayurá black bows, Matipu striped snail shell-necklaces, and Aweti salt. If these objects are lacking, however, other valuables can be offered, such as aluminium pots, glass beads, etc. In the ritual we attended, the gifts offered were *inhu* snail-necklaces and belts, which were gathered and taken home by the *imünhilo*. Then the wrestling matches (*ikindene*) began.

<sup>16</sup> As with the speech proffered on entering the village, none of the *ugihongo* owned this speech, which was recited all three times by Uaja, the first chief of Aiha.

<sup>17</sup> We take as our reference the version published in Guerreiro (2015).

The main regional Xinguano ritual involving wrestling is the Quarup, but, yet again, there are important differences in wrestling matches in the two rituals. In the Quarup, the owners of the ritual select and present the main wrestlers before the matches involving each of the invited peoples, whereas in the *uluki* there is no formal presentation. In the latter, the guest and host wrestlers are simply called up by their respective *ugihongo*, one by one, to face each other. After the main wrestlers have faced each other, all men were allowed to wrestle. At this point, various wrestling matches occurred simultaneously, as also happens during the Quarup.

There are other differences between the wrestling matches of the *uluki* and those of the Quarup. In the former they do not last as long as they do in the latter, and, more importantly, they occur within a generalised climate of amity. During the wrestling matches of the Quarup, it is not uncommon for small fights to break out, involving at times the wrestlers' families (particularly their mothers), who accuse opponents of cheating or of being sorcerers. During the *uluki*, the atmosphere during the matches is quite different. Even though some wrestlers occasionally get hurt, we have never heard of any sort of mutual accusations between guests and hosts. As if to mark the casualness of the event, wrestlers embrace each other at the end of the bout, smiling, before going their own ways to take up new matches with other opponents. Writing of wrestling during the Quarup, Costa (2013) stresses that they almost invariably end with an embrace immediately followed by a push away, pointing to the ambivalence of the relationship between the wrestlers. In the *uluki* opponents only embrace each other, and, at the end, Kuikuro and Kalapalo men and women greeted each other, one-by-one and protractedly, making a point of demonstrating all the joy and friendliness about them.

After everyone had greeted everyone else, the guests returned to their initial formation, with the *ugihongo* sitting down and the remaining people positioned behind them. Three further stools were placed before the *ugihongo*, where the *imünhilo* sat, each one facing his "opponent". The *ugihongo* initiate the exchanges, placing on the ground, in front of themselves, the objects that are made available, each one saying what they expect to receive in return (if they do not want anything specific, they may say only *uhitseke gele*, which means something like "whatever"). These first objects offered by the *ugihongo* are accepted by the *imünhilo*, who take them from the ground and thus initiate the exchange cycles. To an external observer, the whole process may look like a great bazaar. Men and women of the visiting group give their objects over to their chiefs, who are sitting before the chiefs of the hosts, indicating whether they expect something specific in exchange. It is the chief who deposits the object on the ground, before his "opponent" (whoever is sitting in front of him), who picks it up and presents it to his group, indicating what the payment should be if this has been specified by the giver. Within this configuration, up to three consecutive exchanges may take place, each one led by one of the chiefs, which compounds the external observers' impression of "confusion".

However, unlike a market or bazaar, the exchanges carried out in the *uluki* are not limited to the circulation of merchandise. Although they may involve industrialised goods, and even money, *uluki* exchanges are best understood in light of what anthropology has traditionally called "gift exchange" (see, for example, Gregory [1982]). Exchange focuses not on a (quantitative) relation between exchanged objects, but on the (qualitative) relations established between people. In this case, rather than persons, it is groups which are the units of exchange, personified in the figure of the chiefs who exchange between each other, and who elicit of each other the positions of giver and receiver of objects at different moments. This occurs because, after some time has passed where the visitors offer up their objects, the positions are inverted and the hosts come to offer, in the same format, the objects they want to exchange. In these exchange sessions, groups are constantly evaluating each other and exchanging, not only objects, but also images of themselves (and the *uluki* itself projects the virtual continuity of exchanges into the future).

Despite the semblance of confusion, with many things happening at the same time, people are always very much attentive to actual exchanges, commenting on the value and quality of the objects offered, cheering whenever an object of great value is exchanged. It is more typical for the more common, and hence "cheaper"

(*taloki*, 'worthless'), objects to be paid immediately. Nonetheless, arrangements can be made between the people involved in exchange, particularly where valuable goods are concerned, payment of which would require some later effort by the receiver. Despite the efforts of the *ugihongo*, not all exchanges are consummated: some objects which do not generate interest, or which no one is able to pay, are not exchanged, and return to their original owners.

The objects that circulate, offered by men as well as by women, include, among other things: snail shell-necklaces, aluminium pans of various sizes, glass beads, feathers, feather bracelets, dresses, soap, rifle shells, arrows, pequi dough, roast fish, fishhooks, coffee, sugar, wool, motorcycle parts, watches, and even money. Becker [Basso] (1969: 252) describes that, in the late 1960s, "certain 'valuable' items, namely shell ornaments, hardwood bows, and very large ceramics, rarely appear during an *uluki* ceremony, and it is usually 'lesser' items which are exchanged here". In the *uluki* we attended, in contrast, a reasonable quantity of items considered valuable were offered in exchange, particularly snail shell-necklaces and belts, large aluminium pans, glass bead-belts and necklaces with dozens of coils. However, most of the hundreds of transactions that effectively occurred involved items of small value. The most valuable objects exchanged on that day were offered by men, since women store their most valuable property to exchange the following day, in an all-female *uluki*. As Quain (1966) pointed out, the *uluki* functions as a sort of game, in which people (and groups) look to present themselves as generous, offering valuable objects, but also retaining part of their possessions as payment for some desired good that may be offered later. It is not exactly what Weiner (1992) has called "keeping while giving", since these objects are not retained because of their inalienable value, as she defines it, but as means for extracting objects of greater value in future exchanges. This applies mostly to women, who hold their own *uluki* later.

At any rate, the matter we want to stress is that exchanges are not that personalized (individualized) nor is it always possible to even know who offered or paid for the exchanged objects. Exchanges occur between groups personalized in the figure of their *ugihongo*-chiefs, and not between individuals. And since groups that are on friendly terms exchange between themselves, a relation of equilibrium should be maintained between the exchanging parties. For this reason, it is only when the receiver cannot pay what is asked of an object that an effort is made to find out who its owner actually is, so that a deferred payment can be arranged; only debt (and hence hierarchy, even if temporary) makes singular persons appear in these transactions. Otherwise, exchanges are highly impersonal.

### **Celebrating friendship through ritual**

When exchanges were completed (that is, when people no longer had objects to offer), the visiting group was finally lodged in one of the houses of the village. Unlike most inter-village rituals, where visitors camp in uncultivated areas outside of the circle of houses, in the *uluki* all of the visiting group is lodged in the same house, within the village circle. The visitors should share the food they received with the owners of the house in which they are staying. The rituals begin that very evening, and will last the whole night and the following two days. They are promoted by the guests, using instruments and ornaments provided by the hosts. The first ritual to be performed is the *unduhe* (also known as *Tawarawanã*), which is accompanied by the *kagutu* flutes, which are forbidden to women. In the following day the *takuaga* is executed, which is also a ritual involving aerophones. As we will see later, both are "spirit rituals" that have specific owners in each village, and which, despite this common characteristic, are nonetheless quite different from each other. According to the Kalapalo, there is no special reason why these two rituals in specific should be performed during the *uluki*. In effect, there does not seem to be any characteristic shared by these two rituals (*unduhe* and *takwaga*) that sets them apart other spirit rituals that occur in the region, and which could have linked them to the *uluki*. However, it may be possible to consider them, alongside the *uluki* exchanges, as examples of the

process of constructing the “Upper Xinguano complex”, or of “Xinguanization”, as described by Franchetto (2011) and Fausto, Franchetto and Heckenberger (2008). According to these authors, this process includes a distinction between “mythical time” and “historical time”: “While the ‘original’ peoples were directly created by the mythical heroes, others made themselves ‘Xinguano’ by adopting Upper Xinguano ceremonialism and pacific, ethical and aesthetical values, [and] a specific diet” (Franchetto 2011: 16). If, as we have seen, Xinguano peoples define themselves by exchange, and if the Upper Xinguano complex is composed of mythical and historical elements, the contemporary configuration of the *uluki* emerges as exemplary: a ritual the purpose of which is to exchange and which is accompanied by two rituals, one “mythical”, learned from the fish (the *unduhe*), and other “historical”, the *takuaga*, learned from the Bakairi.

Regardless of the origin of the rituals, the main issue for Xinguano people seems to be the fact that they are carried out so that people can “be happy”. Thus, it is common that during sporting events or meetings that involve people from different villages (and/or white people), they perform “ritual sketches” involving dancing and/or singing, and very often the rituals “presented” are, precisely, the *takuaga* and the *unduhe*<sup>18</sup>. Let us now turn to how these take place during the *uluki*.

The first ritual sequence begins with the owner of the trio of *kagutu* flutes of the host village, handing them over to the *ugihongo*, who then hand them over to the visiting men who will be responsible for playing them throughout the night and the following day. There are few men in Aiha who know how to play these flutes. In the first night, the flutes are played in the village patio, once the women have gone home, where they keep the doors shut. Throughout the remaining days, the music is played exclusively in the men’s house. In the context of the *uluki*, the *kagutu* music is played exclusively as an accompaniment (*akongo*, “which goes together”) to the *unduhe*.

According to the Kalapalo, there are two versions of the *unduhe*: the snake *unduhe*, which is said to belong to the Arawak speaking peoples, and the fish *unduhe* (which was learnt from the fish), which is the version that belongs to the Kalapalo.<sup>19</sup> This is one of the most frequently performed rituals in Upper Xinguano villages, an obligatory part of the ritual sketches that occur during events in the Xingu Indigenous Territory (particularly in the area of the Leonardo Vilas Boas Local Technical Coordination), as well as those in the city. This more “quotidian” version is a simplification of the complete version of the ritual, which is only sponsored once by its owner, when he decides to (quite literally) burn his *unduhugu* (which are the ritual objects kept by the owners of the spirit rituals – straw skirts in the case of the *unduhe*), and thereby ceases to be the owner of that ritual<sup>20</sup>. The “complete” version of the ritual occurs in the absence of guests, and dozens of songs are sung, referring not only to fish, but also to birds and other animals, just as they were previously sung/performed by fish.

In the simplified version of the ritual carried out during the *uluki*, the repertoire is shorter (and varies between groups) and requires much less work by the owner of the ritual, when compared to the complete version, since the owner needs a single fishing session to pay all of the dancers. To perform it, a singer stands in the centre, facing the men’s house, holding a bow in one hand and playing a maraca with the other, accompanied by another man who, sitting before him, thuds a bamboo on the ground (a *utinha*, which can also be made of PVC piping), marking the rhythm of the dance. The dancers, adorned with the leaves of a special plant and

18 The *kagutu* flutes are never played in these events, firstly because they are restricted to women, which would make the event unviable, or at least difficult, in many cases, but also because their execution demands a much more restricted knowledge than that which is necessary for executing the *takuaga* and *unduhe*.

19 The Kalapalo claim that the *unduhe* of the Kuikuro is also different from that which they own, possessing a smaller number of songs that are executed. On Kuikuro rituals, see Mehinaku (2010). Even if the Kalapalo version is distinct from that possessed by the Arawak-speaking people of the region, all of songs of the fish *unduhe* are in Arawak languages, as indeed are most of the songs of the other rituals. For a musical analysis of the Yawalapiti version of this ritual, see Almeida (2012).

20 The act of burning the *unduhugu* at the end of the ritual makes the owners of these rituals cease to be owners. The only spirit rituals that cannot be relinquished by burning their respective *unduhugu* are the *kagutu* (flute ritual forbidden to women) and the *tolo*, a female ritual where women sing in words with the *kagutu* flutes perform in melody. On the Kuikuro *tolo*, see Franchetto and Montagnani (2011).

straw skirts, situate themselves around the singer. The “chief” of the dancers (*sanetügü*) or “shouter” (*ihetogogu*) positions himself before the men’s house, facing the singer. It is this “shouter” who conducts the direction of the dance, indicating when the dancers are to approach the singer, when they should move back, and when the song should end. At the other extreme of the circle of men there is a second “shouter”, who only follows the first, responding to his shouts. Gradually, the women of the host village join the dance, forming a circle outside of the circle of men, and occasionally accompanying them, holding on to the tips of the buriti straw which makes the skirts.

This ritual continues throughout the day, with intervals that mark musical transitions. In the afternoon, the host men always dance, accompanied by the visiting women. But the groups do not mix: the group of visiting men dance with the host women and, later, the host men dance with the visiting women, taking turns. The *unduhe* ends late afternoon, a little before the final *kagutu* (both occurring concomitantly throughout the day).

We do not think it is accidental that the first ritual which occurs during the *uluki* has a “mythical” origin, having been learnt from the fish. According to Guerreiro (2015: 228), the fish present a sociality “closer to the Kalapalo ideal of intra-village sociality”, insofar as they do not hunt and are not fighters, behaviour which thus distinguishes them from predatory animals. It is hence a sort of “prototypical ritual”; indeed, *unduhe* designates not only this ritual, but is also used as a generic way to refer to any “ritual, spirit, mask” (Franchetto and Espírito Santo 2014). If the *uluki* is intended to mark the close relations between the groups involved, it hence makes sense to perform this ritual.

Through the three days of *uluki*, the visitors receive fish from the *imünhilo* and the owners of the rituals. Unlike other multi-community rituals, however, the visitors receive raw fish, as well as cooked/roasted fish prepared by the women who accompany the *ugihongo*. Furthermore, the fish is not always accompanied by manioc bread, so that these very same women ask for flour from the village houses. Both the offering of raw fish and the solicitation of flour by the women contribute to bringing the relations between the groups closer to those established in the internal ambience of the village – that is, those established between kinpeople.

At the end of the *unduhe*, the *ugihongo* call the *imünhilo* to the front of the house where they are staying and tell that they will leave the following day. The *imünhilo* respond that they should stay and dance more the following day.<sup>21</sup> The *ugihongo* agree and the owners of the sets of *takuaga* flutes<sup>22</sup> of the host village hand their instruments over to the *ugihongo*.

The *takuaga* is performed on the third and final day of the gathering, also by the visiting men, playing the instruments provided by the hosts and accompanied by the host women. As in the previous day, the Kuikuro men also danced, accompanied by the Kalapalo women, but for a shorter amount of time and making use of only one set of flutes (the Kalapalo had been given two sets).

The *takuaga* is a ritual that the Upper Xinguano people learned from the Bakairi. A set of songs of Yudjá origin have been added to the original Bakairi songs, along with a large set of songs that are invented by players, who have even added new flutes to the original set of five. As with *unduhe*, this ritual frequently occurs in Upper Xinguano villages “to make people happy”, and it also has a simplified version that is carried out within the village, in the absence of guests. The complete version of the ritual, unlike the complete version of the *unduhe*, requires the presence of guests from other villages, whose wrestlers face off against the host-wrestlers. At the end of the *takuaga*’s complete version, as with the *unduhe*, the instruments are burned and the ritual ceases to be owned by its owner.

21 Becker [Basso] (1969) describes that the host chiefs would tell their guests to stay so that they could fish for them. In her description, the visitors would not perform in this last day, but rather would go from house to house to receive gifts from their hosts. We heard no statement from the Kalapalo in support of this pattern.

22 Which are aerophones composed of five or more tubes, each one played by one person.

As a “fish ritual”, the *unduhe* underscores a possible identity between the groups that exchange with each other (the simulacrum that foreigners can see themselves as kinspeople to those who live in a same local group). The *takagua*, however, seems to always remind us of the constant opening up of the Upper Xinguano world to its (relative) exterior, and also of how the *uluki* has been, and continues to be, a privileged moment in this opening. It is perhaps for this reason, along with the fact that the songs performed in the *takuaga* are widely known and new ones can even be composed – which means that dancers/musicians do not depend on a specialist<sup>23</sup> – that it is the most regularly performed ritual in Aiha, and perhaps also in the other villages of the region. It is also the ritual chosen to end the *uluki*, celebrating the “happiness” of all those involved.

In the *uluki* we attended, which was marred by strong and incessant rains, dances ended far too early, close to midday, but ideally the groups should play the flutes until late into the afternoon. When the ritual ended, the *ugihongo* called the *imünhilo* to the centre of the village and made their farewell speeches (which we unfortunately did not register). It is then that the *ugihongo* tell the *imünhilo* what they expect in return for the presents offered at the start of the *uluki*. If they have what is solicited, the *imünhilo* immediately hand them over to the *ugihongo*, but this is not required, and the return gift can be given later. The visitors leave at dawn the following day, without ceremony, only with individual goodbyes between kinspeople and friends.

### The *uluki* and other rituals

As we have said, the *uluki* is part of a complex of multi-community rituals, and comparison with other rituals foregrounds some of its specificities. We will not go into a detailed description of these other rituals, some aspects of which have already been mentioned. However, by paying attention to the relational forms that characterize these contexts, we will see that each produces alternative and complementary socialities on an interethnic scale.

The two main inter-ethnic rituals in the region honour the illustrious dead: the Quarup and the Jawai (called, respectively, *egitsü* and *hagaka* in Kalapalo). The first is performed in memory of chiefs or their close kin, and reaches its climax in the production, exhibition and discard of a mortuary effigy that, although decorated, is not anthropomorphic, as well as in wrestling matches between hosts and guests. This is the largest Upper Xinguano inter-ethnic ritual, to which, ideally, all peoples of the region are invited. The first Quarup was held by Sun (one of the twin creators of humanity) in the village of the jaguars and other land animals, in honour of his mother. It marks the beginning of the time of humans, and participation in the ritual defines the limits of Upper Xinguano humanity. It is a ritual in which the difference between chiefs and non-chiefs is made visible in all stages of the ritual cycle, highlighting the asymmetries that characterize, on the one hand, the sociality of the local group, and, on the other, some of the asymmetrical relations between the local groups of a single people. Furthermore, by gathering Upper Xinguano humanity at a time which coincides with the definitive departing of the deceased to the village of the dead, the Quarup is organized along an opposition between the living and the dead, which allows Upper Xinguanos to mutually present themselves as consanguineal kinspeople who, together, mourn the loss of the deceased. This does not, however, mean that other relational forms are absent from the Quarup. Ritual enmity is repeatedly enacted in relations between chiefs, and, above all, in wrestling matches; symmetrical relations between the groups are also marked in the matches and in ritual exchanges; and potential affinity among them is made evident not only in ritual enmity, but also through offering, before the end of the ritual, pequi nuts to the guests by young women who have just left seclusion:

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<sup>23</sup> There are, indeed, musicians that are considered to be specialists, because of their extensive repertoire and skills, but they do not play a marked role as the owners of songs in other rituals.

in myth, the smell of pequi is produced by the smell of the vagina of women, and the circulation of pequi nuts (which are offered by the chiefs, in their villages, mixed into a broth) is a metaphorical circulation of women between the groups<sup>24</sup>.

The Jawari is also performed in honour of notable dead people, but it is an inter-ethnic ritual which usually opposes only two groups<sup>25</sup> in a javelin-throwing tournament. The ritual has a celestial origin, in which cross-cousins from distinct people publicly offend one another, addressing an anthropomorphic, and purposely grotesque, effigy, which they strike with their javelins or wooden staffs. The javelin-throwing tournaments are explicitly compared to war, and the Kalapalo say that they fear them more than the wrestling matches, since it is not uncommon for fishhooks or pieces of lead to be placed on javelin tips so as to seriously injure an opponent. The ritual is performed in honour of a chief, a great archer, or a great singer, on the condition that this chief has had an effigy in a Quarup. Organized around the conflict of cross-cousins, the ritual foregrounds the symmetrical opposition between groups who compete, between people who offend each other and duel, and the possible matrimonial ties that *were not realized* between groups (brothers-in-law, even if they are also cross-cousins, never face each other in the javelin-throwing tournament). However, as with the Quarup, this does not mean that other relational forms are not also present: the asymmetry between chiefs and non-chiefs is also marked in ritual hospitality; foreign chiefs also see themselves as kinspeople when, at the end of the ritual, the effigy of the dead is burned and they meet with the host-chiefs to mourn the deceased, while the exchange of food marks the relations between cross-cousins (men who were struck should take roast fish to the cross-cousin who hit him with his javelin).

Compared to both of these rituals, the *uluki* stands out in many respects. As we have seen, the first of these is that it does not have an owner, which makes it differ from other regional rituals and from spirit rituals. In chiefly rituals, the owners are close kinspeople of the honoured chief. In spirit rituals, the owners are people who were ill and who, during the healing process, had a shaman identify an *itseke* responsible for the theft of the patient's soul. From this moment on, the ill person becomes "owner" of the spirit, and it is his duty to sponsor its ritual, so as to tame it, to domesticate it (Barcelos Neto 2008; Franco Neto 2010). The owner of a ritual should provide food for the participants (dancers or singers, for example) and the guests, when there are guests. In the Quarup and the Jawari, the presence of the owners of rituals marks a hierarchical distinction between chiefs and commoners, as noted by Guerreiro (2015) and Fausto, Franchetto and Heckenberger (2008). In the *uluki*, even in the absence of an owner, the figure of the *ugihongo* makes visible, even if only momentarily, the people who are personified in these chiefs. However, this initial hierarchical differentiation quickly dissipates as the guests are all lodged in one of the village's house and the rituals begin. Any asymmetry that persists between the owners of the rituals that occur during the *uluki*, such as the *unduhe* and the *takuaga*, is necessarily linked to chieftaincy.

Another important difference concerns hospitality. This theme, which is practically absent from ethnographies of the Upper Xingu, is fundamental to supralocal relations and consists in elaborate and diversified practices according to the contexts and the agents in interaction, which can be described according to certain spacetime qualities (Munn 1986). In rituals, hospitality is not merely a "condition" for the rituals to occur; it is through hospitality that the contexts of ritual interaction are constructed and, consequently, ritual is directly affected by the forms that hospitality assumes. According to a spatial perspective, hospitality during the Quarup and the Jawari sets up a "good distance" between hosts and guests. Since their arrival, guests remain in camps outside the village, and their interactions with hosts is almost exclusively through the medium of chiefs. This distance is layered with an evident antagonism. Camps are seen to be dangerous,

24 For a detailed ethnography of the Quarup among the Kalapalo, see Guerreiro (2015).

25 Frequently, the host group is made up of more than one people. Nonetheless, the Jawari put only two teams into competition: hosts and their allies against guests.

places that should be avoided by the hosts, and guests frequently intone vocalizations meant to cause fear in the residents of the village. The temporal sequence of these rituals also seem to mark a series of “disjunctive conjunctions”: guests arrive and are treated as potential enemies; the chiefs of the guests offer gifts to the host coordinators; the ritual gradually reduces the distance between the groups, which, in turn, increases tensions; the event culminates in a sporting match, from which violence is never excluded; the host chiefs return the gifts of the guest chiefs, and the guests seek out their *friends* among the hosts, in order to quickly change gifts of little value before they leave.

The hospitality of the *uluki* takes a different form. In spatial terms, the guests arrive directly in the patio, and are then lodged in a house within the village circle. Once there, they receive visits, and share fully in the day-to-day activities of their hosts, without the need for chiefly mediation. The temporality of the stages of the ritual also differs: the visiting chiefs offer gifts to the host chiefs; men fight, in an informal and casual manner; exchange is intense, and the circulation of objects of great value is anxiously awaited; the rituals that occur during the *uluki* enact the potential of the exchange of wives between the groups; and when the host chiefs return the gifts, the groups do not go their own ways, but remain a further day, eating together and celebrating.

There is one last difference worth emphasizing, in what concerns the foodstuffs offered in each ritual. In the Quarup and the Jawari, only cooked food ready for consumption is offered: in the former ritual, the main food is smoked fish, a product that results mainly from men’s work; in the second, it is said that the aim is to “drink the *perereba*” (sweet porridge made from manioc broth) made by the sisters of the hosts, emphasizing the consumption of food that is liquid, has a vegetal origin, and is feminine. In *uluki*, however, hosts often offer *raw food* (fish and manioc flour), which is to be prepared by the women of the visiting chiefs. The *uluki* inverts the pattern of hospitality of the other rituals, bringing the visitors into the circle of houses, allowing them to participate in quotidian activities, and supplementing the ritualized exchanged of cooked food (which is also present) with commensality, circulation of raw foodstuffs and sharing of a hearth. It is the largest ritual effort at expanding, to the inter-ethnic scale, the sociality of the local group.

It is also worth noting that each of these rituals is associated with different sociocosmological domains. In myth, the Quarup is a ritual sponsored by the Sun in the village of the jaguars and other terrestrial animals, where the fish are guests and opponents. The Jawari, in turn, is a bird ritual with a celestial origin. The *uluki*, as we have seen, lacks a mythical origin like the two other rituals, but combines rituals of aquatic origin (*kagutu* and *unduhe*).

The following table synthesizes some of the difference between these rituals:

**Table 1:** Comparison of key elements on the three main inter-ethnic rituals common to Upper Xinguano peoples

	<b>Quarup (<i>Egitsü</i>)</b>	<b>Jawari (<i>Hagaka</i>)</b>	<b><i>Uluki</i></b>
<b>Place where guests are lodged</b>	Camp, outside the village	Camp, outside the village	House, domestic circle
<b>Form of the main food</b>	Roast, solid (fish, masculine)	Cooked, liquid ( <i>perereba</i> , feminine)	Raw/Roasted/Cooked
<b>Idiom of inter-group relations</b>	Consanguinity	Potential affinity	Friendship
<b>Predominant relational form</b>	Hierarchy	Symmetrical antagonism	Symmetrical reciprocity
<b>Moment of Sporting Matches</b>	End of the ritual	End of the ritual	Beginning of the ritual
<b>Moment of Exchange</b>	End of the ritual	End of the ritual	Throughout the ritual
<b>Place in the annual cycle</b>	Start	End	Middle
<b>Main cosmological references</b>	Ritual made by land animals	Ritual made by celestial animals	Ritual made by aquatic animals

In sum, while in chiefly rituals the relations highlighted between groups are either those of *consanguinity* and *hierarchy* (Quarup), or *potential affinity* and *antagonism* (Jawari), in the *uluki* they are those of *friendship* and *reciprocity*. And the main specificity of this ritual lies precisely in the fact that its main focus is exchange, a type of relation that, in the upper Xingu, does not occur, in the same way, among close kinspeople, where we find relations more like those of sharing, nor among affines, where we find hierarchical relations in which, ideally, the flux of goods is opposed to the flux of spouses.

## On Xinguano friendship

The type of exchange that occurs during the *uluki* – which, as we have been arguing, reproduces and reinforces aspects of friendship – is distinct from how, in day-to-day interactions, close kinspeople and affines make things circulate among themselves. Among close kin (including those who live in the same house and those who live in different houses of the same village), the ideal form of relating is through sharing and the care of older kinspeople for younger kinspeople. The flow of food is intense and it falls to elder kinspeople (whether of ascending generations, such as parents and grandparents, or of the same generation, such as elder brothers) to feed and satisfy the desires<sup>26</sup> of younger kinspeople, so as to ensure that they live a happy and healthy life. It is precisely through sharing that kinship relations are created and perpetuated. Among affines, in contrast, what we see is that the flux of goods continually recreates the hierarchy of the relation, which is manifest as shame and respect. It thus befalls affines who are wife-receivers to work for their father-in-law and brothers-in-law. It is also extremely impolite to solicit anything from those affines whom one should respect. Transactions carried out between friends (*ato*), on the other hand, necessarily imply the mutual recognition of those involved, as subjects, capable of extracting from one another the objects that, then, circulate – at least when they are exchanged – as parts of those persons, thus appearing as what Strathern (2006: 270) calls “mediated exchange”. Friendship is a type of relation that is very common among Upper Xinguanos and involves same-sex people who exchange with each other, within enduring relations. It is a type of relation that is quite distinct from (if not actually opposed to) that which is established, for example, among Jê formal friends. Here the relation is marked by distance and avoidance (Carneiro da Cunha 1979), while Xinguano friendship is characterized by the absence of formality and the presence of proximity: friends embrace each other, touch each other and share secrets, as well as exchanging objects with each other.

According to Santos-Granero (2007: 11), in Amazonia relations of friendship “emerge in contexts of great fear of (potentially) dangerous others. It is this fear that endows native Amazonian intertribal friendships with their peculiar character and explains the great importance attributed to trust in such relationships”. This view seems interesting in the Upper Xinguano context, where the establishment of a “peaceful regime” also produces a regime of great distrust, and friendship appears to be particularly marked where security is at a low: in the periphery of the kindred, and between people of different groups. However, in the Upper Xingu relations of friendship can also have a collective character, which distinguishes them from the cases compared by Santos-Granero.

As we have shown, the *uluki* is an effort at creating the fiction that guests and hosts are part of the same local group: their chiefs address each other by vocatives that preclude the distance and potential antagonism that is present in the speeches of other rituals, friendship emerges as a marked category of the relations of reciprocity, and visitors are brought into the circle of houses, where they cook their own food. It is as if this ritual amplified to the regional scale those qualities of the sociality of the local group – which, according to

<sup>26</sup> On desire among the Kalapalo, see Novo (2018; 2019).

Stephen Hugh-Jones (2013), is the main characteristic of regional Amazonian systems such as those of the Upper Rio Negro and the Upper Xingu.

By using the category of ‘friendship’, which, as Coelho de Souza (1995) has pointed out, converges on affinity as well as consanguinity, the *uluki* engenders a constant game of identification and differentiation which creates the conditions for groups to exchange things between themselves (not only objects, but also women, speeches, food) which present themselves as parts of collective people. Chiefs that address each other as ‘brothers’, hosts that receive guests in their villages (and not in forest encampments, as in the chiefly rituals), the distribution of raw food, and the rituals that follow the exchanges, all serve to blur, at some moments, the distinctions between the two groups, “making kin of them”, masking the difference between potential affines, in a process that never reaches its final stages.

These mediatory role between identification and differentiation, consanguinity and affinity, is manifest in various Amazonian contexts by what Viveiros de Castro (1993, 2002) called ‘included thirds’, one of the possibilities of actualizing potential affinity. According to Viveiros de Castro (2002: 152), these are “positions that go beyond the dualism of consanguines vs. affines, or kin vs. strangers, and which perform key mediating roles”. Santos-Granero (2007: 9), for his part, points to friendship as the point of mediation between “the voluntary and the ascribed, the personal and the social, the altruistic and the selfish, the affective and the formal”. Whether these figures be defined as included thirds or as friends, what matters to us here is that they typically appear in an “egocentred” form, that is, as singular persons (such as, for example, in the case of Jê formal friends, or Araweté friends). The *uluki* case suggests, however, that there is a sociocentric yield to this relational form within a collective scale, pointing to an amplification of the qualities of (para-)kinship relations beyond the remit of local groups.

This is perhaps why the *uluki* played a key role both in the process of “Xinguanization” of the people of the headwaters, and in the event of “pacification” brought about by the Villas Boas brothers during the creation and consolidation of the Xingu Indigenous Park. In Kalapalo narratives about early 20<sup>th</sup> Century attempts to pacify/Xinguanize the Jaguma (enemies who spoke a Carib language of the Arara-Ikpeng branch), the *uluki* was the first ritual that they established with these people, acting as a gateway into the Xinguano ritual system. A similar process occurs to non-Xinguano people which, while not participating fully in the ritual complex, nonetheless remain within its “orbit of attraction” through the *uluki*<sup>27</sup>. It is also the *uluki* that, in its more domestic and informal variants, mediates many of the relations maintained with non-Indigenous people. At the same time that, alongside the Quarup and the Jawari, the *uluki* defines a certain “Xinguano interiority” (the world of multi-community rituals), it is also one of its main hinges for opening up towards the exterior, with the potential to attract not only singular persons, but also whole groups, into the Upper Xinguano ritual system.

This brief ethnography of the *uluki* has sought to identify some of its specificities vis-à-vis other rituals, and to suggest other questions that merit further investigation in the future. First, it is necessary to better understand the forms and meanings of Xinguano hospitality, a more variable phenomenon than may first appear. Hospitality is what enables people to circulate through an extensive territory in the knowledge that the chances that they will be well-received are greater than the chances of falling to enemy ambush. Hospitality, as Nancy Munn (1986) has shown, has the potential to expand intersubjective spacetime, creating long-lasting exchange relations between people of different locales (operating passages, therefore, between various scales of sociality). Another question that must still be explored is, evidently, the role of gift-exchange in the regional economy. We know that the exchange of objects is an important part of rituals, but we still need a more in-depth ethnography of Xinguano economy.

27 And also through marriages and shamanic relations. Marriages between the people of the headwaters and people who are not considered “Xinguano” are infrequent (the Kalapalo consider them “wrong”, undesirable), but they exist and are important in the inter-ethnic dynamics of the groups who carry them out. The influence of Upper Xinguano shamanism on their neighbours is expressive, and would merit its own ethnography.

We suspect that the conjugation of ethnographies of forms of exchange and hospitality beyond ritual contexts can clarify aspects of the formation of multi-ethnic and multilingual political formations, like that of the Upper Xingu.

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# Accusation and Legitimacy in the Civil War in Angola

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## Abstract

This article analyses the main categories of accusation found in the speeches of leaders from the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) during the Civil War in Angola (1975-2002). Seeking to understand the entanglements between the global and local dimensions of the conflict, we argue that the accusations made by Agostinho Neto (MPLA), José Eduardo dos Santos (MPLA), and Jonas Savimbi (UNITA) aimed to delegitimize the 'other' in the act of claiming legitimacy to occupy the state. This is achieved through the opposition between accusatory categories attributed to the 'other' and their inverse, categories attributed to the person making the accusation. We thereby show how the understanding of political conflicts in general, and the conflict in Angola specifically, can be illuminated through the analysis of categories whose linguistic dimension is entangled with historically constituted social positionalities.

**Keywords:** Angola; colonialism and postcolonialism; civil war; accusation; differentiation.

# Acusação e Legitimidade na Guerra Civil em Angola

## Resumo

Este artigo analisa os principais designadores de alteridade presentes nos discursos das lideranças do Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) e da União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (Unita) durante a guerra civil em Angola (1975-2002). No esforço de compreendermos os imbricamentos entre as dimensões globais e locais do conflito, argumentamos que as acusações proferidas por Agostinho Neto (MPLA), José Eduardo dos Santos (MPLA) e Jonas Savimbi (Unita) buscam deslegitimar o "outro" em sua reivindicação de legitimidade para ocupar o estado. Isso é feito a partir da contraposição entre categorias acusatórias atribuídas ao "outro" e o oposto destas, atribuídas a quem faz a acusação. Mostramos, assim, como a compreensão de conflitos políticos em geral, e do conflito angolano em específico, pode ser iluminada por meio da análise de categorias cuja dimensão linguística se imbrica com posicionalidades sociais historicamente constituídas.

**Palavras-chave:** Angola; colonialismo e pós-colonialismo; guerra civil; acusação; diferenciação.



# Accusation and Legitimacy in the Civil War in Angola<sup>1</sup>

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In this article we analyse the categories of accusation contained in the discourses of leaders from Angola's main political movements during the country's civil war (1975-2002): the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).<sup>2</sup> The speeches made by Agostinho Neto (MPLA), José Eduardo dos Santos (MPLA) and Jonas Savimbi (UNITA) oppose the MPLA and UNITA by constituting the place of the 'other' through accusatory categories. Seeking to understand the entanglements between global and local dimensions of the conflict, we argue that the accusations made by Agostinho Neto (MPLA), José Eduardo dos Santos (MPLA) and Jonas Savimbi (UNITA) aimed to delegitimize the 'other' while claiming their own legitimacy to occupy the state. This is achieved by opposing accusatory categories attributed to the 'other' with their inverse, categories attributed to the movement making the accusation. By taking into account the multiple processes of differentiation articulated in the speeches of leaders from the MPLA and UNITA in order to fix or displace an 'other' to be politically delegitimized, we aim to show how the understanding of political conflicts generally, and the conflict in Angola specifically, necessarily involves an engagement with categories whose linguistic dimension is entangled with historically constituted social positionalities.

A large number of the studies on the civil war in Angola (1975-2002) are concerned with the international dimension of the conflict (Steenkamp, 1983; Virmani, 1989; Schoor, 1989; Windrich, 1992; Monje, 1995; Wright, 1997; Shubin & Tokarev, 2001; Weigert, 2011; Miller, 2012; Miller, 2013). These analyses focus on the issues surrounding the Cold War, especially the clash between socialism and capitalism, and the alignment between Angolan liberation movements and the main world powers of the period: the Soviet Union and the United States of America. These viewpoints describe the conflict as the outcome of the rivalry between the two superpowers, as though the clashes between the MPLA and UNITA were the result of an overlapping of the interests and positionings of the USSR and the USA, respectively. For Kennedy (1987) and Wright (1997), US intervention in Angola through the funding of UNITA's guerrilla movement was designed to inflict a military defeat on the USSR. According to Monje (1995), a victory for the MPLA, allied in Angola with the USSR and Cuba, would swing the balance of the Cold War in favour of the socialist block, while Virmani (1989) attributes the Soviet influence to the MPLA's transition from a national liberation movement into a party. Shubin and Tokarev (2001), for their part, foreground the USSR's actions in the Angolan context in detriment to the agency of the MPLA. Windrich (1992) explains the results of the elections in Angola as the outcome of the persuasive power of the US media. Miller (2012, 2013), in a variation of this externalist view of the conflict, attributes its continuation, in part, to the attempt by South Africa, an ally of the United States, to safeguard the privileges of the white population under the apartheid regime.

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<sup>2</sup> TN: In Portuguese, the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* and the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola*, respectively.

Without doubt, the analyses cited above tell us much about Angola's insertion in the global geopolitics of the period. But while the confrontations of the Cold War had a considerable impact on local events, it needs to be recognized that the Angolan Civil War was not merely a by-product of the geopolitical forces with which, as it unfolded, it became intertwined. As we suggest in the analysis that follows, the conflict was also overdetermined by local conditioning factors. Taking our lead from works showing that civil wars in general, and Angola's in particular, can only be comprehended by taking the local context into consideration (Marcum, 1978; Heywood, 1989; Bittencourt, 1993; Heywood, 2008; Guimarães, 2001; Schlee, 2002; Brinkman, 2005; Cramer, 2005; Messiant, 2006; Messiant, 2008; Schlee, 2008; Péclard, 2015; Oliveira, 2017; Pearce, 2017), we propose to examine the conflict through an ethnographic exploration of its discursive dimensions. What correlations can be established between the political divisions encountered during the civil war in Angola and the disputes between distinct social positionalities in the Angolan context? We analyse these correlations via the unstable relationship maintained between the categories of accusation utilized by leaders in the conflict and historically constituted social places. In this sense, our analysis explores the continuities and ruptures that these categories establish with colonial and postcolonial positionalities.

### **Civil war and (anti)colonialism: continuities and ruptures**

A fundamental aspect of political mobilization in Angola during the civil war involved recourse to the category of the *povo angolano*, the 'Angolan people.'<sup>3</sup> But while the expression was extensively employed by both the MPLA and UNITA, it is essential to comprehend that the discursive effects of its use are connected both to the political context in question and to the internal disputes related to regional, ethnic, racial and class differentiations in Angola. These differentiations, in turn, emerged in the context of Portuguese colonialism – or more specifically, the political and economic changes that resulted in the New State (1933-1974): expansion, centralization and integration of the administrative control of the colonies, associated with a denial of their autonomy, and combined with the intensification of production for exportation and the shift towards economic protectionism (Davidson, 1974; MacQueen, 1997). It was under this regime that were introduced legal distinctions between whites and blacks; ethnic-regional distinctions based on the relations established with the colonizer; the opposition between rural and urban; the social stratifications that led to the formation of elites in the cities and missions, which would later become linked to the nationalist movements.<sup>4</sup>

Mobilizations against colonialism emerged in multiple forms and were based on diverse modes of action, like meetings of small political groups and the dissemination of nationalist ideas (Marcum, 1969). The repression of Portugal's Salazarist dictatorship, added to the lack of political structures that might allow the participation of Angolans in the colonial state, are factors that established the Angolan elites as organizers of the national liberation movement, which emerged relatively disconnected from the colonial society in Angola (MacQueen, 1997). The anticolonial mobilization was organised in Portugal by Angolan students living in the country and by Portuguese opposed to the Salazarist regime in a context of a dictatorship that heavily repressed any kind of political articulation (Bittencourt, 1999). These circumstances point both to the distance between the fight for national liberation organized from abroad and the inhabitants of the colony, and to the difficulty of consolidating a stable alliance between anticolonial political movements and sections of the Angolan population not belonging to the elite.

<sup>3</sup> Italics will be used to indicate the terms and expressions of Angolan leaders found in the analysed sources.

<sup>4</sup> It is undeniable, for example, that a degree of continuity exists between the colonial elites and the elites that dominated the Central Highlands of Angola in the period preceding the Bailundo War. Nor were the racial distinctions created with the implementation of the *indigenato* (see below). However, the colonial regime solidified processes of differentiation previously more open to pragmatic malleability.

As we shall see, in addition to hindering the independentist organisation and facilitating the repression of the colonial state, this disarticulation also had profound effects on the post-independence period.

A landmark in terms of the establishment of liberation movements was the *Processo dos 50*, ‘Trial of Fifty,’ dated 1959, when a series of political activists from Luanda were jailed by the PIDE (the Portuguese state police).<sup>5</sup> On February 4, 1961, a group formed mainly by members of the MPLA met to organise a takeover of the Military Prison, the 7<sup>th</sup> Police Station and the Angola National Radio in the capital. This coordinated action resulted in the release of the prisoners, a victory subsequently claimed by the movement (Bittencourt, 1999; Mabeko-Tali, 2001). The ‘Trial of Fifty,’ combined with its avantgarde image in the anticolonial struggle, articulated primarily by Luanda’s city-dwelling literate elites, proved to be a major political triumph for the MPLA, becoming one of the essential arguments underlying its discursive insistence on the legitimacy of the movement exercising the power of the state. It needs to be kept in mind, however, that, in parallel to the attacks and mobilizations occurring in Angola, many of the articulations involved in the formation of the liberation movements took place abroad, where there was support both for specific war strategies and for the military and academic training of Angolans.<sup>6</sup> These articulations would extend into the postcolonial period in the form of financial, political and military support for the movements during the civil war.

From the effervescence of organizations working towards Angola’s liberation (see Wheeler & Pélissier, 2009), three main movements emerged during the period of anticolonial struggles: the United People of Angola (*União das Populações de Angola*: UPA), founded by Holden Roberto in 1954, which in 1961 would unite with another anticolonial movement to become the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA); UNITA, a splinter organization of the FNLA founded in 1966 under the leadership of Jonas Savimbi, who would remain at its head until the end of the civil war in 2002; and the MPLA, founded in 1956 and led by Agostinho Neto until his death in 1979 and by José Eduardo dos Santos from 1979 to 2017. The political strategy of all three liberation movements was to mobilize the *povo angolano* through the divulgation of nationalist ideas via political propaganda and the speeches made by their respective leaders. Insofar as these speeches were given from distinct positions, they had diverse repercussions among the sections of the population that the generalizing expression *povo angolano* was intended to encompass.

Part of the literature that examines the emergence of the liberation movements in Angola points to the regional nature of their connections, linking them to a specific elite, ethnic group and religion. Following this schema, the MPLA was concentrated in Luanda and Malange, encompassed the Ambundu (popularly known too as the Kimbundu) and were Methodist; UNITA was linked to southern Angola, especially the Central Highlands, inhabited by the Ovimbundu, and was Congregationalist; FNLA originated from northern Angola and the Congo, inhabited by the Bakongo, and was Baptist. However, this form of schematizing the political organizations fails to account for the complexity involved in the formation of these movements, marked by “fusions and coagulations” (Oliveira, 2017, p. 40) between small local organisations and by the attempt to incorporate elements originating from diverse regions of Angola to counter accusations of regionalism, elitism or tribalism made by other movements. It is undeniable, however, that the antagonistic movements were constituted around regional elites formed in the context of colonialism: in Luanda, the so-called ‘assimilated’

5 TN: *Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado*, the International and State Defence Police.

6 In terms of the relationship between political militancy and academic training, time spent in Portugal was a decisive factor for most members of the movements’ elites, many of whom passed through the Home for Students of the Empire (the *Casa dos Estudantes do Império*: see Castelo & Bandeira, 2017). In Africa, the anticolonial movements were backed by countries like Algeria, Tanzania, the Republic of the Congo, and Zambia. China provided military training, arms and resources to the MPLA, UNITA and the FNLA.

7 In Portuguese, the *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola*. Although the FNLA was one of the liberation movements central to the struggle for independence, its weakening in the post-independence period disqualified it as a potential claimant of the place of the state.

(*assimilados*) of the first and second waves (Messiant, 2006) supplied the main leaders of the MPLA, while most of UNITA's leaders were formed in the Protestant missions of the Central Highlands (Péclard, 1998 and 2015; Dulley, 2017).

Re-examining the context in which the liberation movements were constituted is important since the movements leading the anticolonial struggle would assume the role of political parties in the post-independence era. In making this observation, our intention is not to establish fixed positions or periods. On the contrary, we wish to make evident continuities that are recurrently evoked in the analysed discourses. The civil war in Angola did not begin immediately after independence, given that the clashes between the movements date from the anticolonial struggle. The Carnation Revolution (*Revolução dos Cravos*) on April 25, 1974, marked the overthrow of the Salazarist dictatorship in Portugal. In Angola, these events led to negotiations for independence involving the three movements. On January 15, 1975, they signed the Alvor Agreement with the Portuguese government, setting a date for independence and establishing a transitional government to be administered by all three movements in conjunction. However, the war of liberation gave way to the civil war the same year, 1975, triggered by the rush to seize control of the state between the MPLA, which received political-military support from the USSR and Cuba, and the FNLA, allied with South Africa and the United States. Although UNITA was still concentrated in the country's south in 1975, it would grow in strength as the FNLA weakened and UNITA gained support from the United States and South Africa from 1976 on. This established a battleground between the MPLA and UNITA that would last 27 years. The geopolitical alliances in the Cold War context certainly provided the movements with financial and military resources. As we argue, though, the specificities of how the conflict developed on the ground are deeply interwoven with the formation of Angolan society.

In both scenarios, the struggle for liberation and the civil war, there were conflicts, an absence of cooperation and claims of pioneerism made by the movements, which were based on antagonisms and divisions of areas of operation (Marcum, 1969; Messiant, 2008). The continuation of the contradictions already present in the struggles for liberation was reflected in the projection, by both the MPLA and UNITA, of an *enemy* to be combatted (Oliveira, 2017). This involved the utilization of categories of accusation that can be traced back to the colonial period, insofar as the accusatory discourses emphasize the ruptures with the past proposed by the antagonistic parties as part of their construction of a narrative about themselves. The accusations made by the leaders of the movements depict the *enemy* as a continuation of the colonial system by accusing them of reproducing the distinctions of race, ethnicity, regionality and class that characterized Portuguese rule in Angola. The categories that we analyse below constitute the subjects of the conflict through a double movement insofar as they oppose, in a game of mirrors, a self categorized as legitimate in contrast to an 'other' presented as an *enemy*. There is, therefore, a feedback loop between the mobilization of the categories by the movements and their analytic apprehension: while the categories are mobilized by the leaders through the accusations made against the 'other,' and in so doing they resort to the discursive arsenal inherited from colonialism, our analysis, in focusing on these categories, apprehends them via their relationship to the social positionalities found in the pre and post-independence periods.

In their speeches, Jonas Savimbi, Agostinho Neto and José Eduardo dos Santos employ the categories of *inimigo* (enemy), *neocolonizador* (neocolonizer), *imperialista* (imperialist), *racista* (racist) and *tribalista* (tribalist). Through these labels, many of which refer to the alliances established with outside agents, the leader making the speech proposes an image of the 'other' that contrasts with the image presented of themselves: as someone who, by opposing everything related to colonialism and imperialism, has the capacity to destroy them. The accusatory categories thus contrast the image of a negative past with the image of a positive new future, in which the person making the speech acts out his capacity to exercise the power of the state by differentiating himself from the oppressive external agent. The analysis that we propose here is concerned with the relation between the designations applied to the subjects in question and their association with social positionalities

under dispute in the context of the civil war in Angola. By contrasting an image of the self with an image of the 'other' through the use of categories like *imperialismo* or *liberdade* (liberty or freedom) and thereby evoking, respectively, the ideas of the colonial past and the liberated future, these discourses establish an inevitable relationship with the local sociocultural and historical formation. Based on this observation, then, we argue the need to pay close attention to the imbrication between the so-called internal and external factors involved in the conflict.

Understanding the context to which an enunciation refers is essential to elucidating the effects produced by the categories in their different modes of historical articulation (McClintock, 2010). In exploring the continuities and ruptures between the 'colonial' and the 'postcolonial,' it is important to take into account the transformations introduced into colonial society by the *indigenato*, a regime implanted by the Portuguese administration that remained in force in both Angola and Mozambique from 1926 to 1961. The objective of the *indigenato* was to delimit and fix the social and political localization of the black African population, thus enabling the discrimination of the subjects of colonialism whose labour force could be appropriated (cf. Bender, 1978; Castelo, 1998; Messiant, 2006; Neto, 2012; Cahen, 2012). To this end, the inhabitants of the colonies were classified into two hierarchized categories: 'citizens' (*cidadãos*) and 'indigenous people' (*indígenas*). 'Citizens' were those considered 'civilized;' an 'indigenous person,' in theory, could become a 'citizen' through a process of 'assimilation' (*assimilação*) of the Portuguese culture. In this case, the person would become an *assimilado*, 'assimilated.' The possibility of 'assimilation' was limited to men, given that women, if they were not white, could only achieve the same status by marrying with white or 'assimilated' men. In this regime, white people occupied a priori the position of 'civilized people,' irrespective of their level of schooling or social class. But to be considered 'assimilated' and obtain Portuguese citizenship and its benefits, an 'indigenous person' had to demonstrate certain standards of behaviour: speak and write Portuguese fluently; use western clothing; have a fixed address; be Christian; possess a compatible level of schooling and an income to maintain themselves and their family; and possess table manners (Messiant, 2006).

The *indigenato* regime employed a criterion of categorization based on the level of 'civilization,' under which the position of 'indigenous' was marked by a series of constraints. In defining these places, the regime enabled the application of distinct legislation to each category: 'indigenous people' had to pay taxes, faced restriction on their movements, and could be subject to forced labour. What is important for the argument proposed here is that this was one of the instruments through which the Portuguese colonial state institutionalized racism, creating distinctions in the rights and duties between the white and black population. Accusing the other of being a *racist* is one of the categories incorporated into the speeches, especially that of the MPLA, to delegitimize the enemy. This accusation is directly linked to the issue of the building of the Angolan nation, an idea that institutes the need to constitute a population with the same rights. In other words, the accusation of *racist* defines the *inimigo* (enemy) as someone who prioritizes one part of the population in detriment to another, just as the colonizers did. During the civil war, the continuity posed between the *indigenato* regime and the accusation of being a *racist* reworks the categories of accusation for the construction of an *enemy* who resembles the colonial past: while the accusation is maintained, it also transforms in relation to its target and context.

Focusing closely on the speeches of Angola's political leaders during the civil war period entails understanding how the frontiers imposed by colonialism are reworked by these subjects, revealing the agency of Angolans themselves, the relations established by them and the maintenance or subversion of colonial hierarchies. It also means paying close attention to the subtleties of the power games, considering the dislocations that occur in the gaps in the structure. McClintock (2010) shows how categories, on being mobilized, affect the experiences of subjects at the same time as they consolidate an image in relation to what they designate: the categories of designation emerge and become concrete in social relations. Methodologically, therefore, we propose to concentrate here on the relationship between the categories of accusation enunciated and the

positions occupied by the subjects who made use of them. The labels given to themselves and their opponents by Agostinho Neto, José Eduardo dos Santos and Jonas Savimbi indicate the strategies to which they resorted in order to legitimize their ideas and parties. However, this was not done in a merely instrumental manner, since the demarcation of positions through the labels employed locates their political action via the specific place that they occupy in the social fabric. What the two political movements share is their self-positioning in favour of the interests and wishes of the *povo angolano*, while depicting the ‘other,’ the *enemy*, as working against them.

Before turning to the analysis of the categories properly speaking, a methodological observation is required: the sources produced by the MPLA are easier to access and better organized since the movement published a large collection of books and compilations of speeches. Although UNITA also produced publications, most of Savimbi’s speeches were documented by the MPLA. Obviously, the continuation of the MPLA in the Angolan government until the present enabled the entity to organize its own history and, simultaneously, attempt to erase the documentation of the *enemy* (cf. Schubert, 2017). It needs to be taken into account, therefore, that the available records index the distinct social positionalities occupied by the MPLA and UNITA both during the civil war and in the post-war period.<sup>8</sup>

### “Destroy the old to build the new”<sup>9</sup>

The legitimacy to occupy the Angolan government from Luanda was one of the major objectives contested by the MPLA and UNITA during the civil war years. Both movements demanded this position vis-à-vis civil society through the “management of difference” (Oliveira, 2017, p. 24) in their discursive strategies. Through their discourses, the movements sought to shape collective identities and thereby legitimize their exercise of power. In other words, in addition to the warfare and guerrilla tactics mobilized in the dispute for territory, there was a large discursive investment to acquire hegemonic control over the country. Each of the movements presented different narratives concerning Angola’s history, their own role in independence and their relation to the *povo*, the ‘people.’ While these narratives produced distinct forms of universalizing and managing differences, they converge insofar as they mobilize the same categories. The mirror game takes place, therefore, by means of differential interpretations and accusations produced on the basis of the same category by both sides of the conflict. In this process, the establishment of a division between ‘us and them’ proved central. Discursively, the distinction established between specific labels attributed to each of the parties demarcates which pole is the negative ‘other,’ and which pole refers to the positive ‘us.’ In the discourse of the movements and leaders, the ‘we’ was utilized as an attempt to connect the party to the *people*. As we shall see, one of the mechanisms used in the discourses to create a division between ‘us’ and ‘them’ was the association of the ‘other’ with the colonial past and the image of the self with a new future. Connecting the other to the colonial past meant establishing what needed to end and thus could not be associated with legitimate exercise of the power of the state.

One of the spheres in which this took place was related to the position occupied by the colonial elites. The implementation of Christianity in Angola catalysed many of the social changes that unfolded in the context of colonialism (Neto, 1997; Neto, 2012; Heywood, 2000; Messiant, 2006; Dullely, 2010; Dullely, 2015; Péclard, 2015): alterations to the notion of property, family structure and ways of eating, dress and education. Generally speaking, the Catholic church maintained an official discourse in favour of ‘Portugalization’

8 The analysis presented here is based on 47 documents containing the speeches of the three leaders. Our research included visits to the Torre do Tombo National Archive and the Lisbon Municipal Archive, as well as consultation of reports, journals, booklets and pamphlets produced by the parties and available in libraries in Angola, Portugal, Brazil, the United States and England.

9 Title of a speech by Agostinho Neto (1976a).

(Neto, 2013), which led to the formation of a schooled elite located primarily in the urban centres. Meanwhile the activities of Protestant missions were divided among different ethnolinguistic regions, which contributed to accentuating the regional and cultural boundaries between the new elites (Henderson, 1992; Neto, 2012; Péclard, 2015; Dulley, 2017; Dulley, 2018). Given that the MPLA's birthplace was primarily the capital Luanda, the assimilationist universalism in its discourse is unsurprising, notwithstanding the strong Methodist influence on some of its leadership – Agostinho Neto, for example, was raised in the Methodist church. In the case of UNITA, whose members, including Savimbi, mainly came from the congregational missions on the Central Highlands, there was more of an inclination towards communitarian discourse and the denunciation of the universalism proposed from Luanda.

Many of the speeches given by Agostinho Neto (1974, 1975, 1976a, 1980, 1985) contrast the need for progress with colonialist forms of oppression. His rhetoric presents technical, cultural and political development in a single direction, identifying the objectives of the MPLA's struggle as seizure of political power, the reestablishment of cultural life and disalienation. These objectives are fixed through the definition of an *inimigo* (enemy) of the *povo* (people) and the *luta* (struggle, fight). Equality and fraternity are presented as the base for this development, taken as an urgent task. Such an image is conveyed, for example, in the independence speech given by Neto:

Taking as a principle the unity of all Angola's social classes around the political line and the clear formulation of its objectives, correctly defining allies, friends and enemies, the Angolan People, under the leadership of the MPLA, finally overthrew the Portuguese colonial regime. With the defeat of colonialism and the recognition of our right to independence, materialized at this historical moment, MPLA's basic program has been achieved. So the young POPULAR REPUBLIC OF ANGOLA is born, an expression of the popular will and the outcome of the great sacrifice made by the combatants in our national liberation. (Neto, 1985, pp. 36-37)

The ideals of fraternity and equality, as well as the image of a party that seeks to meet the people's demands, indicate the political tendencies shown by the MPLA in its discourses during the civil war. As Marcum (1969) points out, Neto's speeches emphasized the fight against discrimination, whether racial, ideological, religious or regional in kind. Hence, his rhetoric presents the MPLA as "the main instrument that acted for our country to be free" (Neto, 1975, p. 8) or as the party that fought and defeated Portuguese colonialism. In this way, the MPLA had ensured the fight was won against those forces that attempted to institute *neocolonialism* in Angola, preventing the territory from being invaded again by the *enemy* (Neto, 1976c). Setting out from the accusation of the *enemy* as a *neocolonialist*, Neto's speech establishes a continuity between colonial expropriation by the Portuguese and the support given to UNITA by apartheid South Africa, whose army supported the failed joint attempt of UNITA and the FNLA to install an alternative government based in Huambo, between November 1975 and 1977, in opposition to the government headed by the MPLA from Luanda.

The accusation of *neocolonialist* was widely used by Neto to contrast the MPLA's image with UNITA's: a *neocolonizer* is a colonizer that does not identify with this designation, although their actions amount to a form of colonialism. According to Neto (1974) *neocolonialism* in Africa is the substitution of one of the major axes of colonialism – *racism* – by *imperialism*. Nonetheless, it is via the same notion of *neocolonization* deployed by Neto that Jonas Savimbi (1975d) sets out to delegitimize his own *enemy*, the MPLA, by contrasting the idea of UNITA's future with colonial violence. His discourse holds UNITA to be responsible for the political, economic and social independence of Angola for the Angolan *people*. The place occupied by the political movement appears in Savimbi's discourse accompanied by the function of eliminating the country's *enemies*, depicted as those who mystify and alienate politics, characterizing them as *neocolonizers*. Following this logic, the relation with

colonialism was also linked to the occupation by political movements of structures inherited from the colonial period. On this point, Savimbi refers especially to the exercise of power by the MPLA through the political-administrative structures of Luanda, handed over to the entity by the Portuguese at the time of independence.

The judgment on the form of occupying the structures inherited by the colonial state during the postcolonial period was a resource used by the leaders of the movements to demand actions beneficial to the population and at the same time to accuse the *enemy* of continuing the colonial structures. In the MPLA's discourses, UNITA was, throughout the civil war, portrayed as incapable of exercising government. Savimbi, for his part, claims that the MPLA is a *colonial puppet*<sup>10</sup> due to the proximity between the organization and the Portuguese political apparatus in the post-independence period. This accusation is made explicitly in the speech below:

The Portuguese government can continue to play with the MPLA, and the world needs to understand that the Portuguese government is on the MPLA's side, has violated all the agreements, tricked the Angolan people, and tricked the opinion of the African countries who believed in its sincerity. And why? Because the Portuguese government, when it says that the revolution in Portugal is linked to Angola's, has neocolonization in mind. There is no connection. There is one revolution here and another there, and only the leadership of the MPLA allows neocolonization to invade our country to facilitate those who betray democracy in Portugal and govern the country through force and terror. (Savimbi, 1975d, p. 4)

Two points are central to understanding this accusatory strategy: first, during 1975, the power and influence exerted by the left-wing group associated with post-Salazarism in Portugal ensured a certain base of support for the MPLA. Despite the rhetorical disputes that affirmed or denied the relationship between the MPLA and the Lisbon government, the liberation of Angola was announced by Agostinho Neto (MacQueen, 1997). The second point refers to the association between the political movements and specific territories. Angola's independence, proclaimed in a speech by Neto (1985) on November 11, 1975, presents the MPLA as an 'avantgarde force' and establishes the beginning of a regime recognized by Portuguese-speaking African countries, Brazil and the Soviet bloc. In parallel to this event, in Huambo, the main city of the Central Highlands, UNITA, in provisional alliance with the FNLA, proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Angola. This alternative government lasted until 1977 when the forces of UNITA and South Africa were defeated by the forces of the MPLA and the Cuban government, causing UNITA to retreat to the east (Schubert, 1997). A territorial division thus becomes evident in these events, one that dates back to colonialism: generally speaking, the MPLA controlled the Angolan coast, Malange and the area surrounding Luanda, with these being the first regions to be held under Portuguese colonial influence. Meanwhile, UNITA's domain extended principally to the Central Highlands and the 'south' region, which was subjugated by the colonial power only in the twentieth century (Heywood, 2008). The territorial factor is explored by Pearce (2017, p. 80) in terms of the relationship between the locality where the movement is based and the control exerted over this locality and the population resident there. Thus, the discourses during the civil war associate political movement and territory on one hand, and the identity of the populations and the territory they inhabit on the other. Insofar as both movements had national ambitions, though, each would seek to discursively refute the accusations of regionalism or tribalism made against it by the rival movement.

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<sup>10</sup> For example: "Falsehood, the kind with which we were colonized, is the same that continues now" (Savimbi, 1975f, p. 5).

## “Who is the enemy”<sup>11</sup>

In order to elaborate an analysis of the rhetoric related to the construction of the *enemy* in the civil war, we need to turn briefly to the Angolan fights for liberation, since the conflicts and divisions between the movements date back to this period at least. MacQueen (1997) relates Angola’s decolonization to the national post-liberation context by proposing a triangular analysis that takes into account the international political system and the changing relation between the superpowers, the political changes taking place in Portugal with the Carnation Revolution in 1974, and Angolan nationalism. While the global context was defined by the Cold War, Portugal after the revolution no longer had the political conditions to perpetuate the colonial order, nor to plan for a neocolonial situation (Mabeko-Tali, 2001). It was in this context that the Angolan movements and parties would align with the world superpowers until the beginning of the 1990s. In terms of Angolan nationalism, to think of the anticolonial struggle in Angola during the 1960s and 1970s as unified would be a mistake. As we noted earlier, there were three main liberation movements who fought against colonialism. However, the antagonisms between them date from the struggle for liberation and eventually led to the civil war.

The disconnection between the movements is observable in their strategies during the anticolonial guerrilla war. Not only were the attacks on Portuguese troops not coordinated, diverse clashes took place between the movements on the battlefield. This bellicose antagonism was compounded by an ideological dispute during this period between the MPLA and the FNLA and, subsequently, between the MPLA and UNITA. Part of this rivalry can be attributed to the action of the Portuguese government, which sought to “open and maintain social and ethnic divisions among the nationalists” (MacQueen, 1997, p. 36), always establishing accords with one movement in detriment to the other whenever possible, thus fuelling the rivalry between them. Also important was the ideological antagonism characteristic of the support given to the movements by the Soviet Union, China and the United States during the Cold War. However, we cannot ignore the fact that internal factors related to the local sociopolitical and historical formation also played a central role in the conflict.

During the war of liberation, the Soviet Union gave financial and military support to the guerrilla operations of the MPLA. At different moments, Maoist China provided military training to the guerrilla forces of the MPLA, the FNLA and UNITA. The FNLA, for its part, was financed by the United States, who saw its leader, Holden Roberto, as the future president of Angola given the communist tendencies of the MPLA. After 1975 and the FNLA’s relative departure from the scene, UNITA began to be supported by the United States and South Africa, while funding of the MPLA was guaranteed by its relations with Cuba, whose involvement in the civil conflict in Angola indirectly garnered the support of the USSR, initially reluctant to intervene (Monje, 1995; Pérventsev & Dmitrenko, 1987). Oliveira (2017) argues that the alternations in receiving outside assistance reinforce the thesis that the association between the movements and the Cold War powers was determined by a political-economic strategy to sustain the war effort and not just a question of ideological affiliation. However, the speeches given by Angola’s political leaders between 1975 and the end of the 1980s, when international support and UN intervention eventually ceased, evoked such associations. Thus, this amounted to an “ideologized discursive shift” (Oliveira, 2017, p. 88) to insert the global superpowers (the United States and the USSR) in the Angolan context. This shift also enabled the discursive delegitimization of the ‘other,’ which began to be interpreted through the “imperialist associations” (Neto, 1974) attributed precisely on the basis of these external alliances.

In terms of the internal perspective to the conflict, the association of the opposing movement with a country characterized as *imperialist* by both the MPLA and UNITA had the effect of questioning the legitimacy of the other movement’s claim to state power. This effect derived from the accusation that the other was seeking a way to implant *neocolonization*. While there was clearly a complex play of forces in the Cold War era,

<sup>11</sup> Citation taken from a speech by Neto (1974, p. 6).

our endeavour here is to think about the Angolan conflict at the confluence between the internal forces that entered into conflict in Angola and the dispute of this territory by rival blocks. Neto (1976a), for instance, claims that a 'blood brotherhood' existed between Cuba and Angola, a strategy that enabled him to maintain Cuban troops in the country without harming his image, at the same time that he emphasized that the same did not apply to the United States, depicted as a reactionary country whose objective was to infiltrate Angola. UNITA, for its part, justified its alliance with the Americans and the apartheid regime in South Africa due to the need to counter the support received from foreign 'communists,' and thus anti-democratic sources, by the MPLA. In their discourses, both the MPLA and UNITA present themselves as the only movement capable of liberating Angola from the *enemies, neocolonialism and imperialism*. Based on this argument, both movements legitimized their use of violence in contrast to the use of violence by the other, characterized by these three labels and thus able to be eliminated. This is clearly apparent in Santos's speech made on June 5, 1981:

In 1975 South Africans invaded Angola and arrived in Kwanza-South. We could resist thanks to the efforts of our Angolan people and to the international help from our Cuban and Soviet friends and companions. South Africans were brought here by various treacherous Angolans, mostly Unita elements. Today we still perceive growing bonds between this group and South Africa. [...] We must get ready to hit our enemies with more and more force and, naturally this year we have to make all efforts to attack the puppet group Unita, which in some regions of our country practice banditry, massacre populations, destroy and rob their goods, houses, cattle, in short, a series of actions aimed at creating instability. (Santos, 2005, p. 378)<sup>12</sup>

The logic of warfare presented here – defining violence as a form of defence (Pearce, 2017, p. 237) – is recurrent not only in Santos (1982a, 1982b, 1982c, 2005), but also in Neto (1975, 1976a, 1976c, 1985; Neto & Neto, 2011) and Savimbi (1975a, 1975b, 1975d). What differentiates the speeches of Agostinho Neto and Eduardo dos Santos is that those of the former, pronounced during the first phase of the civil war, sought to shape the image of the *enemy* through the use of phrases and expressions like “who is the enemy? Imperialism” (Neto, 1974, p. 7) or “imperialism, the main enemy of our people.”<sup>13</sup> José Eduardo dos Santos, for his part, reinforced the reasoning behind this image, already associated with UNITA by the MPLA in the previous period. An example of the use of this same strategy in Savimbi's speeches appears in the following excerpt:

The MPLA speaks of UNITA's adherence to the imperialist block. We think of ourselves as an independent liberation movement capable of treating all countries on an equal footing, everyone as friends. What we cannot admit and cannot accept is that Russian chauvinism tries to impose on Angola horses that, despite all the favourable terrain they are winning today, are doomed to lose [...] there are no more lessons to be learned from the new czars of Siberia, [...] we have no alternative but to resist with the same means used by the MPLA, who make war on us. (Savimbi, 1975d, p. 3)

Santos's accusations resort to terms like *fantoche* (puppet) and its derivations (*puppet organization, puppet bands, puppet group, Angolan puppets*); *imperialist* or *agent of imperialism*; *bandits* and *enemy*. The justification for this was supposedly UNITA acting in favour of *imperialism* and the forces of colonization, instituted as a target of the MPLA's struggle and violence, based on the “need for physical combat against enemies” (Neto, 1976a, p. 16) to ensure their elimination and/or expulsion. Accusations of disseminating false information or lies are common in the discourses of both movements. As a rule, their leaders use this type of accusation to

<sup>12</sup> All the speeches of the political leaders have been translated from the original Portuguese, save where, as in this case, the source, an internal party document, was already in English.

<sup>13</sup> Document consulted at the Amílcar Cabral Intervention Centre for Development (CIDAC) in Lisbon, under this title, without reference to date or publisher.

reconstruct, in substitution of the information relayed by the other side, valid information that legitimizes their own movement. Santos's allegation, made on November 14, 1982, exemplifies this rhetorical movement:

Unita puppet groups face growing difficulties to make their criminal activities accepted, and so they resort to lying, demagoguery and ridiculous propaganda, according to which Angola is not an independent country, but a country colonized by Cubans and Soviets. [...] There is no Cuban or Soviet colonialism nor neo-colonialism. What there is in reality, as there always has been, is an attempt at the neo-colonization of Angola by imperialists. [...] Imperialism and colonialism always used and supported Angolan puppet groups to try to eliminate the MPLA guerrillas, in the North and in the East of the country. (Santos, 2005, pp. 379-80)

In the above excerpt, the MPLA delegitimizes UNITA's argument and replaces it with a truth that situates UNITA in the space previously attributed by the latter to the MPLA. A switch of positionality occurs in the discourse, therefore, transferring the image of the colonizer onto the 'other' and their alliances, while the image of being the target of *imperialism* represents the self and one's own allies. In fact, this procedure is enacted by both sides to characterize the moment in which they find themselves and to refer back to the conflicts between the movements that first began during the struggle for liberation. Occupying the place of the one who speaks the truth is central to legitimizing the exercise of government for both sides. It is also important to invalidate the other's argument through the inversion of the positionality established by the other's discourse.

UNITA resorted to similar accusatory terms when it sought to legitimize its own participation in the civil war. In the words of Savimbi, the conflict that was taking place, causing thousands of victims, was "entirely the responsibility of the MPLA's leadership headed by Dr. Agostinho Neto" (Savimbi, 1975d, p. 2),<sup>14</sup> forcing UNITA to enter the war: "here MPLA is the aggressor and UNITA the victim" (Savimbi, 1975f, p. 3). A similar effect is created by the association of the MPLA with foreign interests, just as the MPLA argued apropos UNITA. The understanding that the "MPLA and its leadership wished to impose on the Angolan people the neocolonization that I consider to be a Russian neo-imperialism" (Savimbi, 1975d, p. 3) is a response to what Savimbi identified as the "lies disseminated" by the MPLA claiming that UNITA was associated with the "imperialist block." In other words, the accusation of *imperialist* levelled by the MPLA against UNITA is questioned by the latter by highlighting the MPLA's association with Russia. Furthermore, the potency of UNITA's ideas is asserted through the appropriation of concepts derived from its foreign associations: liberty, democracy, authenticity. In sum, Jonas Savimbi uses the movement's external links to construct internal discourses that legitimize the movement and its potential (Pearce, 2017, p. 183). For its part, the opposition of the MPLA to these concepts, considered foreign, mainly occurred through a critique of the model of the United States and the association of the latter with South African apartheid, a comparison that imputes UNITA with the stain of being *racist* and *imperialist*.

Beyond the political associations between the two movements and the Cold War powers, elements of a personal kind were also mobilized as factors delegitimizing the leaders of the rival movement. UNITA, for example, adopted the strategy of situating the MPLA as a movement alien to Angola by referring to Agostinho Neto's marriage to a Portuguese woman, Maria Eugênia Neto, thus connecting Neto's leadership to the colonial past. After Neto's death, UNITA would adopt a similar discursive strategy to question José Eduardo dos Santos's experience of the vast territory of Angola (Francisco, 2011). The fact that the latter knew only Luanda and the Portuguese language, unaware of the distinct realities of the country's interior, whose languages he did not speak and whose customs he did not know, were taken to reflect an inability to govern the Angolan territory as a whole, given his lack of knowledge about the country. This was compounded by the accusation, still levelled against Santos today, that he is a native not of Angola but of São Tomé and Príncipe (Schubert, 2017). Such accusations highlight the structural proximity between Luanda's elites and the former Portuguese colonizers,

<sup>14</sup> Another example of this same argument: "Who started the civil war? Hence the answer is always the same, whether they say 'it's Neto' or they say 'it's the MPLA' [...]. It's the MPLA and its leadership who were responsible for the civil war which we now have" (Savimbi, 1975f, p. 1).

a legacy that would be materialized in its acquisition of the state apparatus, historically centralized in Luanda, to the MPLA. One effect of the questioning of the governmental skills of the *enemy*, associated by UNITA with the colonial past, is the vision of a future ‘independent’ and ‘democratic’ state proposed by the latter movement.

In terms of the political strategies of self-presentation adopted by the MPLA and UNITA, a discursive shift can be discerned (Oliveira, 2017, p. 28) between the moment of independence and the post-independence era when the geopolitical rivalries solidified between the parties and their allies in the Cold War context. While in the pre-independence period and at the moment of independence itself, the main *enemy* identified is the Portuguese colonizer, in the post-independence years, with the advent of foreign political-military support until the end of the 1980s, the *enemy* appears associated with *neocolonialism* and with the interests of third parties: namely, the countries financing each movement. These moments of inflection, which become visible through categories that maintain interrelations of continuity and rupture, are associated with the changes in the positions occupied by UNITA and by the MPLA during the civil war. But who was the intended recipient of the accusations mutually exchanged between the movements during the war? Here too the category used by both movements to designate their principal interlocutor coincided: *the Angolan people*.

### “Our appeal to the Angolan people”<sup>15</sup>

Insofar as both the MPLA and UNITA were formed from educated regional elites associated with the assimilationist colonial system, both found themselves needing to establish a link between the overwhelming majority of Angola’s population, excluded from the assimilation process during the colonial period (Messiant, 2006). The *people* as an object of dispute appear in the leaders’ speeches not only as a source of legitimization, but as a group whom the movements should stand alongside. This becomes visible in the following remarks by Jonas Savimbi:

...we have faith in the people, the Angolan people have faith in us. The children of the Angolans will fight and are already fighting. But those of the MPLA have no faith in this population, they go after the Mozambicans, the Algerians, Russians, Vietnamese, Katangese, Cubans. (Savimbi, 1975e, p.1)

The strategy established here seeks to distance the rival movement, presenting it in a relation of alterity vis-à-vis the Angolan population insofar as it is associated with ‘others’: Mozambicans, Algerians, Russians, Cubans. This produces an atmosphere of a distancing of the MPLA’s interests in relation to the interests of the *people*, while UNITA emerges as the force capable of protecting the Angolan *people* from external threats. Both movements seek to create a ‘we’ through their association with the *people*, an endeavour synthesized in common phrases like: “UNITA is, essentially, on the side of the people” (Savimbi, 1975b) and “who is the people? it’s the MPLA” (Neto, 1976b). In this context, standing alongside the *people* signifies having the legitimacy of power: “power is in whose hands? The people’s. And who gives the orders? It’s the people. And who are the people? It’s the MPLA” (Neto, 1976c, p. 16). If who gives the orders are the *people* and the MPLA is the *people*, the latter appears as the party that governs through the legitimacy conferred to it by the *people*.

The attempt to destructure the rival movement occurs in discourse through labels that create divisions between the movement and the *people*. This tactic proved highly useful during the campaigns for the 1992 elections,<sup>16</sup> the turning point in the civil war preceded by the end of the support received during the Cold War.

<sup>15</sup> Leaflet produced by UNITA’s Central Committee located at the CIDAC in Lisbon, no reference to date or publisher.

<sup>16</sup> The 1992 elections followed the Bicesse Accords, articulated by diverse international actors and signed in 1991 by the MPLA and UNITA in an attempt to terminate the civil conflict with the end of the Cold War (cf. Knudsen et al., 2000; Valentim, 2011). Pearce (2017) and Oliveira (2017) point out that the resumption of the conflict with even greater intensity in 1993 led to it being interpreted by journalists and academics as rooted either in the ethnic rivalry between the elite of the MPLA and UNITA, or driven by the economic interests in oil and diamond exploration that financed the war in the post-elections period (cf. Malaquias, 2007; Cilliers & Dietrich, 2000; Le Billon, 1999; Le Billon, 2001).

In a context in which the accusation of *neocolonialist* had lost meaning and plausibility with the sharp decline in international aid, the mobilization of accusations referring to the ethnic issue and to *tribalism* was central to the production of these divisions. Undeniably, “for decades the composition of the members of each of the movements [...] reflected a relatively accurate division in terms of ethnic and regional affiliation” (Oliveira, 2017, p. 112). Hence, it was necessary for the movements to incorporate representatives from the region associated with the opponent, thereby achieving a greater representation of the Angolan population among their ranks. This would boost their claim to represent the national territory as a whole. But while a consensus existed on the need to represent the entire nation, the history of the movements, profoundly interwoven with the colonial formation of elites, failed to match this ideal.

The discourse of the MPLA, initially allied with socialist ideology, was vehemently opposed to ethnic barriers and *tribalism*, which it frequently attributed to UNITA, associated with the Central Plateau and the Ovimbundu ethnic group. However, with most of its own leaders originating from the region where Kimbundu is historically spoken, it found itself subject to the same accusation from UNITA. In a speech from 1982, Santos already links the accusation of *tribalism* to the colonial past:

...when they attack us in the ideological domain, we must be armed to understand that this is an ideological distortion and we are going to fight it. Whether it is tribalism, or the racist or reactionary who defends the old ideas of colonialism, we must know how to comprehend and detect these ideas and counter them. (Santos, 1982b, p. 43)

During the Cold War, *tribalism* is presented by the MPLA as a recourse used by the *enemy* (*imperialism*) to suppress popular power and impede “our struggle” (Neto, 1976a). Countering this accusation, Savimbi’s speeches emphasize the non-acceptance of tribal barriers within UNITA, arguing that it was the MPLA that had banned the participation of tribes in its party, thus implying that the rival movement was the one establishing discriminations and divisions (UNITA, 1989). Accusing the other movement of being *tribalist* points to the need for a union between the party and the *people*, conceived in a totalized and unified form, as a means to defeat the *enemy* and conquer the state (Neto, 1975).<sup>17</sup> According to UNITA, without a union of this kind, the result would be a weakening of the institutions and of Angola itself, as well as the reversion to an *imperialist* regime that constructs the country from the outside without internal roots (UNITA, 1989). The incapacity of the rival party to end the divisions is also identified, principally by Savimbi (1975d), as an inability to break with the colonial past.

Another accusation linked to colonialism, made by both movements with the intention of distancing their opponent from the *people*, is that of *racism*. Here the colonial legacy is recalled and attributed to the rival movement in distinct forms. When made by the MPLA, the accusation of *racism* is linked to the association between UNITA and South Africa (Santos, 1982a, 1982b, 1982c, 2005). The military support provided by the South Africans to UNITA until the end of the 1980s was appropriated by the MPLA to associate UNITA with a racist regime, since apartheid was still in force within South Africa. The fact that the apartheid regime officially discriminated against black people on the basis of racist legislation posed a clear contradiction for UNITA, given that the latter was associated with a racist regime while supposedly aiming to break with the structures of colonial domination.<sup>18</sup> UNITA, for its part, the majority of whose leaders were black, accused the MPLA of being a party led by “whites and mulattos” descending from the former colonizer, a somewhat uncomfortable accusation for a socialist party governing an African country with a majority black population in the post-independence era. For Neto (1974), though, there existed a confusion between the *enemy* and the whites on the part of UNITA, a confusion that did not apply to the MPLA, which was based, he argued,

<sup>17</sup> Document encountered at the CIDAC in Lisbon under the title “Imperialism: the main enemy of our people,” no reference to date or publisher.

<sup>18</sup> On the relationship between colonialism and racism, see Mbembe (2017).

on racial collaboration. Its statute called for “a struggle against the colonial regime, not against a given race, even that of the colonizers” (Mabeko-Tali, 2001).

Thus, the MPLA presented itself as a universalist regime, above racial divisions, at the same time as it identified UNITA as a collaborator with an explicitly racist regime. In response, UNITA also sought to mark its position in relation to the white and mixed-race population: “whites, blacks or mestizos, those who identified with our program and are ready to defend Angola, those who made sacrifices for Angola are Angolans. [...] Whoever identifies with the suffering of this fatherland is Angolan” (Savimbi, 1975a, p. 2). At the moment of independence, Savimbi made a declaration specifically addressed to the whites of Huambo, establishing UNITA as the first to proclaim black, white and mixed-race Angolans, affirming “our non-racist position” (Savimbi, 1975c, p. 2). The attempt to contrast the two movements thus involved attributing the other with the stain of continuing the colonial regime – conceived by both sides as racist – and attributing the self with the capacity to overcome this discriminatory structure.

Regarding the Angolan *people*, Pearce (2017) shows that one of the main tactics used by the movements during the civil war was the political education of the population controlled by them. Thus, more than the voluntary and intentional adherence to a particular party, the political control over determined regions had been the most determinant factor in cultivating a feeling among the population of belonging to one or other movement. Although it is important to emphasize that there existed contingents loyal to a movement outside its territory of control, the labels ‘UNITA people’ or ‘government people’ were common and created an analogy between the acceptance of an ideology and the adherence to the forces controlling the territory. This served as a circumstantial political impulse to the movements: those belonging to the MPLA, or the ‘government,’ were those under its authority, while the inhabitants of the territories occupied by UNITA belonged to the latter. It is no coincidence that during fieldwork<sup>19</sup> we regularly heard the joke that, during the war, whenever a territory was under dispute, on being stopped by a soldier from one of the movements, the Angolans crossed their fingers that they would put their hand in the right pocket and hand over the right document to the authorities – that is, the document confirming that they belonged, as part of the *People*, to the forces checking their identity, and not to the *enemy*.

## Final considerations

The end of the Angolan civil war was marked by the death of Jonas Savimbi on February 22, 2002. The discourses of the MPLA after this event constructed an image of this movement as the party responsible for bringing peace to Angola (Soares, 2015; Pearce, 2017; Schubert, 2017; Oliveira, 2017). This discourse was associated with the project of ‘national reconstruction’ of the post-war period led by José Eduardo dos Santos, who left the presidency in September 2017. As the government became associated with Luanda after the independence of Angola, from this moment on the state became increasingly indissociable from the MPLA. Having ended the war, the latter movement started to exert a kind of ownership over the national identity by presenting itself as the movement that not only fought against Portuguese colonialism but also defeated the guerrilla warfare undertaken by the *enemy*, restoring peace to the country.

External factors related to world geopolitics unquestionably had a major influence on the development and termination of the civil conflict in Angola. But as we have argued over the course of analysing the categories articulated in the discourses of Angola’s political leaders, paying attention to language provides an insight into the entanglements of local power relations. These are apprehensible through an analysis of the relation between historically constituted labels and contextually determined social positionalities.

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<sup>19</sup> We completed six months fieldwork in total, conducted intermittently between 2014 and 2019. The research was concentrated mainly in Luanda, Huambo and other locations of the Central Highlands.

In the context of the civil war, given Angola's recent independence, the conflict between the colonizing past and future possibilities was latent. In this sense, as we have demonstrated, the political rhetoric sought to articulate these two moments, the negativized past and the future understood as a possibility still to be built. Thus, the negative image associated with the colonial past was attributed by the movements to the 'other,' while the place of the legitimate movement to exercise the power of the state was occupied by the self. The continuities and discontinuities with the colonial past were manifested through categories constituted and transformed in the historical process (McClintock, 2010).

Over this article, we have analysed accusatory practices in the speeches of Jonas Savimbi, Agostinho Neto and José Eduardo dos Santos, configured principally through associations with the colonial past: *imperialist*, *neocolonizer*, *racist*, *tribalist*. These practices sought to delegitimize the other movement by attributing to it a place from which it would be impossible to govern the Angolan nation, transforming it into an *enemy*. These associations with the past were also established through the connection made between the 'other' and its foreign supporters in the Cold War context, a relationship in which a continuation of colonialism was identified. It should be recalled that the categories utilized in the discourses not only marked the turning points in the conflict, as argued by Oliveira (2017) and Pearce (2017), they also made visible the different positionalities occupied by political movements and their elites in this context. As we have shown above, these positionalities and the labels associated with them necessarily link to a colonial process shared in different forms by the MPLA and UNITA. It was the fact that the movements were connected in distinct ways to this process that enabled them, on one hand, to level accusations against the 'other' that, they argued, were inapplicable to themselves and, on the other, to utilize precisely the same categories for this purpose.

As the two movements had emerged in association with distinct regional elites, both found themselves needing to answer the question of how to legitimize their representativity vis-à-vis the Angolan *people*. In this process, they conferred a formal representativity to this idea absent in the colonial period. The *people* appear in the speeches of the three leaders as the people they needed to stand alongside, since they configured and validated the legitimacy of the movement as a representative of Angola. Hence, the arguments made by each movement aimed to connect the *people* to themselves, while simultaneously establishing a distance between the *people* and the 'other,' the *enemy*, through diverse accusations: a *deceiver*, the side responsible for continuing colonialism and starting the civil war. What becomes evident in this kind of narrative is the double movement provoked by the acts of accusation: while this movement can be understood as the construction of a self-image, it also results in an opposite image, qualified as the image of the *enemy* 'other.' These processes of differentiation – processes that specify contrary positions of subjects and groups in the discourses of both the MPLA and UNITA – are informed by categories and hierarchies that can be traced back to colonialism. In our analysis, we have focused on how Angolan subjects negotiated the relations established by themselves and the hierarchies that they mobilized through categories that implied sociopolitical distinctions already existing in the context in question (Spivak, 2010). However, despite the endeavour to differentiate, the categories through which the opposition between the 'us' and the 'other' is realized are mostly the same. The mirror game through which the self and the 'other' is constructed depends, therefore, on a shared language.

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# “The speed of the political is not that of the scientific”: on the time of development in an agricultural technology transfer program

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## Abstract

In this article I seek to present certain problematics related to the ProSAVANA agricultural development program, highlighting a mismatch between a political sphere and a scientific sphere, which allowed me to reflect on some effects of the technical discourse that has guided the implementation of this international cooperation project. From research that sought to do an ethnography on the operationalization of this program, I intend to present the manner in which such technopolitical breakdowns in the proposed “technologies transfer” have produced a composition of different temporalities, which conferred a particular pace to the effectiveness of ProSAVANA. In order to describe this strange relation between different forms of knowledge that are expressed in the time of accomplishing a *development* project – unfolding at different speeds –, I follow the idea of Mbembe (2011) that in the postcolony, time is constantly emerging. In this sense, throughout this article I seek to describe how, by decomposing these different speeds, it is possible to understand the temporalities that emerge from the particular entanglement of technopolitical relations that confer the materiality of this *development* project.

**Key words:** development; technopolitics; temporality; international cooperation.

# “A velocidade do político não é a do científico”: sobre o tempo do desenvolvimento em um programa de transferência de tecnologia agrícola

## Resumo

Neste artigo procuro apresentar algumas problemáticas relacionadas ao programa de desenvolvimento agrícola ProSavana, destacando um descompasso entre um âmbito político e outro científico, que me permitiu refletir sobre alguns efeitos do discurso técnico que tem orientado a implementação desse empreendimento de cooperação internacional. A partir de uma pesquisa que procurou etnografar a operacionalização deste programa, pretendo apresentar a maneira como tais descompassos tecnopolíticos na “transferência de tecnologias” proposta, têm produzido uma composição de diferentes temporalidades, que conferiram um andamento particular à efetivação do ProSavana. Para tentar descrever essa estranha relação entre diferentes formas de saber que se expressam no tempo de realização um projeto de *desenvolvimento* – desenrolado em diferentes velocidades – parto da ideia de Mbembe (2011) de que na pós-colônia o tempo se dá de forma emergente. Nesse sentido, ao longo deste artigo buscarei descrever como, decompostas estas diferentes velocidades seria possível compreender as temporalidades que emergem do *entanglement* particular de relações tecnopolíticas que conferem a materialidade desse projeto de *desenvolvimento*.

**Palavras-chave:** desenvolvimento; tecnopolítica; temporalidade; cooperação internacional.

# “The speed of the political is not that of the scientific”: on the time of development in an agricultural technology transfer program<sup>1</sup>

Vanessa Parreira Perin

The ProSAVANA program is a triangular cooperation proposal signed between the governments of Japan, Brazil and Mozambique, which has sought to execute technical projects for agricultural development in the northern region of this African country. In order to conduct a Brazilian “technology transfer” to the area known as the Nacala Corridor, the main reference for its elaboration was the experience acquired from the Brazilian and Japanese Cooperation Program for the Agricultural Development of the Cerrado (*Programa de Cooperação Brasileira e Japonesa para o Desenvolvimento Agrícola do Cerrado*, PRODECER), a Japanese-Brazilian initiative responsible for the institutionalization of a highly technified and mechanized agricultural production model currently in force in the Brazilian Cerrado region. The agricultural technology that was proposed to transfer to Mozambique, therefore, is largely the result of the experience of “conservative modernization” (Delgado 2012) of the Brazilian rural environment, fostered from the mid-70s of the last century.

In February 2018, I paid a visit to the Soil Analysis Laboratory of Nampula, a city in the northern region of Mozambique. I had marked an appointment to converse with its director to learn more about the laboratory’s work, since it crystallized the “technology transfer” imparted within the scope of ProSAVANA, one of the objects of research that I was conducting at that time. I was accompanied by a fellow sociologist who was also conducting an investigation on the same program and, therefore, we decided to perform that stage of fieldwork together. The director met us amenable at the entrance of the laboratory that was inside the broader facilities of the Mozambique Institute of Agricultural Research (*Instituto de Investigação Agrária de Moçambique*, IIAM), while we continued under the hot sun of Nampula at that time of year.

We went to his office and he initially commented that he was very pleased to receive researchers from an area of social research. According to the director, things were not going well there and it would be up to us to understand and explain what had gone wrong. If everything remained as it was, the laboratory would not continue to function for much longer. The funds that maintained it until then came from Japanese cooperation and with the end of the program component that included the construction of the laboratory, among other activities, it was the responsibility of the Mozambican government to keep it running. Considering the very low government investments regarding the country’s agricultural sector,<sup>2</sup> this was unlikely to happen.

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<sup>1</sup> This article forms part of my doctoral research, which was supported by the Wenner Gren Foundation (Dissertation Fieldwork Grant) to conduct field research in Mozambique.

<sup>2</sup> Despite being presented by the Mozambican government as the basis of the economy, since approximately 75% of the population lives in rural areas and agriculture is their main source of income, the agricultural sector has historically received little public investment. According to Mosca (2012), with the exception of the early post-independence years, agriculture was not privileged by the state and, beyond the stagnation or setback of many elements of agrarian development, there were no structural transformations in the productive base, technologies, or productivity, contrary to the official discourse on the sector.

The researcher attributed many of the problems faced to the difficulty in dealing with “the Japanese,” who he described as very closed in their own way of doing things, with no possibility of dialogue. They built a laboratory that was unsustainable for Mozambican reality. He pointed to the ceiling where it was possible to observe several empty lamp holders, even though the room was very bright. “Do you understand what I’m saying? Do you think we need so many lamps in a country with so much sunlight?” he commented. He also recalled how this was incompatible with the recurring energy spikes and outages in Nampula. It was not uncommon for us to go a few hours without electricity in much of the city. However, Japanese cooperation always followed the same installation pattern in their laboratories, which had to be repeated in any place where their technicians were to work, in order to maintain the same quality of work environment.

His complaint extended to the machines that were purchased. “A donation from the Japanese people,” printed on the stickers present on all types of material acquired through cooperation with this country, whether it was a pen, a centrifuge, or a huge crane in the port of the city of Nacala. State-of-the-art technology, that was already deteriorating due to such power outages. And if a piece broke, explained the director, a technician from South Africa had to come to repair it, since there were no technicians qualified for such work in Mozambique. And if the piece needed to be exchanged, it would certainly have to be imported, since the country did not produce them. An expense that the laboratory was unable to constantly meet. In addition, there was a loss as a result of the import waiting time. Therefore, the technology brought in proved to be unsustainable for Mozambican financial and management capacity. Although well equipped, “the country cannot handle” the expenses generated by the laboratory’s activities, explained the Mozambican researcher.

He was visibly discouraged by the situation he faced. He told us that he had worked on the elaboration of ProSAVANA from the beginning, from the first meetings in Brazil. It was supposed to be a project implemented in southern Mozambique, where his capital is located, but he affirmed that he understood the Cerrado, since he had graduated in Brazil. Therefore, he put pressure on the cooperants to install the project in the north of the country, where the existing soils are closer to those of the Brazilian Cerrado, our “Savanna.” The initial idea of conducting the program in the south came from the fact that those with power in Mozambique were there. Politicians who, as I was told by several interlocutors throughout the research, had already “parceled out” all the land among themselves. When visiting the Cerrado and glimpsing our huge soy farms, said the director, these politicians wanted that type of enterprise to take place in Mozambique and quickly. Except that “the speed of the political is not that of the scientific,” he said. In his opinion, this had created a large portion of the problems in the implementation of the program.

I highlight this mismatch between a political sphere and a scientific sphere, addressed in the director’s narrative regarding the laboratory constructed by international cooperation, as it allows reflection on some effects of the technical discourse that guides the implementation of ProSAVANA, which I seek to discuss throughout this article. Based on research that sought to do an ethnography on the implementation of this program, I intend to present the manner in which the techno-political<sup>3</sup> mismatches that involve this undertaking of “technology transfer” for *development* have produced a composition of different temporalities, which conferred a particular pace to the operationalization of this program.

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3 According to Mitchell (2002), “Techno-politics is always a technical body, an alloy that must emerge from a process of manufacture whose ingredients are both human and nonhuman, both intentional and not, and in which the intentional or the human is always somewhat overrun by the unintended. But it is a particular form of manufacturing, a certain way of organizing the amalgam of human and nonhuman, things and ideas, so that the human, the intellectual, the realm of intentions and ideas seems to come first and to control and organize the nonhuman” (p.42-43)

Based on the repositioning of a problematic described as technical in the field of politics, by organizations and social movements, by peasants and by the technicians themselves, this work also questions how to analytically surpass the anti-political machine of the *development* apparatus (Ferguson 1994) and its mechanisms of *rendering technical* (Li 2007).<sup>4</sup> Therefore, I emphasize the inseparable presence of politics in the choice and use of various techniques, considering that these do not constitute a set of procedures whose objective ends are self-contained (Ribeiro 2018). In this sense, I sought to do an ethnography on the ways in which “the technique appears in the world as inseparable from politics, either as intertwined domains or practices, or as domains or practices considered separate, but in both cases in close relationship” (Moraswka Vianna & Ribeiro 2018: 10). The speed of the scientific (or technical) and the political are not the same, as the director of the laboratory in Nampula pointed out, but they are placed in a specific and situated relationship.

As Gupta (1998) indicates, in order to understand why certain agricultural policies have been promoted, how they are implemented and why they are adopted or challenged by farmers, it is important to keep in mind three different frameworks: the discourse of *development* and its modernization strategies; a change in the nature of global capitalism; the technological transformations promoted by the green revolution. Each of these “macrologies” brings a different temporality, creating both moments of overlap and disjuncture and intersections.

Contestations of the state’s claims of fostering “development” reveal that the postcolonial condition is distinguished by heterogeneous temporalities that mingle and jostle with one another to interrupt the teleological narratives that have served both to constitute and stabilize the identity of the “West”<sup>5</sup> (Gupta 1998: 17).

And in order to describe this strange relationship between different forms of knowledge that are expressed in the time of accomplishing a *development* project –unfolding at different speeds –, I follow the idea of Mbembe (2001) that in the postcolony, time is constantly emerging. According to the author, the peculiarity of historicity in African societies is rooted in a multiplicity of times, trajectories, rationalities that, although they are private or local on some scale, cannot fail to be conceptualized in a globalized world and in a time on the move. The postcolonial debate in the African context, therefore, implies not only a denunciation of power, but a discussion about time and displacement, which rehabilitates notions of *age* and *durée* when thinking about the African experience.

By *age* is meant not a simple category of time but a number of relationships and a configuration of events — often visible and perceptible, sometimes diffuse, “hydra-headed,” but to which contemporaries could testify since very aware of them. As an *age*, the postcolony encloses multiple *durées* made up of discontinuities, reversals, inertias, and swings that overlay one another, interpenetrate one another, and envelope one another: an *entanglement* (Mbembe 2001: 14).

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4 A striking feature of development projects highlighted by Ferguson (1994) is that they almost ceaselessly fail to achieve their apparent goals. However, the productive character of these interventions is not in what they do not do, or in what they should do, but in what they actually create with their intervention, beyond what the technicians understand as failure. In the case observed by the author in Lesoto, results that at first appeared as mere side effects of an unsuccessful attempt to project an economic transformation became readable from another perspective, as instrumental elements that extended the exercise of state bureaucracy in that country. At the same time, a mechanism for depoliticizing poverty was created: an anti-political machine that repeatedly replenished questions about the distribution of land, resources, labor and wages as technical problems that could be solved with the correct intervention of the *development* apparatus. Li (2007) also calls attention to an inevitable gap between what is intended and what is accomplished by these models. Thus, her analysis turns to the will to improve of *development* programs, a mechanism situated in government practices described by Foucault, that is, interventions that seek to direct the conduct of the subjects in a calculated manner. Such interventions are elaborated, first, by problematizing certain phenomena, identifying deficiencies that need to be rectified. Then, through a set of practices that the author calls rendering technical, where the objective is to represent the domain to be governed as an intelligible field, with defined characteristics and limits, on which certain techniques can act.

5 According to the author, shortly after the Second World War, when the end of colonial government seemed inevitable, the *development* apparatus institutionalized a new form of governmentality, in which the new independent nations of the *third world* were located in particular times and spaces. When using the term “post-colonial condition,” therefore, Gupta refers to a set of locations articulated by the historical trajectory of colonialism, *development* and global capitalism.

Thus, in this emerging time that combines many temporalities, demarcating a before and one after colonization is not enough to exhaust the questions concerning the passage of stages, for example, as the discourse of *development* does.<sup>6</sup> Mbembe highlights that it is necessary to know not only how this multiplicity of times are rewritten in a historical *durée*, but also in native *durées* and in the particularity of this time that is constantly emerging:

To think relevantly about *this time that is appearing*, *this passing time*, meant abandoning conventional views, for these only perceive time as a current that carries individuals and societies from a background to a foreground, with the future emerging necessarily from the past and following that past, itself irreversible. But of central interest was that peculiar time that might be called the *time of existence and experience*, the *time of entanglement*. (Mbembe 2001: 15)

It is in this sense that throughout this article I try to describe how, by decomposing the different speeds implicated in the implementation of the ProSAVANA program, it is possible to understand the temporalities that emerge from the particular entanglement of techno-political relations that confer the materiality of this *development* project.

### Technology transfer between parallels

ProSAVANA is part of the Brazilian foreign policy framework of the Lula government (2003-10), which highlighted South-South cooperation as one of the priorities of its international policy. With a strong presence in the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and in the World Trade Organization (WTO) throughout the 2000s, the Brazilian government became a prominent actor in the dialogue between governments and multilateral agencies in terms of combating hunger and the promotion of food security in Africa. Thus, the country was responsible for articulating the internationalization of important national programs to encourage family farming and small producers, such as the More Food Program (*Programa Mais Alimentos*), Food Acquisition Program (*Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos*) and the National School Feeding Program (*Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar*), in addition to promoting the internationalization of the work of important research institutions, such as the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation and the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (*Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária*, EMBRAPA) (Cabral & Shankland 2013). However, the increase in Brazil's economic and political presence in the African continent allowed for the expansion of national and transnational companies focused on agribusiness, which from another perspective of intervention in agriculture, had a marked influence on Brazilian foreign policy (Garcia & Kato 2016).

Despite the numerous criticisms made about PRODECER regarding the creation of a mass of landless rural workers and small farmers unable to compete with the large producers, together with to the environmental impacts resulting from the use of chemical pesticides, an increasing number of trade agreements that facilitated investments in commodities turned this program into a “success” that should be exported (Funada-Classen 2013). Thus, the first movements of the promoters of ProSAVANA were to highlight similarities between the Brazilian Cerrado region and the Nacala Corridor, described by them as a place of “vast unused lands,” characterized by “food scarcity and poverty,” located in a climatic region along the same latitude as the Cerrado.

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<sup>6</sup> As Ferguson (2006) points out, many studies on “globalization” have treated the African continent as an “inconvenient case” that does not fit the narrative line of *development*. Thus, “the narrative repeatedly describes the world in terms of a traditional ‘before’ and a globalized ‘after’ that leaves no place for most contemporary African social realities except in the putative past” (p.27). Moore (1999) also highlights the historical-cultural dimension as one that also escapes *development* interventions, since many contemporary analyzes on the theme eclipse the micropolitics through which “global development discourses are refracted, reworked, and sometimes subverted in particular localities” (p.655), by assuming that these initiatives rigidly determine local political dynamics. For Moore, particular interventions are linked to a deeper history of the ways in which governments have tried to regulate and discipline landscapes and ways of life.

“A Mato Grosso in the middle of Africa, with free land, with less environmental impediment and much cheaper shipping than to China,” as a Brazilian businessman stated.

Since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the three countries that were part of the “Tropical Savannah” agreement of cooperation for agricultural development, in mid-September 2009, an image has been strongly linked to the imaginary of this enterprise: the 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> parallel south, as a link between South America and Southern Africa. The area covered in these latitudinal bands places the regions of the Brazilian Cerrado and the Savannah of northern Mozambique in relation to each other, and this cartographic perspective, a series of possible *similarities* could be produced and highlighted to support the South-South character of the initiative that had been outlined for the program, even though it was a triangulated cooperation with a donor from the north.

As a publication by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) points out, the idea for the elaboration of what would become ProSAVANA came up a few months earlier, during the meeting of the G8 summit in the Italian city of Aquila. At this meeting, the then President of Brazil and Prime Minister of Japan established an agreement to develop agriculture in Africa. No African country, however, was present at this meeting and only months later was Mozambique officially identified as the “beneficiary country” for this initiative (Ferrando 2015). According to its promoters, the African country was chosen as the appropriate place to receive the agricultural model of the Cerrado, since the so-called Tropical Savannahs are found in both regions.

As the aforementioned JICA document describes, ProSAVANA was an assistance program for *development* that aimed to achieve synergistic effects through promoting agricultural investment by the private sector, and by increasing the income of small producers (Hosono 2012). The first documents of the program also indicated that the model followed by its developers aimed at integrating private investments on a large scale with the production of local farmers through contracts with agricultural companies, through which they would receive a *technical package* – seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, machinery and extension services – in exchange for their production (Nogueira & Ollinaho 2013). It was, therefore, the implantation of an intensive and market-oriented agricultural production system, which could combine investment and technical assistance. Following a proposal for rural modernization similar to that which occurred in the Cerrado, the Nacala Corridor could then become the “granary” of Southern Africa.

It is believed that creating large-scale, modernized farms using industrial techniques on this underproducing land will reap high yields in both commodity crops and financial profits. This is where Brazilian agricultural development projects have focused their efforts: on providing the scientific and technological basis for improving farm productivity in sub Saharan Africa. In the words of an EMBRAPA soil scientist, the aim is to create “intelligent farms in any part of the world” (Wolford & Nehring 2015: p.210).

However, for the knowledge that enabled the increase in productivity in the Cerrado to serve as a basis for the new enterprise, it was necessary to emphasize the *similarities* between the two regions, in a way that made the “transfer of technologies” and the choice of the north of Mozambique feasible, which, as the laboratory director described, was not the first site selected for the implementation of ProSAVANA. As underlined by Wolford and Nehring (2015), the idea that Brazilian cooperation would focus more on partnership than on development assistance, expressed several times in the media, in official documents and in comments by Brazilian and Mozambican government representatives, is connected to the notion of *similarity*. This discourse on shared affinities (Cabral and Shankland 2013) is the first entanglement that I would like to highlight. Encompassed by the image of “parallels,” the similarities between the two countries is often invoked based on three main elements, with specific temporalities: a shared ecology, history and culture (Wolford & Nehring 2015; Shankland & Gonçalves 2016; Cesarino 2017a; Camana & Almeida 2018).

As Funada-Classen (2013) indicates, “Tropical Savannah” is a climatic category in the classification system established in the nineteenth century by geographer Wladimir Koppen, who describes a region in which periods of rain and drought alternate. According to the author, this was the reference for the first JICA documents when drawing the comparison between the Cerrado and the Savannah region of northern Mozambique, referring mainly to the overarching latitude to take the “success of the Cerrado” to the Nacala Corridor. The same Cartesian logic “that aligns spaces as equivalent through latitudinal similarities while abstracting ecologies and landscapes through categories such as the tropics, savannahs or corridors” (Wolford & Nehring 2015: p. 212), was also used by Brazilians.

Thus, since the two regions are located in the tropical zone of the globe, similarities in relation to the type of soil, climate, rainfall regime, vegetation, were presented as comparative advantages of Brazilian cooperation vis-à-vis other emerging donors, such as China, or even in relation to traditional donors from the north and former partners of the socialist bloc. A selective analogy, similar to the orientalism described by Said (1979), that from a metonymic mechanism took parts for the homogenized whole (Cesarino, 2014).

An example of this mechanism can be found in the Paralelos project<sup>7</sup> developed by EMBRAPA, concurrently with the first ProSAVANA agreements. This project sought to map the territory of the Nacala Corridor to generate an ecological and geographic database through satellite information systems. Reiterating certain trends expressed in documents produced in that period by international bodies, like the World Bank, the project was an important tool for building this parallelism, emphasizing not only a latitudinal equivalence, but a prehistoric territorial proximity between the two continents that assist in dealing with ecological characteristics, such as a shared tropical climate and geological landscape. The “transfer of technologies,” therefore, reinforced a “natural partnership” between the regions to build a “bridge over the Atlantic” (World Bank & IPEA 2011) and reconnect regions that prehistorically had been one. Through the production of this set of data and artifacts, the idea of a shared nature between the two countries operated as one of the agents for the promotion of ProSAVANA (Camana & Almeida 2018).

The second connection made between the two countries is that of the shared legacy of Portuguese colonization, which, for example, resulted in a common language. The use of Portuguese by Brazilian cooperators appears, therefore, as an advantage in relation to other donors in the north and also justifies Brazilian participation as a kind of mediator for Japanese cooperation. Wolford and Nehring (2015) and Cesarino (2017a) also indicate the importance of discourses like that of Gilberto Freyre’s lusotropicalism to legitimize the idea that “future Brazils” could be gestated in African countries of Portuguese colonization.

Despite being widely used by Brazilian cooperation, the assertion of *similarities* as an advantageous mechanism for the implementation of development projects is a factor also highlighted by other “emerging donors.” In general, a past of common colonial subjugation has served to legitimize the precept of horizontality in *South-South cooperation*, focusing on the technical character of the interventions, which are presented under an aura of scientific neutrality, before the political precepts of these undertakings (Shankland & Gonçalves 2016).

Highly connected to this second *similarity*, the third is also based on a colonial legacy: slavery. Brazilian cooperation, as expressed in many speeches by ex-President Lula and his ministers, was a way of reversing a “historic debt” arising from the traffic of Africans to Brazil. Positively presented, the “common roots in indigenous Africa” (Wolford & Nehring 2015: p.213), in addition to the use of Portuguese as an official language, evidenced a bond not only based on the African cultural matrix developed on Brazilian soil, but on blood. Which, according to the Brazilian government, implied a moral duty of cooperation between the two countries.

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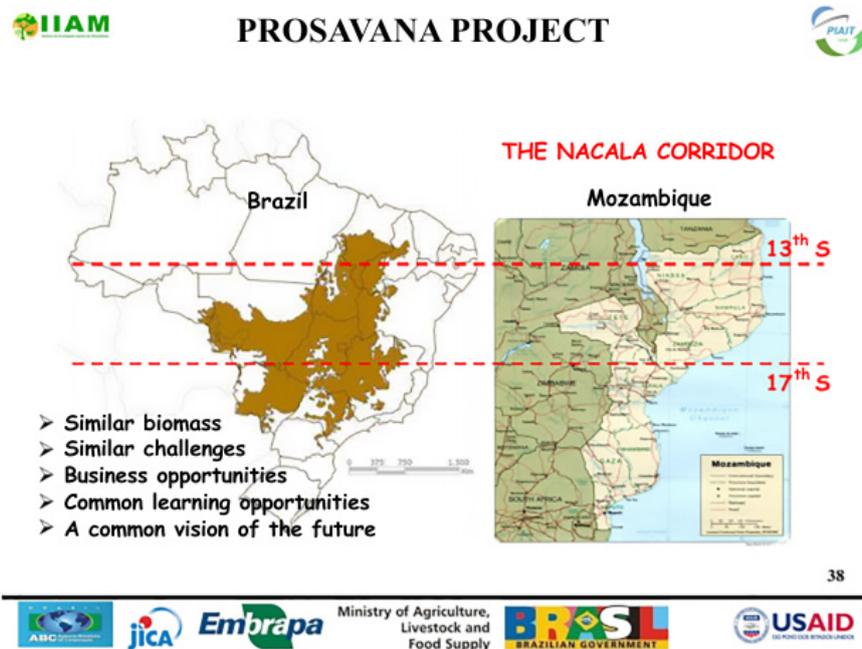
7 Concerning the Paralelos project, see Batistella & Bolfe (2010).

These elements were synthesized by ex-president Lula during his speech<sup>8</sup> at the dinner offered by the then president of Mozambique, Joaquim Chissano, in 2003:

Brazil has a **historic debt** and, consequently, **needs to contribute decisively to the payment of that debt.** (...) We know that Brazilian society was constructed with the work, the effort, the sweat and the blood of a large portion of Africans, who were free citizens in Africa and became slaves, to provide services in my country and in other countries. **The most correct way to repay the sacrifice that Africans have suffered is to establish the most perfect policy of harmony with Africa.** (...) We came here to tell President Chissano that we, Brazilians, and **the Brazilian government want to dedicate part of our time, part of our technological knowledge; we want to dedicate our industrial knowledge, our agricultural knowledge, so we can contribute to the development of this part of planet Earth.** (Da Silva 2003: p.2; emphasis added)

As shown in the figure presented below, not only were the aforementioned ecological, linguistic and cultural *similarities* emphasized, but other elements of analogy could be produced from them that would locate the three countries in a relationship within the proposal for international cooperation brought by ProSAVANA. The “challenges,” the “learning opportunities” and the “vision of the future” would also be shared. And from this projection of *similarities* between the territories in question, a specific temporality was also composed. To ensure the emergence of the time for *South-South cooperation*, different temporalities became entangled: a prehistoric geographical complementarity between the continents, the history of colonization and, finally, a prospecting for the future in which the Brazilian experience – its time on the move, as Mbembe calls it – could be reproduced in Mozambique.

**Figure 1:** ProSAVANA presentation [translated]



Source: Mozambique Institute of Agricultural Research (IIAM).

<sup>8</sup> Wolford and Nehring (2015) highlight the way in which this construction of cultural similarity between Brazil and African countries also appears in Lula’s speech in Ghana in 2008, when the president visited the Embrapa office opened in that country. In his speech, the president affirms that the Brazilian people were similar to the African peoples in their color, their joy, their dances and in much of their culture, reinforcing the bonds more than the barriers created by slavery.

The choice of this African country as the third element of the proposal for international cooperation is not, however, due only to the resemblances between the two countries, which are mostly only sustained at the cartographic scale, or in the rhetoric of the foreign policy of the cooperators. The proposal appears in the midst of a group of other political movements that intersect with the program's initiative, creating a specific composition of relations with singular temporalities, which can be framed only within the technical discourse of international cooperation with some difficulty. Thus, despite this effort to create *similarities*, the first actual technical visits to the ProSAVANA implementation site showed that the resemblances between the regions were not so considerable, since other elements would become entangled in this discourse on "parallels."

As narrated by a local government official from Nampula, who followed the program's initial activities, it was very difficult, for example, to reach the peasant communities who speak Macua, a language of the local ethnicity, to hold discussions with technicians who spoke "Brazilian" (remembering how the lived experience had already modified the language spoken in both countries), Japanese technicians speaking English, or Mozambicans "from the south," who did not speak the local language. He also reports that language was not the only problem that was asserted, deconstructing the idea that it would be a facilitator for cooperation, but the discourse of cultural proximity was also not maintained; in the moments reserved for the foreign technicians' lunch, they went to their air-conditioned cars to eat bread and drink bottled mineral water, while the peasants "remained to eat dry cassava." He argued, sarcastically, that the co-workers should have brought water in canteens, since the communities already knew about them "from the time of the settlers."

In his opinion, these "communication problems" resulted in the series of resistances faced by the technicians when taking ProSAVANA from the scale of plans to "the terrain." In the next section, therefore, I seek to discuss some implications of these resistances for the temporality of program implementation.

### **Adjustments in the speed of technology transfer**

An important element of differentiation that came to counter the discourse of the parallels between the Savannah and the Cerrado is the high population density of the Nacala Corridor region. In addition to being a region with considerable water resources, northern Mozambique has very productive land, which is the reason it is one of the most populated areas in the country, principally in the vicinity of the railroad that crosses the corridor, the highways and the few roads that integrate the rural households with larger urban agglomerations. Much like in the entire country, the Nacala Corridor is inhabited by different ethnic groups. The northern region in general, is home to the largest ethnic group in Mozambique, the Macua. Other groups also live in this territory, such as Macondes, Lomues, Ajauas and Nyanjas, who speak their own languages. As the above report indicates, Portuguese is not the first language spoken by this population, especially in rural areas where the vast majority live.

**Figures 2 and 3:** Houses next to the road in a peasant community



Source: The author, in the field.

Doing semi-nomadic agriculture, these groups are mostly organized in peasant, matrilineal communities, living on subsistence agricultural cultivation or with few surpluses, drawing on family labor and community members to maintain agriculture in their areas. Mainly women work in the *machambas*,<sup>9</sup> while the men are responsible for the exchange and commercialization of the products. However, these rural households are generally poorly integrated into the market, as they are distant from the main marketing centers and find few possibilities for distribution. The intercropping of food crops, such as manioc, corn, beans and vegetables, in addition to the reservation of rotating fallow areas to maintain the fertility of the land, have been the main cultivation techniques employed by peasants in community areas that generally occupy approximately one hectare,<sup>10</sup> worked with short-handled hoes and machetes.

<sup>9</sup> Agricultural production areas in Mozambique are called *machambas*.

<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed description of the farming done by small Mozambican producers in relation to land occupation, and the production methods and technologies used, see Smart and Hanlon (2014) and Uaiene (2012).

**Figure 4:** Photo of the collective fields of a community in Ribaué



Source: The author, in the field.

In addition to these singularities of Mozambican rural environment, it is important to note that land ownership in Mozambique is state owned and can be used through an annual tax of approximately six dollars per hectare for fifty years, and renewable for the same period. However, the aforementioned peasant communities have the right to traditional use of their community lands, and do not require a Right of Land to Use and Benefit (*Direito de Uso e Aproveitamento da Terra*, DUAT) document to occupy them.<sup>11</sup> Due to this rotation system of cultivated lands, it is difficult to find extensive continuous agricultural areas. It was not, therefore, “free,” “empty” or “available” land for large investors, as stated in some of the first discourses concerning ProSAVANA.<sup>12</sup>

Faced with these specificities, the developers of ProSAVANA had to modify the program’s approach in its preparatory phase. Beyond the *similarities* of climate and latitude in the area encompassed by the “parallels,” they began to highlight agronomic similarities not taken advantage of by the peasants of the region, given the lack of investments and the appropriate techniques to increase productivity. In this case, the techniques developed by EMBRAPA and the investment of large companies producing commodities for export.

<sup>11</sup> According to the Land Law, “As a universal means of creating wealth and social well-being, the use and enjoyment of land shall be the right of all Mozambican people. (...) Ownership of land: exclusive right of the state, established by the constitution of the Republic of Mozambique incorporating all rights of ownership, as well as the power and the ability to determine the conditions of its use and benefit by individual or corporate persons. (...) The land is the property of the State and cannot be sold or otherwise alienated, mortgaged or encumbered. (...) The application for a title for the right of land use and benefit shall include a statement by the local administrative authorities, preceded by consultation with the respective communities, for the purpose of confirming that the area is free and has no occupants.” (MOÇAMBIQUE 2004: 1-5).

<sup>12</sup> I would emphasize that the production of territories as empty areas is nothing new, rather it is a common way of operating the *development* apparatus. In general, the space which the state (articulated with international cooperation) intends to *develop* is produced as a demographic, sociocultural and even environmental vacuum, both in terms of discourse and interventions that result in population displacement or the degradation of a given biome. Considering the Brazilian case, it is possible to observe how this invisibility mechanism was present in the policies of occupation, modernization and expansion of the agricultural frontier to regions of the Amazon and the Cerrado (Heredia et al. 2010; Martins 1997; Velho 1981) during the military governments and, more recently, in the MATOPIBA (Santos 2018). Projects for the *revitalization* of certain urban spaces, which operate in a similar manner, are also worth highlighting (Guimarães 2014). On the production of the Mozambican Savannah as an empty place, uninhabited and waiting for *development*, see Camana and Almeida (2019).

The tropical savannah region that spreads to the northern part of the country is thought to have a **high potential of agricultural production**, for the land being especially suitable for farming, due to its steady amount of rainfall and vast land. This region, however, is mostly uncultivated. Furthermore, **small-scale farmers are limited by their adherence to traditional agricultural practices, which are mostly extensive type of cultivation, and the productivity of both subsistence crops and cash crops are not high**. Even the agricultural techniques of intermediate and large-scale farmers are limited, and not very productive. Hence, **the expansion of cultivated land and increases in agricultural productivity are to be expected with the introduction of appropriate agricultural technology and investment**. (JICA, February 2011 apud Funada-Classen, 2013 p. 11; emphasis added)

Since the first apparent movements toward the implementation of ProSAVANA, the *União Nacional de Camponeses* (UNAC)<sup>13</sup> has condemned the concession of land to Brazilian agriculturists dedicated to agribusiness, through an initial pronouncement concerning the program released in 2012. In this, the protesters already highlighted the elements that would guide their criticisms, which deepened in the years that followed: the focus on monoculture cultivation, the risk of loss of land by peasants, and an exogenous model of agricultural production that would rupture with elements of the sociocultural organization of the populations of that region. The declaration was drawn up from a meeting held in the same year between peasant communities to discuss the progress of the program and access to information on it, since the elaboration of a Master Plan already appeared to have begun, without the corridor populations actually having been consulted, as stipulated by the Mozambican Land Law.

The first public information about the program came from an article published on August 14, 2011, in the Brazilian newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*, under the title “Moçambique oferece terra à soja brasileira” [Mozambique offers land to Brazilian soy]. It states that an area of approximately six million hectares would be available under a concession regime for Brazilian businesses linked to agribusiness to grow soy, cotton and corn. For many peasants, however, the meeting organized by UNAC was the first time they received information on ProSAVANA. From that point on, some Mozambican organizations began to work on verifying the existing information with their government, however, this would have brought little clarification on the terms and conditions of this “offer to Brazilian soy.”

Criticisms about the lack of transparency and a participatory process in the elaboration of the program intensified after the unofficial disclosure via internet of a first version of its Master Plan, in early 2013. Denominated Report no. 2, the document established the area covered by program activities, which would be approximately 14 million hectares, comprising 19 districts located in the provinces of Nampula, Zambézia and Niassa. In addition to the fact that this large area is often presented as available to investors in Mozambican government discourses, disregarding the population of approximately 4.5 million inhabitants in the region, recommendations for the formation of productive clusters in the document drew the attention of organizations and social movements:

Clusters are strategic approaches to **accelerate development within a specified territory**. The central line of development of these strategies is to design one or more value chains, with synergic potential and in appropriate context regarding the territory, in **order to channel efforts for its realization within a period lower than that which could be achieved without integrated and specific actions**. All producers, companies and institutions that are correlated with the central value chain, such as input suppliers, machinery suppliers, specialized infrastructure or competing entities, represent the constitutional elements of a Cluster.

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<sup>13</sup> UNAC [National Union of Peasants] is a Mozambican platform for peasant representation that was established as a social movement in 1993, following the end of the civil war and due to the neoliberal economic restructuring that the country is undergoing. It has been created to be a national organization “of peasants” rather than “for peasants,” as one of its founders says, in contrast to the previous General Union of Cooperatives organized within the scope of socialist planning. UNAC branches into Provincial Unions and, more recently, has fostered the formation of District Unions and advocacy agents trained to mediate relations between the organization (and local government) with peasant communities.

Clusters also involve marketing channels and consumers as well as producers of complementary products and companies of related sectors. (...) The production clusters present themselves as the basis for the political, social and especially economic development of Nacala Corridor. Each cluster will encompass a variety of agricultural, industrial and service providers companies, where will be involved corporate domestic and foreign producers up to the Mozambican smallholders working together in synergy between components (PROSAVANA-PD 2013: 2-14; emphasis added).

As the document indicates, such clusters would be constituted based on zonings in the Nacala Corridor region, classifying it into different classes of agricultural management through a wide mapping of the territory in order to determine the different types of soil, climatic variations and agroclimatic conditions, productive scales, potential human resources and degree of access to arable land, through integrated actions elaborated based on the agricultural potential, land use mode and environmental restriction of each region. Thus, one of the main objectives to be achieved by this proposal for the productive reorganization of the area covered by the program was to accelerate the results of agricultural *development*.

Initiating the preparatory activities for the formation of these clusters, the document listed 16 priority projects – the Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) – to increase the productivity of the value chain to which they applied, generating visible impacts and results in the short term.<sup>14</sup> In order to guarantee the speed of *development*, meeting the political demands of the Mozambican state and quickly generating the “success of the Cerrado” in the Nacala Corridor, the results of the QIPs would act as showcases of the region’s agricultural potential, in order to attract donors to finance other projects proposed in the Master Plan, in addition to national and international companies that could promote agribusiness plans in the region.

Most of the fast impact projects, however, did not precisely define their beneficiaries, location or magnitude, making it practically impossible to measure the size and quality of their results. Many still required environmental impact studies and indicated the need for expropriation of local peasant populations. Such issues deepened the national and international demonstrations against ProSAVANA. A number of organizations and social movements publicly opposed the program, claiming that with the arrival of massive foreign investments, peasants in the region would eventually be removed from their land as a result of the indebtedness that a contract work regime can produce, or by resettlements put forward by the Mozambican government, both proposals present in Report no. 2. Criticisms were also directed at the possible loss of autonomy of peasant families not only in relation to the land, but also what is produced in the areas of community use, resulting in implications for their diet and a reduction of the peasants’ quality of life, in a context of the progressive loss of their consuetudinary rights.

As Shankland and Gonçalves (2016) highlight, the allegations of *similarities* based on the landscape that brought the Brazilian Cerrado and the Mozambican Savannah together had a particular productive force that allowed both to promote *South-South cooperation* and to question it. Also supported in the results of the PRODECER a transnational network contesting the program was then built based on this search for more information. Since 2014, civil society organizations and social movements in the three countries involved in trilateral cooperation have maintained an anti-program campaign – the *Não ao ProSavana* [No to ProSAVANA] Campaign – which, together with advocacy work with the governments of their own countries, in the dissemination of documents in the peasant communities, the articulation meetings between organizations, social movements and communities, the publication of papers positioned against the program model and even through boycott activities, have managed to delay or even paralyze some ProSAVANA activities.

14 In some of the projects, it was expected that after three years it would be possible to glimpse “improved productivity and increased income of beneficiaries, introduction and promotion of improved agriculture technologies such as quality seed, fertilizers, agriculture machinery, and post-harvest technologies, and the construction or rehabilitation of rural infrastructure related to agriculture development” (PROSAVANA-PD 2013: 4-1).

One of the most striking effects of this process of resistance has been the reformulation of the Master Plan, which should have been completed in 2013, but is still being prepared. In the most recent version of the document, called Draft Zero, it is notable that together with the focus on *small producers* as the target group of the program, a series of food crops has also become more relevant. Although “an analysis of the evolution of the areas of the different crops referred to in the MP-Version Zero, between 2011 and 2030, clearly indicates that soy will evolve much more rapidly than the remainder” (Mosca & Bruna 2015: 16), such that it will be the crop that most receives the improvements in “technology transfer.”

A second important element of this process of resistance was the pressure to hold public consultations with the peasants who would be affected by ProSAVANA projects. Based on the criticisms and demands from the communities of the Nacala Corridor, peasant associations and the articulation of civil society organizations from the three countries, expressed in a series of documents, the Mozambican Ministry of Agriculture convened the so-called “Public Hearings on Draft Zero of the ProSAVANA Master Plan,” in 2015. However, these meetings brought even more conflict to the situation. The protests began because the hearings were organized to present yet another ready-made version of the Master Plan, without having previously established the “democratic, transparent and inclusive” dialogues requested in an Open Letter<sup>15</sup> two years previously.

After the hearings, the organizations of the *Não ao ProSavana* Campaign wrote a series of denouncements. Signed by more than sixty national and international organizations, the “Call of the Peoples for Immediate Invalidation of the Public Hearings of the ProSAVANA Master Plan,” emphasized that the meetings had no legal basis, as they ignored the legal instruments that define the guidelines for public consultations in the country. According to the protesters, the organizers deliberately used delays, changes in locations, the selection of participants, and making it impossible to understand the contents of the document (because it was not made available in a timely manner for analysis) to prevent interventions.<sup>16</sup>

In this great dispute over the legitimacy of community consultations, it is possible to apprehend a second entanglement of different emerging temporalities as an effect of the power relations that traverse the implementation of the program of cooperation. While the work of the technicians seeks to guarantee the speed of the processes to achieve *development*, it crosses not only the obstacles brought by the slow time of bureaucracy expressed in the production of different versions of documents, but also the temporality evidenced by the communities that refused to accept the disclosure of a previously completed technical document as an appropriate consultation. For critics of the program, the construction of another *development* proposal was necessary, a movement of a slower nature, which would fundamentally imply the participation of the peasants not only in community consultations, but in the formulation of ProSAVANA in general. This is demonstrated by the statements of the president of a peasant-based organization and the coordinator of a Mozambican civil society NGO, which I reproduce below:

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<sup>15</sup> In May 2013, the demonstrators drew up an “Open Letter to Deter and Urgently Reflect on the ProSavana Program,” addressed to the presidents of Mozambique, Brazil and the Prime Minister of Japan. It called for the immediate suspension and review of ProSAVANA and proposed another technical model of *agricultural development*, understood as more *sustainable* for the region: an agriculture based on *production systems* and not on products, which respected the peasants’ *family production* logic and their way of occupying space in its social and anthropological dimension.

<sup>16</sup> The first version of the master plan was just under 300 pages long. Although successive versions of the document are getting smaller, it is important to remember that these are communities with low levels of education and whose first language is not Portuguese. Therefore, it would be very difficult to analyze a technical document within the limited time proposed by the program managers. Many protesters also denounce the creation of an intimidating environment for peasants through the presence of uniformed armed security guards at the meetings, together with threats and the harassment of peasants who expressed objections to the program.

These are saying that the Version Zero Master Plan has changed (...). It changed because in the Master Plan, that of 2013, there was only corn, soy and sugarcane in there. (...) Now there's peanuts, beans, cotton, cashew nuts. Perhaps they consider it a change, but what we're saying is, not yet! Nothing's changed. **First thing is that they should have left everything out.** Leaving it all out, the first thing was to do the field work. **Go to the base, sit with the peasants. To hear the peasants.** Listen to the peasants, what concerns they have, what kind of support they need, and all that. And so, after spending time in the communities, the technical team could sit down and produce the Master Plan. And this Master Plan, after its produced, has to go back to the peasants. **And it would remain there for two, three, four months. For the peasants to try to read it slowly, see if it's exactly what the peasants had reported. And then you could hold community consultations, but that's not what's happening.** There's a lot of manipulation and there's no transparency. A lot is happening in ProSAVANA's space. They are advancing, but the base there, the peasants there, were not informed. (Peasant leader)

Unfortunately, in the Mozambican government, things are like that, things have to happen from one day to the next. In my opinion, this does not ensure, it does not guarantee the quality of the work. (...) **Every single time we tried to have community consultations, things were like night and day. Like, we have to do the consultations next week, or next month.** We commented among our colleagues here, sorry there, we have our work plans. The peasants also have their activities, their plans. (...) **These activities should be part of our work.** And to be part of our work, it can't appear and be included in this month's plans, for example. **It has to be fitted into the plan two, three months ahead.** (...) And I think that because of the way ProSAVANA itself was brought over... I've no doubt that there was political pressure. It has to happen. A done deal. (Member of Rural Association for Mutual Support, ORAM)

This criticism was not restricted to protesters who oppose the program, but it was also emphasized a lot by ProSAVANA technicians. According to a former extension project coordinator, "there was a lack of thought and observation of the specificities of the country." When evaluating the results of the interventions already carried out, unlike the rhetoric of "technology transfer" between "parallels," his analysis indicated the absence of deeper field research on the program's target region. For the coordinator "whoever drew up the first documents did not have this dimension." As I will present below, to face these criticisms, the solution found by the proponents of ProSAVANA was to fit it into another temporality – that of the experiment.

### **The experimental time of *development* technopolitics**

In conversations with technicians linked to ProSAVANA in different districts that already had ongoing experimental activities, they were concerned enough to emphasize that no peasant had lost land. Using as reference the most recent version of the Master Plan, prepared after the various criticisms received over the years, they highlighted that the focus of the next steps was to increase productivity in the cultivation of the "banner crops" of each district, listed in the Strategic Plan for the Development of the Agrarian Sector (*Plano Estratégico para o Desenvolvimento do Sector Agrário*, PEDSA) of the Mozambican government and the integration of small producers into the region's production chain, improving their access to the market.

Thus, just as the temporalities of bureaucracy and resistance affected the speed of the program's implementation, an experimental period emerges as an official technical discourse that responds to the challenges faced. As a representative of JICA pointed out, the problem of high population density in the Nacala Corridor or the need to carry out socioenvironmental impact studies indicated by the campaigners of the *Não ao ProSavana* Campaign, were not seen as major obstacles to the continuity of the program, since that the activities conducted thus far were still preliminary studies for the structuring of what ProSAVANA would become:

One of the minor constraints that we found concerning the difference between PRODECER and ProSAVANA has to do with population density. In Mozambique, the Nacala Corridor is the most densely populated zone. Just to give you an idea, if we combine the provinces of Nampula and Zambézia, it's just over 50% of the population of Mozambique.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, there can't be large tracts of land available in that area. (...) It must be said that the program is not being implemented as ProSAVANA, as such. Both the research project and the extension project have yet to find out how we're going to implement it. And the master plan will decide exactly which projects to implement. It's more about research and the search for models. (...) And so far, we haven't seen any need to commit to the study of environmental conditions, because no project has been designed. **So, probably *a posteriori*, if a project appears that could have an environmental or social impact, we'll do the necessary studies. Now it's all about research.** Finding out exactly what's happening at the field level. (JICA representative)

ProSAVANA is structured around three preparatory projects – the Investigation Project, the Extension and Models Project and the Master Plan – that should be developed over a twenty-year horizon. Characterized as the “technology transfer” component itself, ProSAVANA-PI (*Projeto de Investigação*; Investigation Project) began in 2011 and ended in 2017. This step aimed to strengthen the operational capacity of the IIAM and develop new agricultural technologies in demonstration units.

EMBRAPA technicians have acquired a central role in this component, since they are the holders of knowledge in tropical agriculture that is proposed to transfer and adapt from the Cerrado to the Mozambican Savannah. Within the scope of ProSAVANA-PI, therefore, some food crops and soybeans for the production of feed were tested and improved seeds have already “released,” that is, they have the certification that allows them to be commercialized, from the germplasm of Brazilian seeds or from local varieties. Again, in this component, Japanese cooperation handled the construction and supply of equipment for the Nampula Laboratory of Analysis of Soil and Plants and for certain tests on varieties of seeds (corn, soybeans, beans, peanuts, rice, sorghum, vegetables and cotton).<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the *sustainability* problems of the laboratory that the director highlighted, and from what I was able to accompany in seminar that released the ProSAVANA-PI results, many of the technicians questioned the ability of small farmers to use the laboratory apparatus, since integration with the extension activities has been weak. Currently, its main users are researchers and businesses, in their soil analysis and seed acquisition. The *sustainability* of the transferred technology, therefore, appears to be another entanglement that I would like to highlight. It emerges in yet another specific composition of different temporalities that become entangled with the “time of the experiment”, displacing its execution under laboratory conditions, which occur as if they were isolated from external agents that could influence their results.

According to Latour and Woolgar (1997) after the purification process that isolates the political characteristics from their own condition of production, evading the sociological or historical explanation of their construction, the scientific fact<sup>19</sup> could only transit unchanged if there was a standardization of the sociotechnical networks outside the laboratory. “But what about laboratories that are not well equipped, where technicians are not well trained or assiduous and energy or basic materials may be lacking at any time, that is, where the fact or technoscientific object is not ‘effective’?” (Cesarino 2017b: 73).

17 The situation in Niassa Province is a little different. At the height of the Cuamba district, where the main section of the railway ends, together with the Nacala Corridor itself, the province is still quite populated. However, new districts were added to the initial project, such as the Sanga region, where there is a greater area of continuous arable land. For this reason, the area that would be occupied by the project varies between 7 and 14 million hectares (taking into account that this is the area of impact/influence of the projects and not of occupation). On the other hand, this region is home to numerous forest reserve areas, which may be at risk from program activities.

18 Brazilian cooperation, however, was unable to meet all the commitments agreed upon, due to a lack of resources. The laboratory that was to be constructed in the city of Lichinga, for example, was never built and visits by Brazilian technicians are practically nonexistent.

19 For Latour and Woolgar (1997), a scientific fact is recognized as such when it loses all its temporal attributes – its historical reference – and is integrated with a whole set of other knowledge already established as purified facts.

In the case analyzed here, an important moment in which the *sustainability* of the technology called into question the *efficacy* of the experimental temporality in which the program has been developed was the use of *improved seeds*. *Local seeds* have a long cycle, that is, slower growth from sowing to harvest. In contrast, the *improved seeds* have a shorter cycle, which is one of the fundamental factors that not only increases the quantity of what is produced, but accelerates the speed of production. Thus, the *seeds improved* by Brazilian technology are presented as the most appropriate, since they produce faster and in a more standardized manner than the native seed in the same harvest. However, their productivity is only maintained when combined with the use of certain inputs, such as fertilizers and pesticides. This implies costs that currently cannot be maintained by small farmers, which is a criticism that has already been raised by ProSAVANA technicians concerning the *sustainability* of the projects tested, many of which were abandoned by the peasants.

Thus, the main consequence of applying the *technical package* of the *improved seeds* is the generation of this dependence in relation to the use of inputs, which had to be constantly acquired by farmers to maintain the productivity of their areas. On the other hand, although they present problems related to a lower fertility and are vulnerable to the recent changes in the region's rainfall patterns, native seeds are better adapted to local agroecological conditions, they are more resistant to periods of drought and, when fertilizer applications are not possible, in remaining productive over a larger number of crop cycles.

It's not that we don't want better seeds. We do, but the seed we receive is a seed that creates problems, a dependency for the peasants. Because our system is: the peasant sowed this cycle, corn, **it's the same seed that he'll use in another cycle. (...) For two, three, four generations of seeds, it produces. But unfortunately, the improved seed does just one cycle.** (...) This is where we're [questioning] what kind of technologies are these? Will they help farmers raise the level of production, or will they create more dependency? (...) We want development, but an endogenous development, in which communities participate in the process. (...) We have to improve our local seed. There are problems, we recognize that. But we have to improve this one, our local seed, because it's that seed that adapts to the environment, adapts to climatic conditions. There's an excessive dependence for the peasants. Every cycle, the peasant has to buy seed. In other words, we're feeding the multinationals. (UNAC Representative 1)

And as we can see, the master plan, ProSAVANA itself, saw the peasants as a component to support agribusiness. I mean, the peasant had to buy that commercial seed, which **he has to buy season after season**. Always dependent on that kit of fertilizers or pesticides to develop the crop in the drought. Not in the sense of ensuring that the models that the peasants already used were maintained, or at least were combined with the model that they intended to install. It's like a landed estate, companies are installed there in vast areas and the peasants are only there to supply labor, buy seeds, buy pesticides, but not to preserve their production models. (UNAC Representative 2)

From the statements highlighted above, it is possible to perceive how the time of the different seeds changes the mode of production that has been followed by the peasants in the region by proposing an intensive use of the areas, since the use of fertilizers means it is not necessary to rotate the fields of cultivation. However, by making to this mode of field production<sup>20</sup> dependent on the use of inputs, it relates the increase in productivity to the production of surpluses to be exchanged in the market. There is a shift from a cyclical temporality in the rotation of soils and crops, to the progressive and sequential time of *development*.

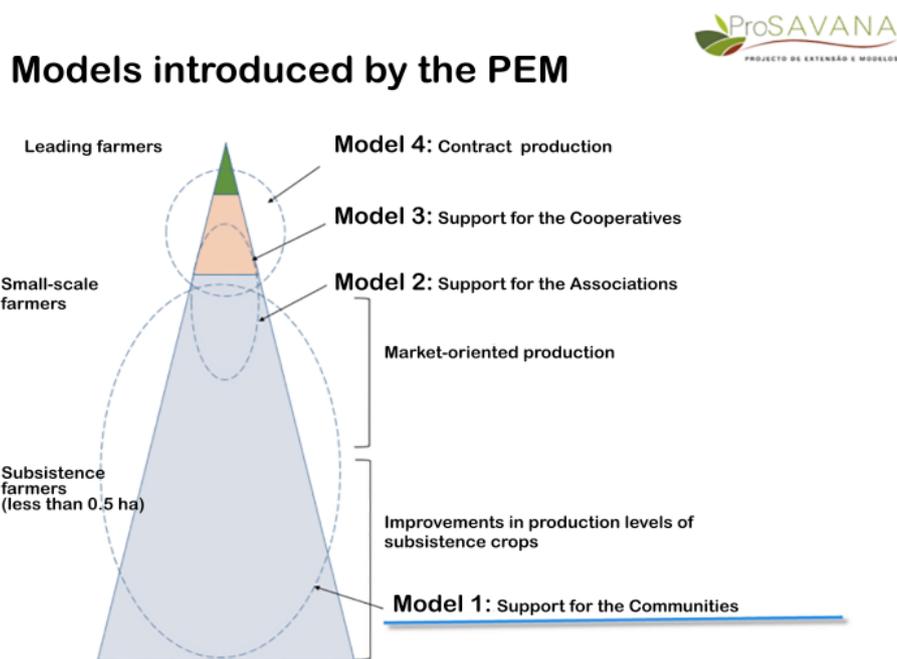
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20 The peasant's way of production was described thus by a peasant leader: "Our land here is very, very fertile. And we're also used to having a *machamba* here of a hectare, or two, or three hectares, for example, of corn, or sorghum, or beans, but then we have to move away from here. We have to go down [to the river] to open another *machamba* for rice production. Later, we have to go to other places, we open another *machamba* for the production of other crops. (...) We are also used to producing here for two, three, four, five years, or six years. It depends on the soil. Then we let it rest. We're going to open a new *machamba*. To replace that *machamba* that we're leaving fallow. We open a new field and this one, we let it fallow. If we let it rest, it doesn't mean that this land is abandoned land. It doesn't mean that this is land that's not used. No. We let it rest so that the soil can absorb nutrients again, to guarantee production. (...) After a few years we realize that no, this soil now, production is falling. Without using chemicals, we leave it fallow. We came back to this old field. We reopen it again. We produce like this."

According to one of the technicians responsible for ProSAVANA-PEM (*Projeto de Extensão e Modelos; Extension and Models Project*), there is indeed a risk in the dependency created by the use of *improved seeds*. He said that initially the proposal of the Japanese cooperants was to work with the certification of *local seeds*, which “would merely go through some selection.” They would thus work with the farmers’ own seeds, offering technical assistance to improve their cultivation. However, there was a lot of pressure on the part of the Mozambican government to use the seeds improved by Brazilian technology. The technician also highlighted that in Mozambique “technical power has no independence,” so they had to adapt the program to the demands of “political power.” From his perspective, this has been one of the reasons for the failure of many interventions in the country’s agricultural sector and he therefore questioned what would happen from 2019 onward, when ProSAVANA-PEM assistance would end. “Does the government have the capacity to make seeds available to farmers?” He believed not.

Considering that the peasant communities have low integration with the market, local or export markets, in addition to having a minimally monetized economy, the *sustainability* of these packages would only be maintained in a kind of ideal laboratory condition created by international cooperation when supplying the inputs for the production. Thus, in order to better promote this transition from peasant to commercial agriculture, ProSAVANA-PEM aimed to establish pilot production projects in commercial and family agriculture, by offering extension services. This stage began in 2014 and ended in 2018, and was the component responsible for the so-called *win-win integration* between small, medium and large producers.

**Figure 5:** Extension models tested by ProSAVANA-PEM [translated]



Source: <https://www.prosavana.gov.mz/portfolio-items/video-prosavana-2019-sobre-novos-modelos/>

As figure above shows, four models were tested, each expanding the scale of integration between producers and the market: individual non-associated farmers; associations; cooperatives; integrated activities between national medium-sized companies and small producers through contracts. For the execution of the projects, the selected communities were offered a revolving fund maintained by a microcredit financial agency for the

acquisition of seeds and inputs. This fund should be repaid when the association or cooperative receives its first income, and is then lent to the next association chosen.

Thus, “financial education” activities were also carried out so that producers could organize savings for the payment of the debt, in addition to reserving a portion of the crop’s income to meet their basic needs and invest in the following year’s production. Thus, ProSAVANA-PEM, operated on the relation of the communities with the future time of the market and the financial system. According to a coordinator of this component, his role was “provide the worm on the hook, not the fish”:

The community is selected. Once selected, what happens next is explained and they begin to participate in the activity. (...) The times that I’ve visited these associated groups, at least, I’ve felt a great enthusiasm in them. Now if you ask me, will they remain sustainable? [brief silence] I still don’t have a clear answer (...). If they’ve really adapted to it well, then they’ll become sustainable and, in a few years, they can become groups of producers with a certain differentiated status. Because they have everything to move forward. They have the knowledge, they have the training, they have all the possible packages there for them to produce as individuals with vision and perspective for transformation. To not become passive. That’s the reason for delivering the first five kilos [11 lbs], to multiply this seed. And whatever you’ve produced, then in the following cycle, you seed the area accordingly. It means baiting the hook. You catch the small fish, you get a taste, you try to catch the biggest fish possible. So, I think that in the way it’s being incorporated, the communities that really adapt to it will be very successful. (ProSAVANA-PEM technician)

Finally, the third component of ProSAVANA, the Master Plan, as discussed above, will be a plan for comprehensive agricultural development and territorial planning for the Nacala Corridor, part of a strategy to implement *value chains* in six logistics corridors scattered across the country. At the time this work was being finalized, it was still under elaboration due to the pressure for public consultations with the communities that will be affected by the project. According to the program’s implementers, the continuity of ProSAVANA depends on the completion of this document, which will be its legal basis. Until this occurs, activities continue to take place in the experimental temporality of research and the development of extension models.

Once this stage of *technical cooperation* is concluded, a stage of *financial cooperation* will begin, in which agribusiness companies will be invited to invest in the Nacala Corridor. However, the funds that existed for the first stage gradually disappeared, both because of the many criticisms of the way the program was being implemented, and because of the Brazilian economic and political crisis that led to a retraction of its participation in the cooperation.<sup>21</sup> One of the program’s coordinators also pointed out that the dispute in Japanese civil society regarding denunciations about the concealment of information was one of the factors that led to reevaluation of the program by the Japanese parliament, which was fundamental for the suspension of the second stage.

As highlighted by Bijker & Law (1992), technologies do not have a starting *momentum* that allows them to pass through a neutral social environment. On the contrary, they are subject to contingencies as they are passed from hand to hand, from context to context, being shaped and remodeled. Constituting a complex set of relations between heterogeneous elements, these technologies are not only transferred to a local situation, but need to be described, decoded and transformed, producing new patterns of relationship with the scientific object or practice (Akrich 2014). Thus, a question raised by this active experimental temporality, as if scientific activities were conducted in a kind of sociocultural, political, environmental vacuum that relativizes their

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<sup>21</sup> It is important to highlight that though the program occurred in the midst of high prices for agricultural commodities, minerals and biofuels, which brought a lot of influence to the format acquired by its *development* proposal, from 2013 onwards, this “commodities boom” ended. Therefore, in addition to the resistance encountered in the actuation of civil society, this change in the international economic scenario has also had an impact on the formatting of ProSAVANA projects, as they become less attractive to investors.

effects, is that there is no moment in the intervention of a *development* program in which their activities do not have profound implications on the ways of life of the subjects embroiled in their activities and on the territory where they occur.<sup>22</sup>

With regard to ProSAVANA, since its announcement in a newspaper report in Brazil, a network of contestation processes has become intertwined with the duration of its implementation. A duration that became entangled with the temporality of the technological *modernization* of rural areas in Brazil, of Portuguese colonialism, of bureaucracy in the production of documents, of new *improved seeds*, of the *traditional* agricultural cycles of peasants and of the geological prehistory of two continents.

### **Final considerations: the speculative time of *development***

Despite the change in approach during attempts to implement its components, which eliminated proposals to grant large areas to international investors, and to some extent served to disqualify the criticism that the program would “usurp land,”<sup>23</sup> it is still possible to reflect on “mechanisms to open space,” as a member of an NGO critical of the program called it, given the specificity of the land regime in Mozambique and the relationship of peasant communities with it. One of these mechanisms is the proposal for contract farming as a way to achieve *win-win integration* between different scales of producers, based on the formation of *value chains* and a logistical corridor that could accelerate the production of *development* in the region.

Based on the experience of Mozambican peasants in the production of crops that are already historic in the country, such as tobacco, sisal and cotton, what is observed are intermittent jobs, with low wages and almost negligible payments for the use of community areas. By handing over their cultivation area, or going to work in the area of a businessman in exchange for a salary, the small farmer is dependent on the payment he receives in order to purchase food. As has been said, in the case of subsistence communities, which are often completely isolated from the market, this becomes a great risk. “Money runs out, land doesn’t” always reiterated the leadership of the Nampula Provincial Peasants’ Union, with whom I visited some communities that were facing problems with investors who entered their lands.

The Mozambican Land Law is often cited as a guarantee of land maintenance<sup>24</sup> by peasants, mainly by members of the local government. However, a recent movement for the concession of DUATs exists that enables us to question whether a mechanism to make the peasant communities’ right of customary use more flexible is in effect. Virtually all the organizations working on land issues in the region where ProSAVANA is being implemented were involved in the delimitation and certification of community areas for the concession of DUATs and in the mapping of their “potentialities,” including reserving an area for the entry of future investors (in the so-called “future vision maps” carried out in participation with the communities).

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22 The effects of these large projects, therefore, do not fit into purely technical categorizations of time and space, or strictly economic compensations. The area of intervention and the changes produced are the subject of a dispute that also takes place in the field of politics and is linked to complex historical and social processes (Vainer 2008). Thus, it is important to consider that the temporality of the effects goes beyond the period of intervention of the projects. As Sigaud (1986) points out, the very announcement of these undertakings initiates a series of transformations in the place where this will occur.

23 “Usurpação de terras” [lit. Seizure of land] was the form most used by my research interlocutors to refer to the debate on “land grabbing,” a generalizing term that has been related to the great increase in (trans)national land transactions in the last decades, mainly around the production and export of food, minerals, wood and biofuels (Borras & Franco 2012). Being associated with forms of land control, more than its ownership, it can also be understood as a process of large-scale acquisition of land – whether through purchase or lease – by domestic or transnational companies, governments or individuals, in which one of the effects is the transformation of land into a financial asset disputed in the international market. On this topic, see Sassen (2013), Eldeman et al. (2013), McMichael (2014).

24 In the documents that support ProSAVANA, the only guarantee presented is the “good conduct” of entrepreneurs when implementing voluntary contracts and principles of “corporate responsibility” and “good governance” (Morais 2014).

However, when talking to communities and individual peasants, the fear that they had of losing their land was evident, even if it was documented. They commented that if “the state is the owner of the land,” it could decide what the “use and benefit” of these areas means, or the criteria for defining the valid forms of their occupation, and hand them over to an investor. According to the organizations that are against ProSAVANA, this is one of the “mechanisms to open space” and produce these free, empty, available lands. They feared, therefore, that the individual DUATs, whose concession was provided for as part of one of the QIPs, could be used as guarantee of payment of some debt of the communities with financial agencies that have been working with the *development* projects.

This would be a facet of a land market, which is said to be illegal in the country, which could result in indirect expropriations.<sup>25</sup> The case of a company in the district of Gurué that displaced peasant families from their lands to a neighboring locality in another province, based on a very problematic community consultation and with negligible indemnities, has been emblematic of this process. The highly criticized lack of transparency in ProSAVANA’s activities meant that the case of this company was associated with the program. The peasant leaders with whom I was able to talk, however, said that they understood that these were different processes, but they took the actions of the company and local governments as an example of what they fear could happen with the arrival of new stages of ProSAVANA.

One question that unfolds from this discussion is what are the technopolitical effects of considering land as a financial asset, which can be offered as a commodity in an international market, and not as a place of sociocultural reproduction, as has generally been the case for these peasants in their multiple and previously established relations with the land, seeds, medicinal plants, waters, among themselves, with their ancestors and spirits. As if in opposition to the constant movements that threaten to remove them from their land, the Macua people always say *axinene arivava*, “the owners are here.” “The land is a donor, the hoe is a partner for the peasant,” said one of the leaders of the Nampula Provincial Peasants’ Union.

As representatives of the still nascent peasant movement in the province always reiterate, the DUAT of the peasant is a cashew tree, a mango tree, a cemetery, even a mosque. These are the elements that indicate that the community is living in that land, a peasant explained to me, reinforcing the consuetudinary character of the legislation, but also a temporality linked to agricultural cycles. As the Mozambican writer and biologist, Mia Couto (2011), emphasizes, Time as a circular entity is inherent to the philosophy of the African rural world. Moreover, it is a cyclical time based on the continuities learned through experiences with past harvests, which order community relations and resist the speculative calculation of capitalist accumulation (Bourdieu, 1979)<sup>26</sup> brought about by integration with the market.

In Mozambique, reference to time is very present in everyday discourse. There is talk of the time of the settler, the time of Frelimo (period of socialism), the time of Samora (first president in post-independence). Now, with the projects that have flooded the country since the economic restructuring and the opening of the market, there seems to emerge a speculative time of *development*, which is entangled with another time much mentioned by my research interlocutors, the “time of war.”

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25 As Fairbairn (2013) analyzes, although the sale of land is illegal in Mozambique, there is in fact a land market that operates through other channels, and it is common knowledge that in the country “the land is not sold, but it is bought.” One example of these channels is the transfer of ownership of infrastructure and improvements, the sale of which is permitted under Mozambican law. Similarly, land is also “sold” when a company that owns the DUAT for the exploration of an area is in turn sold or divided among some shareholders. A third possibility indicated by Fairbairn occurs through compensation received by resettled communities, when the areas that they previously occupied are transferred for exploration by investors due to a “public interest,” as provided for in the Land Law.

26 As Bourdieu (1979) described, referring to Algerian peasants as traditional communities in the face of a capitalist *ethos*, “[e]conomic decision is not determined here by taking into account a goal explicitly posited as a future like that established by calculation within the framework of a plan; economic action is oriented towards a ‘forthcoming’ that is directly grasped in experience or established by all the accumulated experiences which constitute the tradition” (p.8).

It is a contexture made, for example, by a peasant who followed the case of the company in Gurué reported above, when explaining the changes in relations with colonial companies and the new companies that have emerged with this wave of investments and *development* projects in the Nacala Corridor:

What do they do: they give people money, people open the patch of land, they sow cotton, sesame. Then, the [settler's] company just comes to buy. The land belongs to the peasant. The peasant does everything he wants. That is what we peasants still do. When you make cotton, you [peasant] know that I have five hectares, ten hectares of cotton. And there are also automatically ten hectares of cute beans, because we work collectively. But these [new companies] don't want that. They want an independent area in which they produce. For us, no way. We are even seeing that it's a new war. We've had the settler's [war]. We've already had this sixteen-year thing, which was the civil war. Now this one, which we haven't named yet, but it's also a war. Yes, because being taken from where you were since... Hey, seriously... It's conflict (Peasant from Malema, a district in Nampula province).

He loses himself in time while remembering since when they have been in the region. In any case, not only in the words of the Macua people, but in the temporality of Mozambican legislation, the peasants are the owners of the land. Following the precept that the war of decolonization “liberated the land and man,” as the former members of the anti-colonial liberation movement would claim. Something that seems to be in transformation with the arrival of this logic brought about by the financialization of the land and a cooperation based on the grammar of “corporate responsibility,” as shown by the entanglements of the emerging temporalities involved in the *development* intervention presented by ProSAVANA.

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# Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira: una Antropología Reflexiva

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## Resumen

Este artículo analiza la trayectoria y la obra de Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira. Siguiendo su metodología hermenéutica, se analizan las monografías ejemplares y conceptos claves a lo largo de su trayectoria académica. Esta trayectoria fue dividida en el joven Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, etnólogo y el viejo Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, humanista con una mirada hermenéutica. El análisis explora la dimensión reflexiva en la obra del autor, tanto en el trabajo de campo como en la escrita, así como la reflexión que la etnografía despierta en el público. El trabajo finaliza sugiriendo algunos desdoblamientos de la perspectiva antropológica del autor en el campo de la antropología visual, rituales y performances.

**Palabras clave:** Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira; identidades; antropología interpretativa; hermenéutica.

# Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira: a Reflexive Anthropology

## Abstract

This paper analyses the trajectory and work of Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira. Following his hermeneutical methodology, analysis exemplary monographs and key concepts are analysed throughout his academic career. This trajectory was divided into the young Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, an ethnologist and the old Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, a humanist with a hermeneutical perspective. The analysis explores the reflective dimension in the author's work, both in the fieldwork and in the written work, as well as the reflection that ethnography arouses in the public. The work ends by suggesting some insight of the author's anthropological perspective in the field of visual anthropology, rituals and performances.

**Key words:** Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira; identities; interpretative anthropology; hermeneutics.

# Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira: uma Antropologia Reflexiva

## Resumo

Este artigo analisa a trajetória e a obra de Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira. Seguindo sua metodologia hermenêutica, se analisam as monografias exemplares e os conceitos-chave ao longo de sua carreira acadêmica. Essa trajetória foi dividida no jovem Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, etnólogo, e o velho Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, humanista com perspectiva hermenêutica. A análise explora a dimensão reflexiva no trabalho do autor, tanto no trabalho de campo quanto no trabalho escrito, bem como a reflexão que a etnografia suscita no público. O trabalho termina sugerindo alguns desdobramentos da perspectiva antropológica do autor no campo da antropologia visual, rituais e performances.

**Palavras-chave:** Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira; identidades; antropologia interpretativa; hermenêutica.

# Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, una Antropología Reflexiva<sup>1</sup>

*Gabriel O. Alvarez*

Este trabajo presenta los principales puntos del pensamiento antropológico de Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira. Metodológicamente, analizaremos la obra de un autor; prestaremos atención a las monografías ejemplares y los conceptos claves; observaremos quiénes fueron sus interlocutores o, como diría Roberto, su comunidad de comunicación. En este análisis, colocaremos en diálogo la obra del “joven” Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira etnólogo y la visión humanista del “viejo” Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira. Esperamos que esta síntesis permita presentar los principales aportes de Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira para el público de México, que está más familiarizado con el joven teórico de la “fricción interétnica” que con el antropólogo hermeneuta. Como forma de enfatizar la vigencia de las ideas del autor, finalizamos señalando algunos desdoblamientos de esta perspectiva en el análisis de rituales, performance y antropología visual. Esperamos mostrar así la vigencia de su pensamiento a 15 años de su muerte.

## **El joven Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira: una etnología política**

Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (1988; Cardoso de Oliveira, Ruben, 1995), en su análisis de las tradiciones en Antropología, siempre prestó especial atención a la institucionalización de la antropología social en la academia. Por este motivo, iniciamos nuestro análisis con la trayectoria institucional de Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira.

Recién graduado en filosofía por la Universidad de São Paulo (USP), el joven Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira fue convidado a asistir a una conferencia de Darcy Ribeiro. Impresionado con la presentación, se acercó para conversar después de la conferencia y recibió la invitación de Darcy Ribeiro, en la época en el Servicio de Protección al Indio (SPI), para incorporarse al órgano indigenista. Durante ese periodo Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira tiene una formación empírica en antropología al tomar contacto con los problemas indígenas, primero a través de los informes, luego a partir de la realización de etnografías. El SPI estaba a cargo de la política indigenista de Brasil y contaba en sus cuadros con tres antropólogos, Darcy Ribeiro (1979), Eduardo Galvão (1979) y el joven Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, quien participó del órgano entre 1955 y 1958 (Alvarez, 2008).

En 1960, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira ingresó como profesor en el Museo Nacional en Río de Janeiro, donde tuvo como colega a Luiz de Castro Farias. En el Museo creó primero una especialización en Antropología, que en poco tiempo se transformó en Maestría y en curso de Doctorado. En 1971, realizó un posdoctorado en la Universidad de Harvard, durante su año sabático. En 1972, fue convidado por Roque Larraín para crear el Programa de Pos-Graduación en Antropología Social de la Universidad de Brasilia (PPGAS/UnB), institución en la que permaneció hasta 1986. En 1974, viajó a México, donde estuvo vinculado al CIESAS. En este período realizó una etnografía con los Tarascos y estableció fraternos vínculos con los colegas mexicanos, en especial con Bonfil Batalla. Permaneció en la UnB hasta el año 1986, cuando recibió la invitación para vincularse a la UNICAMP,

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<sup>1</sup> Este artículo fue presentado originalmente como conferencia en el Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (CIESAS) DF/Mx, 14 de mayo de 2019, en el marco de la Cátedra Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (CIESAS/UNICAMP). Agradezco al colega Mariano Baez Landa (CIESAS) por invitación y a Iván Deance y Verónica Deance, de la BUAP, por la invitación para este periodo como Profesor Visitante en el Laboratorio Universitario Imagen y Memoria, que hicieron posible este periodo en México y la participación en el evento.

con el propósito de crear un programa de Posgrado en Relaciones Sociales, inspirado por la experiencia en Harvard. Permaneció en la UNICAMP por una década. Volvió a la UnB como profesor visitante en el CEPPAC/UnB, en Brasilia, institución a la que permaneció vinculado hasta su muerte, en 2006.

El propio Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira marcaba una inflexión a lo largo de su vida académica contrastando el joven Roberto, etnógrafo, trabajando con los pueblos indígenas de Brasil y el viejo Roberto, marcado por la preocupación hermenéutica.

El joven Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira realizó sus etnografías con los *Terena* (1976 [1960]), en el sur de Brasil y con los *Tikuna* en Amazonas (1996 [1964]). Su visión académica estaba orientada por la antropología social británica y los problemas indicados por la Escuela de Manchester. Trabajó el tema de las identidades indígenas, como construcción ideológica y como posición subordinada en la estructura social. Desarrolló el concepto de “fricción interétnica”, donde señaló la contradicción dialéctica entre los pueblos indígenas y la sociedad nacional. En los frentes de expansión, la población nacional se apropia de las tierras indígenas, mas necesita de la mano de obra indígena para la explotación de los territorios. La identidad indígena es estigmatizada, reforzando su posición subordinada en la estructura social. Frente a esta situación, la estrategia de algunos individuos consistía en negar, mimetizar su identidad indígena, asumiendo la identidad de *bugre*, en el sur, o de *caboclo* en la región amazónica (*ladino*, en México). Los que optaron por esta estrategia renunciaron al mundo del indio, pero no por eso fueron incorporados en el mundo del blanco. Subyace a este análisis una crítica a la teoría de la aculturación en boga en la academia americana. Los pueblos indígenas no podían ser analizados aisladamente de sus relaciones con la sociedad nacional.

En esa época, los pueblos originarios no tenían voz, o su voz era la del padre o la de los antropólogos. La relación entre los pueblos indígenas y el estado tenía que ser construida a partir de la formulación de una política indigenista comprometida con el futuro de estos pueblos. Se construía una antropología preocupada por encontrar soluciones para los problemas enfrentados por estas poblaciones que habían sido relegadas por los proyectos nacionales en Latinoamérica, como lo señaló años más tarde la Reunión de Barbados (1970), de la que participaron Bonfil Batalla, Miguel Bartolomé, Darcy Ribeiro, Silvio Coelho, entre otros.

El otro período, que él mismo caracterizaba como el viejo Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, fue marcado por lo que él llamaba de “guinada” hermenéutica, la guinada puede ser traducida como ‘viraje’, ‘cambio de rumbo’, y es donde se manifiesta la preocupación humanista de Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira. Las preocupaciones hermenéuticas, introducidas por Geertz en la antropología americana, fueron repensadas por Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, con su formación de filósofo, y renovadas con la lectura de autores como Dilthey (1974), Gadamer (1992; 1993), Apel (1985), entre otros. A partir de estas preocupaciones, pasó a ver los paradigmas de la antropología como tradiciones nacionales (Cardoso de Oliveira, 1988). Se destacan en este período sus preocupaciones con los diferentes estilos nacionales que adquirió la antropología. Otro tema abordado en este período fueron la fusión de horizontes al interior de las comunidades de comunicación, ecuacionadas en términos de moral y ética; y sus reflexiones sobre el trabajo del antropólogo. En este período, a partir de la década de 1980, en Brasil asistimos a la emergencia del movimiento indígena y la escolarización de los pueblos indígenas; un indígena, que a diferencia de lo que ocurría décadas atrás, ahora tiene su propia voz y acceso a los textos escritos por los antropólogos.

Las etnografías escritas por el joven Roberto fueron: *Del indio al bugre. El proceso de asimilación entre los Terena*, publicada en 1960 (1976 [1960]); *El indio y el mundo de los blancos: la situación de los Tikuna en el Alto Solimones*, publicada en 1964 (1996 [1964]); *Urbanización y tribalismo*, publicada en 1968 (1968).

En *Del indio al bugre*, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira realiza una etnografía de los *Terena* que viven en las Tierras Indígenas del grupo en el sur de Brasil (1976 [1960]). Subyace en este trabajo una crítica a la teoría de la aculturación, en boga en la academia americana. Recordemos que la Asociación American a de Antropología (AAA) emitió dos memorandos sobre el tema. Los *Terena* son un grupo Aruak que no pasado tuvieron una

rígida estructura social, dividida en tres estratos y en dos mitades. Tradicionalmente, cada uno de estos grupos era endógamo entre sí, una estructura social que no se sustentó con las condiciones que enfrentaron los indígenas después del contacto. En su trabajo de campo, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira muestra que el grupo mudó su estructura social y las mitades sólo eran invocadas para la realización de rituales, y ya no orientaban los casamientos del grupo. A pesar de estas mudanzas en la estructura social, los *Terena* mantenían su identidad étnica, que aseguraba su derecho a las tierras en la reserva. El autor también observó el tránsito urbano de estos indígenas y como algunas costumbres de la ciudad eran practicadas en la tierra indígena, como la vuelta al final del día, paseando por la calle de la aldea.

*El indio y el mundo de los blancos* es su libro más destacado y uno de los que fue más veces reeditado (Cardoso de Oliveira, 1996 [1964]). En su etnografía sobre los *Tikuna*, acuña el concepto clave de *fricción interétnica* que orientará la antropología del joven Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira. En este trabajo, analiza la situación de este grupo indígena localizado en el Alto Solimones, en la zona de explotación del caucho. El autor observa la contradicción dialéctica entre el frente de expansión de la sociedad nacional y las poblaciones nativas. Los blancos necesitaban del territorio indígena y de la mano de obra indígena para la explotación del caucho. La estrategia de los blancos fue someter a los indígenas a través de la esclavitud por deudas. Si la sociedad nacional está estructurada en clases sociales, subyace un corte étnico, que coloca a los indígenas en la posición más baja en la estructura social. En el libro indica el doble carácter de las identidades, como construcción ideológica y como posición en la estructura social. La posición subordinada en la estructura social era reforzada por una serie de estereotipos que estigmatizaban la imagen del indio. Frente a esta situación, una de las estrategias adoptadas por los indígenas consistía en negar su identidad indígena para asumirse como “*caboclos*”, que podría ser traducido como ‘ladinos’ en México. El *caboclo* niega su identidad indígena como forma de mimetizarse para escapar del estigma que sufren los indios. El autor señala que los que optaron por esta estrategia quedaron en el peor de los mundos, porque salieron del mundo del indio sin ser incorporados en el mundo del blanco.

*Urbanización y tribalismo* (Cardoso de Oliveira, 1968) fue la primera etnografía sobre indígenas urbanos realizada en Brasil. En este trabajo, contó con la participación de alumnos del programa de especialización en Antropología Social que había iniciado en el Museo Nacional. Esta investigación se centró en los indígenas *Terena* que habían migrado a las ciudades próximas de las tierras indígenas. En su etnografía, reconstruye las redes de relaciones sociales movilizadas en esas migraciones, para mostrar que las estrategias envolvían elementos tradicionales como el parentesco. Analizó incluso los agrupamientos urbanos como *Aldeinha* que congregaban varias familias extensas y contaba con la presencia de un chamán que atendía a los *Terena* y al público local. En este trabajo, describió la inserción de los indígenas en el mercado de trabajo urbano, en posiciones subordinadas, como peones en la construcción, en panaderías e incluso como portero de un cine. En sus entrevistas los indígenas revelan que el trabajo urbano era menos pesado que el trabajo campesino en la tierra indígena. Los indígenas se reorganizaron en el medio urbano, cambiaron su estructura social, mas mantuvieron su identidad indígena. La aculturación no es un fenómeno que afecte al grupo como un todo. Algunos individuos pueden negar su identidad indígena y presentarse como *bugres*, mas buena parte de la población *Terena* continúa invocando su identidad indígena inclusive en el medio urbano. *Urbanización y tribalismo* reveló la implementación de mecanismos tradicionales en el medio urbano y el tránsito, entre las aldeas y la ciudad.

Sus principales interlocutores en la época eran sus colegas del SPI, Darcy Ribeiro y Eduardo Galvão. Darcy, había realizado etnografías con los *Kadiweu* y con los *Kayapó*, su punto de vista teórico estaba inspirado en el evolucionismo multilinear y había focalizado su atención en los frentes de contacto de la sociedad nacional con los pueblos indígenas (Ribeiro, 1979). En sus libros apuntaba los efectos devastadores del contacto, tanto por las matanzas provocadas por los blancos para apropiarse de las tierras indígenas, como por la mortandad de indígenas provocada por el contagio de enfermedades para las cuales las poblaciones nativas no tenían defensas.

Eduardo Galvão (1979) realizó su etnografía con los *Tenethara*, bajo la orientación de Charles Wagley, antropólogo americano. La influencia de Wagley le dio una orientación funcionalista al trabajo. Otro interlocutor importante fue su orientador de Doctorado, el profesor Florestan Fernandes, destacado sociólogo de la USP. Sociólogo de formación, Florestan publicó dos libros sobre los *Tupí-Guaraní* en los que reconstruye la organización social del grupo, a partir de los documentos de los cronistas de la conquista. Otro de los temas de interés de Florestan Fernandes fue la inserción del negro en la sociedad nacional después de la abolición de la esclavitud. Uno de sus libros más importantes sobre el tema, *El negro y el mundo del blanco* (Fernandes, 1972), parafrasea el nombre del libro de Roberto sobre los *Tikuna*. Un raro homenaje del orientador al orientando. Otros interlocutores de la época fueron Fernando Henrique Cardoso y Octavio Ianni, con quienes se reunían en un seminario para discutir la obra de Marx, en un departamento en São Paulo, fuera de la Universidad. La mirada teórica del joven Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira estaba orientada por la Antropología Social Británica y, en especial, la Escuela de Manchester, que tenía un diálogo con el marxismo.

En la producción del joven Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira sigue una serie de libros con compilación de artículos que son reflexiones que se desprenden de sus etnografías, o que se originaron en ellas. Me refiero a *La sociología del Brasil indígena* (1978 [1972]); a *Enigmas y soluciones* (1983); y a su trabajo clásico, *Identidad, etnia y estructura social* (1978). Los dos primeros son una compilación de artículos, muchos de los cuales presentan los resultados del proyecto Harvard-Brasil Central, que desarrolló en el Museo Nacional, con Maybury-Lewis como contraparte por la universidad americana. En estos trabajos se explora la aplicación del concepto de fricción interétnica en las diversas regiones de Brasil, analizando también los diferentes frentes de expansión de la sociedad nacional. Los trabajos presentan los problemas enfrentados por los pueblos originarios en una relación de colonialismo interno. Uno de ellos analiza el movimiento mesiánico de la Santa Cruz entre los *Tikuna*, así como la influencia de la circulación del dinero entre estos grupos y las migraciones provocadas por el movimiento mesiánico. Estos libros traen al lector tanto la situación enfrentada por las poblaciones indígenas, cuanto la búsqueda por soluciones para estos problemas. Una solución que pasa necesariamente por la implantación de políticas públicas de los estados que contemplen a las poblaciones nativas. *Enigmas y soluciones* (1983) compila los artículos de carácter más etnográfico y *La sociología del Brasil indígena* (1978 [1972]) los trabajos centrados en la política indigenista y el colonialismo interno del estado brasileiro.

El proyecto Harvard-Brasil Central/Fricción Interétnica fue importante para la consolidación del programa de Posgrado en Antropología Social en el Museo Nacional de Río de Janeiro. Este proyecto permitió el intercambio de docentes y estudiantes, así como estimuló la realización de etnografías sobre los pueblos indígenas. Pasaron por el proyecto sus alumnos del curso de especialización: Roberto da Matta, Roque Laraia, Julio Cezar Melatti.

*Identidad, etnia y estructura social* (1978), su trabajo ejemplar de la época, fue escrito durante su período de posdoctorado en Harvard y se complementa con un capítulo escrito durante su estadía en México en 1974. En las bibliotecas de Harvard, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira descubre los trabajos de Fredrick Barth (2000), formado en la escuela de Manchester, que vienen al encuentro de las reflexiones desarrolladas en sus etnografías. En primer lugar, quebrar la falsa ecuación, de sentido común, de que una identidad es igual a una cultura, a una sociedad, a una lengua, a una religión. Quebrada esta falsa ecuación, Barth proponía ver las identidades como formas de organización social; las identidades se organizan en sistemas interétnicos; la importancia de los límites de las identidades. Límites éstos que pueden ser atravesados por individuos, pero no por grupos enteros, como suponía el concepto de aculturación. Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira propone ver las identidades como brújulas que orientan las redes de relaciones sociales. Desarrolla teóricamente la idea del doble carácter de las identidades, como construcción ideológica y como posición en la estructura social. Si las identidades tienen una gramática, en su articulación en sistemas interétnicos, en América Latina, en el caso de las poblaciones indígenas, la misma aparece condicionada por el colonialismo interno desplegado por los estados nacionales y sus frentes de expansión.

El concepto de “colonialismo interno” había sido formulado por Pablo González Casanova en México e incorporado por Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira en su concepto de fricción interétnica. Durante este período, Roberto participa de un intercambio con México, donde florecía, en la época, la antropología aplicada y se consolidaba el CIESAS como un ambicioso programa antropológico. En sus viajes a México forjó una entrañable amistad con Bonfil Batalla, su gran compañero en el CIESAS D.F., así como con otros colegas como Teresa Rojas, Arturo Warman y, en el CIESAS de Oaxaca, con Salomón Nahmad Sitton. Durante su estancia en México realizó una experiencia etnográfica con los *Tarasco* y escribió un nuevo capítulo, incluido en la segunda edición de *Identidad étnica y estructura social*. En esa época, su libro *Urbanización y Tribalismo* fue publicado en México, en 1972, por el Instituto Indigenista Interamericano.

Eran los años de la Declaración de Barbados (1970), que denunciaba la situación enfrentada por las poblaciones indígenas de las tierras bajas sudamericanas, que resultaba en el genocidio y etnocidio de estas poblaciones. La Declaración apuntaba la responsabilidad de los estados, por acción y por omisión frente a la situación, producto de negligencia política y delegación de la tutela de estas poblaciones en manos de la Iglesia Católica y las sectas protestantes. Participaron de esta reunión Miguel Bartolomé, Darcy Ribeiro, Silvio Coelho dos Santos, Guillermo Bonfil Batalla entre otros. A pesar de no haber participado del encuentro, las reflexiones de Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira estaban presentes en los debates. Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira participó años más tarde en el encuentro de Costa Rica, una reunión de la UNESCO donde se discutió, junto con Stefano Varese y de líderes indígenas, el concepto de etnodesarrollo, en 1981.

## La “guinada” hermenéutica

A partir de la década de 1980, inspirado inicialmente en los trabajos de Geertz, que reintroducen la hermenéutica en la antropología americana, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira da una “guinada”–como gustaba decir– un cambio de rumbo, dando lugar a un Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira humanista. Si bien en esta nueva fase dialoga con Geertz, su abordaje hermenéutico es más profundo. Mientras el autor americano se apoya principalmente en Paul Ricoeur, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira reflexiona a partir de su formación inicial como filósofo, para incorporar autores como Dilthey (1974), Gadamer (1992; 1993) y Apel (1985). Sus reflexiones se vuelven hacia la antropología como *Weltanschauung*, como tradición, visión de mundo.

Esta mudanza de preocupaciones se refleja en sus libros *Compilación e introducción a la obra de Marcel Mauss* (1979) y *W. H. R. Rivers* (1985); *Sobre el pensamiento antropológico* (1988); *La Antropología de Rivers* (1991); *Razón y afectividad: el pensamiento de L. Lévy-Bruhl* (1991); y *Estilos de Antropología* (1995).

Las dos primeras obras del grupo de trabajos son compilaciones de artículos de Mauss y de Rivers. El método que está por detrás de estas compilaciones es analizar la obra del autor y seleccionar sus trabajos ejemplares; contextualizar la obra, al interior de una tradición académica, con sus antecedentes, sus interlocutores y sus desdoblamientos. Este método se aplica también a sus estudios monográficos sobre Rivers (Cardoso de Oliveira, 1985, 1991) y Lévy-Bruhl (Cardoso de Oliveira, 2002 [1991]). Marcel Mauss y Rivers tuvieron un papel central en la institucionalización de las tradiciones francesa y británica de antropología social.

Al analizar la obra de Rivers, da merecido destaque al método genealógico, que permite visualizar las redes de relaciones sociales, algo que el ojo no percibe. El autor señala la importancia del método genealógico como análogo a la importancia del microscopio para el biólogo. El otro punto destacado es el *fieldwork*, el trabajo de campo, empírico, aplicado a las investigaciones en la expedición al Estrecho de Torres, de la cual participaron Haddon, Seligman y Rivers, y que le dieron una saludable impronta empírica a la antropología social británica.

Al analizar la obra de Marcel Mauss, destaca el papel que ocupó el estudio de las categorías del espíritu humano en la tradición francesa. El concepto de categorías fue discutido por Aristóteles. Kant, con la idea de la razón trascendental, retoma el tema de las categorías del espíritu humano, pero coloca el tiempo y el espacio

como datos de lo sensible. Esta tesis es contestada por Durkheim (1989) en las *Formas elementares de la vida religiosa* [1912]. Durkheim analiza el material sobre las tribus australianas para mostrar que tiempo y espacio, para ser construidos, deben estar marcados por algún quiebre que permita su conceptualización. Encuentra esta diferenciación en la atribución de los valores de sagrado y profano, tanto al espacio de la aldea, como al tiempo de fiesta y el tiempo profano del trabajo cotidiano. A partir de la atribución de estos valores es que la sociedad se percibe como persona moral, como colectivo y se constituyen las categorías de totalidad, tiempo y espacio.

Estas ideas fueron retomadas por Marcel Mauss (Cardoso de Oliveira, 2003 [1950]) y por otros participantes de la escuela francesa de Antropología. Las *categorías*, son comunes a toda la humanidad, pero diferentes en cada sociedad. Esta idea fue explorada por Mauss en “La noción de persona”, “Las técnicas del cuerpo”, “Ensayo sobre el don”, la muerte, sistemas clasificatorios. En el “Ensayo sobre el don” realizó una crítica certera a los teóricos del contractualismo, al señalar que no podemos colocar la forma contrato (mercantilista) como origen de la sociedad. Por el contrario, los mecanismos del don –la obligación de dar, obligación de recibir y obligación de retribuir– crean relaciones sociales, son más elementares y universales que la forma contrato, surgida durante el mercantilismo. Otra preocupación que aparece en Mauss es con estas categorías como formas tradicionales y eficaces. Mauss aplicó esta fórmula, tanto para los rituales y oraciones, como para las técnicas del cuerpo. Colocó las categorías al interior de tradiciones culturales, y las mismas tienen que ser evaluadas en términos de eficacia. El tema de las categorías también fue trabajado por otros autores. Herzfeld trabajó la oposición entre mano derecha y mano izquierda como categoría, y más recientemente Dumont, al diferenciar los sistemas de parentesco consanguíneos de los sistemas dravidianos, donde las relaciones de afinidad preceden a la unión matrimonial.

Cardoso de Oliveira (2002 [1991]), al analizar la obra de Levy Bruhl en términos de las categorías de la escuela francesa, muestra que el autor nos coloca frente a dos categorías, aquella del pensamiento lógico, basado en el principio de la contradicción, y otra en que el pensamiento no se rige por el principio de la contradicción del racionalismo y puede estar regido por el principio de la transformación, como el caso del pensamiento amerindio. En última instancia, lo que orienta el pensamiento no es la lógica, sino los valores. En este punto, el autor elaboró el principio de participación para explorar cómo los valores movilizan a partir de las emociones, de los sentimientos.

El trabajo ejemplar de este período es *Sobre el pensamiento antropológico* (Cardoso de Oliveira, 1988), donde el autor completa su “guinada” hermenéutica y nos presenta una visión plural de la antropología. Para entender la dimensión de esta “guinada”, debemos comparar la idea de ciencia desde la perspectiva positivista y colocar, como contrapunto, el punto de vista hermenéutico. Para el positivismo, el conocimiento científico es producto de la aplicación del método. El conocimiento científico buscaría la explicación por medio de leyes, a partir del método experimental. Estas leyes tendrían el poder de predecir y de articularse en un sistema de leyes *universales, ahistóricas y objetivas*. Estas ideas positivistas acerca de la ciencia ya fueron cuestionada por Thomas Kuhn (1975) en la revolución científica. Este autor señaló que los avances en la ciencia no se dan por la comprobación o refutación de las hipótesis, sino por cambios en los paradigmas científicos. La ciencia no es una entidad autónoma, se sustenta en una comunidad científica y la mudanza de paradigma se relaciona con la creación de un nuevo consenso en torno de las cuestiones relevantes. La ciencia depende de una comunidad de investigadores, y la misma puede ser pensada como una Comunidad de Comunicación (Apel, 1985).

En su abordaje humanista, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (1988) plantea, desde un punto de vista hermenéutico, la importancia de la comprensión, por sobre la explicación. En su crítica va más allá de Kuhn, al afirmar que, en el caso de las ciencias sociales, esas comunidades científicas estaban orientadas nacionalmente. Así, mientras que en la física los diferentes paradigmas se suceden en el tiempo, en la antropología coexisten diversos paradigmas, producto de tradiciones nacionales. Al ver a la ciencia como *Weltanschauung*, el conocimiento deja

de pretenderse universal y adquiere el carácter de tradiciones nacionales; es un conocimiento contextualizado históricamente; no se trata de un conocimiento objetivo, es un conocimiento intersubjetivo, producto del consenso al interior de una comunidad de investigadores.

Podemos ver así el desenvolvimiento de diferentes tradiciones nacionales en el campo de la antropología, lo que nos lleva a comprender la coexistencia de diferentes paradigmas, anclados en estas *Weltanschauung*, visiones de mundo. Para visualizar estas tradiciones, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (1988) usaba como recurso la creación de una matriz disciplinar, en las que colocaba: el paradigma histórico cultural de la antropología boasiana; la tradición francesa, con su preocupación en las categorías; la tradición británica con su empirismo; finalmente, la nueva tradición interpretativa, inaugurada por Geertz. La matriz nos permite colocar en su interior los principales autores claves y las monografías ejemplares de cada una de estas tradiciones. Por otro lado, nos permite explorar las áreas de tensión entre los diferentes paradigmas. Un dato que puede pasar desapercibido para el lector es la importancia que daba Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira al momento de la institucionalización de la disciplina en la Universidad, una vez que los autores analizados tuvieron un papel de destaque en la creación de los cursos de antropología en sus respectivos países.

Las tradiciones presentadas en la matriz son las de los países centrales. Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (1988; Cardoso de Oliveira, Ruben, 1995) prestó también atención al desarrollo de la antropología en los países periféricos. La relación entre la antropología de los países centrales y periféricos no debe ser leída en clave de la teoría de la dependencia. Por el contrario, lo que apuntaba el profesor es que mientras que los antropólogos de los países centrales son socializados en el seno de un paradigma, nosotros, formados en las antropologías periféricas, podemos transitar por los diferentes paradigmas, explorar sus áreas de tensión, desenvolver una visión plural de la antropología.

El análisis de las antropologías periféricas tiene su continuidad en el libro *Estilos de antropología* (1995), coordinado junto con Guilherme Ruben, donde presentan los resultados del estudio comparativo de diferentes “antropologías nacionales” desarrollado por diferentes participantes del proyecto. Roberto trabajó el desarrollo de la antropología española, con énfasis en la antropología catalana, en Barcelona, lo que permitió también explorar las tensiones nacionales al interior del reino de España.

Tenemos otro conjunto de libros, producidos en sus últimos años de vida, en los que explora la cuestión hermenéutica a partir de la antropologización de las cuestiones expuestas por los filósofos. Me refiero a *Ensayos antropológicos sobre moral y ética* (1996); *El trabajo del antropólogo* (1998); *Los diarios y sus márgenes: viaje a los territorios Terena y Tikuna* (2002); y *Caminos de la identidad* (2006).

Un trabajo clave de este periodo es el artículo “El oficio de antropólogo” que da nombre al libro homónimo. En este trabajo, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira revisita las preocupaciones de Geertz (1989) sobre la antropología, el estar en el campo y en la academia, ahora desdoblada a partir de las preocupaciones hermenéuticas de Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira y sus experiencias de trabajo de campo (1998).

El autor nos llama la atención sobre tres características de nuestro oficio de antropólogos: el mirar, escuchar y escribir. El mirar y escuchar no deben ser entendidos como datos de lo sensible (como Kant entendía el tiempo y el espacio). La mirada a la que se refiere Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (1998) es una mirada informada, informada por el paradigma, las cuestiones teóricas y el estilo antropológico del investigador. El escuchar se refiere al proceso de fusión de horizontes de comunicación que acontece durante el trabajo de campo. El mismo no se reduce a la práctica de entrevistas, sino que envuelve complejas formas de comunicación, como rituales y performances; diversas formas de conocimiento, como la empatía; y los momentos metódicos y no-metódicos del trabajo de campo. La tercera característica, el escribir, trasciende el mero ejercicio de pasar el pensamiento para el plano escrito e incluye el debate entre pares en la academia.

A partir de la realización de estas actividades propias de nuestro *métier* de antropólogos, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira señala los diversos momentos interpretativos de la antropología. En su diálogo con Geertz (1989), Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira los apunta como momentos interpretativos, más fiel a sus enseñanzas en el aula, me gustaría señalar que los mismos son, en realidad, momentos reflexivos.

El primer momento interpretativo-reflexivo acontece durante el trabajo de campo, envuelve el mirar y escuchar, como indicamos anteriormente, una mirada informada teóricamente, marcada por un estilo de hacer antropología y el escuchar como proceso de fusión de horizontes de comunicación. El concepto de fusión de horizontes de comunicación, tomado de Gadamer (1992; 1993), tiene que ver con la comprensión de los horizontes de comunicación del otro, en un proceso que envuelve momentos metódicos y no-metódicos. Durante el trabajo de campo experimentamos un extrañamiento de nuestra propia cultura para poder comprender, a partir de la experiencia, el punto de vista del otro. Este proceso de fusión de horizontes puede envolver recursos metódicos desenvueltos por la disciplina, como entrevistas y genealogías, pero también envuelve otras formas de conocimiento no metódico como el arte, la religión, la música, las comidas, la empatía. A partir de estas consideraciones queda claro que la etnografía no es descripción, es reflexión sobre un problema teórico a partir de la experiencia.

El segundo momento interpretativo-reflexivo es el que se realiza en la academia, cuando traducimos la experiencia del trabajo de campo para un público más amplio. En la academia, cuando presentamos y discutimos los resultados de la investigación, tiene lugar un momento reflexivo entre pares. Las presentaciones en congresos y en las clases, implican también un tipo de reflexión plural, al incorporar las reacciones del público y cuestionamientos a nuestras reflexiones sobre el trabajo de campo. Los datos del trabajo de campo son contrastados con las discusiones levantadas por los colegas en la bibliografía sistematizada. Cuando escribimos, no sólo volcamos nuestras reflexiones en el papel, también volvemos al campo, ahora mediante la evocación, cuando al mirar una de las páginas del cuaderno de campo recordamos las situaciones vividas en el campo, muchas de ellas no registradas en nuestras bitácoras. El producto de este segundo momento reflexivo es una narrativa, en forma de libro, artículo e inclusive video etnográfico. Quiero llamar la atención aquí para una cuestión de estilo de la antropología: las monografías envuelven una forma dramática, son presentadas como un drama.

El tercer momento interpretativo acontece cuando el público lector entra en contacto con la obra y en ese momento el autor no está al lado para comentar lo que quiso decir. Lo que marca este momento son las reflexiones que la obra pueda despertar en la mente del lector. Como drama, la narrativa cautiva al lector y le permite interpretar la experiencia que vivimos durante el trabajo de campo, nuestras reflexiones. En la forma dramática, el significado es producto de la totalidad, resultado del drama. La interpretación del drama envuelve también momentos catárticos que llevan a que el público reflexione a partir de la identificación con los personajes.

Un trabajo revelador de la importancia de la dimensión reflexiva de Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira es *El diario y sus márgenes*. En este libro, el autor publica los diarios escritos por el joven RCO en sus trabajos de campo con los Terena y los Tikuna, con las márgenes comentadas por el viejo RCO, que vuelve al campo mediante la evocación provocada por los diarios. El drama, coloca en diálogo el joven RCO etnógrafo, empírico, con el RCO humanista, con sus reflexiones de inspiración hermenéutica. Este libro fue pensado para un público amplio, que incluye los indígenas, descendientes de los que aparecen retratados en los diarios. El mismo fue pensado como una restitución, para que los indígenas de hoy, alfabetizados y con voz propia, puedan acceder a los registros de la situación de sus ancestrales hace 50 años atrás, cuando el indio no tenía voz (Alvarez, 2008).

El otro grupo de trabajos se encuentra disperso en los libros *Ensayos antropológicos sobre moral y ética* (1996); *El oficio del antropólogo* (1998); *Caminos de la identidad. Ensayos sobre etnicidad y multiculturalismo* (2006). En los mismos hay un intento del autor para domesticar, en términos antropológicos,

conceptos formulados por la filosofía. Entre los mismos se destacan: Comunidades de Comunicación, de Apel (1985); la lógica de la acción comunicativa, de Habermas (1989); y la hermenéutica de Gadamer (1992; 1993) y Dilthey (1974).

El concepto de Comunidad de Comunicación de Apel (1985) supone una Comunidad de Comunicación Ideal (CCI) que, por contraste, permite analizar la Comunidad de Comunicación Real (CCR), que podemos relevar durante el trabajo de campo o mediante la aplicación a casos ejemplares, con fines analíticos. Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira enfatizaba en la importancia de la CCI por su carácter revelador, en el sentido fotográfico, cuando se la aplica para analizar las diferencias con la CCR. Es importante destacar las condiciones de la Comunidad de Comunicación Ideal: que la comunicación sea en el plano del discurso; que haya igualdad de condiciones de poder entre las partes; que exista un consenso en torno de las reglas que rigen la comunidad de comunicación; el establecimiento de relaciones dialógicas que deben acontecer en un plano simétrico, en el que tenga lugar una interlocución democrática, entre actores soberanos. La creación de una comunidad de comunicación implica la emergencia de una ética, de un consenso en torno de reglas, límites y valores que hacen el diálogo posible.

Por otro lado, en toda comunidad de comunicación existe una comunidad de argumentación, que constituye su núcleo duro. La lógica de la acción comunicativa enfatiza la importancia del conjunto de reglas que rigen la comunidad de comunicación. Este conjunto de reglas es el que nos coloca en el plano de la ética de acción comunicativa. Notemos que Habermas (1989) trabaja la ética en el plano del discurso. Este autor también trabajó en diversos libros el tema de la esfera pública, como forma de auto organización de la sociedad (1984).

En sus escritos de moral y ética, Cardoso de Oliveira (1996; 1998; 2006) coloca la moral como el “buen vivir”, como tradición, cultura, *Weltanschauung*. La ética aparece como ética del discurso, como sistema de reglas para la Comunidad de Comunicación interétnica. Cómo analizar el caso de comunidades de comunicación que envuelven diferentes morales, diferentes tradiciones. Aplica estas cuestiones a diversos casos, como el ejemplo de monjas que, en diálogo, en el plano de la argumentación, convencieron a los *Tapirapé* de abandonar práctica de infanticidio. Otro ejemplo es en la problematización de lógicas de la acción comunicativa y las diferentes esferas: la microesfera, local, que podemos registrar en el trabajo de campo; la mesoesfera nacional, para la cual son invocadas razones de estado; y la macroesfera global, que se materializa en las organizaciones multilaterales. Son numerosos los casos en que los actores de la microesfera, como poblaciones indígenas, consiguieron el apoyo a nivel de organismos multilateral en sus reclamos frente al Estado. Un punto a destacar es que la creación de comunidades de comunicación implica intersubjetividad, una fusión de horizontes de comunicación.

*Caminos de la identidad* (2006), su último libro, revisita reflexivamente los trabajos sobre identidad del joven Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira. En esos escritos, la identidad había sido separada analíticamente de la cultura, enfatizando sus aspectos de organización social en sistemas interétnicos que estigmatizaban las poblaciones indígenas. El Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira hermenauta reconoce que las identidades étnicas tienen una espesura en términos de tradiciones culturales, que puede y debe ser trabajada empíricamente. Los estudios de la década de 1960 indicaban la estigmatización de las identidades indígenas y la manipulación de identidades, su negación. La organización del movimiento indígena a partir de la década de 1980 mostró que las luchas por el reconocimiento refuerzan la autoestima de los pueblos. El movimiento que se inició con la lucha por los derechos territoriales continuó en otras áreas, como acceso a las políticas de salud, educación. La lucha por el reconocimiento anclado en las identidades favoreció la autoestima de los grupos y permitió avances en términos de ciudadanía. Las identidades son invocadas en estas reivindicaciones políticas. Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira apunta también los procesos de politización de las identidades en Brasil, México y España, donde realizó trabajos de campo. En este nuevo contexto, el papel del antropólogo es traducir las demandas de esas microesferas locales donde realizamos el trabajo de campo para producir reflexiones en otras arenas, la mesoesfera nacional y la macroesfera global.

En síntesis, analizamos la producción bibliográfica de Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira en dos bloques, el joven RCO y el RCO humanista, hermeneuta. Cuando revisamos la bibliografía del joven RCO, contrastamos las etnografías *Terena* y *Tikuna*, con sus reflexiones sobre la situación indígena, con una serie de libros que lo suceden y son desdoblamientos reflexivos, sea teóricamente, sea como resultado de proyectos inspirados en esa experiencia etnográfica. El joven Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, como teórico, reflexionó sobre los datos empíricos de su etnografía. Cuando revisamos la obra de Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira como hermeneuta, observamos que sus reflexiones se vuelven sobre la antropología como tradición, como visión de mundo y sus reflexiones sobre la práctica de la etnografía. Nos preocupamos con esta dimensión reflexiva, porque es central en el pasaje de la explicación para la comprensión, la *Verstehen* de los hermeneutas. En sus consideraciones sobre el oficio del antropólogo, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (1998) deja ver la reflexión/interpretación: durante el trabajo de campo, en el encuentro cara a cara con el otro en la experiencia; la reflexión entre pares en la academia; y la reflexión en el público lector, tanto en la reflexión sobre el significado de un drama (la etnografía como drama), como en la reflexión al interpretar un drama a la luz de otros dramas. Esta dimensión reflexiva hermenéutica, *Verstehen*, aparece también al interpretar al interior de una tradición, y en la reflexión mediante la evocación, en el diálogo que él mismo establece entre el joven Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira etnólogo y el Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira humanista, con sus preocupaciones hermenéuticas.

## Desdoblamientos

Durante mi trabajo de campo en México, un mariachi me dijo: “Los muertos solo mueren cuando nos olvidamos de ellos”. Creo que una forma de mantener vivas las enseñanzas de Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira – que falleció en 2006 – es reflexionar sobre cómo nos apropiamos de ellas.

Cuando frecuenté los cursos del profesor Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira intenté la antropologización de los conceptos de Apel (1985) y Habermas (1984, 1989) en torno de las comunidades de comunicación para la construcción de mi objeto en la tesis de doctorado. Trabajé con la hipótesis del Mercosur como espacio público (habermasiano) a ser explorado con una etnografía de la comunidad de argumentación que se creó entre políticos y diplomáticos que trabajaban en la implementación de la propuesta. El resultado fue la etnografía: Mercosur Ritual (Alvarez, 2000).

“Ser diplomático es decir una cosa, pensar otra y hacer otra diferente”, me dijo un informante durante el trabajo de campo. En efecto, las declaraciones de los participantes eran discordantes y la información de las entrevistas no estaba en armonía con los datos de la economía política, ni con las declaraciones oficiales que balizan el proceso. Fue allí, en el ritual, donde encontré las claves para ordenar la etnografía. El ritual como poderoso aparato comunicacional que se sobreponía a la comunicación racional. Organicé la etnografía como una serie de rituales, de los más laxos, como fiestas de embajadas, a los más rígidos, como reuniones presidenciales. Había focalizado en los diplomáticos y los políticos, pero el trabajo de campo nos reveló un tercer actor, los periodistas, claves para el pasaje de la Comunidad de Comunicación a la Comunidad Imaginada. La comunicación no se da sólo en el plano del discurso. Con frecuencia los rituales se superponen a los discursos y los bañan de sentido.

En la investigación *Tradición y política Sateré-Mawé* (Alvarez, 2009) incorporé en el proyecto la consideración del Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira humanista de que las identidades tienen una espesura, una tradición, visión de mundo que tiene que ser comprendida. En esta oportunidad, el ritual fue la puerta de acceso a esa alteridad radical. En esta investigación incluí el video como herramienta metodológica en el trabajo de campo. Como técnica para alcanzar una antropología compartida, utilicé la cámara participante y la edición compartida. Después de los registros, mostraba el material al grupo; en cada viaje llevaba los clips editados, los presentaba para el grupo y prestaba atención en sus reacciones y finalmente edité el material con la colaboración de un

joven profesor indígena. Lo más interesante del proceso fue cuando, después de ver el material, el cacique general dijo que quería agregar unas palabras. Las mismas no sólo fueron pertinentes, sino que también indicaron cosas a las que no había prestado la debida atención. El video permite que el grupo reflexione y participe en los rumbos de la investigación, creando una dimensión dialógica que difícilmente conseguiríamos con el texto escrito.

Para finalizar, algunas consideraciones sobre la etnografía como momento reflexivo. La etnografía no es descripción de los datos de lo sensible, lo que veo y lo que escucho a partir de lo cual voy a escribir una descripción. La “mirada” es una mirada informada por el problema teórico y por el “estilo” de la tradición antropológica. “Escuchar” es un proceso de fusión de horizontes de comunicación que no se restringe al plano del discurso. Conocer a partir del discurso es diferente de conocer a partir de la experiencia. Los rituales y performance también deben ser vistos como sofisticadas formas de comunicación, que tienen menor margen de manipulación que los discursos. La comunicación no es discursiva, es performática, inclusive el discurso incluye una performance al ser actuado frente al interlocutor. Esto nos lleva a apuntar el contraste entre la Comunidad de Comunicación Ideal, donde prevalece el plano del discurso, y la Comunidad de Comunicación Performática, que vivenciamos en los trabajos de campo.

Cuando llevamos las metáforas de “mirar” y “escuchar” hacia el campo de la antropología visual, el video no está en el “mirar”. Si pensamos el “escuchar” como proceso de fusión de horizontes de comunicación, con el video o la fotografía estamos escuchando al grupo, no sólo por medio de testimonios, sino principalmente, por medio de performances. La metodología participativa en el uso del video implica también un horizonte ético de alcanzar una antropología compartida, en la que el grupo tenga voz en la construcción del material que lo representará. El uso del video permite también generar un momento reflexivo en el grupo, que tiene importancia para los rumbos de la investigación. Anteriormente destacamos los momentos metódicos y no-metódicos de la investigación y las diversas formas de conocimiento. El video nos permite incorporar aspectos estéticos, arte, música, sensorialidad. A través de la antropología visual podemos mostrar cosas que no se ven y escuchar cosas que no son dichas, performances que no se reducen a datos de lo sensible y son producto de complejas experiencias de campo, con sus momentos reflexivos (Alvarez, 2017).

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# On Faith and Miracle: A Cosmological Perspective on Faith and Miracle as ‘Social Categories of Understanding’ in Brazilian Catholicism

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## Abstract

The concepts of *faith* and *miracle* frequently appear in the anthropological literature on Christianity. Yet these phenomena are rarely employed as social categories of understanding, and this is particularly true for research related to Catholicism. By way of my own ethnographic experience in three different fieldwork sites of Brazil's Northeast (Agüera – where apparitions of the Virgin Mary occur; Monte Santo – a Catholic pilgrimage sanctuary; and Casa Amarela, a neighbourhood in Recife, the capital of Pernambuco state), I argue that a cosmological perspective is central to understanding Brazilian Catholicism. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, such a perspective reveals *faith* and *miracle* as key elements to an understanding of Catholicism as it is lived in this context. As such, I suggest rethinking *faith* and *miracle* as “social categories of understanding,” which dialectically organize Catholic logic and cosmology: the interconnectivity of humans, nature, and the supernatural.

**Key words:** faith, miracle, Brazilian Catholicism, categories of understanding.

# Sobre Fé e Milagre: uma perspectiva cosmológica da fé e do milagre como “categorias de entendimento” no catolicismo brasileiro

## Resumo

*Fé e milagre* são temas frequentes na literatura antropológica sobre cristianismo. Contudo, estes fenômenos são raramente considerados analiticamente como categorias de entendimento, sendo isto especialmente verdade em relação ao catolicismo. Através de minha experiência etnográfica em três diferentes campos de pesquisa no Nordeste do Brasil (Angüera – onde ocorrem aparições da Virgem Maria; Monte Santo – um santuário de peregrinação católico; Casa Amarela – bairro populoso da cidade de Recife, capital de Pernambuco), argumento que adotar uma perspectiva cosmológica é central para compreender o catolicismo brasileiro. Além disso, e talvez o mais importante, tal perspectiva revela que *fé e milagre* são categorias chaves para a compreensão de como é vivido o catolicismo nesse contexto. Neste sentido, sugiro aqui repensar *fé e milagre* como “categorias sociais do entendimento”, as quais dialeticamente organizam a lógica e cosmológica desse catolicismo, através da interconexão entre humanos, natureza e sobrenatureza.

**Palavras-chave:** fé, milagre, catolicismo brasileiro, categorias do entendimento.

# On Faith and Miracle: A Cosmological Perspective on Faith and Miracle as ‘Social Categories of Understanding’ in Brazilian Catholicism

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The ethnographer who ‘wanders’ about the religious field of Brazilian Catholicism, in particular, is no doubt struck by the importance and value of ‘faith’ (*fé*) and ‘miracle’ (*milagre*) in this specific context. Indeed, my own ethnographic research – conducted over the course of more than two decades – in three different areas of the Brazilian Northeast (Angüera, Monte Santo, and Casa Amarela-Recife) has made me more sensitive to these categories while also moving me to consider how best to articulate these phenomena in theoretical terms. Through a careful analysis of the ethnographic data I have gathered, I propose conceptualizing *faith* and *miracle* as ‘social categories of understanding’ employed by Catholics living in Brazil’s Northeast.

As demonstrated by even a cursory look at the innumerable ethnographies on Catholicism in Brazil (ex. Zaluar 1983; Minayo 1994; Steil 1996; Campos 2013), it is clear that anthropologists recognize the importance of *faith* and *miracle* in their fieldwork sites. However, I believe that the way in which scholars have treated *faith* and *miracle* vis-à-vis their application as social categories fails to do justice to what the data actually offer, particularly regarding the concept of ‘faith’, and possibly extending to religions beyond the Brazilian context. This shortcoming primarily owes to the fact that the word ‘faith’ in the anthropological literature is more commonly employed as a synonym of a religious identity or specific religious practice (Badone 1990; Taylor 1995; Brandão 2004; Norget, Napolitano and Mayblin 2017) than as an autonomous anthropological concept. Indeed, contrary to what happens with the category of ‘miracle’, which has been regularly discussed (see below), ‘faith’ is not problematized, which seems to result from the fact that ‘[a]nthropologists have often regarded the latter as something beyond their analytical scope’ (Miyazaky 2000: 44).

It is important to note, however, that the concept of ‘faith’ has been discussed – albeit in a marginal way – with greater relevance in certain Christian ethnographic contexts (ex. Elisha 2008; Mitchell and Mitchell 2008; Maynard 1993; Miyazaky 2000), including Pentecostal religions in Brazil (Swatowski 2007). In their discussions, these authors offer points of divergence and overlap with each other, and they adopt approaches that seem to deviate, in greater or lesser degrees, from that which I intend to put forth here. To take one example, Swatowski (2007) largely bases her analysis on the work of Giddens, arguing that faith contains pragmatic elements aligned with regulating forces which emerge as a positive experience, and from which trust in the system is derived. Building on Bourdieu’s notion of ‘practical faith’ – the ability one has to participate in any given social field or activity – Mitchell and Mitchell (2008) argue that ‘faith’ is less a transcendence than a bodily performance, immanence. Differing in some ways from the Mitchells, Elisha (2008) seeks to understand the meaning of faith as a ‘social fact’, as a category of discourse and Christian practice, as social construction; faith emerges from this field as transcendence, encompassing thus emotion, reason, body, and mind. Agency is central in Miyazaky’s (2000) analyses on faith. Advocating for the ethnographability of this phenomenon, the author insists that faith ‘emerges not so much as a Kierkegaardian leap of belief in something beyond comprehension but as a capacity to place one’s agency in abeyance’ (2000: 32), in which faith, for the subjects, is constituted in experience, identity, and belief.

Dialoguing with these and other authors, the present article has two primary intentions. First, using ethnographic analyses of *faith* and *miracle*, this article advances an argument that such work requires treating both of these phenomena as ‘social categories of understanding’ (Mauss 1969; Descola 1992) in a way that is more critical and structured than in previous studies. For this approach, it is necessary to adopt a cosmological perspective derived from the (specifically Catholic) field<sup>1</sup>. Second, this article suggests that adopting this demarche creates an alternative that allows greater intelligibility among ethnographic fields that are different but related by way of their interest in these phenomena, within a perspective of an anthropology of Christianity, or, more precisely, an anthropology of Catholicism (Norget, Napolitano and Mayblin 2017).

In summary, I argue that within the Brazilian Catholic contexts in which I have done fieldwork, *faith* and *miracle* must be taken as social categories of understanding that organize the relationships that link humans, nature, and the supernatural, in which *faith* imposes itself as the broadest category. Here I consider the meanings of these terms and their specific uses in these particular contexts. Moreover, I insist that to understand the native sentiments attributed to faith and miracle, it is necessary to grasp the context of Brazilian Catholicism by way of a cosmological perspective, in which the world emerges and is constituted by the intertwining of nature-culture-supernatural. As such, I will begin by describing very briefly my ethnographic sites, after which I will offer a perspective on Catholic cosmology, complementing this with what I conceive of as ‘social categories of understanding’. I will then present my ethnographic analyses of *faith* and *miracle* before offering my concluding thoughts.

### Contextualizing Three Ethnographic Sites<sup>2</sup>

My ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in three different locations of the Brazilian Northeast region. In the state of Bahia, I worked in areas of Angüera and Monte Santo; and in the state of Pernambuco, I worked in a neighbourhood of Recife, the state’s capital<sup>3</sup>. The first fieldwork site to which I will refer is the rural area of the small town of Angüera, which is located in the hot and sub-humid *agreste* region of Bahia. Here a local *vidente* (seer) has received visions of Our Lady for over twenty years. My second locus of study is the Sanctuary of the Holy Cross (*Santuário da Santa Cruz*), situated in the city of Monte Santo, in Bahia’s backlands (*sertão*). Finally, my third ethnographic site is Casa Amarela, a neighbourhood in the coastal city of Recife, the capital of Pernambuco. In Casa Amarela, my focus has been on local Catholic rituals and representations of death. In presenting my case studies, I do not begin with the ethnographic context of Casa Amarela, where I first conducted research (1994-2010). My narrative instead follows the development of my ideas regarding faith and miracle: Angüera (1996-1997) to Monte Santo (2004-2007), both pilgrimage sites and loci of miracles, concluding with a return to my data from Casa Amarela. This intellectual path allowed me to understand more fully the phenomena in question.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I do not want to imply that a cosmological perspective belongs only to the Catholic realm, and much less so to only Brazilian Catholicism specifically. I also would like to point out that I do not take Brazilian Catholicism, or even any of its customary varieties, to be a homogenous entity. As I have amply discussed elsewhere (M. Reesink 2003a), I understand the field of Catholicism as consisting of a dialectical process between unity and plurality: a process that enables its members to build both identifications and diversities. Consequently, the same understanding will also be applied here to the concept of cosmology.

<sup>2</sup> Due to the lack of space here, and the fact that this article aims to make a more analytical and comparative effort, the ethnographic descriptions had to be shortened. For a more detailed description, see: Reesink 2003b and 2005a (for Anguera); Reesink 2006 and 2013 (for Monte Santo); Reesink 2003a, 2009 and 2014 (for Casa Amarela-Recife).

<sup>3</sup> Brazil is officially divided into five geographic regions: North, South, Northeast, Southeast and Centralwest; each region includes a certain number of political states. Bahia and Pernambuco are two of the nine states of the Northeast, the poorest region of Brazil. Here we find three main ecological and geographical zones: the term “agreste” describes the intermediate ecological zone stretching from Paraíba to Bahia, which is bordered on the east by what used to be the Atlantic coastal forests, and on the west by the semi-arid sertão, or backlands.

<sup>4</sup> The research for this essay was conducted in the following periods: Angüera, 1996-1997 and 2007; Monte Santo, 2004-2007. From 1994 to the present, I have conducted a number of different research projects in Casa Amarela, with the most extended periods of fieldwork being 1994-1995, 1998-1999, and 2008-2010.

We turn first to Angüera. Here apparitions of Our Lady appear on a small cattle farm belonging to a fifteen-child family. One of the children, Pedro, who is known as the *vidente* (seer), figures prominently. In 1987, after a period of illness and tribulation, Pedro, then a teenager, received his first apparition of Our Lady. From that moment on, the Virgin informed him, he would regularly receive messages that he would be obligated to spread. Indeed, the *vidente* is transformed into a channel of communication between the ‘two worlds’. Subsequently, the farm became a sanctuary and *locus* of pilgrimage and devotion to Our Lady of Angüera. Our Lady appears on Tuesday and Saturday nights. Before her appearance, the *vidente* always delivers a sermon, a moment of proselytizing, relaying innumerable messages left to him by the Virgin. This also serves as a moment during which both his legitimacy and the veracity of the apparitions are affirmed. This is, moreover, a preparatory ritual for both the *vidente* and the audience. Following the sermon is the recitation of the Holy Rosary and the Hail Holy Queen. Pedro then goes into a trance, at which time he receives Our Lady’s messages by way of an image of her that only he can see (Reesink 2003b and 2005a).

When this first began, the vision of Our Lady happened every Saturday. After a few years this also started to happen every Tuesday. Angüera’s fame began to spread and to attract hundreds of pilgrims at those apparitions’ days. In the initial years, pilgrims came mostly from Salvador and small cities of Bahia, attracting also pilgrims from the state of Sergipe. Currently, the apparition is a known phenomenon throughout Brazil, in particular in the direction of the southeastern part of the country: they come to hear Our Lady’s messages, passed along by way of the *vidente*. In this context, we can say that the *vidente* becomes the communicational channel between the supernatural (Our Lady) and the natural (the other persons, aiming, in fact, at the whole world) (Reesink, 2003b and 2005a). The *vidente* hence plays an indispensable role even when Our Lady is always thought to occupy the main and predominant role.

The city of Monte Santo arose at the base of the mountain housing the Sanctuary of the Holy Cross, a place that has been a pilgrimage site since the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Its micro-zone is currently known as “*Sertão de Canudos*”, because this is where the War of Canudos took place (1895-1897).<sup>6</sup> The foundation of the sanctuary of Monte Santo was the work of Apolônio de Todi, a capuchin friar. During his stay in the area, contemplating the view, he thought the mountain looked like the mountain of the Holy Land, in Jerusalem. In a synecdochical action, he led the first procession to the mountain’s summit: the first “miracle” happened during this ritual, an event that confirmed his intuition. For this reason, he renamed the mountain; originally called Piquaraçá, it is now Holy Mountain. From that moment on, the mountain has been sanctified and was transformed into a locus of peregrination, and source of countless miracles.

The Sanctuary of the Holy Cross refers to the whole mountain, at the summit of which sits the Church of the Holy Cross. Around (and across) this sanctified mountain two majors religious ceremonies developed: Holy Week, considered a local celebration, performed mainly by Monte Santo inhabitants, lasting eight days (from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday); and the Feast of All Saints (*Festa de Todos os Santos*), which is put on by thousands of pilgrims<sup>7</sup>, on the first of November. To make the pilgrimage on the first of November,

5 Within a Christian system, the development and establishment of cities by way of devotional and pilgrimage centres has been a recurrent pattern since Christianity’s primordial beginnings (Brown 1981), in Europe as well as in other Christian and Western regions, as is the case in Brazil (Cavignac 1997).

6 The War of Canudos was a civil war between the Brazilian army and the followers of the religious layman Antônio Conselheiro whose religious fervor earned him the title of Counsellor. This leader, and the majority of Catholics, did not accept the authority of the recently instituted ‘República Brasileira’ and the consequent separation of the Catholic Church from the State. Originally Canudos was a small village pertaining to Monte Santo until growing considerably with the arrival and settlement of the Conselheiros. The movement created an autonomous area that did not recognize the legitimacy of the State, and an enormous campaign to extinguish the town followed. The town of Monte Santo was the republican army’s headquarters. This event was romanticized by Vargas Llosa in his book *La Guerra del Fin del Mundo*. For a more anthropological discussion, see E. Reesink (2017).

7 The number of Monte Santo’s inhabitants is estimated at around 50,000, the majority in its rural area (source: IBGE). During the Feast of All Saints the number of pilgrims and visitors can reach over 40,000 (according to Monte Santo’s Council).

devotees climb the steep mountain to the church, a journey on foot that stretches for over more than three kilometres. Beginning at the chapel of souls (*capelinha das almas*), the path passes another twenty-three chapels before reaching the Church of the Holy Cross, thus representing the *via crucis*.

As such, Monte Santo is a historically Catholic place, not only in the sense that its population was at one time entirely Catholic – and is today still a strong majority – but also because the Catholic Church has had a preponderant and significant role in the history and development of the city (Reesink 2006).

Finally, there is Casa Amarela, a neighbourhood in the city of Recife that is interesting not only because of its history (of fighting for land, relying heavily on the help of the progressive wing of the Catholic Church), but also because it is a large and populous neighbourhood separated into hilly areas inhabited primarily by working class groups, and flat areas which are home to middle class residents. I call my Catholic interlocutors who reside in the neighbourhood ‘everyday Catholics’, in the sense that while they call themselves Catholics, they do not necessarily constitute a specific or ideal Catholic ‘type’, vis-à-vis a would-be exceptionality (such as, for example, seers or pilgrims).

Consequently, I have focused on the ‘movement’ of the neighbourhood’s Catholics, and their relation to this space. These Catholics tend to establish differences among themselves, not from the perspective of being real or nominal Catholics (a system of classification common among Brazilian social scientists). Baptism, after all, is the primary defining aspect of a Catholic identity. Rather, the differences these ‘everyday Catholics’ envision are based on *intensities* of Catholic ritual practice (Reesink 2003a).

What I call “intensities of ritual practice” refers to the amount of time and commitment that the Catholics engage in with regards to the Church rules and Catholic practices and rituals. Brazilian Catholics normally distinguish themselves from within two major groups: *praticante* (practicing) and *não-praticante* (non-practicing) Catholics; however, what defines a practicing or non-practicing Catholic can be differently conceived or understood by each person or community. The intensity of ritual practices can vary from just contemplating God’s creation and performing only a prayer’s *rythemes*<sup>8</sup> to attending Mass every Sunday, praying the Rosary every day and being actively engaged in the parishes’ activities and the (regular and special) Catholic rituals that are organized.

Analysing comparatively these three different ethnographic contexts and experiences has allowed me to deepen my knowledge of Brazilian Catholic beliefs and practices. The comparison led me to understand the necessity of approaching Catholicism from a cosmological perspective, which, in turn, led me to comprehend *faith* and *miracle* as social categories of understanding that contribute significantly to organising the Catholic cosmology. Therefore, I consider that to better understand the why/what/how of Brazilian Catholicism, it is vitally important to take a cosmological approach and investigate its social categories of understanding.

## Catholic Cosmology and Social Categories of Understanding

To discuss *faith* and *miracle* as categories in the Catholic context and to account for their complexity, it seems to me that we must comprehend the world in accordance with the cosmology of Catholic devotees (Reesink 2003a). By complexity, I am suggesting that the Catholicism conceived by my research subjects cannot be seen as a moment or space *in the* world or in society, but rather as a set of elements that constitute a world, their world. This makes it necessary to adopt a cosmological perspective of Catholicism, for the Catholic agents ‘think’ about this religion cosmologically<sup>9</sup>. It follows that the concept of ‘cosmology’ is not only of theoretical or

<sup>8</sup> This term adopts an analogy to Lévi-Strauss’s concept of “*Mythème*”, the smallest part of a myth. Accordingly, the “*rythème*” is the smallest part of a rite. Therefore, as I explain elsewhere (Reesink 2009), a prayer’s *rythème* would be the minimal gesture that it takes to utter a few words from a prayer.

<sup>9</sup> One could argue that it is neither new nor original to say that people think of Catholicism cosmologically. However, in the anthropology of Brazilian Catholicism, scholars seldom take this approach to understand its specific and/or general logic. Therefore, I put forth that to adopt a cosmological perspective in order to understand the way Brazilian Catholics think and practice their Catholicism still has originality in this context.

intellectual importance to my analysis, but also that its use gives us a pragmatic and methodological application enabling one to better grasp the world of the interlocutors.

In the first place, in a broad sense, I prefer to apply the concept ‘cosmology’ rather than that of ‘religion’, for it seems to me that using ‘cosmology’ is a viable way to resolve some of the problems pointed out by critics of the concept of ‘religion’ and its application (e.g. Asad 1983). In this sense, ‘cosmology’ encompasses ‘religion’ and the latter could be broadly analyzed within the scope of the former, which could also lead to cross-cultural analyses<sup>10</sup>. Last but not least, in my earlier analyses and mainly because I was applying the usual definition on ‘religion’, I found it difficult to understand certain Catholics contexts. One of the main issues with this concept is that, consciously or unconsciously, it introduces a rigid duality (or opposition) between the profane and the sacred realms. However, and despite the fact that the profane/sacred distinction is a native conception, in my fieldwork, they show a dialectical dynamism that seems to make and unmake the opposition/duality in a triadic process (nature, culture, supernatural): this is expressed in the relationships that occur at different times, in different spaces and, hence, in variable contexts of time-space. Furthermore, as I will discuss below, Catholicism in such contexts is also the natural law that constitutes the world and a historical/religious institution. Therefore, the use of ‘religion’ or other similar terms, e.g. ‘transcendence’<sup>11</sup>, does not really aid us in understanding this dynamic and logic. Through the methodological application of the concept of ‘cosmology’, it was (ironically) easier to see their complexity, and it also enabled me to discern a more original understanding of the kind of Catholicism that I came across in my fieldwork.

I should note, on the other hand, that no one should apply this concept without keeping in mind Viveiros de Castro’s criticism about ‘how utterly trivial any attempts are to establish functional consistencies or formal correspondences between morphology and cosmology or between institution and representation’. It is therefore ‘essential to grasp the problematic sense of this cosmology and then try to account for the “fluid” character of the morphology’ (1992: 2-3). The most interesting thing about his criticism is that it has a double effect: it is a warning not to take the concept for granted while also maintaining its utility and applicability (which, naturally, should be valid for any concept).

Hence, with regard to my specific ethnographic data, such a discussion engages concepts directly linked to the question of nature, culture, and the supernatural. Inscribed onto the logic of the Judeo-Christian tradition, Catholics clearly have, in Descola’s (1992) terms, a ‘naturalist’ model of objectifying the world, implying the establishment of a dichotomy between nature and culture without being reduced to it. What interests us here is that if these Catholics think about the universe in terms of culture on the one hand and nature on the other, both are directly related to the supernatural. As such – and in a way quite different from that which Viveiros de Castro (1996) observes for Amerindian perspectivism – both nature and culture derive from the supernatural, suggesting that nature and culture both contain, in a latent form, aspects of this supernatural, which is in turn always in a hierarchically superior position to nature and culture, both of which are seen to ‘exist’ because of the supernatural (represented by God).<sup>12</sup> Given this situation, Catholicism would, for Catholics, be the best suited to express the nature-culture-supernatural relationship. Citing the words of one informant from Casa Amarela:

10 In this article, however, I am narrowing down my analyses to compare only the data that I gathered during my fieldwork, and the conclusions arise from those data. It does not mean the analyses cannot be applied or compared more widely, only that it is not my aim to do this here.

11 Robbins (2011 and 2016) has an interesting take on the pair immanence-transcendence. However, although this seems to be a more neutral term than ‘religion’ (and in this way, attempting to respond to Asad’s criticisms); it seems to me that this pair does not really solve the problem as far as my data is concerned. Maybe this is less problematic, or even unproblematic, in contexts like those of Protestantism, but at least in relation to my data, the problem remains. It follows that the concept of ‘cosmology’ remains the least problematical and most useful to what follows.

12 Which, as Lindquist suggests for the Siberian case, presents itself with an ontological nature (Lindquist 2008); moreover, as Mitchell and Mitchell (2008) note, this nature would also be immanent. For a further and more extended discussion about the notion of “God” in the context of my interlocutors, see Reesink 2005b.

The Catholic religion is this: it's not a religion, it is a religion, it's because it's the history of the world, right? It's the history of the beginning of the world, the time of Adam, also stuff that no one ever saw, right? No one saw it, right? But it's in books, it's written, no one saw except for whoever wrote it, right? So that's what the Catholic religion is; it's the history of the world, of the beginning of the world, right? And these others were invented afterwards. This is why I say I'm Catholic; it's not that I live at church, no way! ... I know that to believe God exists, to believe that there is a supreme power you don't need anything. It's enough to see a mango tree like this.... The Catholic that I'm talking about is exactly what I've said; it's a family tradition (Joel, Casa Amarela).

In this context, the Catholic religion, or 'Catholic law', as it is commonly called, was instituted by God at the creation 'of the beginning of the world', and thus would be inscribed in the world, in nature. Put otherwise, the natural world would comprise not only physical laws, but also moral ones represented by 'Catholic law'. But there is a more profound implication. It also serves to make Christian morality – or more precisely Catholic morality – universally legitimate, since this type of morality is viewed as intrinsic to nature itself. Here we find, if not a 'socialization' of nature, at least its moralization, for it would have both 'physical laws' and 'moral laws', the latter being, as already noted, Catholicism itself. But I repeat: both laws are supernatural creations, the product of God, and thus retain an aspect of the supernatural. Still, as I perceived through innumerable conversations with Catholics, if Catholicism is a naturalised morality/religion, it is also culture. In this sense, a human dimension is revealed in its 'history', above all else in the errors – the result of human fallibility – committed over the course of this long history. This suggests that Catholicism is viewed as having a natural dimension (a moral law inscribed in nature) and a cultural dimension (a product of human history, the institution) (Reesink 2003a). We can thus interpret culture as a representation of the possibility of error, of failure, of being human, while nature would represent the absolute, the immutable, and the ineluctable. Catholicism, as a supernatural creation, would simultaneously belong to both nature and culture<sup>13</sup>.

The discussion here about nature and culture is vital particularly if we consider a third dimension, that of the supernatural. The terms nature-culture-supernatural are categories that belong to the worldview of my interlocutors, even if they do not always explicitly and consciously conceptualize them<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, their importance proves particularly true in the case of the Catholics involved here, since for the native exegesis itself, the supernatural is the foundation of culture and nature, while simultaneously presenting itself as external to both. The categories of *faith* and *miracle* need to be considered within this frame, for they express the possibility of establishing an intersection/mediation of these three dimensions.

For this, I propose that within the Catholic context, these two terms be treated analytically as 'social categories of understanding'. Consequently, here I utilize the Maussian conception that social categories of understanding are historically and culturally conditioned. He explains, 'categories live and die with people and their diverse contributions' (Mauss 1969: 150). But this does not prevent Mauss from generalizing. Therefore, it is necessary to think of a dialectic relationship between 'human cognitive processes' and specific cultural conceptions that 'also introduce a set of rules governing the use and the appropriation of nature, evaluations of technical systems, and beliefs about the structure of the cosmos, the hierarchy of beings, and the very principles by which living things function' (Descola 1992: 110). In the same way, and in a sense analogous to Descola's (1992) argument, I consider *faith* and *miracle* – in the Catholic context under investigation – to be 'elementary categories' that dialectically 'structure social life to organize, in conceptual terms, relations' (Descola 1992: 114) between people, nature, and the supernatural.

13 For other different and interesting discussions about the idea of 'culture' in relation to the religious realm, see Mafra (2011) and Giombelli (2008). However, the authors discuss other contexts and a different kind of problematic.

14 Their contents – and its possible variations – are very much rooted in the traditional Christian-western perspective (as discussed, e.g., by Viveiros de Castro 1996).

Yet as Mauss insists, before proceeding with an investigation of the general character of categories, it is first necessary ‘to research each category’s shape to make conclusions thereafter about the general character of each’ (Mauss 1969: 128). It is important to note that for Mauss, the initial research of these forms entails, first and foremost, ethnographic analysis. In Toren, we find this same preoccupation with ethnography, though in a more elaborate form. Indeed, in discussing Fijian categories, Toren affirms that these “show why, according to an anthropological perspective, a category’s meaning cannot be presumed; they demonstrate why an ethnographic investigation must always determine in what way a category is used as well as its possible implications’ (Toren 2006: 452). One might therefore say that categories must also be understood as categories of the real. In addition to this, or perhaps because of it, thinking about these categories is nevertheless akin to considering, in a reworked fashion, the position of Lévy-Bruhl (1949) upon detecting the existence of an affective dimension of concepts and, in this way, comprehending the categories that refer to the ‘mystical’ dimension of ‘affective categories of the supernatural’. However, instead of thinking along the same lines as Lévy-Bruhl in considering the content of affectivity as something specific to categories of an aspect or of different types of societies<sup>15</sup>, it is important to adopt the viewpoint that these categories, particularly those understood ethnographically (in any type of society), are constituted also by affectivity, which ‘would materialize’, as Lévy-Bruhl himself notes, in its symbols, allowing the comprehension of their subjective meanings. Furthermore, it seems to me that the greater adherence to these social categories of understanding (or even their greater plausibility) among natives is due precisely to the fact that they are also affectively constituted.

With this as our point of departure, I consider the categories of *faith* and *miracle* in the articulation between the native and anthropological perspectives. And indeed this articulation has a pronounced influence on the very process by which I construct my reflections. As such, the meanings and practices related to the category of *miracle* are much more ‘visible’ and comprehensible in the field, moving me initially to take this category as the most immediate. Therefore, influenced by this more obvious ‘visibility’, in my earlier analysis of the pilgrimage site of Angüera (Reesink 2005a), I considered *faith* to be an aspect of what I called the *Regime of Miracles*. In my original discussion, I pointed out that from ‘the establishment of the *Regime of Miracles* (where cure, grace, blessing, signs and apparitions are its main components), we could infer some fundamental relations: sacralisation and protection, faith and proof, pleading and help. Furthermore, we can also say that it comprises the process of communication, reciprocity and alliance between the pilgrims and the Virgin Mary (Reesink 2005a:14). Yet, given the degree to which the category of *faith* became more diversified when introduced in new contexts of investigation, it proved to be increasingly broad. Consequently, today I think that these two categories are better interpreted as constituting the dialectical order of the Catholic cosmological system<sup>16</sup>. The dialectic process occurs asymmetrically, such that *faith* reveals itself as a category encompassing and containing the category of *miracle*, the latter seeming to exist or be constituted only by way of *faith*. This finding proved increasingly accurate as I compared the two ethnographic contexts of Angüera and Monte Santo (centres of pilgrimage and miracle) with the data from Casa Amarela, in which the Catholics’ ordinary lives were not completely focused on the prominence or urgency of miracles, precisely because the focus was on ordinary daily life. However, the potential for miracles remained. The logical consequence is the perception

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15 One could argue that Lévi-Bruhl did not limit the ‘affective categories of the supernatural’ to ‘primitive’ societies. However, from my interpretation of Lévi-Bruhl’s work, he did posit it explicitly within the ‘primitive logic’. That said, I would not say that for this author there were no ‘affective categories’ at all amongst other kind of societies. On the other hand, from what I know, he never discussed this idea in these terms related to the latter.

16 This does not mean that only these two categories are present in the social ordering of the cosmological system, or that faith is always the most significant or most encompassing. Rather, this is the case in the specific ethnographic context discussed here and according to the perspective adopted here.

of a category that is perennial (*faith*), and another which is latent, yet always present, but appearing only intermittently (*miracle*). Yet when the second, extraordinary, category emerges, it dialectically contributes to the first<sup>17</sup>.

## Faith and Miracle

As already noted, in anthropological work on Catholicism, few scholars treat *faith* as a ‘social category’ central to organizing and justifying the actions of Catholic devotees.<sup>18</sup> But to comprehend Catholic practices and representations, it is necessary to emphasize that *faith* emerges as a fundamental category to solidifying both Catholic performances and the actual structure of the cosmological system. Ethnographically speaking, the category of *faith* appears as a result of three meanings and/or uses: the first, and the least analytically complex, is *faith* as a synonym of *religion*. Thus, informants often speak about ‘my faith, which is Catholicism’, ‘those who have a Catholic faith’, or ‘those who belong to the Catholic faith’. The second meaning of *faith*, and perhaps the most interesting, is as belief and a link to proof, doubt, and assurance; this appears most explicitly in *faith*’s dialectic with *miracle*. The third meaning of *faith* is as a human condition.

*Faith* as belief – particularly in a sense of believing in the existence of the supernatural and of the imposition of the supernatural on nature – seems to be the meaning that is most ‘talked about’. Paradoxically, though, this meaning of *faith* often remains the least critically examined, as the specialized literature often limits it exclusively to ‘belief’.<sup>19</sup> It seems to me, however, that the meaning of *faith-belief* necessarily includes qualities not always implicated in *belief*.<sup>20</sup> One such quality is the relationship of trust and affectivity (Maynard 1993; Reesink 2003a) that is established, for instance, between devotees and the Holy Cross; between Our Lady of Angüera and her followers; between the Catholics of Casa Amarela and their “special dead” (Reesink 2003a); between the Catholics of these contexts and Christian divinity, for as Mariluce, from Casa Amarela, puts it, ‘[Faith] is trust in God’.

Regarding the term *belief*, Toren (2006), in her analysis of Fijian ‘mana’, makes an interesting distinction between ‘believing’ and ‘knowing’. She argues that ‘we can end up characterizing as *belief* that which our informants *know*’ (2006: 449). Even if a difference in the degree of certainty between belief (relative) and knowing (absolute) truly exists, it seems to me that the category of *faith* in the Catholic cosmological system contains both a relative certainty (translatable as belief) and an absolute certainty (knowing). Thus Catholics know that God exists and believe in the possibility of miracles, but they do not know if a specific miracle took place. Regardless, it is most common to treat belief as synonymous with knowing.

17 Despite this change in seeing a more fundamental role for the category of *faith*, I still think it is more interesting to maintain the *Regime of Miracles* concept, precisely because of its ethnographical visibility.

18 Primarily vis-à-vis ritual situations in which sacrifice, and mainly that which implies physical suffering, presents itself as the visible dimension and therefore performed according to the logic of the *Regime of Miracles*.

19 Generally speaking, in the majority of known studies (ex. Mitchell and Mitchell 2008) belief and faith seem to be presented simply as interchangeable terms; however, in other contexts, such as among the Pentecostals of Ecuador, belief is inferior to faith (Maynard 1993: 253). The distinction between faith and belief – seemingly rooted in the distinction between greater reflexivity (reason) and greater commitment (affectivity) – also appears to be at the heart of Balzer’s (2008) analyses in Siberia and of Swatowski’s (2007) thoughts on Brazilian Pentecostals. The fact that the interpretations of these authors in their respective contexts are pertinent, comparatively, to my own ethnographic research context demonstrates that the difference and hierarchisation between faith and belief – given that the former is typically better explained by natives than the latter – make sense for a view of faith as a social category of understanding, as has been discussed here. This view not only accounts for diversity of context, but also for feelings, performances, emotions, and differentiated characterisations raised by the natives themselves.

20 Lindquist and Coleman question the applicability – or the problems and virtues – of employing the term ‘belief’ in the anthropological analysis of religious phenomena, concluding that: ‘in writing “against belief” we cannot hope – or even wish – to remove it from our analytical lexicon forever. We can try, however, to show the value of writing “against”, rather than “with”, the term’ (Lindquist and Coleman 2008: 15). From this we can extract a ‘near’ analytic-ethnographic impossibility of it being subtracted from the category ‘belief’. At the same time, one would not expect anthropologists to take such a fact for granted, expecting them instead to relativise and condition it analytically and ethnographically.

But if *faith-belief* implies a distinction (at least in analytical terms) between belief and knowing, it also implies doubt and scepticism. Put differently, the category of faith exists at the articulation of doubt-belief-knowing, in which proof plays an extremely relevant role. A few anthropologists have already addressed the issue of doubt in the construction of belief. Pouillon (1979) has emphasized that doubt is inherent in belief. Yet it has only been of late, primarily in the works of Severi (2002), Hojbjerg (2002), and Whitehouse (2002), that doubt has begun to occupy a more central role in the study of religion. Indeed, doubt pertains to what these authors call religious reflexivity, in the sense that when subjects reflect on their beliefs and practices, doubt and scepticism are vital aspects of this reflexive process even if in the end (as is typical) the reflection serves merely to confirm the belief.<sup>21</sup> At any rate, this religious reflexivity largely depends on the absence, or conversely, the existence, of *proof*; it is dependent on effectiveness. Therefore, when I speak of the relationship of trust between devotees and saints, it is important to understand that this trust is based on something quite palpable and concrete: *proof*. For one to have faith, examples are needed, *ex-votos* (votive offering) are needed, a demonstration of sacrifice is needed (for this is also revealed in miracles).<sup>22</sup> For Catholics the *proof* resides in the *faith-belief*.

- Do you know of any miracles? (M. Reesink)

- Ah! There are many miracles here. People who arrive with a broken leg and leave healed; they make a vow...You go around there [He points toward the room of the *ex-votos*] and you're going to see all these legs, arms, photos, cloth dolls. Everything is there, the stuff of the vows that people make, and they get well. There are people who come from far away, make a vow, receive the grace, so they owe. (Evandro, Monte Santo, resident)

Thus the occurrence of a miracle demonstrates or proves its 'realness' to the devotees. At the same time, though, these concrete examples confirm and legitimate, for Catholics, the existence of miracles. It is not uncommon, therefore, for pilgrims in Angüera or Monte Santo to express doubt regarding the existence of miracles, saying things such as 'they say miracles happen, I don't know because I've never seen them'. The doubt expressed here does not concern the cosmological system itself. Rather it is doubt about the real capacity of miracle production in that particular sanctuary or in relation to that specific apparition. This furthermore reveals the idea that the proof, or evidence, involves the senses. Of all our senses, vision, as Bloch (2008) notes, seems to permit the greatest recognition of truth, or even of knowing. The prominence of vision can be observed in common expressions such as 'I'll only believe it if I see it' or 'I saw the miracle happen before my very own eyes'. But vision is not the only source of validity or means of proving a miracle. Indeed, proof can also exist in emotions, experiences that may not necessarily be objectively demonstrable, accounts given by people considered reliable, and the sacrifices made by others. Everything can serve as proof of a supernatural action. Perhaps, then, the overriding quality of *faith-belief* is its capacity to offer proofs that are not necessarily objectifiable in a purely cognitive way, but are subject to the senses, emotions, and experiences of the faithful. And it is in the interplay of belief-doubt-proof that the relationships of reciprocity are established between Catholics and the supernatural, according to which some give while others receive and reciprocate.

Here I would like to utilize the category of *faith* to explore further the issue of receiving and reciprocating. In the ethnographic context of the Sanctuary of the Holy Cross an extremely relevant issue emerged that seems to me akin to a double movement of faith. The first movement is the primary and most frequently and easily

<sup>21</sup> As discussed elsewhere (Reesink 2010), there are two levels of doubt: the broadest is that which puts into check the whole cosmological system and which can lead to a person's conversion to another system; the other is a doubt that questions very specific aspects or even the efficacy of certain rites within the cosmological system, without putting the system itself into 'doubt'. See also Haynes (2019) for an interesting discussion about 'doubt' in a different context.

<sup>22</sup> This is distinct from that which occurs in the Ecuadorian Pentecostal context (Maynard 1993), and, possibly, in the Protestant context more generally, in which there appears to be a reduction in the importance of miracles and proof vis-à-vis faith. It would be interesting to discuss more about Pentecostalism, but I don't have the space to do so here. For a good discussion of this kind, see Birman (2012).

noticed, which is the need to have the faith to be able to receive miracles. This is clear in the response given to me by one city resident when I asked her if miracles occurred in Monte Santo.

I think they exist, because people wouldn't come otherwise... And lots of people do things, they take wooden legs to the Holy Cross, they take arms, they take hair and everyone who does it is blessed. It also depends on faith; you can't get anything without faith. (Ivone, Monte Santo, resident).

The second movement of faith appears above all else in regards to pilgrims dealing with the obligatory reciprocation of that which was obtained by way of the Holy Cross; this retribution is made through corporeal sacrifice, the realization of which seems to be predicated fundamentally on faith.

They went back home because they couldn't handle it, they ran out of breath, they got tired, and went home... I was feeling tired too, I stopped, had a popsicle, I think it was so much faith, it gave me courage, so I made the climb, thank God. (Mônica, Monte Santo, pilgrim).

They come to thank Him [God] in many different ways. They come on their knees, they come.... The people go around on their knees; it is great faith. Since when a person does this, climbs up on their knees, it's because the person has a lot of faith. (Heloísa, Monte Santo, pilgrim).

- But do you believe it happens? (M. Reesink)

- I do believe it, you know? Going up this thing is no joke, it must be tremendous faith for us to go up it, then come down... I think it happens. (Vânia, Monte Santo, pilgrim).

In these words, it is clear that faith is necessary to fulfil a vow. Indeed, the sentiment is especially vivid in this case – as the pilgrims seemed unanimously to affirm – given the actual geological formation of the Sanctuary of the Holy Cross. With a steep climb stretching over three kilometres, the pilgrimage requires a truly great physical effort, above all in the case of women and elderly men, but also for younger individuals not physically prepared for the climb. There are countless stories of people falling ill, of people who take hours to make the climb due to the difficulties, or of people forced to abandon their objective of reaching the main chapel at the summit. Consequently, for a significant majority of the pilgrims, simply being able to make the climb up the mountain represents a superhuman feat, indicating, in other words, that such an act would be impossible without supernatural intervention. Here we once again find that faith is a prerequisite to being blessed with this miracle.

God blessed me, because I made the climb. We go up and it's like God gives us the strength, you know? Because oh my goodness [*Ave Maria*]! (Amara, Monte Santo, pilgrim).

We aren't the ones going up, it's God who gives us the strength to go up. If it were just flesh, a natural strength, people wouldn't make it all the way. I think God gives us the strength to go up. (Leonardo, Monte Santo, pilgrim).

I encountered two little old ladies, and I don't know how they come and go, I have no idea how they do it, it could only be a miracle! (Miro, Monte Santo, pilgrim).

In this way, faith in both God and the Holy Cross make it possible to receive the miracle, which requires reciprocation. But the reciprocity itself is rearticulated as a supernatural occurrence since the devotee acts with complete faith. In this context, the reciprocation of the miracle is only possible by way of supernatural intervention, which would imply that people are completely powerless, and that they thus serve as a means of expressing the power of the supernatural. However, looking at this from another angle, it might be argued

that, in the end, this entire cosmological system actually depends on people, for it is only through human faith that it can be put into motion in the first place.

We now arrive at the ideal moment for a critical analysis of the category of *miracle*, an inevitable aspect of the meaning of *faith-belief*, as should be clear by now. In ethnographic studies on Catholicism, and particularly regarding Brazilian Catholicism, the category of *miracle* has received greater anthropological attention than that of *faith*. This may be due in part to its greater visibility, which may therefore more easily arouse ethnographic interest<sup>23</sup>. And although researchers have discussed the issue at some length, the category has not always been utilized as a means of analysis and comprehension. For example, Shanafelt (2004) has proposed that the Latin term *mirabilis* replace its Latin synonym *miraculum* in anthropological analyses. According to the author, the term ‘marvellous’ would be advantageous as it is less closely linked to monotheistic presumptions and would thus be more ‘universalizable’ than ‘miracle’ in dealing with events considered extraordinary. As such, ‘marvellous’ would encompass both the ‘magical’ and the ‘miraculous’. Despite Shanafelt’s interesting rationale, I believe that in the Brazilian context, although the term marvellous is indeed linked to an idea of that which is ‘unusual’ (ex. *cidade maravilhosa*, or marvellous city, as is Rio de Janeiro’s moniker), it does not necessarily imply anything supernatural or anything related to the supernatural.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, the broader and more ethnographically inclusive term, for the current context at least, is surely *miracle*.

In one of the first ethnographic works to conceptualize *miracle* in the context of Brazilian Catholicism, Zaluar (1983) asserts that in characterizing a miracle, ‘one cannot attribute the fact to any other cause except divine intervention, since its course or development is *uncontrollable*’ (1983: 100). This suggests that nature is separate from the supernatural such that nature is within the human domain and the supernatural within that of the divine. Here a *miracle* would be the act of the supernatural intervening in the natural for the good of the ‘men of God’ (Zaluar 1983), and largely at their request. Sallnow (1987: 54-55) has also sought to conceptualize *miracle*, but from the Andean point of view. The author suggests that miraculous phenomena would first be classified as ‘mystical theophany’, which is the apparition of an image; afterwards, a divinity’s ‘active thaumaturgy’ would lead to the entrance of cures, successes, etc. Still, neither Zaluar nor Sallnow make any classificatory and/or qualitative distinction between *miracle* and other terms such as *grace* or *blessing*.

We find this distinction, however, in Minayo (1994). The author classifies *cure*, *miracle*, *grace*, and *blessing* in a hierarchy according to research conducted in a Catholic sanctuary in Brazil. For her, *cure* in this context ‘refers to the phenomenon by which people recuperate their physical and mental health’ (1994: 66), or even their safety and well-being; *miracle* ‘is reserved to designate the obtaining of a good (health, or a material or spiritual good)’ (1994: 66) which could not be ‘naturally’ attained; *grace* ‘is used to explain situations of cure’ (1994: 66); *blessing* would be ‘a preventative act against evil, against adversarial forces’ (1994: 66). While certainly interesting, these classifications reveal differentiated degrees of overlapping. They reveal much more than a mere complication in establishing definitions or an ambiguity in the native discourse, according to which ‘miracles are called graces or blessings, just as graces are classified hyperbolically as miracles’ (1994: 66). Indeed, this seems to suggest an equivalence of terms, according to which *miracle* is the term that is always (or nearly always) utilized as equivalent or synonymous with the others.

In this sense, when I began to study pilgrimage sites, my idea was to apply Minayo’s elaboration of ‘miracle’, ‘cure’, ‘grace’ and ‘blessing’ as relational, but autonomous, categories in order to understand the phenomenon. Nevertheless, the facts and data I found through my fieldwork did not quite fit her model. The Catholics in my fieldwork always – or nearly always – apply the word *miracle* as equivalent to or synonymous with ‘cure’, ‘grace’

23 For an extended historical analysis of the development of the concept of miracle, see Goodich (2016).

24 It seems, however, that *marvellous* and *miraculous* are not distinct from each other only in the Brazilian case, for even Hume positioned miracle above marvellous (1996: 114).

and ‘blessing’<sup>25</sup>: they interchange them (miracle-cure/ miracle-grace/ miracle-blessing) to describe or analyse a particular miraculous event; this appears to introduce a sort of ambiguity and ambivalence regarding the term ‘miracle’ in its relation to the others<sup>26</sup>, for it would seem to express difference and sameness at the same time. However, it seems to me (then and now) that we have a larger category, that of *miracle*, and it encompasses all of these other categories. Therefore *cure*, *grace*, and *blessing* are but aspects or types of *miracle*, for a *miracle* would itself be the intervention of the supernatural into the natural while *cure*, *grace*, and *blessing* would be the results of such an intervention. The equivalences and ambivalences between miracle and cure, miracle and grace, miracle and blessing would be nothing more than the exposition of a relationship of the parts to their whole in the establishment of a synecdoche. Taking this approach allowed me to better understand the data and the way these people conceived their world<sup>27</sup>.

My data provide yet another source of reflexion that also reinforces my approach. In addition to *cure/grace/blessing*, the category of miracle also comprises other elements, specifically *signs* (and/or *stigmata*) and *apparitions*. *Signs* are among the most recurrent phenomena in the hagiographies and accounts analyzed by social scientists (see, for example, Cavignac 1997; Blanc 1995; Brown 1981). These can appear on human bodies (as *stigmata*) or in the environment. *Signs* are characterized by the supernatural transformation of nature, often translated as the inversion of the natural, as many informants recount in Angüera (for instance, daylight at night or darkness during the day). *Signs* are, as the word itself indicates, ‘signs’ of supernatural presence, serving to verify and legitimise<sup>28</sup>. They are, furthermore, proof of the holiness of a locale, a phenomenon, or an individual involved in a process of sanctification.<sup>29</sup> As for *apparitions*, scholars generally classify these as phenomena distinct from *miracles*. This is the case for Turner and Turner (1978), as well as for Davis and Boles (2003). For the Turners, in the Christian – specifically Catholic – model, the divine power is manifested by way of ‘revelation, miracles, prophecy, and apparitions’ (Turner and Turner 1978: 205). In other words, apparitions are in a separate category. But, still in dialogue with these authors, one could argue that in fact *apparitions* are extraordinary occurrences that emerge in the quotidian and natural human world. In this and many other ways, apparitions are miraculous occurrences, for they are the result of the intervention of the supernatural in nature, as is asserted in Angüera by devotees of Our Lady. In Angüera, therefore, the locale of pilgrimages and of apparitions of Our Lady is protected and prepared by God, as a privileged place ‘where the contrasted poles of Heaven and Earth met’ (Brown 1981:3), or as the *vidente* (seer) puts it:

This is a holy ground that God chose and where He erected a cross so that the Mother of Jesus, before this cross, could transmit her message. (Pedro, the *Vidente*, Angüera)

And this is why it is a permanent (and potential) source of miracles, however this may be configured.

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25 It does not follow that there is no hierarchy between these types of miracles: the cure has the greatest value and is also the more difficult to “receive”, while a blessing is of minor importance. We could say that the more extraordinary the miracle (cure, apparitions) the greater its value; the less extraordinary the miracle (grace, blessing), the less relative value attributed to it.

26 It is important to note that I have seldom seen or heard anyone doing the same with the others terms: they rarely used grace-blessing, grace-cure or blessing-cure as equivalents to describe or analyse the same event.

27 This argument is extensively developed in M. Reesink 2005a. Once again, unfortunately, in order to present the central argument of the current paper, lack of space does not allow for some important concepts like ‘sacrifice’ to be discussed in detail.

28 I would like to stress that signs (“sinais”) is an emic concept/category from my different fieldwork projects, which refers to the materialization of the supernatural in the natural world. Their content primarily refers to the supernatural actions that invert the laws of physics. As any kind of miracle, they can also be used or seen as a kind of proof of the supernatural interference/existence. For an interesting discussion about religious materialization, see Keane (2008).

29 In hagiographies the presence of stigmas on the bodies of those in the process of sanctification is always a recurring presence. See Albert (1992) and, in the case of modernity, see Blanc (1995).

Deliver it to her and that's it, you forget your problems, debts, illness, it's in Mary's hands. I am sure that the miracle will happen in your life, for God is powerful and Our Lady is the powerful mother of Jesus, who will take our request to Christ. (Pedro, the *Vidente*, Angüera)

So I said it like this: 'it's Angüera, my prayers in Angüera'. (Andrea, Angüera, pilgrim)

In this way, the perspective that should be adopted treats miracle not just as a 'simple' exceptional occurrence. Rather, it should be conceptualized as a social category of understanding that classifies, justifies, and encompasses all of these occurrences, which are actions and revelations of the supernatural, organizing and explaining the nature-culture-supernatural relationship. It seems plausible to view miracle as this type of category only if we also consider it as ethnographically constituted by way of a kind of hybridism, or syncretism, that my informants construct: everything happens as if they put together Hume's and St. Augustine's seemingly contradictory conceptualizations of miracle, which, put metaphorically, are 'science' and 'religion'<sup>30</sup>. Hume insisted that '*miracle* is a violation of the *laws* of nature' (1996:114) while St. Augustine rhetorically asked, 'For how is that contrary to nature which happens by the will of God, since the will of so mighty a Creator is certainly the nature of each created thing? A portent, therefore, happens not contrary to nature, but contrary to what we know as nature' (1996: 240).<sup>31</sup> This hybridism seems to legitimate the cosmological conception of a Catholicism that participates in nature, and not just as 'culture'. More important still, it seems to be precisely because of *miracle's* capacity to be simultaneously *contra natura* and *intra natura* that allows it to serve as a native social category, subject to, and utilized alongside, the category of *faith*, at the intersection or mediation of supernatural-nature-culture, as discussed above.

In this way, we find a broad category, *miracle*, composed of various parts or qualities (cures, graces, blessings, signs, apparitions) that are not mutually exclusive. Rather they are complementary, even if such complementarity does not annul the autonomous capacity of each of the parts, allowing them to appear together or separately. In Angüera, we see a synchronicity among these qualities of miracle such that apparitions, signs, cures, graces, and blessings occur contemporaneously. In the ethnographic case of Monte Santo, what we see is the diachronic presence of all of the elements of the category of miracle acting with differing degrees of intensity at different times: signs (a windstorm) and apparitions (the most recurrent being that of Our Lady, indicating her chapel's location) are said to have materialized at the time of the 'discovery' of the mountain as a holy source. These signs and apparitions served to authenticate and spatially organize the sanctuary; and these events were succeeded by a period of numerous graces, blessings, and cures, all of which still continue today.

## The Human Condition

The third meaning, or utility, of *faith* is that which refers to the human condition, or more specifically, that which is conceptualized as an aspect or quality of the notion of the Catholic person (Reesink 2014), but which only makes sense for natives since faith as an aspect or quality of the human comprises faith as belief. This meaning/use of the category of *faith* became more evident to me in relation to the representations Catholics established in reference to God, to the dead, and to the 'other world'. From this, I noted that the construction of the notion of the Catholic person is intimately linked to the notion of God: the idea of the human person derives from the conception of the Catholic-Christian divine (Reesink 2005b). Thus if the Catholic person has components that are 'whole', such as the body and spirit, other aspects vary in their intensity and quality

30 In which, obviously, Humes would represent 'science' and St. Augustin 'religion'.

31 This hybridism only appears to be possible by discarding the logical conclusion of Hume's entire argument, which denies the possibility of a miracle. As Pannenberg affirms, in Hume, 'The concept of miracle as a violation of natural law subverts the very concept of law and exposes the futility of the assertion of miracles' (2002: 759).

(Reesink 2003a). This characterizes love; this characterizes *faith*. As such, faith – or the capacity to have faith – is perceived as an element central to the human person, as a condition or capacity directly connected, as has already been mentioned, to a superior being linked to the supernatural.

It's to be sure about God, faith comes from deep inside. I think it comes straight from God. He created us so it definitely comes from Him. (Viviane, Casa Amarela).

Thus subjects are complete as humans because they have faith in God.

This explains why my informants refuse to acknowledge atheists as truly human, frequently referring to them instead as 'beasts' or 'animals', in a view I call 'radical'.

To me they aren't even people, they're atheists [laughter]. To me they're atheists, because who would live in the world without God? Because we just live, why? Because of God! And if God didn't want it this way, there would be nobody, no one would live in the world. So there you go! And these who don't believe, who don't believe God is in the sky, or on the earth, aren't people, they're animals, atheists! (Lemos, Casa Amarela).

I think it's a huge aberration, don't you think, sister<sup>32</sup>? Because who doesn't believe in God, really, really, it'd be better not to have ever even come to earth, my child. Because life only exists with God, everything only with God. Truthfully, people who don't have faith in God, don't have anything in life, it's a big hole. Everything only with God, without God we're nothing, and we have nothing, we're nothing, everything is with God. It's a tremendous aberration to be atheist, truly. (Carlos, Casa Amarela).

According to this perspective, by denying God and His existence, the atheist tears him-/herself away from humanity, from the very possibility of existence. This decision is viewed as akin to a rejection of humanity. We might even venture to say that, in this context, humanity is fixed to culture such that a person secures his/her human condition by a capacity to have faith, a capacity granted by God. In this way, a person without faith is part of nature; the person is a beast, a non-human. Furthermore, an atheist is an aberration, as Carlos put it, a monster in the world. After all, the 'essence' of humanity is linked to a faith in Christian divinity, for here humans *are* in God: to deny the supernatural is to deny the human being and is thus to present oneself as a monster, and in a situation such as this, it would be better simply not to exist. The atheists' lack of faith in the supernatural implies another dehumanizing metonym, as I was told by Tereza, from Casa Amarela: an atheist is lower than an animal, something resembling a rock, belonging, in other words, to inanimate nature: no life, no existence, nothing.<sup>33</sup>

Still others believe that if a person cut off from God is not just a beast, a thing, a monster, or simply nothing, it is because he/she aligns him-/herself with pure evil.

These people who don't believe in God, these people are already dead in my eyes, right? For me, they don't have a spirit, they don't have a soul, because without believing in God you can't live... Because anyone who claims not to believe, I feel, is a child of the devil himself. (Ana, Casa Amarela).

From this viewpoint, if a person rejects the Christian divine, he/she falls inevitably into the hands of the devil, of evil: the person becomes the child of the devil himself, for here he/she is either in the 'kingdom' or in

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<sup>32</sup> Carlos was one of my best informants. One of his objectives was to convert me to Catholicism, so he made it a point to include me in the activities of the lay Catholic community (of which he was one of the leaders), thus situating me within the community itself. One of the ways he included me was by calling me 'sister'.

<sup>33</sup> The term 'atheist' is in itself negative: if some informants utilize it to designate a fact, others utilize it to express the fact itself, thus turning 'atheist' into a profanity, an offence.

the 'other world'. Furthermore, atheists are a source of fear and distrust, for they leave the world of humans/God to broach the world of the animals/devil, acknowledging that this entity is linked to the world of savages, animals, and, worst of all, to the undomesticated supernatural (Reesink 2003a, 2005b).<sup>34</sup>

While this 'radical' approach places the atheist in nature, distant from humanity, there is yet another possible approach, which I call the 'distrust paradox' which sees a lack of faith in God as entirely impossible.

I think they [atheists] are totally wrong, and that deep down they actually do believe, because there isn't anyone who doesn't believe in God, right? (Lucas, Casa Amarela).

There are those who say: 'I'm atheist, thank God!' So by accident, right? There is always the moment when we know that God has a hand in everything. Why would I believe someone who denies the existence of God? Don't you think, Mísia? There's always something. (Hilda, Casa Amarela).

These discourses demonstrate, first and foremost, impossibility: a person cannot be a non-human, but to be human, the person must believe-have faith in Christ's divinity, for it is He who allows for the conditions of humanity. Therefore, the affirmation, 'he has to believe!' or, as Lucas clearly stated, there are no people who do not believe. From this it follows that one who confesses his/her incredulity is viewed as crazy or offensive, or as someone who wants to stand out, a drifter, a pity case, or quite simply a liar. This is because in this ethnographic context, it is impossible – even unthinkable – that a person would exist without faith in God. And this is the paradox of the atheist: he or she is a person who has no faith in God; yet it is necessary to believe in Christian divinity to be a person. The existence of an atheist thus becomes a source of distrust, for he or she is a person who, to be a person at all, must be/believe in God. It is for this reason, then, that the majority of the informants exhibit an incredulity regarding what atheists say. Even among those (few) informants who do not show a distrust of atheists, atheists are seen as resulting from a 'blindness' or even a 'misguided search' for God. It is hardly surprising to suggest, then, that for these Catholics, human-without-God is truly unimaginable.

I now return to yet another issue. As already noted, it seems that the capacity to have faith, indeed faith in and of itself, can be increased or decreased over an individual's lifetime: it is thus necessary 'to practice' faith in order to preserve it intact and, by extension, to preserve one's own humanity.

Of course you need to have faith! Without faith we can't get anywhere, right?! And it has to be a daily faith, there, every day. With courage and faith, you can't get discouraged, no way. Look, I'm over 60 years old and I've never lost my faith, here I am, with courage as long as God wills it. (Marlene, Casa Amarela)

Exercising faith is something human beings must do. (Marcos, Casa Amarela).

This is why saying that 'one must have faith' to receive miracles demonstrates the characteristic of faith as an element that 'fluctuates' in quantity and intensity. However, in order to have sufficient faith or not, for example, to request or receive a miracle, does not deny the primary condition of Christian-Catholic divinity. Thus we are left with the notion that being human is linked to one's capacity to exercise faith, and this is always related to the supernatural: to exercise faith implies an increased intensity of faith in the supernatural. It is further worth emphasizing that practice, in this case, is the primary means by which to augment the specific quality of the Catholic human person. But the practice of faith is still a 'complete' performance, including not only aspects that are physical (i.e., the body), but also those which are cognitive and affective.

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<sup>34</sup> According to Muchembled, in the process of constructing the image of Satan, there was a concerted effort to undue any semblance of a man, pushing it thus in the direction of an 'emphasis of the devil's basic inhumanity' (2000: 49), making the image very bestial, a visual inversion of humanity.

## Conclusion

Using ethnographic work conducted in specific Brazilian Catholic contexts, I have sought to argue in this article that *faith* and *miracle* should be conceptualized as social categories of understanding that organize relationships of people to nature and to the supernatural. I proposed that to understand the native meanings attributed to faith and miracle, Brazilian Catholicism must be viewed through a cosmological lens, for natives conceive of their world cosmologically.

This perspective brought into focus different aspects of the category of miracle (grace, cure, blessing, apparitions, signs) and the manner in which it is employed (by way of people-devotees and the supernatural-divinities/saints). Above all else, I have suggested that faith, as a category, is fundamental to the constitution of this Catholic cosmology in its meanings and described uses: faith-religion, faith-belief, faith-human condition. In particular, and as a precondition for a Catholic existence, a meaning of the human faith-condition involves the conception of *faith* as nature (derived from the supernatural), since it is intrinsic to humanity, even if it fluctuates. This also suggests that faith needs to be practiced and that there exists a distance at which more faith (more practice) signifies a more profound closeness with the supernatural, the human, and therefore an increased 'capacity' to receive miracles, rewards. As we have seen, moreover, these categories make the lived world of these Catholics meaningful.

The categories of faith and miracle, therefore, are constructed and utilized because the Catholic cosmological system establishes a world in which nature-culture-supernatural simultaneously possess exclusive and inclusive dimensions, for nature and culture are derivatives, creations of the supernatural. Faith and miracle – as social categories of understanding – exist to order, legitimate, and make sense of the relationships established among the dimensions: humans, nature, and divine beings.

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# Vegetable Temporalities: Life cycles, maturation and death in an Amerindian ethnography

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## Abstract

This article considers how relations with certain plants produce multiple temporalities for the Wajãpi, an Amerindian people from the Brazilian Amazon. Inspired by a non-anthropocentric anthropology or an “anthropology beyond the human,” the article is an ethnographic exploration about how the Wajãpi perceive the concrete and sensible features of certain vegetable species, and thus how they see them as subjects, in a process that produces different space-times. I also show how certain concepts are central to this same process, specifically, that of life cycle and maturation (including death), which lead to notions of co-temporality and difference between groups and individuals.

**Key words:** maturation, temporality, amazonian ethnology, plants.

# Temporalidades Vegetais: Ciclo de vida, maturação e morte em uma etnografia ameríndia

## Resumo

Esse artigo se volta ao modo como espécies vegetais produzem múltiplas temporalidades entre os Wajãpi, um povo ameríndio que habita a Amazônia brasileira. Inspirado por uma análise antropológica não-antrópocêntrica ou por “uma antropologia para além do humano”, o artigo é uma exploração etnográfica sobre como os Wajãpi percebem as dimensões concretas e sensíveis de certas plantas, e como eles as compreendem como sujeitos, em um processo que produz diferentes tempo-espacos. Também demonstra como certos conceitos são centrais nesse processo, tais como as ideias de ciclo de vida, maturação e morte, o que conduz a noções como as de co-temporalidade e a diferença entre grupos e indivíduos.

**Palavras-chave:** maturação, temporalidade, etnologia amazônica, plantas.



# Vegetable Temporalities: Life cycles, maturation and death in an Amerindian ethnography

*Joana Cabral de Oliveira*

“To see a world in a grain of sand  
And a heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand  
And eternity in an hour.”  
William Blake, *Auguries of Innocence*, 1805

## **Canopy: an overview of the context and the questions it raises**

Plant beings are central to the construction of space times by Wajãpi families, as I observed while walking through the gardens and forests that compose their world<sup>1</sup>. In this context, the relevance of sensible dimensions is very clear, leading us directly to Lévi-Strauss’ (1966 [1962]) “science of the concrete,” in which these dimensions are made of “discoveries of a certain type: those which nature authorised from the starting point of a speculative organisation and exploitation of the sensible world in sensible terms.” (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 10). Although a detailed description of the concrete elements that make up the Wajãpi’s knowledge of plants is beyond the scope of this article (see Cabral de Oliveira 2012), we can identify how these sensible dimensions operate here by considering a specific aspect: vegetable temporalities manifest through plant diversity and through a broad, plastic and motile scale of doing, thinking and relating to different space-times.

The Wajãpi are Tupi-Guarani speakers who inhabit a region along the Jari River in Brazil and the headlands of the Oiapoque River in French Guiana. I work with families who live on the Wajãpi Indigenous Land (WIL) on the Brazilian side and who move throughout their territory, occupying small villages at the limits of the WIL during the dry season and concentrating in large central villages – regional conglomerates made up of small clearings that surround state institutions such as schools and health posts – during the rainy season. These movements currently also follow the secondary school calendar, which is set by the Brazilian Federal Government. Despite the increasing number of Wajãpi families with salaried individuals, their food requirements are obtained from gardens and by hunting, fishing and gathering. Their way of life thus also involves daily movements, including incursions into older growth, and secondary growth forests, gardens, floodplains and streams.

The diversity of landscapes named and recognised by the Wajãpi can be distinguished, up to a certain point, as either gardens (koo) or forest (ka’a). The gardens are spaces created by families in sections of the forest that they tame by slashing, burning and planting, constituting places appropriate for humans. Villages are built over those gardens and can thus be understood as extensions of the koo domain, both villages and gardens are composed of cultivated plants (temitãgwerã, which means “planted”, the most inclusive category of Wajãpi taxonomy). Meanwhile, the term ka’a – often translated as forest – includes all those spaces that are neither

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<sup>1</sup> I have worked with Wajãpi families since 2004.

gardens nor their extensions (a former-garden that is now secondary growth forest, *kookwerã*; a village, *taa*; and a former village, *taapererã*). *Ka'a* is composed of non-cultivated plants (*temitã'e'ã*, literally “not-planted”) and in some speech contexts the term may also encompass forests, rivers, mountains, etc. We can thus begin with an initial differentiation between the *koo* and *ka'a* domains, where the garden is a space for sociability and consanguinity among humans, as affective memories are made through cultivated plants, while the forest belongs to others: it is the domain of the most dangerous cosmological owners – the *ijarã* – and their pets (the creatures that they care for and over which they are extremely protective).

The forest is well-known as a field of affinity and alterity but this does not mean that the *Wajãpi* distance themselves from it. Irrespective of the inhabitants of the *ka'a*'s potential for aggression, *Wajãpi* families form close ties with them and have detailed knowledge about their bodies, affects, behaviour and moods. They can also disguise potentially distant relations with these beings through the use of consanguineous titles when faced with certain dangers. For instance, to prevent heavy clusters of Brazil-nuts from falling on their heads during the harvest, they enter the forest cautiously, addressing the Brazil-nut trees as grandfather (FF or MF) and ask them not to throw down their fruits. They may also refer to a roaring jaguar encircling a camp as grandfather. The *Wajãpi* hope that this approach will acquiesce the forest's inhabitants. The forest also contains memories of a remote past, bearing the marks that spatialize formative events and making them present, and thus allowing the *Wajãpi* to imaginatively experience the *jane ypy* (our beginnings).

Meanwhile, the gardens and their extensions are marked by cultivated plants (*temitãgwerã*) that carry the affective memories of kin, of different moments in life, of people's growth and ageing. Despite the intimacy established with these plants and clearings, they can also be aggressive and demand a specific type of conduct: people who are sick and women who are menstruating or have just given birth must follow several prescriptions, which include not going to the gardens and refraining from all harvesting activities. This is because these conditions can anger the plants' cosmological owners (*ijarã*), the most feared of which is the manioc owner.<sup>2</sup>

By considering the *Wajãpi*'s active relations with plants (referring to the Western category that encompasses the opposing folk categories of *temitãgwerã* and *temitã'e'ã*), in the reflections that follow I will describe the processes involved in living and elaborating different space-times in this setting. At first, the description and analysis consider the binaries garden versus forest and planted versus not-planted but as the complexity increases certain twists and turns emerge that prevent a simplistic conclusion. Inspired by the *Wajãpi*, I hope to portray the plants as subjects (as “agents of meaningful acts”, Pollock 1996: 323). To this end, I establish a dialogue with anthropologies that aim to destabilise humanity's significance, such as Bateson's (1979) concept of “mind”; Haraway's (2003a and 2003b) notion of “companion species”; developments of this notion by Tsing (2012) and Van Dooren (2011 and 2012); and more recently Kohn's (2013) “anthropology beyond the human.”

## Purpose and Contributions

In relation to Amazonian ethnology, the aim is to open a new path within a well-established debate about space-time, which is firmly based on the analysis of shamanism and ritual, and that will be raised here through the daily, sensible relation between the *Wajãpi* and plants (*temitãgwerã* and *temitã'e'ã*). In this way, I hope to show that plants can be drivers in the passage between a (mythic) time of origins and a time of kinship.

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<sup>2</sup> In this case, we are dealing very simply with cultivation (care given to plants) and not with a relation of domestication, the process by which an organism's reproduction and survival depends on humans. The plants' cosmological owners are also responsible for them and thus cultivation does not imply domination or dependence; we might even call it a relation of co-caring or “shared custody.”

The focus of this effort falls on the life cycles of various species and how the Wajãpi compare and create commensurability between them. The focus on plants allows for an alternate view of the questions raised by Amerindian perspectivism (Viveiros de Castro, 2002), such as the generalisation of a human condition, as something that is common to all beings and which defines the position of subjects.

Post-human anthropology seems like another way to approach the focus of this article, which also hopes to contribute ethnographically to this novel theoretical approach. At the same time, an effort is made here to move away from commonly analysed dyadic relations, such as humans and animals or humans and plants, through an ethnographic comparison of the relations established with both primary groups of organisms, as well as with objects. Another contribution is to reflect on inter-specific relations that operate at different levels of abstraction, specifically at the level of the individual and the group (or category). The analysis also strives to invert the vectors of action, locating plants as agents in and of relations. More than as supports for thinking about temporality, they make the Wajãpi remember, which allows for the emergence of distinct space-times. Here, Lévi-Strauss' contemplation of mythic temporality and action will be connected to the life cycles of organisms and consequently to Darwin's theory of evolution. In this context, scientific studies conducted by botanists seem like a reflexive solution to the effort to invert the vectors for action and understand the agency of plants without invoking Amerindian perspectivism. By tracing partial connections between Wajãpi and scientific knowledge, the article explores notions of inter-specific communication (a semiotics of nature, as Kohn, 2013, would say) or the configuration of a cybernetic circuit (a mind system, as Bateson, 1979, would say). Another contribution to post-human anthropology is therefore presented by the possibility to partially connect disparate knowledge regimes.

### **Great Ageing Trees (The Space-Time of Origins Accessed by Vegetable Bodies)**

Some of the mythical accounts that I had the privilege to listen to during fieldwork were triggered by questions surrounding the name of a tree or plant. On one occasion, from the village clearing I saw a *Parkia pendula* and this beautiful tree caught my attention due to the red blooms that hung from its long stalks, and which were distributed throughout its flat canopy. When I asked the name of this tree I was given a first-times story, which I transcribe here to transmit its narrative style:<sup>3</sup>

“Long ago the sky fell.

Friends played. The ancestors' children played while the butterflies tied up the sky. The children picked cotton flowers, drew them together and spun them. “Butterfly *weri*<sup>4</sup> like me,” said one uncertain butterfly. “They are my kin,” said another butterfly uncertainly. So, many butterflies came down. The ancestors' children killed them all by using baskets to cover them. The butterflies gathered once more and came down again. They gathered with the cotton flowers in the clearing. Baskets were thrown over them once more. Once more, they were killed. Children are like that, they kill things just like that.

The ancestors had gone out and that is why they didn't see that the children had killed the butterflies. The old chiefs only saw the deed later: “What did you do, kill all the butterflies?!”

It was already late and the dawn wouldn't come. The sky had fallen.

Did the falling sky make a sound? The forest held it up, that's why the sky didn't fall to the ground. What was it that held the sky when he fell? It was the *jiruru* tree [*Parkia pendula*].

<sup>3</sup> This narrative was recorded in Wajãpi and I translated it to Portuguese.

<sup>4</sup> *Weri* butterflies belong to the *Phoebis* genus (sulphur butterflies). I am grateful to Dr. Blanca Huertas for this identification. It is important because it provides a telling characteristic: this species is yellow, in a tone similar to cotton flowers.

That is why its canopy is flat now. During first-times, long ago, our owner made the jiruru, he became a tree.

Later, when the sky fell, there was a deep darkness. Why did the ancestors not scold [the children]?: “Why did you fight with the butterflies?” that’s what they should have said to their children. Why didn’t they say: “Night will no longer break!”

But Janejarã [a demiurge, literally ‘our owner/master’] was still in the forest, on land: “You killed all the butterflies that’s why the sky fell. The butterflies tie-up [the sky at] the edge of the land. The edge of the sky comes down and the butterflies tie it to the edge of the land end,” he said.

After the sky fell the elders asked: “How do we lift up the sky? We cannot exist without dawn.”

“Come and make the jupara [kinkajou, *Potos flavus*] party”, said Janejarã. The women went to the garden in the dark, using resin to light their way. The women made kasiri [fermented manioc]. “You should play jupara!” said Janejarã. “The jupara songs will lift the sky high. You should sing jupara to raise the sky.”

They finished making kasiri and made resin torches in the dark. The men lit the resin. Then they brought them together and they played marakaja [ocelot, *Leopardus pardalis*], jupara and other songs. The night became beautiful, they played. And the night became beautiful like this one. The sky went up. Janejarã listened attentively to the party. The sky went up round as a gourd, very beautifully, the sky went high as thunder.

“Now dawn will really break,” said our ancestors. “The cock didn’t sing, now the cock knows, the dawn will come and when it does the cock will sing.” And they played until dawn. They continued to play until after it had dawned, the sky sprouted and went far, the sky went far, such as it is today. “The jupara party makes the sky go up,” said our grandparents. That is why we don’t kill butterflies, the sky may fall.

Jupara is a good party, in the past it made the sky go up. Replicas of the jupara fruit are made of curassow [Cracidae] feathers, macaw feathers... and resin ... Then we play and hang these replicas of the jiruru fruit [on the flutes]. That is what our grandparents told us in the past.”

On another occasion, while walking down a forest path, a wooden vine caught my attention due to its strong stalk, which was almost the size of a tree-trunk and delicately twisted down an enormous tree. I asked one of the Wajãpi who I was following for the vine’s name: “it is called japuamyu [japu bird mucus]”. On recognising the composition of the name I asked why it had this name, which led him to tell me a long story. It turned out that the japuamyu (Bignoniaceae) vine was a reminder of another first-time event. The story tells of the adventures of a demiurge called Wyrakauri and his brother-in-law and their effort to fetch a sparrow-hawk chick from the top of a tall sumaúma tree (*Ceiba pentandra*). At one point, Wyrakauri climbs up a slender tree that stands by the sumaúma and crosses over onto the larger tree’s canopy, using a branch as a bridge. As a prank, his brother-in-law removes the bridge, leaving Wyrakauri stuck in the nest. A series of events takes place during which a number of different birds try to help him down but only the japu (*Cacicus cela*) succeeds: he snorts through his beak and lets his mucus run down to the ground, which becomes a vine that Wyrakauri uses to descend.

The ãjãpiry tree (*Calycophyllum spruceanum*) is another good example. One of the mythical motifs that I heard on numerous occasions during my fieldwork is of how humans became mortals. In these accounts, Janejarã invites the first Wajãpi, taivígwerã, to bathe in his cauldron’s boiling waters but they decline because they are suspicious, and fear being burnt. Instead of the first humans, it was thus the snakes, lizards, cicadas and other insects that bathed in the bubbling waters and who can now change their skins: a sign of eternal youth and immortality. At the end of the story, Janejarã throws the rest of the water away and it falls on the ãjãpiry tree, which thus becomes like those animals and can constantly change its bark: its dry wooden brown skin eventually cracks and falls, giving way to a smooth shiny green trunk.

The point is that the forest is full of markings that make past events more than memorable. Temporality is thus spatialised, providing access to an inescapable past that is inscribed in the trees and many other beings, a past that is activated in the present to make the world’s current configuration intelligible.

Some Americanists – such as Overing (2006), Hugh-Jones (1979), Viveiros de Castro (2002), Gow (2001) and Saez (2005) – have discussed mythic temporality through the analysis of shamanism and ritual, and have ethnographically shown how mythic narratives do not only refer to the remote past. In shamanic negotiations (involving treatments for diseases, help with hunting, revenge, etc.), shamans deal with animals and other beings in their human condition while sharing a common language with them. Thus, as Saez concludes for the Yaminawa, “the extraordinary facts narrated [...] identify a synchronic rather than diachronic distance; animals speak from another current time, which is shamanic time” (2004: 43). And as Hugh-Jones states about the Tukano: “it should be clear from the material [...] that the ancestral past is also an alternative aspect of the present which can be contacted through shamanism and ritual” (1979: 235).

However, while access to a mythical space-time has been well-established via shamanism and ritual, what I would like to point out here is that it can also be reached through an alternative relational path, one that operates through the sensible and imaginative<sup>5</sup> faculties. Forest inhabitants carry their ontogeny and make it explicit in their bodies, allowing us to establish connections between distinct space-times through sensorial experiences. The jiruru’s flat canopy is thus an indelible mark of the sky’s collapse but it also reminds us of the current condition of the cosmos: it is a flat plane in which butterflies must constantly work to tie the sky and land together at their edges. Likewise, the jiruru make it impossible for the Wajãpi to forget the jupara and many other festivities.

### **Planting Affect, Remembering Kin**

How can we connect the scale of an ancient space-time with a recent past that is closer to a human lifespan and to personal memories? One option is to consider how cultivated plants directly refer to the cycle of affective memory among kin: memories can be planted through them, as we will find in the descriptions that follow.

An old chief called Waiwai brought some patauá palm (*Oenocarpus bataua*) seeds back from a visit to French Guiana and presented them to his wife, Parua. I was with her that morning in her courtyard as she spoke to her grandchildren, who surrounded their grandmother while she distributed the patauá seeds among them. She then used a hoe to dig some small holes in which the children lay the seeds. Later, Parua explained that she had called on her grandchildren to plant the patauá because they were unfamiliar with that palm tree: “They have never seen it, later it will sprout for them to see.” However, it was also clear from our conversation that this was not just an instructive act: it involved creating a childhood memory for her grandchildren. According to Parua, when her son was small she had him plant a pino’e’e palm (a variety of bacaba, *Oenocarpus bacaba*) and when the pino’e’e palm had grown, her son had become an adult. The maturation of the palm and her son were thus entwined. Planting and the care given to the palm and child were interlaced in both subjects: her son’s memory of growing-up was manifest in the palm and vice-versa. Parua’s act can thus be understood as creating a qualitative index,<sup>6</sup> a fundamental step in making and transmitting Wajãpi knowledge (Cabral de Oliveira 2012). Parua established a nexus of commensurability between her son and a pino’e’e palm, creating an index of maturation: a mark that commensurates these processes.

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5 I understand the imagination to be the capacity to virtually place oneself (not to actually do so, as do those who possess shamanic capacities) in other space-times or perspectives. Some authors have made use of this term without giving it the status of an anthropological concept (Ingold, 2013; Hughes, 2002). Following Thompson: “The imagination is not a source of error or illusions, but an ability to feel that which one does not yet know, to intuit that which cannot be understood, to be more than what is conceivably known” (1987: 8).

6 The notion of index necessarily refers us to Charles Peirce, who defines it as an indicating sign that makes inference possible (apud. Gell, 1988). Alfred Gell adds a semantic charge of agency to the Peircian concept in his proposal for an anthropology of art. Eduardo Kohn (2013) also borrows Peirce’s concept, according to Kohn, the characteristic property of an index is its capacity to signify more than it represents, opposing it to the notion of icon, which represents itself (Ibid. :32-33).

This type of action is extremely common among the Wajãpi: the peach-palms (*Bactris gasipae*) planted by a deceased chief index his presence for his wife and children; although a deceased person's belongings are buried and abandoned along with the village where the corpse is buried, her crops (especially those that last longest, such as palm and fruit trees) remain, spread out in the area that she once occupied, reminding everyone of her wanderings and stories, and marking each wãna's (local group's) area. This is why it is common to identify specimens planted by certain people – who may be deceased – when passing by old gardens and villages, and to remember and relive the ties that bind people in a network of relationships and places.

This not only happens with specimens (which are individual) but also with varieties (groups). Once Kasawa told me that upon returning from her garden she found that her tapupura cotton plant (a variety of *Gossypium*) had been cut down: “I cried when I saw that my son had cut my tapupura cotton! I became angry. I said: ‘Why did you do that?’ I cried a lot that day, I was sad because it is very difficult to find tapupura cotton, my mother had given me the seeds.” Although Kasawa was sad in relation to a specific plant, she had other tapupura cotton plants that were also planted with seeds given to her by her mother. She continues to be reminded of her mother by all of the tapupura plants that she has planted or will ever plant, for memory is linked to a variety of plant, which operates as a lineage as long as it is continuously (re)planted.

Every woman knows the origins of her plant varieties and the story surrounding the acquisition of each variety is connected to its name and not just to a specimen, for each variety is annually replanted in a new garden or courtyard. The gardens are thus veritable collections of manioc, sweet potatoes, cottons and so on, each with their own origin stories (Cabral de Oliveira, 2009; this can also be seen in other ethnographic contexts, such as Hugh-Jones 1979, Rival 2001 and 1998 and Murrieta et. al. 2003).

### **Comparisons: approximations and discontinuities between plants, animals and objects**

Although my work emphasises the Wajãpi's relations with plants, I would be unable to fully account for the implications of these relations if I restricted our attention to the vegetable kingdom alone. In fact, to broaden our reflection beyond the Western distinction between living and non-living beings or animals and plants – particularly given the importance attributed to human-animal relations in Amazonian studies in the last two decades (Viveiros de Castro 2002, Garcia 2010, Lima 1996, Fausto 2008) – it is useful to raise some of the spatio-temporal connections that the Wajãpi establish with animals, as well as with objects. Thus, as Santos-Granero does through his critique (2009) of the theoretical invisibility of objects in Amerindian studies, I also hope to highlight the non-exclusiveness of certain aspects of human-animal relations.

As already mentioned in the case of snakes, lizards and insects who change their skins in a constantly rejuvenating cycle, animals can also carry ontogenic marks on their bodies. The colours of different birds' plumage is another example. Generally, the Wajãpi attribute these colours to a primordial festivity in which each bird – at a time when they were all people – painted itself and sat in a sumaúma tree's branches (which also gave all sumaúma branches their current shape). At the same time, according to an episode of the mythic saga about Janejarã's (Our owner's) twin sons, many different birds received their markings while trying to help the twins to obtain fire from the vulture, its owner, by stealing a burning ember: while attempting this feat, the spix's guan (*Penelope jacquacu*) swallows the ember, leaving the red wattle seen on its body today; the toucan (*Ramphatos spp*) burns its beak, which leaves a black spot; the clumsy trumpeter (*Psophia crepitans*) falls into the embers, which is why the back of its plumage is grey; and so on. These examples are enough to indicate how animals seen today also trigger the imaginative experience of an ancestral space-time.

However, the clear equivalence between forest animals and plants in relation to a primordial space-time is not repeated in the domestic sphere. It is therefore common, for example, for Wajãpi families to rear the young of birds and mammals captured in the forest and to establish relations equivalent to filial ties with them during

the process of taming, by sharing their food with them, anointing their bodies with annatto (*Bixa orellana*), sharing common spaces, etc. The criteria they employ for the constitution of domestic animals (xerimbabos in a Tupi-derived Portuguese term and *-reima* in Wajãpi) can be inversely demonstrated through observations made during fieldwork in relation to the practice of rearing agoutis (*Dasyprocta* sp.) for consumption. According to Nazaré, for example, these agoutis could be killed and were not xerimbabos both because they remained in a pen separate from the village's communal living space and particularly because they were not fed with the same food as her family.

Although xerimbabos establish relations of extreme proximity and affect with the people that rear them – following their owners wherever they might go – unlike cultivated plants, they are not sources of distant memory. I would argue that this difference is due to the vegetable (sensible) peculiarities involved in rearing animals and plants. Unlike plants, xerimbabos are not perpetuated through a lineage because their shorter life-cycle and incapacity to reproduce themselves in the domestic context erase mnemonic ties at death. Meanwhile, manioc, cotton and many other plant varieties are perpetuated in time, traversing and connecting different generations and social groups. Since lineages last longer than the lifetimes of individuals and since plant lineages do not perish (unless they stop being cultivated), certain plants become long-lasting relational vehicles that obliterate the passage of time. Concurrently, the longer life-cycle of palm and fruit trees, and their permanence in specific places, make the peach-palm or cotton tree into fixed material marks that tie space and time together.

Finally, it is also worth inserting objects into the broader picture given their known importance in Amazonia (Santos-Graneiro, 2009 and Van Velthem, 2003). In the Wajãpi case, we can identify the agency of certain artefacts, as well as their relevance to the mythical genesis of a number of living beings (which Santos-Graneiro calls “Amazonian constructional cosmologies”): in the aforementioned mythical twins saga, specific objects become aquatic animals when they come into contact with floodwaters, such as a mat, which becomes a fish known as *paku* (*Myleus* spp.). Much like plants and animals, certain objects can thus appear as the mnemonic sources of cosmogenic events.

In terms of the temporalities that refer to kinship and to a person's life-cycle – while cultivated vegetable species have a central place – objects do not stand out as subjects that activate memories, since a deceased person's things are buried and abandoned together with the body. It is therefore possible to compare concrete objects (that are made and owned by a certain person) to xerimbabos, and thus indicate their short life-cycle: which is short because the majority of objects manufactured by Wajãpi families (with the exception of ceramic pots) are made from perishable materials that last very briefly in a tropical climate. Their life cycle is short because objects made or used by someone who dies (including objects with greater durability such as ceramics and industrialised goods) should be buried and abandoned since they carry with their owner's substance and can cause illness in living relatives. Wajãpi families often come across potsherds, stone axes and even whole ceramic vessels when making their gardens in very old secondary growth forests. As well as being dangerous, these objects are the topic of long discussions among those who find them: in each case they recount certain stories and evaluate whether the objects belonged to their generic kin or to their enemies.

Such finds thus allow for the emergence of different temporal and mnemonic registers, a theme already explored by the archaeologist Mariana Cabral (2014) and which I cannot develop here. What I would like to emphasise is that what is at stake is not exactly an opposition between living and non-living beings. We cannot understand the world presented by the Wajãpi – where objects' have agency in the present, reflecting a condition given in a primordial space-time in which axes and pots do work by themselves – by projecting our own separation between living and non-living beings. What seems important is thus to think about the

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<sup>7</sup> We can include lakes, mountains, rivers, landscape and other components that are also imbued with agency and carry marks that remind people of primordial events.

concrete temporality afforded by these entities in their elaboration of the multiple space-times that compose the Wajãpi universe. Contrary to Kohn (2013), I do not apply and reflect through our separation between living and non-living, but set out from the Wajãpi ethnography to understand how cycles that begin and end are qualified in a cosmos where agency is broadly distributed. The question here relates to the temporalities that belong to the bodies of each being (including objects), that is, their cycles of duration, maturation and transformation, and I will now focus specifically on the emergent temporalities of botanical diversity.

## Engagements and Vegetable Temporalities

The Lévi-Straussian maxim that “animals are good to think about” has undergone minor changes in recent years. According to Ingold (2000) animals are “good to relate to”; while Mosko (2009) looks at the relation between Melanesians and yams, and affirms that they are “good to act with”; and Haraway (2003a) uses her notion of companion species to insist that “animals are good to live with.” Notwithstanding the advantages of these conceptual nuances, the central point is that the non-humans<sup>8</sup> with whom we construct and share a world should be understood as relational subjects. This is particularly evident in the Amazonian context, where this subjective condition means that the cosmos’ various inhabitants need to be carefully dealt with and related to: one can therefore potentially avoid a fatal attack by calling the Brazil-nut tree “grandfather”.

What emerges from the descriptions presented here is thus a way of acting in a socio-cosmic network. At times, this involves active constructions by Wajãpi mothers, grandparents, etc. – as in the memories entwined with cultivated plants – and at other times in memories made by a cosmos that leaves traces of its transformation. That is, it involves a cosmos that also acts and communicates through and with plants (and/or animals and objects). In both cases, the plants that lend themselves towards the elaboration of memories diverge significantly from each other in terms of life cycles and maturation. Therefore, while large trees such as the jiruru, ãjapiry, sumaúma, and the japuamyu vine grow slowly and last for hundreds of years, the plants that materialise affective memories mature quickly and have short life cycles. As a result, the latter have more malleable interactions with humans: they are constantly replanted and altered in a process of multiplication, accumulation and loss of variety (or forgetting). Their temporality allows for a more global perception of maturation processes and reactions by the two parties (people and plants) that form a relationship.

Hugh-Jones (1979) and Rival (1993) have already drawn attention to the Tukanoan and Huaorani interest in plant maturation and its relation to social processes. Hugh-Jones thus describes Tukanoan analogies between human growth and manioc processing, while Rival shows how the Huaorani’s sophisticated understanding of plant development is used to qualify social maturation processes, and to act on the transformation of children into adults. The Wajãpi do not explicitly speak about these issues but it is possible to argue that their engagements with various plants involve a detailed perception of their specificities (including morphological characteristics, maturation and life cycles), and that this perception guides a complex system of attitudes and relations. Assorted plants provide them with the experience of multiple times and thus vegetable temporalities are as diversified as the biodiversity that constitutes them.

## First Twist: Individual and Group, Myth and History

Until now I have described a stable dual composition – forest: origin space-time; vegetable garden: kinship space-time – that is also related to the separation between myth and history in anthropology; an extensive debate that is beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, Gow (2001) and Gallois (1993) have

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<sup>8</sup> Since non-human subjects are not restricted to animals and plants, but also include rocks, rivers and objects, the idea of a companion species can and should be extended to what is thought to be inanimate and inorganic in the West.

made observations about Amerindian peoples that are relevant here. In Lévi-Straussian inspired analyses, these anthropologists ethnographically argue that the intensely open and transformational qualities of myths make them historical objects. In the Wajãpi case, Gallois describes how a myth can converge with and insert itself into a historic narrative (an account with named ancestors) when a new experience or situation allows for the myth's reevaluation. Meanwhile, among the Piro, Gow refers to a temporal axis with two poles: one of personal experience – relating to named subjects that are known as kin (history) – and another that describes events enacted by demiurge (myth). According to the author, between these poles, processes are found that combine myth and history. Along with Lévi-Strauss, both authors contextually point to the relational complexity of myth and history, emphasising the various transformations that these narrative genres and temporalities can undergo.

The material that guides this article, based as it is on a Wajãpi ethnography in which movement is seen to be fundamental to life<sup>9</sup>, also destabilizes this binary frame and complexifies the analysis. For example, the Wajãpi clear annual gardens in forested areas and abandon them after a harvest of short-cycle crops, these gardens gradually become forest again after passing through secondary growth stages. As such, if the very opposition between garden and forest that is so important to Wajãpi life includes movement, the temporal setting that contrasts these domains cannot be as inflexible and standardised as described until now.

First-times can also be present in the bodies of cultivated plants, as in crops that sprouted when the body of a puss-ridden old woman was burned: manioc emerged from her shins, corn from her eyes, yam from her feet, papaya from her breasts, bean pods from her vagina, and so on. Independent of the variations that each version of this myth presents, what matters is the relation of similarity of form between body parts and vegetable species. Cultivated plants can therefore also present the corporeal signs of their ontogenesis and, likewise, large trees can be reminders of recent events linked to a human life span. During the move to a hunting camp near the Tawariry River, upon passing by an enormous *yvyra pirã* tree (I was unable to identify the Latin name for this species), I heard amidst laughter the story of a kinsman who missed a shot on a *coati* (*Neusa* sp.) that ran up its trunk. In another example, presented in Cabral (2014) in the account of an expedition to the Ypavu lake, the Wajãpi elder who led the way found an old path that he had not taken since his childhood by recognising some machete marks: scars left decades earlier on the durable trunks of ancient trees.

We are thus faced with non-lineal series that prevent the use of a stable explanatory schema, yet one more point of differentiation is required here for us to move forwards: the taxonomic distinction between specimen and species, individual and group (category). The temporality of the Wajãpi cosmos, which primarily refers to the forest, does not consider specific individual specimens but species as a category that encompasses a group of similar individuals. It is worth remembering here that species is a central notion in Lévi-Strauss' (1966) "savage mind," as it lies halfway between universalisation (categories of gender, family, etc.) and particularisation (individual). The notion of species reunites a complex combination of characters from a group of living beings and operates as a conceptual "instrument" that turns unity into multiplicity and multiplicity into unity (Lévi-Strauss 1966). The *jiruru* tree that held up the sky is therefore not exactly a single *jiruru* tree that can be identified at a specific point in the forest. It is rather an ancestral *jiruru* that virtually possesses all *jiruru* in itself – it is a singularity that is multiple and a multiple that is one<sup>10</sup>. That is why each and every *jiruru* indicates the time that the sky fell and allows for the sensible experience of that moment. In short, it is *jiruru* as a species that operates the act of remembrance.

9 Discussions of Wajãpi movement appear in many preceding works with varied analytical scope that consider territorial shifts, successive migrations, linguistic appropriation and cosmological movement (P. Grenand, 1979, 1980; F. Grenand, 1995; Gallois, 1988; and Campbell, 1989).

10 Strathern indicates the productivity of the idea "one that contains many" found among the Gawans: "If 'ones' contain 'many' then one is also a version of many, epitomized in the recapitulation of descent group members as one. [...] Each member contains the group. At the same time, in terms of the capacity for making extensions and connections, each member potentially belongs to a matrix of radiating." (1991: 68).

Meanwhile, memories of social relations – that is, of entwined life stories that are exemplarily remembered through cultivated plants – essentially have specimens as subjects. Specific trees carry the marks of a machete in their bodies indicating the path to the Ypavu lake. A specific pinoe'e palm reminds Parua of her son's childhood. A specific grove of peach-palms located near Aramirã reminds Kumai's family of the deceased chief. Specimens have relational agency, they are not inert supports because they provoke memories and affects in the people with whom they relate – specimens make people recount and affectively remember.

At one extreme we have specimens (individuals) that remember life trajectories and social relations: memories imbued with a dense affective charge due to the proximity of the subjects that they weave together. In the middle are plant lineages, which might last longer than individual specimens but can only be maintained by the latter and by awakening people's interest in continuously (re)planting them<sup>11</sup>; this is a temporality that is perishable much like people and plants: each has a lifespan – some are centenary like the sumaúma, others are more ephemeral, like a manioc plant – but all of them will die. At the other extreme there are species and genera, categories of beings that lead to a more or less imperishable temporality that always renews itself; in the end, unless predictions about the world's end and destruction are confirmed, there will always be a jiruru tree to remind the Wajãpi of the time that the sky fell, a japu-mucus vine to remind them of Wyrakauri's adventures...

In dialogue with the biological theory of evolution, Gregory Bateson (1979: 103) presents us with an interesting idea about how life tricks death, how a biological system obliterates time. He proposes that while individuals complete their lifecycle and then undo this circuit (by dying), the group maintains itself, the species continues through the reproduction of new individuals and tricks death by extending that lifecycle through the collectivity:

The bamboo bends before the wind', in a Japanese metaphor; and death itself is avoided by a quick change from individual subject to class. Nature, to personify the system, allows old man Death (also personified) to have his individual victims while she substitutes that more abstract entity, the class or taxon

The capacity for transformation is a fundamental factor in this game of life and death in which organisms perpetuate themselves through continual change: processes such as adaptation and natural selection are<sup>12</sup> mechanisms driven by the plasticity and renewal of living beings, who can cheat death precisely because they do not remain identical through the generations.

We can thus find an echo of Lévi-Strauss' analysis of myth (2004 and 2011) in Darwin's theory of evolution: myths both maintain and obliterate time not because they remain the same throughout the generations that narrate them, but precisely because of their capacity to ceaselessly transform. At the end of the last volume of *Mythologiques* the author even recognises a formal similarity between the mythological spiral and life as

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11 Michael Pollan (2003) points out that the desire (the will to eat, smoke, look at, smell etc.) aroused by plants can be understood as an evolutive disposition related to the perpetuation of these species. In this sense, it means that some plants co-evolve with other species and also act upon them. For example, when a bird or person eats a fruit and spreads its seeds, the plant is not passive in this process for it stimulates these actors' desire. Here we can also evoke Bruno Latour's notion (2001 and 2002) of "make act."

12 It is important to recognise Ingold's (2004) criticisms of the theory of evolution (both in relation to Darwinism and to a more recent evolutionary synthesis, or neo-Darwinism), a critique that focuses on the concepts of natural selection and adaptation. According to Ingold, the greatest problem with these notions is the unidirectional relation between environment and organism. Even though the criticism has grounding in certain contexts, I look to biologists who note and also problematise these aspects and highlight two-way movements. For example, Lynn Margulis (1987) shows how bacteria were fundamental to the formation of the Earth as we know it, emphasising environmental changes caused by life, by the action of organisms. Francisco Varela (1987) notes that adaptation and natural selection should not be reduced to the idea of improvement or survival of the fittest but rather the congruence (a two-way relation) between environmental and organic changes. Ernest Mayr (2001) himself discusses the imprecise use of these concepts, vehemently denying the idea of improvement, highlighting how the interplay between chance and necessity is fundamental for evolution, a process in which environment and organism are in dialogue. I use these terms – risking a certain misunderstanding – because the dialogue with biology seems to be one possible way to de-centralise humanity in anthropological analysis, which was already operating in Charles Darwin's work (see Marras, 2009).

described in D'Arcy Thompson's evolutionist studies about the relations of transformation between different species. The obliteration of time by myths can thus be related to the perpetuation of species in constant transformation (and vice-versa).

## Second Twist: Co-Temporalities

So far, we have closely followed the Wajãpi ethnography, but an analytical shift is now appropriate for us to explore other possible (and partial) connections between Wajãpi and scientific knowledge with the aim of contributing to a post-human discussion in anthropology beyond an Amazonian ethnographic case.

Amerindian perspectivism (Viveiros de Castro 2002, and Lima 1996 and 2005) emerged from Amazonian research (with special emphasis on Tupi-speaking groups such as the Wajãpi), focused on shamanic activity – a practice that makes access to other beings' lived worlds possible. As a result, the central point of perspectivism is that those who possess shamanic substances in their bodies experience a broadly shared humanity and a multiplicity of natures (of bodies and worlds). Shamans are thus inter-specific beings, people with hybrid bodies who can pass between worlds. These propositions make sense in the Wajãpi context: other ethnographies (Gallois 1988 and 1996, Campbel 1989 and Grenand 1980) have confirmed this, describing their shamanic<sup>13</sup> activities in detail. However, when we look beyond shamanism, it is not the humanity of these other beings that is at stake; or rather, it is not necessarily the human position that is being marked when trees and other plants are treated as if they are endowed with autonomy and agency – taking agency “as a capacity to create and affect particular kinds of relations” (High, 2012: 137).

Even though the aim here is not to critique perspectivism by presenting a potential dissonance between points found in the ethnographic material and the perspectivist model (as in Sulkin, 2005), it is important to state that perspectivism does not always function or appear in all contexts of life in a Wajãpi community. We are faced with “a complex and overlapping matrix of humans and non-humans that interact in different ways. In this light, we might envision Amazonian cosmology and sociality not just as struggle between different co-specifics to assert a generic ‘human’ perspective over other beings, but also a set of multiple agencies that affect specific relationships in distinct ways” (High, 2012: 137). This allows us to suggest that in Amerindian societies subjects might not be human as suggested by Viveiros de Castro (*op. cit.*).

In an effort to conduct a non-anthropocentric anthropology (Kohn 2013) and using an ethnography that is attentive to the ordinary activities that produce life (Overing 1991 and 2006), I hope I have emphasised how, in certain contexts, the interaction between some Wajãpi and other beings (and especially plants) takes place through the absolute recognition of difference between them. These are differences that are noted at moments of corporeal constitution and maturation, and which do not come close to configuring a (backgrounded) common humanity. Such differences present the need to approach the process of elaborating life through the limitations and impositions asserted by these beings; agents that are in and of the relation. It is true that by attributing humanity to all of these beings, perspectivism undoes the notion of humanity, transforming it into a zero signifier. In a different way, perspectivism also points out that humanity is not the centre since it is everywhere. However, the decision to conduct an ethnography beyond mainstream shamanic actions<sup>14</sup> does not permit a simple adherence to the notion of a shared humanity, and the decision to follow a different path can be explained by a move to de-centre humans.

13 Note that ethnographic descriptions about the Wajãpi also served as material for the production of the perspectivist synthesis.

14 I am calling “mainstream shamanic actions” those actions operated by shamans in relation to healing-aggressive systems and hunting. Elsewhere (Cabral de Oliveira 2015) I suggest that shamanism should be situated at a specific point in an agency scale, so that we can include actions by people who are not endowed with powerful shamanic substances, but who have a certain efficacy through their communication with other inhabitants in the cosmos.

Along these lines, Van Dooren (2012) traces relations between certain botanists' arguments and the adaptive changes that some plant species underwent in the domestication and cultivation process. The author shows how our agricultural history can be read in reverse, as a two-way process in which humans were also domesticated by plants. Van Dooren thus highlights that we (humans) have adapted our way of life and bodies to conditions imposed by crops. What is at stake in his argument is not the plants' possible humanity but their fully singular and autonomous agency.

I would like to point out that the emergence of co-temporalities was fundamental in this process of mutual cultivation (to maintain a more appropriate concept for this ethnographic context), that is, the intertwining of distinct life cycles through difference itself: difference between individual times, between group times, and between the life cycles of an individual in relation to a group. There is a necessary composition between times of growth, maturation and life for each of those involved in this game of conviviality: there are species, like manioc and potatoes, that possess a shorter cycle in relation to a human being's average life span, and that seduce (Pollan 2003) humans so that they are constantly cloned and replanted, thus extending their life-cycle through a lineage, through a group. There are also species with a longer cycle that can often be harvested by people from different generations - such as the peach-palm, which produces fruit for approximately 50 to 75 years, with accounts of productive palm trees that are more than one hundred years old (Mora-Urpí et. al. 1997) - which extends their life span through their relation with a group of people (family).

If plants have been given less space in debates about relations between humans and non-humans in anthropology, I suggest that this is largely due to the corporeal difference (to use an essential idiom in Amazonian ontologies) between vegetables and the human animal. These differences speak to the temporality of the life cycles and maturation of botanical species, which are marked by an apparent lack of movement and capacity to vocalize that conjures, for us, the essence of communication. In truth, these functions are not completely absent in vegetables, but are difficult to perceive due to our animal models for movement and the circulation of information. However, certain botanical studies have gone in other directions, making it possible for us to broaden our human-animal centred filters.

My argument is that more important than de-centring humanity is the need to de-centre animality<sup>15</sup>. Recent botanical studies thus show how plants exchange nutrients and information about how to defend themselves against pathogens through networks formed by the mycorrhiza and that connect trees through their roots (Johnson et. al. 2015, Babikova et. al. 2013, Simard 2009). Using terms such as "signs" and "communication" biologists describe complex molecular phenomena that travel through the mycelium web and allow for carbon sequestration, as well as produce defences against insects and fungi attacking neighbouring plants, through the exchange of organic compounds and information.<sup>16</sup> These studies show the importance of intra and inter-specific relations in the evolutionary process, which is best understood as a form of co-evolution. Meanwhile, in anthropology, it is important to note that Tsing (2012 and 2015) has stressed how fungi connect heterogeneous actors - like people, plants, soil, nutrients etc. - in a living network that make them into a "companion species" (Haraway 2003a) for other beings beyond humans.

Donna Haraway and Van Dooren thus both propose that the human is simply another organism that is formed and forms others, or rather, that the concept of co-evolution should be broadened to incorporate humanity; that we should think in terms of co-histories that lead to the emergence of naturecultures

<sup>15</sup> This discussion is being made by philosophers and botanists: Coccia, 2018 and Mancuso, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Other studies also show communication via volatile molecules that travel through the air or soil, playing a part in a species' defence system. It is also observed that when a specific specimen is attacked by insects and fungi, neighbouring plants might have a faster reaction time and sometimes react even prior to attack (Baluska and Mancuso, 2009).

(Haraway 2003a: 12). In anthropology, this might mean that we should be attentive to the connections that certain humanities make with other beings to constitute their worlds and to describe this process in a manner that considers the conceptions of those that participate in it.

In turn, since its foundation by Darwin, the biological theory of evolution (the naturalistic theory of life) has pointed precisely to relations between various living beings (“the kinship of organic forms”), as well as to life’s capacity for transformation. As Mayr (2001: 7) argues, Darwin placed a spotlight on the world’s inconstancy and illuminated the complexity of life: “the acceptance of evolution meant that the world could no longer be considered merely as the seat of activity of physical laws but had to incorporate history and, more importantly, the observed changes in the living world in the course of time.”

By broaching the forms in which plants react to the environment, some botanists speak of “intelligence” to define their capacity for noticing, reacting and communicating information. Plants are thus seen to monitor temperature, gravity, luminosity and humidity, transforming their perception of these factors into chemical and electrical instructions that generate reactions in leaves, roots, branches, etc. (Baluska and Mancuso 2009, Baluska et. al. 2007 and 2009). What these studies point to is that these reactions often go unnoticed by us because we operate at a different time scale: tendril movements, the growth of stems and branches, and the direction taken by roots are too slow and can only be noticed by us once they are complete. Meanwhile, plants move, they recognise and seek out the best supports, the soil with most nutrients, the sun’s direction and seduce dispersers that carry their seeds afar. In a different way, the Wajāpi families with whom I have lived recognise distinct temporalities that can be accessed through careful engagements with other beings (these “significant others” to quote Haraway 2003a). As we have seen, in this relationship it is necessary to communicate and respect the differences that each plant presents, and to construct multiple space-times alongside them.<sup>17</sup>

## Conclusions

This article initially sought to show how events in an origin space-time left marks on the bodies of beings that inhabit the current terrestrial platform as mnemonic ties anchored to certain groups (categories). In contrast, individuals – particularly cultivated plants – are central to the constitution of recent memories that are rooted in kinship space-time. The objective was to contribute to an important discussion about space-time in Amazonia beyond an established ritual and shamanic scope, demonstrating how plants and other beings can be subjects that promote spatialized recollections, with emphasis on the operation of sensible aspects (life cycles, maturation and perishability) in this process.

By treating plants as subjects in their relations with Wajāpi families and their production of community life between gardens and forests, it was necessary to question the perspectival maxim that humanity is the form of the subject. The ethnographic excerpts presented indicate the need to understand the subjects through actions, thus corroborating High’s (2012) proposal that agency should be defined as the capacity to affect and produce relations.

Faced with this ethnographic framework, and to fully consider the specificities of relations between the Wajāpi and plants, one option is to appeal to a post-human anthropology. By de-centring the human animal in the analysis it became possible to, firstly, conduct a descriptive experiment that is aligned with this recent theoretical proposal and, secondly, to understand that what is at stake is precisely the constitution of relations through significant differences between life cycles. As they articulate temporalities diverse to our own,

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<sup>17</sup> Kohn (2013) recently reviewed and developed the idea of a broad theory of communication. He presents a semiotic analysis that includes non-humans and treats sign processes as inherent to life. Kohn also describes cross-species communication among the Runa beyond shamanic actions. Despite these interesting contributions, and while his work has been an important inspiration to my own recent work, instead of applying his analytical proposal based on Charles Peirce’s theories, I would rather follow an immanent Wajāpi theory.

due to their apparently fixed and silent character, the agentive power of plants has been given little import. This is why it was important to call upon botanical studies that look at plants through their own spatio-temporal scales. Accordingly, as the Wajãpi and various botanists teach us, this article sought to ethnographically establish that vegetable action can and should be noticed in its alterity.

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# Traditional peoples and communities in Brazil: the work of the anthropologist, political regression and the threat to rights

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## Abstract

The article problematizes the questions of identities and territories, and the forms of resilience in contemporary Brazil, based on the correlation between power, territoriality, State and development, emphasizing situations of vulnerability of indigenous peoples, quilombos, peoples and traditional communities, as well as their fights for recognition, access to land/territory and other rights. The developmentalist perspective adopted by the Brazilian State has resulted in a series of impacts on territories and ways of life, resulting in deficits of citizenship for various historically excluded groups. This situation has worsened over the last few years with a political setting of demographic regression (revocation of legal frameworks, dissolution of social oversight bodies, dismantling of State apparatuses, cancelation of social programs, budget cuts), in line with hegemonic interests and projects. The article also problematizes the work of the anthropologist in the processes of recognizing collective and territorial rights, in dialogue with the judicial field, the federal government and social movements.

**Key words:** Traditional peoples and communities; the anthropologist's work; political regressions; threat to rights and risks to the anthropological practice.

# Os povos e comunidades tradicionais no Brasil: o trabalho do(a) antropólogo(a), retrocessos políticos e ameaça aos direitos

## Resumo

O artigo problematiza as questões das identidades e territórios e as formas de resiliências no Brasil contemporâneo, a partir da correlação entre poder, territorialidade, Estado e desenvolvimento, enfatizando situações de vulnerabilização de povos indígenas, quilombos, povos e comunidades tradicionais, bem como suas lutas por reconhecimento, acesso à terra/território e demais direitos. A perspectiva desenvolvimentista adotada pelo Estado Brasileiro tem resultado numa série de impactos sobre territórios e modos de vida, resultando em déficits de cidadania de vários grupos historicamente excluídos. Essa situação se agrava nos últimos anos, com cenário político de retrocesso democrático (revogação de marcos legais, extinção de instâncias de controle social, desmonte de aparatos do Estado, supressão de programas sociais, cortes orçamentários), em sintonia com interesses e projetos hegemônicos. O artigo também problematiza a atuação do(a) antropólogo(a) nos processos de reconhecimento de direitos coletivos e territoriais, em diálogo com campo jurídico, poder executivo e movimentos sociais.

**Palavras-chave:** Povos e comunidades tradicionais; atuação do(a) antropólogo(a); retrocessos políticos; ameaças aos direitos e riscos à prática antropológica.

# Traditional peoples and communities in Brazil: the work of the anthropologist, political regression and the threat to rights

*Aderval Costa Filho*

## **Introduction**

Brazil is a country of continental dimensions and mega-diversity, both in terms of the peoples and communities that compose it, and in relation to numerous biomes and ecosystems associated with their territories and ways of life. This represents a big challenge to order, public policies and the production of knowledge. Among the guaranteed collective rights we can highlight the right to difference and its maintenance, and the right to territory, including various constitutional devices and norms that establish as a fundamental right the maintenance of culture and the access to and maintenance of ownership/tenureship of the lands traditionally occupied by various historically excluded social groups. Nevertheless, in Brazil most of the denunciations concerning human rights violations in the rural world are directly or indirectly connected to the question of land/territory. A survey by the Comissão Pastoral da Terra (Pastoral Land Commission) found that in 2018 there was:

[a] sharp increase in all forms of violence in the rural world (and, correlatedly, in urban peripheries), especially against traditional peoples and communities, focused on their territories, rich in natural resources (desired commodities) under their control, and intentionally rendered precarious from the legal point of view. [...] Conflicts in the rural sphere (land, water, work, during droughts, mining, unions and violence against the person – murders, threats, assaults, imprisonments, etc.) increased by 4% in relation to 2017, rising from 1,431 to 1,489. Of these, 1,124 were over land. Close to a million people in total were involved in the conflicts, 36% more than in 2017, 51.6% in the North region. Land conflict were concentrated there too: 92% of the total in 2018. Other alarming indices [confirm] Amazonia as the main focal point. (Comissão Pastoral da Terra 2019: 11)

Despite these figures, there is actually no lack of legal instruments available to protect these peoples and their territories, identities and ways of life, including Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (2004), the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992), the Convention on Cultural Diversity (2007), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), Articles 215 and 216 of the Federal Constitution, Articles 231 and 232 of the 1988 Federal Constitution, Article 68 of the Transitory Constitutional Provisions Act of the 1988 Federal Constitution, and all the infra-constitutional legislation and regulation at federal, state and municipal levels, highlighting Decree 6040/2007, which institutes the National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities.

A more recent instrument, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, was approved by the UN General Assembly on November 19, 2018, having been proposed, voted on and approved in September of the same year by the UN Human Rights Council. I had the opportunity to contribute to this process over recent years, participating in a side event at the 36<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council, as well as various agendas with international bodies, seeking to address collective rights, the right to land/territory and Brazilian sociobiodiversity.

The Declaration represents the outcome of a campaign lasting almost two decades, led by Via Campesina International, involving peasants, herders, artisanal fishing communities, farmworkers and indigenous peoples organizations, seeking to safeguard the rights of peasants and other people working in rural zones, categories that encompass Brazil's 'traditional peoples and communities.'

Among the rights mentioned in the Declaration are: the right to the land title regularization of their lands and territories; the right to access the natural resources necessary for the social reproduction of the communities; the right to form organizations, unions, cooperatives or any other organizations; participation in the creation and implementation of public policies, programs and projects that may impact their lives, territories and means of survival; the right to access to justice, education, shelter and water; the right to food security and sovereignty; the right to access production tools, technical assistance, credit and insurance; the right to conservation and protection of the environment; the right to welfare (social welfare, public healthcare and social security); the right to use and protect their traditional medicine; the right to biodiversity and to fair and equitable sharing of the products arising from the exploration of natural resources traditionally used for their social production and reproduction; among others.

Consequently, the Declaration seeks to improve the living conditions of peasants and rural workers, strengthening their fights to access rights, recognizing that the ways of life of peasants, people who work in rural areas and traditional peoples and communities are fundamental to the maintenance of sociobiodiversity, the guarantee of food sovereignty, and the fight against climate change.

### **Brazilian sociobiodiversity: a short introduction**

Collective rights-holders – indigenous peoples, quilombo communities, traditional peoples and communities – and their territories and ways of life represent counter-hegemonic forms in the face of the advance of capitalism and development. Rethinking the local and the global, Arturo Escobar (2005) argues that a series of recent works have attempted to reposition 'the place,' offering elements for thinking beyond development – that is, for a conceptualization of post-development, which, in the author's view, is more favourable to the creation of new types of language, understanding and action.

Escobar emphasizes the role of ethnography in this respect, documenting the resistances to capitalism and modernity in diverse environments, and demonstrating practices and processes that represent forms of active resistance to development itself. He lists various works on local models of economy and environments maintained by peasants and indigenous communities, in part rooted in local knowledge and practices (Escobar 2005: 76).

According to the author, in Latin America special attention has been given to cultural hybridization, rendering explicit the dynamic encounter of practices originating in many different cultural and temporal matrices. Moreover, local groups, far from being passive recipients of transnational conditions, actively configure the process of constructing identities, social relations, new practices (Escobar 2005: 76) and new territorialities. In Brazil, this is what has been happening particularly in relation to traditional peoples and communities.

According to Eliane Cantarino O'Dwyer:

The expression traditional peoples designates a diversity of social situations that have as a common denominator conditions of existence considered to contrast with ‘modernity,’ situated on the margins of the representations of ‘development’ and ‘progress’ of the hegemonic economic and political powers. The expression is used in the context of the processes of building ‘modernizing’ Nation States and encompasses social and political identities constructed in relation to the current constitutional and legal framework [...], as a guarantee of the recognition and reproduction of their ways of making, creating and living. (O’Dwyer 2018: 35)

The author emphasizes the category ‘traditional peoples’ as an inclusive category, encompassing various groups that assume descriptive and analytic meanings, but also as diacritical marks used by social actors in interactive contexts to signal forms of belonging through the construction of ethnic, social and spatial boundaries, as well as in relation to the State.

Paul Little (2002) identifies as elements related to traditional peoples “the existence of regimes of common ownership, the sense of belonging to a place, the search for cultural autonomy, and the sustainable adaptive practices that the various studied social groups demonstrate in the present.” As for the ethnogenesis of the concept of *traditional peoples* and its subsequent political and social uses, according to Little the concept has emerged to encompass distinct social groups who defend their territories against the usurpation attempted by adversaries, other social groups or even the Nation State itself.

Alfredo Wagner Berno de Almeida (2006), in turn, emphasizes that ‘traditional’ is not reduced to history, nor to primordial ties that incorporate collective identities, but involves identities that are redefined situationally in a process of continuous mobilization. “The political-organizational criterion stands out, combined with a ‘politics of identities,’ used by objectified social agents in movement to confront their adversaries and the apparatuses of the State” (Almeida 2006: 25-26).

Costa Filho (2015) explains that traditional peoples and communities in Brazil have in practice attributed themselves identities on the basis of four criteria, sometimes mobilizing more than one depending on their socio-spatial and historical situation:

- a. ethnic-racial, such as indigenous peoples, quilombo communities, Roma peoples, *terreiro* [candomblé] peoples, and others;
- b. through the connection to a specific biome or ecosystem, like the *geraizeiros* or peoples of the cerrado [Brazilian savanna], the *catigueiros* or peoples of the caatinga [Brazilian steppe savanna], the *pantaneiros* (peoples of the pantanal of the states of Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul);
- c. by a predominant work activity that figures as a mark of identity, such as the rubber tappers, Brazil nut harvesters [...] fisherfolk [...], among others;
- d. by the type of occupation and use of the territory, combined with historical-conjunctural circumstances, such as the *retireiros* of the Araguaia (free range cattle ranchers in common use areas along the shores of the Araguaia river), [...] the *comunidades de fundos* [communities that live from gathering wild caatinga fruits and breeding goats and sheep on common use areas] and *fechos de pasto* [who live from gathering cerrado fruits and breeding free range cattle, while also practicing common use of the territory], the *ilhéus* (residents of coastal and river islands, who mix fishing with crop cultivation and gathering) (Costa Filho 2015: 82-83; my additions).

Whatever the specific case, the expression ‘traditional peoples and communities’ refers to modes of appropriating, organizing and using space that produce territories of traditional occupation, constituted by the political exercise of groups subalternized by the State, in contrast to conceptions of land as a commodity, a natural element available to economic exploitation.

In Brazil, these social forms are identified to a large extent with the peasantry, associated with ethnic attributes or overdeterminations, territorial connections, knowhow and practices linked to the use of biodiversity, their own forms of organization and mobilization, among other factors.

These can indeed be considered contemporary peasant forms, countering the argument or the possibility of the death of the peasantry as a result of modernization and globalization (Mendras 1991), or alternatively as forms of resistance and resilience displayed by these ways of life and their territorial bases.

Mauro Almeida (2007: 14) describes the death of the peasantry more as the death of “a system of thought; the end of a code. The pieces that this code organized in the past, though, are still in circulation,” through the “reactivation of indigenous, native, grassroots, ethnic politics,” the discourses and practices of

[...] rural democratization, environmental self-government, counter-hegemonic gender politics whose actors are affected by dams, indigenous peoples undergoing movements of ethnic revivalism, *caboclos* who rediscover themselves as Indians, rubber tappers who transfigure into peoples of the forest, *caiçaras* who turn into peoples of the seas, marginal peoples who become quilombolas [...] we see that cultural, economic and ecological traits that were associated with it [the classical theory of the peasantry], though disjointed and separated from the grand theoretical narrative of which they formed part, remain on the agenda. (Almeida 2007: 14)

I tend to think of these peasant forms as prevalent in the rural world, especially when we seek to understand the historical or processual dimension of these situations and avoid essentializing concepts and/or freezing realities, territories and social groups. Instead, I seek to demonstrate their patterns of resistance and resilience – just how plural, multiform and contextual these groups or societies are, especially through the processes of fighting for and maintaining their territories and identities.

### **The production of anthropological reports and the implementation of rights: the Gurutuba case**

Considering the right to land/territory to be a fundamental right of these groups, it should be emphasized that, in terms of legal-formal structures, Brazil has Indigenous Lands, Quilombola Territories, Extractivist Reserves (RESEX), Sustainable Development Reserves (RDS), Agro-Extractivist Projects (PAEs), Real Right to Use Concessions (CDRUs),<sup>1</sup> the conventional agrarian reform settlements and the land title regularizations of territories by state agencies, among other instruments. It is essential to recognize, however, that these administrative forms are not always sufficient to meet demands or to accommodate traditional modes of use and occupation.

There is also an increasing tardiness in the land regularization processes and a rapid advance of hegemonic interests: the pace of the regularization processes of territories has failed to match the advance of macroeconomic interests, undermining territorial demands and community bonds, causing disagreements and rifts within groups, compromising natural resources, territorial bases and ways of life, and prompting a whole series of rights violations.

This is the context in which anthropologists work in the processes of land regularization of territories, producing technical documents that substantiate rights, when they are not working directly alongside communities and community members in the fight to obtain recognition and the realization of their rights. On the other hand, the actions of the responsible agencies (the Colonization and Agrarian Reform Institute, INCRA, in the case of quilombo communities, and the National Indian Foundation, FUNAI, in the case of indigenous peoples) have been marked by delays and by political-administrative decisions that do not always consider territorial demands – or the territories identified and delimited by anthropologists and community leaders – “which are sometimes shrunk under the pretext of respecting the principles of reasonability, rationality and feasibility, among others, which, in practice, have restricted the amplitude of their rights [...] and favoured their adversaries” (Costa Filho 2016b: 278).

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<sup>1</sup> The Real Right to Use Concession, which concerns the allocation of federal lands, will be discussed further below.

In the case of the production of technical reports for territorial identification and delimitation, it is essential to consider Eliane Cantarino O’Dwyer’s assertion:

[...] following my own ethnographic experience in the field of applying constitutional rights, rather than ignoring the conditions that enable the realization of this kind of anthropological knowledge, it is necessary to describe the panoptic processes and disciplinary techniques to which state power and relations of domination subject those groups that demand their rights and their economic, social and political autonomy (O’Dwyer 2011: 116).

While the disciplinary action of the State affects “groups that demand territorial rights, notably the quilombo communities [and indigenous peoples], the anthropologist and anthropological practice are also exposed to the risk of compliance or disciplining” (Costa Filho 2016a: 278), especially when conducting ethnographic research on the production of ethnicity, processes of territorialization (Oliveira Filho 1998; 1999) and the consubstantiation of community demands within territorial limits.

In the field we can also observe an enormous lack of awareness about the land regularization process – among both the communities and their adversaries – combined with fragilities caused by long periods of exclusion and discrimination, resulting in “low group self-esteem.” Also frequent are

[...] the apprehensions of community members concerning the tacit declaration of their interests in recuperating territorial portions, today in the hand of farmers and economic groups. Many were until recently, or still are, exploited or ‘favoured’ by these invaders, who appropriated their territories and resources, and the relations of ‘good neighbourliness’ have assured the economic viability of families and the group itself. In turn, these land regularization processes, highly complex and protracted, once begun result in the gradual or immediate suspension of ‘favours’ and the worsening of conflicts at local/regional level (Costa Filho 2012: 336).

To give an idea of the difficulties of the land regularization process of a quilombola territory, for example, especially the lengthy delays that these processes entail, I briefly present the saga of the quilombola community of Gurutuba and their attempt to guarantee their territorial rights. “The Gurutubana community has lived in the Gurutuba river valley, in the north of Minas Gerais, since the eighteenth century, victimized by a brutal process of expropriation, unleashed in the twentieth century, more precisely in the 1950s, and intensified with the arrival of the Northeast Development Office (SUDENE) from the 1970s” (Costa Filho 2008: 11). Their large population is dispersed among 31 localities or local groups situated at the confluence of the northern Minas Gerais municipalities of Pai Pedro, Porteirinha, Jaíba, Janaúba, Gameleira, Monte Azul and Catuti. In all, there are approximately 6,000 people, 1,200 families, many cohabiting and occupying tiny fractions of the land of their ancestors, amid large cattle ranches.

The “Report on the Identification and Territorial Delimitation of the Gurutuba Quilombo – North of Minas Gerais” was elaborated on the basis of Directive n. 36, of 27/12/2002 of the Ministry of Culture – Palmares Cultural Foundation<sup>2</sup> and was registered at INCRA in 2003. Following the foundation of the Gurutuba Quilombola Association (2003) and the articulation of various partnerships, a wide-ranging mobilization process was initiated with various interventions conducted with the aim of accessing rights and improving the community’s living conditions.

In 2006 work was continued on the administrative land regularization process with various stages already concluded: elaboration of an anthropological report, registration of families, land surveys, a survey of the ownership sequence of the land deeds relating to the delimited territory, publication of the RTID<sup>3</sup> – 20/12/2013

2 Today these processes are based on Decree 4887, which regulates the procedure for identification, recognition, delimitation, demarcation and official registration of lands occupied by descendants of quilombo communities as defined in Article 68 of the Transitory Constitutional Provisions Act of the 1988 Federal Constitution.

3 *Relatório Técnico de Identificação e Delimitação* (Technical Report of Identification and Delimitation).

(process 54170.000533/2005-81), notification of the non-quilombola owners and tenants with a deadline set for contestations, the response to the contestations, and preparation of the Declaratory Directive by National INCRA. The process is currently in the final regulatory phase at federal level. According to Costa Filho (2016b), there are various decision-making forums or barriers that delay the process for issuing the quilombo land titles:

One of the instruments or barriers that needs to be broken are the decision-making forums within the Colonization and Agrarian Reform Institute (INCRA), namely: the Regional Decision Committee (CDR) and the Board of Directors (CD: decision-making forum of National INCRA). [...] This forum decides on questions such as whether to publish the Technical Report of Identification and Delimitation (RTID), as well as assessing the contestations received after publication of the RTID and notification of the owners; it also decides on the technical and political merit of the territorial claim, [...] for the purposes of ratification and publication [of the INCRA Administrative Directive], that is, definitive recognition as the territory necessary for the group's social, economic and cultural reproduction (Costa Filho 2016b: 279, my addition).

It should be emphasized that the Quilombo do Gurutuba RTID remained under discussion for various years in INCRA's Regional Decision Committee (CDR) due to a lack of consensus on approval for publication, especially on the part of the Chief Prosecutor of INCRA/MG. More than 17 years after submission of the Anthropological Report to INCRA, the community is still fighting for the land registration of its territory, which, with the current scenario of national political regression (depletion of public policies and weakening of rights already achieved), has demanded constant social mobilization and the deployment of various defence strategies amid the rising violence in the region.

It is also important to observe that the tutelary status, superseded by legal frameworks introduced after the 1988 Constitution with respect to the relationship between the State and indigenous peoples, is still deeply rooted in government structures and forms of governance. In this case, tutelage is not limited to indigenous peoples but is extended to quilombola communities and to all historically excluded groups. Control over social life, as demanded by the hegemonic model, have been perpetrated and amplified, meaning that protective measures present biases that meet other interests, hegemonic in this case.

Souza Lima (2015), analysing tutelage and participation, simultaneously foregrounding the attention paid to forms of action and the sociohistorical dimension of the processes of State formation, argues that tutelage is a "modality of exercising power" (Souza Lima 2015: 430). Thus, the government administrative mesh extends over populations and territories, articulating and centralizing networks of powers, resources and interests. These dynamics are examined by the author through the idea of participation, "taking as a nodal point the reconfiguration of the political setting since the 1988 Constitution" (Souza Lima 2015: 426).

In this context, the very meaning of participation has altered "from an eminently political practice marked by the pursuit of autonomy in the dialogue with government agencies, and [...] has been converted into a more technical, bureaucratic and sometimes figurative presence" (Souza Lima 2015: 444).

According to Zhouri and Valêncio:

[...] in the last 20 years, democratization processes in the country have been depleted and subsumed by government techniques that, despite utilizing terms that indicate participation, end up reaffirming political projects that diverge from the emancipatory perspective of civil society (Zhouri and Valêncio 2014: 9).

The authors discuss the negotiation/mediation/resolution procedures for environmental conflicts and the construction of consensuses in the context of large-scale construction and development projects, which seem to adhere to democratic forms of management but, in fact, shift the focus of action from the sphere of rights to the sphere of interests, diluting constitutionally guaranteed rights.

Members of civil society in these circumstances or in the so-called social oversight forums end up constituting, through prescient elite strategies, one more component in the performance of democratic life in a country whose history is marked by authoritarianism in the exercise of State power, by the permanent production of social inequalities and by violence.

### **Working as a judicial expert in the conflict between the PNSC and Traditional Communities: the Canastra case**

It should also be observed that many national and state parks were created as a mitigatory/compensatory measure for the environmental damage caused by large-scale development projects and by the steel industry linked to iron smelting. Moreover, many of these parks overlap the territories of indigenous peoples, quilombo communities and traditional communities. The liability in terms of the land regularization of these full protection conservation units is greater than the Legal Reserve<sup>4</sup> liability of the properties in the respective states/biome. In this context, we have, on one hand, rural properties obliged to recuperate or compensate for deforested areas that correspond to the Legal Reserve of their properties; and, on the other hand, lands expropriated for the creation of Conservation Units without due payment of compensation to the owners, nor any prevision of public money to pay for the same.

The solution has been encountered through an administrative measure based on a provision of the Brazilian Forest Code: the Legal Reserve Compensation, involving the purchase and donation to the federal government of an area located in a Conservation Unit and awaiting land regularization. It is worth emphasizing that the legal reserve compensation can be effected anywhere in the national territory so long as it belongs to the same biome. This has resulted in the incursion of preservationist interests over traditionally occupied lands, since it lies in the interest of large rural landowners to relieve the State of outlays in the land expropriation processes for preservation purposes, obtaining, in exchange, permission to exploit all the lands on their properties in the production of commodities, for example. This has severely affected traditional territories and ways of life.

Legal reserve compensations, with the respective legalization of new areas, have frequently occurred in the regularization of many parks, notably the Serra da Canastra National Park. The park was created in 1972 with 200,000 hectares and regularized through a Management Plan in the 1980s, in the middle of the military dictatorship, with an area of 71,525 hectares. From 2005 the recently created Chico Mendes Institute for the Conservation of Biodiversity (ICMbio) restored the original proposal of 200,000 hectares, covering parts of six municipalities in the state of Minas Gerais: São Roque de Minas, Sacramento, Delfinópolis, São João Batista do Glória, Capitólio and Vargem Bonita.

Various interests and threats hover over the region, including the expropriation for public ends (environmental preservation) of another 130,000 hectares, posing a risk to more than 1,500 families of producers and residents of the rural area, and 43 traditional communities. Some 550 families are traditional occupants of the region. In terms of prevailing interests, we can note diamond mining, in direct conflict with environmental preservation, as well as the interests of the communities in maintaining their territory and way of life.

I was appointed to act as an expert witness for the evaluation of the Public Civil Action under way in the Federal Courts, filed by the Federal Public Defender's Office in defence of the right of the traditional communities and community members of Serra da Canastra to remain in the territory. During this process,

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<sup>4</sup> The Legal Reserve represents a percentage of the property that must be maintained with native vegetation, its use restricted. The size of the area that should be allocated to the Legal Reserve varies according to the geographic localization of the rural property and the surrounding biome: if the property is located in Legal Amazonia (states of Acre, Pará, Amazonas, Roraima, Rondônia, Amapá and Mato Grosso and the regions situated to the north of parallel 13° S of the states of Tocantins and Goiás, and to the west of meridian 44° W in the state of Maranhão), the legal reserve must be 80% in forest areas, 35% if the property is situated in a cerrado area [Brazilian savanna] and 20% in areas of open fields; if the property is located in other regions of the country, the legal reserve is 20% of the property.

I was also subject to a claim of grounds for disqualification on the part of the federal prosecutor (Federal Attorney General's Office in the state of Minas Gerais), who questioned my condition of 'exclusive dedication' at the Federal University of Minas Gerais and prior knowledge of the subject of the Public Civil Action (correlated publications and professional activities), which, according to the accuser, amounted to lack of impartiality in relation to the subject of the lawsuit.

I consider presumable and entirely reasonable that it was precisely my professional and academic trajectory as a whole, including the specific bibliographic production, that had led the Judge responsible for the lawsuit to nominate me as a court expert to coordinate the investigative studies on the land conflicts in which the traditional communities were involved and on the implantation of the Serra da Canastra National Park.

In this context, although anthropologists are obliged to present ethnographic 'proofs' and 'evidence,' one of the potential risks for the expert is to come under suspicion, as in my own case. As Almeida (2008: 46) stresses, while the doctor, for example, cannot be an expert witness in cases involving his or her own patient, the anthropologist can and indeed should be a witness when the legal action lies within his or her theoretical-conceptual or ethnographic domain. According to the Assistant Attorney General of the Republic at the time and coordinator of the 6<sup>th</sup> Chamber of Coordination and Review of the Public Prosecutor's Office, Dr. Deborah Duprat, it is

[...] important to emphasize, in relation to the anthropological study, that this does not and could not have a neutral position in relation to its research, in the sense of objectifying and defining a particular domain through norms or patterns external to the group, since this would entail depriving it of its statutory force. Thus the anthropological study aimed at the identification of a traditional territory [or even of the traditionality of the group] presumes comprehension and translation of the forms in which the group sees itself over the course of its existential trajectory, how it sees and knows the world, how it organizes itself in it (Duprat 2016).

The jurist added:

In this sense, the decisions that reject the validity of anthropological expertise because of suspicions concerning the researcher's close relations with the group are somewhat curious. However, any expert opinion requires the professional's technical and scientific knowledge (Article 424, I, CPC). Furthermore, in the case of anthropology, only someone with knowledge of the group's everyday existence is qualified to produce this proof. On the other hand, the definition of a traditional territory [or of a traditionality] cannot ignore anthropological research, unless we wish to re-establish the ethnocentric bias that guided the previous law in which the judge attributed the agents with his or her own vision (Duprat 2016).

The Brasilia Protocol (ABA 2015) contains explicit guidelines for the training and experience of the anthropologist expert witness to participate in administrative and judicial processes, once again making clear the

[...] need to take into account the specific training and experience of the anthropologist in relation to the communities involved and their territories, and/or proven experience in the production of technical and expert reports [...]. Moreover, the effective participation of the communities is fundamental, not only because they figure as rights-holders in the context of the investigative studies, but also because they are participants in the knowledge building process, in accordance with already established regulations. [...] The researcher also needs to be assured the autonomy necessary for interaction with the group during all phases of the research and the writing of the expert/technical report (ABA 2015: 22).

Configuring as an assistant to the courts, in the capacity of an expert witness, as set out in Articles 148 and 149 of the Code of Civil Procedures (CPC/15), he or she also meets the requirements of Article 10 presented in the code of ethics for expert witnesses at federal level:

Article 10. The nomination as a Court Expert or as a Technical Assistant should always be considered, by themselves, as a distinction and a recognition of their special technical or scientific knowledge, capacity and honourability, and they will decline from these nominations in the cases set out in the Code of Civil Procedures.

It is clear, therefore, that not only the CPC and the Code of Professional and Disciplinary Ethics of the National Council of Experts of the Federal Republic of Brazil, but also the Code of Ethics of the Brazilian Anthropology Association expect the expert to possess knowledge of the issue (naturally, obtained through studies conducted and accumulated previously) or of the social group in question, and that the proofs or evidence have been compiled through scientific research.

As for the Institutions of Higher Education, specifically the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) where I work as a member of the academic staff, there is a constitutional principle of indissociability between teaching, research and extension that governs Public Universities (Article 207 of the 1988 Federal Constitution). In relation to the participation of academic staff employed full-time in occasional collaborative work on topics relating to their speciality, under the terms of Article 21, caput, of Law 12.772/2012, the provision of these services has been regulated by UFMG since 1995; it is, therefore, a matter regulated both by Federal Law and by Resolution of the university itself.

It should be emphasized, therefore, that in the specific case of Serra da Canastra, the provision of judicial services did not lead to any remuneration of the expert witness or his team. With free legal assistance made available via the website of the Federal Justice,<sup>5</sup> the system only permitted reimbursement of expenses on travel, accommodation and food in the field.

The claim of a conflict of interests mentioned above delayed the technical studies considerably, reflecting the frequency with which claims and arguments compromise the realization of such investigations, sometimes even amounting to persecution of anthropological researchers and professionals.

### **Government allies, judicial power and conciliation: the case of the PNPCT**

In terms of professional activity and, above all, the defence of the rights of indigenous peoples, quilombo communities and traditional peoples and communities in the government sphere, it is common to encounter technicians and managers engaged with their interests, but this does not occur in all government sectors. The same occurs in the legislature and less frequently in the judiciary. Furthermore, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Public Defender's Offices and Public Lawyers have supported the struggle of traditional peoples and communities for their territorial, social, cultural and political rights. This support has grown in Brazil.

Public lawyers have worked tirelessly in defence of leaders, communities and community members, especially when their rights are undermined or they become criminalized for their work in defence of the territories and communities to which they belong. It is here too that the work of anthropologists enters in land regularization processes, producing technical reports that substantiate the right to the territory in question, when they are not assisting organizations and communities in the fight for rights, or indeed working in the government structure itself as public policy technicians or managers.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://portal.trf1.jus.br/portaltf1/servicos/ajg-assistencia-judiciaria-gratuita>

Many different campaign strategies have also been used by communities, including training workshops in rights, associativism, cooperativism, the construction of social cartographies or participatory social mappings, self-delimitation and territorial reoccupation processes, and so on. It is important to remember that usually there is no government support for community organisation and empowerment.

In the judiciary, we sometimes encounter allies, but conciliation strategies have tended to predominate. Inspired by the new Code of Civil Procedures, these have been prejudicial to the basic rights of traditional peoples and communities: after all, a conciliation meeting sets out from the premise that the parties will give up something.

The new Code of Civil Procedures (CPC), which came into force on March 18, 2016, emphasizes the need for courts and other executive bodies to create chambers for mediation and conciliation with powers related to consensus-based conflict resolution. The problem is that these forums and bodies have applied the provision to any issue or legal dispute, including 'basic rights,' which should be outside the bounds of conciliation.

Among the rights recognized to indigenous peoples, quilombola communities and traditional communities are their civil and political rights, denominated first-order rights, which include the rights to life, equality, liberty, security and property. These are set out in Article 5 of the CF/88 and envisage full protection for the freedom of individuals from violations by governments, social organisations and private organisations, ensuring the capacity of subjects to participate in the civil and political life of society and the State without repression or discrimination based on their specificities and ways of life.

Also included are the right to safeguard human dignity in all its dimensions, taken to include the originary rights of indigenous peoples to their lands, the right to lands traditionally occupied by quilombo communities and by traditional peoples and communities; as well as the right to maintain difference and preserve their identities; respect for their way of interacting with the world, their social organisation and cultural identity; among other derived rights.

As I mentioned earlier, anthropologists also work as technicians and managers in diverse government sectors. In December 2004, I was invited to coordinate the recently created National Commission for Sustainable Development and Fighting Hunger, run by the Ministry of the Environment, later reformulated as a joint commission (July 2006).

The objective of this commission was to establish a National Policy for the Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities (PNPCT). The policy was constructed with a high degree of civil society participation and was issued on February 7, 2007 (Decree 6.040). Today Social Oversight Forums have also been created in various federal states, most of them joint entities, and diverse laws and decrees have been issued protecting the territorial, social, cultural and political rights of traditional peoples and communities – for example Law 21.147 of January 14, 2014, to which I contributed, today already in force and whose first effects are being felt in terms of formal recognition of the identities and land regularization of vacant state lands to the benefit of local communities.

In August 2018, the National Confederation of Agriculture and the Parliamentary Agriculture Front of the National Congress, which represent the interests of agrobusiness and the big rural landowners, submitted an official letter to President Temer requesting revocation of Decree 6.040/2007. In this letter, they questioned the right to self-attribution of traditional peoples and communities, as well as the concept of traditional territory, which, they claimed, jeopardized national order and security, as well as violating the constitutional guarantee to protect private property, claiming that rural owners had lost their lands, production and family livelihood. The official letter also mentioned the demarcation of areas of land along the shores of the São Francisco River, in Minas Gerais, by the Federal Assets Office/Ministry of Budget Planning and Management (MPOG).

The concepts of self-attribution and traditional territory that the big rural landowners were questioning are consecrated by international law, not just by the International Labour Organisation (ILO Convention 169), but also by the system of Human Rights Protection of the United Nations, and by anthropology itself since the end of the 1960s. This comprises an international consensus of which Brazil is part, as well as diverse legal provisions already cited, which assure the rights of these peoples and communities.

It is also worth emphasizing that the already cited Direct Action on Unconstitutionality (ADI) of Decree 4.887/2003 had already been voted on. Practically the same arguments were presented, then: the ADI was contrary to the principle of self-attribution and contrary to land regularization, among other policies assisting quilombo communities. In other words, jurisprudence already existed on the issue.

The previously mentioned Decree 6040 of February 7, 2007 is structured in four government lines of action or programs: access to the territories and natural resources; infrastructural initiatives adapted to the realities of these peoples and communities; initiatives for sociopolitical inclusion; and initiatives for production and sustainability. Guaranteed, therefore, are the territories and the autonomy of socioproductive processes, as well as the forms of social and political organisation of these peoples and communities. Thousands of families and hundreds of communities potentially benefitting from this National Policy would be cast adrift by revocation of Decree 6.040.

Federal lands along the shores of national rivers (those that cross two or more federal states) are defined by the average flooded area (median ordinary flood line: *linha média das enchentes ordinárias* or LMEO) over the last ten years. In other words, they do not meet all the needs of 'rivershore' communities but are indispensable to the social reproduction of these groups, according to their uses, customs and traditions.

These small strips of land that form part of territories can be covered by Real Right to Use Concessions (*Concessão de Direito Real de Uso*: CDRU), with TAUS (Term of Authorization for Sustainable Use) able to be emitted until the CDRU is issued. The regularization of federal lands is specified in Article 7 of Law Decree n. 271 of 28/02/1967; and Law n. 9.636 of 15/05/1998 regulates the regularization, administration, leasing and sale of properties belonging to the federal union. The lands in question will always be federally owned for the usufruct of the benefitted communities.

It is important to understand that after the SPU declares the LMEO, all the land titles existing there become immediately null and void, leading to the allocation of these lands to local communities who have traditionally occupied them, or to payment for the use of tracts of land by those making use of them. The SPU/MPOG also conceives the declaration and administration of these lands as a source of revenue for the State. In this case, while these areas are found in the possession of rural landowners, the latter are using these strips of land illegitimately, since they would not be or are not paying the public coffers for use of this land with losses for the Brazilian people.

The SPU is responsible for supervising and taking the necessary measures in relation to the destination and public interest of the lands and property of the federal union. To this end, it can issue embargos, fines and other legal penalties, as well as request support from the police forces, in accordance with Article 11 of Law n. 9.636 of 15/05/1998. It is also worth stressing that the SPU/MG to date has undertaken a number of studies and issued a TAUS for the quilombola community of Caraíbas – Pedra de Maria da Cruz/MG, with a considerable liability existing in terms of regularization of federal lands in favour of traditional peoples and communities.

While at the level of Congress and the General Secretary of the Presidency of the Republic things are resolved by official notice, at local level farmers, in collusion with the Military Police, expelled community members, flattened and burned down houses, and criminalized leaders and pastoral agents, as in the case of the land conflict affecting the Canabrava Artisanal Fishing Community in Buritizeiro/MG, accentuating the violence in the rural area.

In almost all cases, eviction has been implemented by force. A process similar to the compulsory resettlement of Algerian peasant families and communities described by Bourdieu and Sayad (2004). The strategy or tactic is still the same: “a scorched-earth tactic: burnings of forests, annihilation of reserves and livestock – every means was used to force the peasants to abandon their land and their homes” (Bourdieu and Sayad 2004: 446-447).

According to Baviskar (2010), the violence of the State – we could also say the violence authorized by the State – is made routine by the constitution of social categories, including those who can legitimately use violence and those against whom violence can legitimately be used. The State also comes to define the context in which violence is justified. The definition of the conflict as a “law and order problem” becomes the next step in its suppression.

The outcome of the prevalence of hegemonic interests, the risks have grown to the legal frameworks themselves, along with sharp rises in violence in the rural world, with the criminalization of leaders and movements, murders, violent evictions, the disproportional use of police force against communities, as well as the frequent repression experienced within government departments, in the social oversight forums, in meeting rooms and in decision-making spaces, perpetuating forms of domination and exclusion. The uniting of politics and violence has been constitutive of this State that we expected to be transitory. As Bourdieu would say: “Every established order tends to produce the naturalization of its own arbitrariness” (Bourdieu 1977: 164).

This is the situation in which many of the indigenous peoples and quilombola communities and the traditional peoples and communities find themselves living in Brazil. Moreover, the current scenario is far from favourable: the land regularization of indigenous and quilombola territories and those of traditional communities is subordinate to the interests of large rural producers. It is worth emphasizing too that environmental licenses for development projects that sometimes impact the territories and the lives of quilombola communities and other traditional peoples and communities are also controlled by the big landowners and their representatives.

Beyond these governmental and situational shortcomings, various parliamentary actions have worked to undermine the processes of recognition and implementation of rights, jeopardizing legal frameworks arduously conquered by historically excluded groups and by civil society.

### **Political regressions and the erosion of rights: ADI 3239, PEC 215, CPI INCRA/FUNAI**

The situation of traditional peoples and communities, especially in relation to processes of identity self-affirmation and institutionalized access to territories, have worsened over the last five years with the emergence of a political scenario of democratic regressions in syntony with hegemonic interests and projects. This has been especially pronounced under the last two governments of Michel Temer and Jair Bolsonaro, including the revocation of legal frameworks, closure of social oversight forums, dismantling of State apparatuses, suppression of social programs, and budget cuts.

Some specific threats are worth highlighting: the Direct Action on Unconstitutionality put into effect by the Democratas Party in relation to Decree 4887/2003; PEC 215, which transfers to Congress decisions concerning the demarcation and regularization of indigenous lands and the territories of quilombola communities and traditional peoples and communities; the CPI introduced in the Chamber of Deputies against the work of FUNAI, INCRA and anthropologists in land regularization processes, which has been shelved but may return; among other risks.

The Direct Action on Unconstitutionality (ADI) n. 3.239/2004 questioned the rights to self-identification of communities of quilombos and the ownership of lands traditionally occupied by them, as well ordering the paralysation of the land regulation processes in the territories. The vote in favour of the ADI and the consequent legal uncertainty lasted for years with the argument based on the temporal landmark – that is, referencing land regularization to effective occupation at the time of promulgation of the 1988 Federal Constitution.

The temporal landmark represented and still represents a strong threat to quilombola rights, as well as the rights of indigenous peoples and other traditional peoples and communities, given that it ignores the historical processes of expropriation of lands suffered by these groups, the processes of compulsory migration caused by the advance of economic fronts, construction works and development projects over their territories, and the unequal correlation of forces existing in the land conflicts in question. Very often the adversaries of the communities are agents of the State itself or backed by it, as in the case of infrastructural works and projects licensed by the State. However, despite the votes based on the temporal landmark and the unfavourable decision of 2012, on February 9, 2018, after large-scale mobilization of civil society and the professionals involved, as well as the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office, the quilombola cause emerged victorious. The STF declared the constitutionality of Decree n. 4.887/2003.

The other threat to the territorial rights of quilombola and indigenous communities mentioned above was the creation of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (CPI)<sup>6</sup> into the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) and INCRA. The CPI was set up in 2015 and had the aim of investigating the work of FUNAI and INCRA in relation to, respectively, the work of these institutions in the demarcation of indigenous and quilombola lands. It is worth emphasizing what Santos (2016) claims concerning the CPI in question:

[...] that the objective of the parliamentarians that requested it, as the document establishing the CPI demonstrates, is to disqualify the technical work of anthropologists, whether in relation to the reports that make up the technical and scientific documents that provide the basis to the indigenous and quilombola land regularization processes, as well as the environment impact studies and reports... (Santos 2016: 111).

It is also worth stressing that the CPI is closed, but in the current context may be reopened. As I have stated elsewhere, “the CPI meets the interests of the rural caucus and hegemonic Brazilian sectors and attempts to hinder even further the processes of land regularization of indigenous and quilombola territories” (Costa Filho 2016a: 136).

As well as the CPI, another government action that has been undermining the process of regularization of quilombola lands is the deterioration of INCRA. According to information from the Instituto Socioambiental (ISA) in 2019:

Between 2012 and 2018, the effective expenses on processes and expropriations [of INCRA] plummeted from R\$ 51.6 million to R\$ 2.7 million, a fall of 94% [...]. The situation tends to worsen due to the ceiling on public expenses and the orientation of fiscal austerity of the new government (ISA 2019).

Across Brazil there is a shortage of civil servants and, since 2013, INCRA has seen substantial cuts in its budget. The Michel Temer government, in 2017, established a significant reduction in the funding for agrarian reform in the country. As a consequence, the INCRA program for the regularization of quilombola territories fell by 48%. This trend has worsened under the current government.

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<sup>6</sup> CPIs are normally set up by parliamentarians with the aim of investigating, hearing testimonies and obtaining information directly from those involved, responding to popular grievances.

## Final considerations

In this context of growing violence there is simply no question of abandoning the communities with which we work and about whom we write. When we produce reports or provide technical support, we sometimes feel the retaliation of adversaries who, as Alcida Rita Ramos would say (1990: 15), feel that their interests are attacked by our testimony-work. But we are in the field for relatively short periods of time, while the communities and community members sleep there everyday, unsure about tomorrow.

In this era of regression in which we live, whose risks are imminent, especially for traditional communities and peoples, but also for those of us who work on the regularization of indigenous and quilombola territories and those of traditional peoples and communities, or with the socioenvironmental component of licensing processes, we are called to respond to two primary movements: the first is to continue contributing to the consolidation of the democratic rule of law established by the 1988 Constitutional Charter, especially the rights of historically excluded groups; the second is to resist with care and theoretical-conceptual, ethnographic and political expertise, just as the groups with whom we work have always fought, in order to contribute effectively and exercise our role as anthropologists.

Even so, the sensation that lurks today is one of displacement, without having travelled anywhere, without leaving the place where we are. Here displacement is not diasporic in the sense used by Stuart Hall (2003), the feeling that the 'land' is no longer the same; it is no longer a question of breaking natural and spontaneous connections that the groups with which we work once possessed, connections interrupted through their diasporic experiences. Displacement now is felt in unprecedented form by ourselves, and is ethical and political in kind, a strange sensation that we are displaced without leaving the present place, a sensation that "we are no longer at home," which imposes on us the urgent need to (re)exist.

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# Anthropological practices, inter-group conflicts and shared colonial experiences in a regional context of the Lower Amazon

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## Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present new reflections on ethnographic research conducted in the Lower Amazon, in social situations investigated under fieldwork conditions over two and a half decades. During this period, nation-building developmental projects promoted by capitalist enterprises and the modernising state, regarded as the two most important powers that organise space today, have been implemented. In this context of hegemonic developmental policies, narratives related to territorial and cultural rights are produced, which equally count on the contribution of anthropologists through academic research and the elaboration of legal and administrative reports in Brazil as new narrative genres.

**Key words:** Anthropological practices, Quilombolas, Munduruku of the Santarém Plateau, Territorial rights, Power relations.

# Práticas antropológicas, conflitos intergrupos e experiência colonial compartilhada em um contexto regional do Baixo Amazonas

## Resumo

O objetivo deste artigo é apresentar novas reflexões sobre pesquisas etnográficas realizadas no Baixo Amazonas, em situações sociais investigadas em condições de trabalho de campo ao longo de duas décadas e meia, nas quais são implementados projetos desenvolvimentistas de construção da nação promovidos por empreendimentos capitalistas e o estado modernizante, considerados como os dois mais importantes poderes que organizam o espaço hoje. É nesse contexto de políticas desenvolvimentistas hegemônicas que são produzidas narrativas relacionadas aos direitos territoriais e culturais, que contam igualmente com a contribuição dos antropólogos mediante pesquisas acadêmicas e na elaboração de relatórios e laudos antropológicos como novos gêneros narrativos.

**Palavras-chave:** Práticas Antropológicas, Quilombolas, Munduruku do Planalto, Direitos Territoriais, Relações de Poder.

# Anthropological practices, inter-group conflicts and shared colonial experiences in a regional context of the Lower Amazon

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## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present new reflections on ongoing ethnographic research in the Lower Amazon, through social situations investigated under fieldwork conditions over two and a half decades<sup>1</sup>. During this period, nation-building developmental projects have been implemented, promoted by capitalist enterprises and the modernising state, regarded as the two most important powers that organise space today (Asad 1993). This modernising project of constructing the Brazilian nation-state involves not only the governing class who try to implement it, but also those who struggle with its negative effects in established legal political spaces. Thus, together with the modernising project, new ways of making history are configured, particularly after the Federal Constitution of 1988, through the recognition of lands traditionally occupied by indigenous peoples, quilombolas and other categories of traditional peoples.

It is in this context of hegemonic developmentalist policies that narratives related to territorial and cultural rights are produced, which equally count on the contribution of anthropologists through academic research and the production of “new narrative genres (such as anthropological expert reports, identification reports, environmental impact studies)” (Oliveira 2013: 48).

Thus, social identities like quilombolas, indigenous peoples and other categories of traditional peoples – riparian, fishermen, family farmers – are triggered as forms of resistance to the effects of this type of “conservative modernisation”<sup>2</sup> that in practice, denies “original” rights and possession over areas of traditional occupation, which are, however, ensured by the Federal Constitution of 1988. Within the legal framework of civil rights, the concept of private land ownership has hitherto been prevalent over other forms of dominion (Duprat 2012). It is within this institutional framework that we exercise the anthropological task of observing and describing such encounters/clashes between the implementation of so-called developmentalist projects and the local forms of adaptation, cooperation and/or resistance to the action of these hegemonic economic and political powers.

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1 Projects coordinated by Eliane Cantarino O'Dwyer: *Provárzea: Socioeconomic Situation: Diagnosis of Settlement Types, Demographics and Economic Activity* (2002-2005); *Regularisation Project of Quilombola Territories of Western Pará*, Ford Foundation (2008-2010); *Ethnicity, cultural practices and forms of social organization in a regional context of the Lower Amazon*, CNPq (2010-Atual), Capes-Fapespa (2016-2018); *Intersections of ethnographic and archaeological knowledge in Lower Amazon contexts: the case of the Aiaíá territory in Santarém, Pará*, Edital Universal CNPq (2014-2017). *Quilombos do Trumpetas and Erepecuru-Cuminá*, Study Group and Fieldwork in the Amazon, Proex-UFF (1992-2000).

2 The term “conservative modernisation” is used to refer to the modernisation of agriculture, “which has been achieved without changing the structure of rural property” and its “perverse effects”: “concentration of property”, “income disparities”, “Rural exodus” means an “increase in the rate of labour force exploitation in agricultural activities” and “worsening quality of life of the rural working population” (Palmeira 1989: 1)

The processes of change and transformation observed in ongoing research experiences, particularly in the last two decades, have given rise to new identity configurations, organisational forms and socio-environmental conflicts on an unprecedented scale.

It is in this regional context of the Lower Amazon that anthropological practices have observed and recorded the hegemony of corporate economic forces and state actions that have been imposed in the name of “progress”, in the face of which traditional cultural forms have only been recognised through legal categories like indigenous, quilombolas and use of the most ambiguous and generic term of traditional peoples (Presidential Decree no. 6.040 of 02/07/2007). These traditional peoples are considered to be in contrast to modernity, such that the “traditional” denomination signals the subjection of the life of such groups to changes intended to be modernising and that are considered sources of salvation for the economy, politics and the nation-state.

Anthropological knowledge produced in this regional context of the Lower Amazon has observed and described such processes of change not only through academic production, but also through the anthropological expertise used in the recognition of the territorial rights of indigenous peoples and quilombolas<sup>3</sup>.

The legal discourse of the recognition of territorial rights participates in the construction of processes of the creation of “modern” realities that shape new social relationships in terms of legal rights, which, as observed in some ethnographic situations, have also contributed to dividing groups that self-identify as indigenous, quilombolas and other categories of traditional peoples, such as the case observed between quilombola communities on Lake Maicá and their Munduruku neighbours on the Santarém Plateau.

The notions of ethnogenesis and ethnic emergence as explanatory frameworks to describe this new social and political configuration in the Lower Amazon (Ioris 2019; Vaz Filho 2010)<sup>4</sup>, by producing relevant knowledge concerning the current identity construction of indigenous and quilombola groups, raise the risk of merely reversing the regional historiographical narrative regarding the disappearance and erasure of indigenous peoples in this region of the Amazonian frontier with positive signalling, “substantiating a process that is historical” based on the use of “naturalising metaphors” (Oliveira 1998: 62). Such metaphors are equally tributary to “another frequent classification (...) [,] that of the attribute of invisibility”, which “remains partisan to an ethnology of cultural losses and absences” (Ibid.).

Thus, based on the ethnographic situations, we seek to reflect on the risks of an uncritical reproduction of legal administrative discourse by anthropologists (Asad 1991), in this case, through the division of groups and communities that contemplate ancestral relationships and common dominion that is reduced to legal administrative categories that impose the division of the territory as the only means of defence against the advance of agribusiness economic interests and projects concerning the construction of dams and ports for Brazilian Midwest soybean transshipment, like the proposed construction of the Port of Maicá.

In the ecological context of the Lower Amazon, the fields of connected activities among fishing, agriculture and cattle raising, bring together domestic groups in an environment defined by an integrated system of lakes that encompasses the floodplain and plateau communities. Thus, the new configuration of modernity that has guaranteed territorial rights of traditional peoples and communities has likewise been creating intergroup disputes over spatial boundaries in large-scale ecological units, formed by rivers, streams and lakes,

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3 One example is the case of quilombola communities in Santarém (Pará) and the anthropological reports prepared for Incra/Sr-30, which were accompanied, under fieldwork conditions, by members of the quilombola associations and the Federation of Quilombola Organisations of Santarém (*Federação das Organizações Quilombolas de Santarém* FOQS).

4 The most recent production on the process of organising the indigenous movement in Lower Tapajós and Lower Arapiuns has been addressed in the works of Ioris (2014, 2018), Vaz Filho (2013) and Lima (2015, 2019). These publications reveal the possibility of an exercise of contrastive comparison between the social and political processes in the Lower Tapajós region and those in the Itiqui-Maicá region, on the Santarém Plateau. However, this is beyond the scope of this article.

especially in the region that encompasses the Ituqui-Maicá floodplain communities – the Aiaiaí territory, together with the Munduruku of the Santarém Plateau, which occupy the territory located between Lake Maicá and the PA 370 highway, which runs from Santarém to Curuá-Una.

It is within this regional context, comprising the Ituqui-Maicá floodplains and areas of solid ground and part of the Santarém Plateau, where the social situations are addressed and “the observed facts” and “recorded behaviours” under ethnographic fieldwork conditions constitute part of the accumulated relationships and experiences between people and groups, which configure social, historical and political processes (Bensa 1998: 46), in a range of scales beginning with the local level.

Faced with the changes arising from the implementation of developmental projects to exploit commodities, particularly soybean, which affects all the communities of Ituqui-Maicá and the Santarém Plateau, the activation of indigenous and quilombola ethnic identities for the purpose of recognising territories of traditional occupation, the prevailing feeling is still one of continuity of the socio-cultural forms of family and community organisation translated into ethnic and territorial rights.

The new narratives on rights are contextually communicated between leaders and groups to overcome the divisions and disputes recently introduced over areas of common and shared use, which raises the question whether, in the hegemonic context of modernity, individuals and groups can trace their lives free from a colonialist vision that makes the sustainability of their existences (un)sustainable.

It is within this context of the struggle for the recognition of constitutional rights (Constituição Federal, 1988) in which the “dominion of the social has been restructured and/or constituted” (Asad 1991) that makes it necessary to problematise oppositions between the modern and the traditional by focusing on social interactions within a historical perspective of hegemonic powers, including the local colonial relationships involved in this new moulding of modernity (Van der Veer 2001). This approach from the margins intends to highlight fields of interaction and historical encounters, though fragmentary, like the case of the Taperinha estate and travellers reports that indicate the existence of indigenous and slave labour in the economic exploration of the Aiaiaí region.

The current differences produced in the context of the application of constitutional rights between indigenous peoples, quilombolas and other categories of traditional peoples are not constituted as cultural essences, but are the result of power relations inherited from as far back as the colonial period<sup>5</sup>, like the Taperinha estate, principally based on the ethnographic situation of the dispute for territorial boundaries between the Munduruku of the Santarém Plateau and the quilombolas of Maicá, even though these involve kinship relationships, including among their leaders.

Consequently, these are not only distinct organisational forms, but also networks of historical interaction, which force us to question the very categories with which we usually study these so-called traditional groups and peoples. Thus, we seek to explore alternative ways of analysing ethnographic problems and materials based on new narratives that present themselves as alternatives constructed by the social actors themselves – “living the way we have always lived” – to configure modes of interaction and relationships that, in practice, can be lived by them.

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5 The concept of “coloniality of power” refers to a new pattern of world power, based on the “social classification of the population according to the idea of race [...], which expresses the basic experience of colonial domination and which ever since, has permeated the most important dimensions of world power, including its specific rationality, Eurocentrism. Thus, this axis has a colonial origin and character, but has proven to be more lasting and stable than the colonialism within which it was established. This implies, therefore, an element of coloniality in current hegemonic pattern of power.” (Quijano, 2005: 117)

## Aiaia Territory and the Taperinha estate: a shared colonial experience

In the municipality of Santarém, Pará, one of the main slaveholding properties was the Taperinha estate, which belonged to a Portuguese man with the insignia of Barão de [Baron of] Santarém, who was associated with the North American, Mr. Rhome, living in that region, along with others who immigrated there from 1867 onwards, shortly after the end of the US Civil War in 1865.

One of the ethnographic pieces of evidence of this slave relationship inscribed in the territorial space are the *cavados*, which comprise excavations made by slave labour. These *cavados* still allow the flow of water between the Ituqui River and the Maicá channel, facilitating the transportation of boats and goods in the region. For the Ituqui quilombolas, the *cavados* symbolically and significantly condense the “sacrifice” of ancestral work and demarcate the relationship of these groups with the territory. The production of this landscape incorporated into social relationships, since the time of slavery, is known as the Aiaia territory (Papavero & Overal 2011) in the narratives of the travelling naturalists who passed through it in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

According to recent reports from the residents of the Ituqui quilombola communities, one of these *cavados* is currently called “Darlan’s *cavado*” – the name of a farmer who claims to be a descendant of the Riker family, belonging to the former Confederates in Santarém. This *cavado* is located on the right bank of the Ituqui River in a floodplain area, cited by historiographical sources as “subsidiary” to the Taperinha estate during the period of slavery. Thus, the *cavado* can be considered an ethnographic evidence of the process of occupation that constitutes the social memory of the forms of relationships established.

Reference to this *cavado* is also found in historiographical sources, such as a report by the naturalist Barbosa Rodrigues concerning his visit to Taperinha in 1871: “after crossing the Cavado, I entered the Ayayá [Maicá] river, where the Hon. Mr. Barão de Santarém’s estate is located [and after] a few hours of travelling on this river, I arrived at the aforementioned estate [Taperinha] at two o’clock in the morning”. The “Taperinha estate” was considered by the naturalist as “the first in the municipality”, directed by the “active administration” of the North American, Mr. Rhome (p. 121-122). In the book *Taperinha* (Papavero & Overal 2011), in a note on the *cavado*, the following explanation is also given: it is an “artificial channel, following the tradition made to order by slaves of Barão de Santarém, in the western part of Ituqui Island, to reduce the navigation time. It was a kind of artificial ‘opening’, linking the Ituqui channel to the Maicá or Aiaia channel” (p. 126).

**Figure 1:** Taperinha estate



Source: (Santarém.pa.gov.br)

In the nineteenth century, the Taperinha estate was the scene of intense activities linked to the exploitation of resources from the floodplain and solid areas, as well as scientific research. In turn, this period was recorded by visitors, commonly called naturalists, and with regard to the region under study, the records are profoundly marked by certain personalities, among the most important we have Joseph B. Steere (1870-1871), Charles F. Hartt (1870-1871), João Barbosa Rodrigues (1871) and Herbert Huntingdon Smith (1875). According to the sources consulted, these researchers were welcomed by the American family, Rhome, and in Taperinha and surrounding areas several specimens of fauna and flora were collected that became holotypes in several Brazilian and foreign collections. The records indicate the presence of members of Romulus Rhome's family and slave and Indian labour at the Taperinha estate, according to the terms used at the time, and describe it as a thriving place where tobacco and sugar cane were grown, in addition to cocoa harvesting (Papavero & Overal 2011).

In this region of Aiaia, so named by both riverside dwellers and Santarém farmers, the "remnants of the quilombo" communities that make up the Quilombola Maria Valentina Territory differentiate themselves and invoke their constitutional rights using, as a prevailing criterion of belonging, the presumed descentance of group members from a common ancestor named Maria Valentina Ramos, who lived near the Taperinha estate. According to Tia Gó (88 years old) – the granddaughter of Maria Valentina, who welcomed us into her home on the banks of the Ituqui River in 2010 and told the researchers, "I am quilombola" –, her grandmother was an angry old woman who was even capable of standing up to men. In her house, where she was raised, there were a lot of crops, a variety of fruits and cattle that stayed at the far end of her land. Therefore, social memory refers to Maria Valentina as a slave freed by her resistance and bravery.

In the context of fieldwork, at the presentation meetings of the team of anthropologists, like those held in the communities of São Raimundo, São José and Nova Vista that form the Valentina Territory, members of the communities present expressed their concern that due to the process of racial miscegenation among them, especially after the Cabanagem (Salles 1971), researchers questioned the use of terms like quilombo and the self-definition of quilombola, often related to the descendants of black people sold into slavery.

However, in this field concerning the application of constitutional rights, researchers gathered at the Brazilian Association of Anthropology have questioned the use of forms of identification and classification that are foreign to the social actors themselves, based on "historiographical", "archaeological", "racial", and "cultural" criteria, in search of the "meaning" considered "correct", "valid", and "true", by insisting on the comprehension of new meanings that use of terms like "remnants of quilombos" acquire in social actions guided by the existence of the constitutional device (O'Dwyer 2011).

Thus, the legal existence of a group depends on the actions and meanings that are produced in the field of recognition of the differentiated rights of citizenship, which can only be interpreted "when they are situated in a social organisation and in a praxis of communication" (Barth 1989: 85). By orienting their actions and producing meanings in these contexts, individuals and groups are driven by worldviews, representations and social relationships that shape and filter their experiences (Ibid.).

From an anthropological perspective, race exists as a "cultural construct" and "native notions of race are (considered) crucial to understanding ethnicity (...), and may be important in the extent that they inform people's actions" (Eriksen 2010: 6-7). Ethnicity as a feeling and condition of belonging to an ethnic group can thus take many forms, and ethnic ideologies tend to accentuate common descendancy among its members. This is the case of the quilombo communities that make up the Maria Valentina Territory.

During the ethnographic work conducted in 2010, through social memory – whose importance is fundamental in anthropological research, because "to be able to share another's past is to be able to participate in their present life" (Fabian 2010: 19) –, we heard reports in which the common origin of members of communities of the Ituqui region, self-identified as descendants of Maria Valentina, established the vindication of a collective territory through kinship, rather than phenotype characterised by skin colour.

According to the reports, Maria Valentina maintained relationships with many men and had a variety of children with them, including in terms of colour, and this fact was constantly mentioned in the construction of a common origin and ethnic belonging. However, the relative “ethnic” (read phenotypic) diversity of the context in question was also related to historical events in the region, particularly the Cabanagem movement<sup>6</sup> in the 1930s.

The great diversity found among the movement’s members, called *cabanos*, included individuals considered ‘white’, of European origin, ‘black’, of African origin, brought over as slaves, Indians, and others considered mestizos: *caboclos*, indigenous and white; *cafuzos*, indigenous and black; *mulatos*, black and white (Salles, 1971).

The discussion concerning the construction of quilombola identity in the fieldwork situation is understood as and referenced to this historical origin of the communities and the common descendancy from Maria Valentina, a woman considered ‘brave’ and ‘angry’, like the insurgent *cabanos*.

This native theory of miscegenation dialogues with Brazilian social thinking, like the book *O negro no Pará* (The black man in Pará) (1971) by Vicente Salles, according to whom miscegenation took place intensely in the Amazon and in the captaincy<sup>7</sup> of Pará, where the mass of the slave population in the mid-nineteenth century was no longer exclusively black, with the exception of native Africans, resulting in the ‘*crioulo*’ [lit. creole], a term used in Brazil to refer to any black person, to multiple ethnic combinations. The mestizos that formed the so-called “coloured population” were also slaves, according to an announcement published in the press of the captaincy of Pará regarding the escape of a “*mulato ataquiado*”, a mulatto who also had indigenous phenotypic characteristics (Ibid.).

Miscegenation did not mean the elimination of prejudice, which was considered one of the causes “that set the ‘*caboclo*’ mass on the warpath during the Cabanagem against the *reinóis*” (Salles 1971: 138), as those born in the kingdom of Portugal were called. This designation also extended to those not specifically Portuguese, “who were identified through economic interests and common social positions” (Ibid.). Some authors have even identified the “Cabanagem as a kind of racial struggle” against prejudice (Ibid.).

Again, according to Vicente Salles, in the Cabanagem “the black man who had thus far fled to distant *mocambos* [refuges of runaway slaves generally located in the forest], joined the movement *en masse*, intent on achieving freedom” (Idem: 212). However, this was not granted to him and after the Cabanagem, the *mocambos* multiplied throughout most of the Amazon.

Nowadays, studies on the formation of political identities have been characteristic of “modern societies”. According to Eriksen (2010: 85):

While many historians tend to try to find out what really happened – some even distinguish between ‘invented’ traditions and ‘real’ traditions (Hobsbawm, 1983; cf. chapter 5) – most anthropologists would rather concentrate on showing the ways in which particular historical accounts are used as tools in the contemporary creation of identities and in politics. Anthropologists would stress that history is not a product of the past but a response to requirements of the present. For that reason, this discussion of history relates not to the past but to the present.

6 The Cabanagem was a rebellion that occurred in the province of Pará, from 1835 to 1840. Although for different causes, the *cabanos* (mostly Indians and mestizos) and members of the local elite (traders and farmers) united against the regency government in this revolt. The main objective was to conquer the independence of the province of Grão-Pará during a period of rupture and following the independence of Brazil. The *cabanos* intended to achieve better living conditions, while the farmers and traders who led the revolt sought greater participation in the administrative and political decisions of the province. According to Harris (2017), the movement’s leaders called themselves “defenders of the homeland and of freedom”.

7 Captaincies were administrative divisions of the former overseas territories of the Spanish and Portuguese Empires.

According to reports collected in the field, Maria Valentina became a slave in her childhood and a genealogical survey indicates she was born between 1860 and 1865, making her a contemporary of the arrival of the Confederates in Santarém after the American civil war. In Gerald Horne's *The Distant South* (2010), on the Confederates in Brazil in 1867, two years after the end of the American Civil War, the New York Times reported that several southern farmers had moved to Brazil and settled there. The persistence of African slavery in Latin America, especially in Brazil, even after its extinction in North America, continued to provide a basis for the descendants of the slaveholding southern Confederates and their allies.

In 1885, three years before the abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1888, the US Consul in Pará had noted the disillusion of his former compatriots with miscegenation. The Confederate project in Brazil was considered a disaster precisely due to the interracial relationships prevalent in the tropics. Thus, many American Confederates who defended the ideology of segregation returned to live in the USA (Horne 2010).

**Figure 2:** resident of the margins of the Maicá



Source: Elisa Cotta de Araújo, 2010.

The quilombolas who identify themselves as descendants of Maria Valentina are currently constructing the political project of collective title of the territories they occupy as a means of fighting for the autonomy of ways of making, creating and living, and against other models of spatial organisation and the exercise of power.

This ethnographic narrative on the Ituqui-Maicá quilombolas, the Aiaia territory, has another empirical variant in the case of the Trombetas and Erepecuru-Cuminã quilombos, which used events present in social memory related to heroic legends and mythical narratives concerning the great snake of Barracão de Pedra, in the contexts of affirming their identity as historical subjects derived from the quilombos (O'Dwyer 2000).

Thus, groups self-identifying as quilombo remnants in the relations they establish with the Brazilian state create different ways of belonging to the nation, as an imagined community, like the case in question, that reconfigure ethnic identities by associating gender and ethnicity to the processes of construction of the nation. In the ethnographic situation of the quilombola territory Maria Valentina, the diacritic sign referenced to the female gender by the miscegenation promoted by a black woman who had many children from the sexual relations she engaged in with many men of various ethnic and national origins, produces an inverted image of the role of the woman and mother symbolically attributed by the nation-state, which subverts structures of the domination historically imposed upon them (O'Dwyer 2016).

## The Munduruku of the Santarém Plateau: the struggle for territorial recognition in the context of agribusiness expansion in Santarém

According to their own name, the Munduruku *do Planalto*<sup>8</sup> are located in an area of the Santarém Plateau that encompasses Maicá Lake. The area they occupy is located between the Santarém-Curuá-Una state highway, PA 370, and the banks of Maicá. This territory is composed of four villages, Açaizal, Ipaupixuna, São Francisco da Cavada and Amparador, where they develop agricultural and fishing activities, animal husbandry and provide services on surrounding farms.

The region is also inhabited by self-identified quilombola communities, some of which have kinship and affinity ties with the Munduruku, with whom they establish relationships marked by intergroup alliances and conflicts, often fostered by a shared colonial history and its power structures present throughout local history. Thus, producing ethnographic material concerning the social changes and struggles of indigenous collectives, quilombolas and traditional peoples in a context circumscribed by the advance of various fronts of colonisation and the exploitation of natural resources, implies great care regarding information and attention when problematising the various circumstances in which these power structures are rearranged in the most diverse social segments involved in the situations.

The prevalent territorial conflicts, both for the Munduruku of the Plateau and the quilombolas on the banks of the Ituqui-Maicá, are related to the expansion of soybean cultivation along the Cuiabá-Santarém highway, BR-163, and the project to construct the Port of Maicá for commodity outflow. Using a narrative based on the idea of “development”, “civilisation” of the region and of “bringing progress”, and through continued expropriation, these new economic-entrepreneurial agents are forcing the reorganisation of social relationships, including the intensification of tensions between and within groups and socio-environmental conflicts, in order to exploit and appropriate renewable environmental resources. This is an expansion front of agribusiness over the territories of traditional occupation, vindicated as indigenous lands and quilombolas by the collective subjects who fight for their recognition, demarcation and title with the Brazilian state.

In June 2018, during a field trip to the Santarém Plateau<sup>9</sup>, we were able to interview some Munduruku leaders fighting for the demarcation of an indigenous land as opposed to the process of territorial expropriation that advances over their traditionally occupied spaces, forced on them by agribusiness. The leaders brought a general overview of these confrontations to the discussion, synthetically categorised here as three interconnected aspects: a) the urgency of land regularisation and the demarcation of an Indigenous Land, demanded by the Munduruku of the Plateau; b) the damage caused by the advance of soybean cultivation to the health of indigenous people, quilombolas and the environment; c) territorial overlaps in lands traditionally occupied by the Indians and quilombolas; in this case, the overlaps between the indigenous land claim and the quilombola territories of Murumuru, Murumurutuba and Tinigu, already pursuing the title process.

Between 2010 and 2015, the Munduruku leaders, in partnership with the New Social Cartography of the Amazon Project (*Projeto Nova Cartografia Social da Amazônia*, PNCSA) and the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), conducted a self-demarcation study that produced a fascicule, with a map that indicates the main difficulties and conflicts engendered in the region since the arrival of agribusiness (Almeida et al 2015). The territory that circumscribes self-demarcation is mostly superimposed on the Ituqui Federal Gleba<sup>10</sup> and, to a lesser extent,

8 The ethnonym Munduruku covers self-identified indigenous groups in various contexts of interaction, such as the Munduruku of the Middle and Upper Tapajós (Loures 2018) and the Munduruku of the Santarém Plateau. This ethnonym of the colonial period is updated in the vindication of territorial and cultural rights against the Brazilian state. For the different ethno-social meanings of an ethnonym, see Bazin (2017).

9 Within the scope of the Ethnicity, Cultural Practices and Forms of Social Organisation Project in a Regional Context of the Lower Amazon, coordinated by researcher Eliane Cantarino O'Dwyer, developed between 2016 and 2018, with funding granted by CAPES-FAPESPA 005/2015.

10 The definition of *gleba* (rural or urban) is related to parcels of land that have not yet been allotted or divided and allocated (Lago 2017). On notions of land, territory and traditional peoples, see respectively Almeida (2008), Oliveira (2012), O'Dwyer (2013).

the Belterra A Concession Federal Gleba. Only the former is completely blocked for land regularisation purposes, due to a request made by the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) to the National Institute of Colonisation and Agrarian Reform (Incra) and the extinct Terra Legal Programme, based on the demand for demarcation of an indigenous land on the site. The blockade prevents the declaration of title of the area until the FUNAI has completed the land identification and delimitation process, but this does not mean that the conflicts are frozen.

Since the first half of the 2000s, the Munduruku have been engaged in a movement for the recognition of their ethnic identity, provoking the FUNAI to conduct studies to identify the indigenous territory. In 2012, the FUNAI conducted the first study, the preliminary qualification of the territory under claim, but did not expedite the necessary measures for a deeper study on the historical and social situation of the region.

In one of the documents produced by the Munduruku, sent to the Public Prosecutor's Office (MPF) on October 2012, and used to support the Public Civil Action of the MPF on May 29, 2018, the following threats to the territory were recorded: siltation and contamination (by pesticides used in soybean cultivation) of the Açaizal stream; contamination and death of animals; air contamination (through spraying poisonous pesticides); pressure from farmers involving harassment over land purchases and land grabbing by "fencing off villages"; deforestation for soybean planting; impeding spatial mobility and obstructing the right to free movement by building fences and guarding arbitrary boundaries; together with the systematic destruction of areas considered archaeological sites (Ministério Público Federal 2018).

According to indigenous reports, there are occasions when discrimination occurs at the institutional level, as in the case of certain Special Secretariat of Indigenous Health (SESAI) officials who refuse to serve them because they are not "regularised Indians" and are not part of a state-demarcated territory.

In addition to these discriminations, one of the major problems that commands the attention of the Munduruku is the indiscriminate use of pesticides in the region. They denounced the use of pesticides that have caused problems of respiratory failure and are banned in Brazil. According to the Indians, a representative of the Guamá-Tocantins Indigenous Special Health District Basic Healthcare Unit, where they are attended, verified the prevalence of respiratory problems and allergic crises among indigenous children and adults, as well as other problems that include diarrhoea, intestinal diseases and outbreaks of leishmaniosis.

The expansion of the agricultural frontier is well remembered by the interlocutors since grain transshipment occurs through the port constructed by the Cargill company between 2001 and 2002, and along the BR-163 highway. From then on, for about 10 years, the various groups and territories traditionally occupied in the Plateau have been under pressure from agribusiness entrepreneurs. These pressures materialise, for example, in cases where Indians, quilombolas, family farmers, and other categories of traditional peoples, are mobilised by farmers to serve as labour in exchange for remaining in the location.

One of the major developments that poses a threat to the Indians and quilombolas is the pressure to build the Port of Maicá, which is to be located on the lake of the same name. The Brazilian Port Company of Santarém (Embraps) has headed this process and since 2013, they have been involved in clashes with local leaders to execute the construction of this venture. Initially, Embraps hired the Research Support and Development Foundation (*Fundação de Amparo e Desenvolvimento da Pesquisa*, FADESP) to elaborate the Environmental Impact Study/Environmental Impact Report (EIA/RIMA).

In the following year, Embraps was considered fit by the regulatory agency and the National Waterway Transportation Agency (*Agencia Nacional de Transportes Aquaviários*, ANTAQ), which sanctions the construction of the Port of Maicá. In 2015, the Secretary of State for Environment and Sustainability (SEMAS) published an EIA/RIMA favourable to the construction of this port. In 2016, in opposition to this decision, the Federation of Quilombola Organisations of Santarém (FOQS) questioned the MPF and SEMAS regarding the environmental studies conducted by the FADESP. Thus, under pressure from the social movements, in March 2016, the SEMAS held a meeting to inform the communities involved regarding the project of the Private Use Terminal on

Maicá Lake. Faced with the onslaught of agribusiness interests, numerous social groups opposed the progress of construction. Among the groups mobilising against the construction of the port, the collective of indigenous women and quilombolas should be highlighted. Later, the Federal Court ordered the suspension of the licensing for the Port of Maicá and the Regional Federal Court of the First Region denied Embraps' appeal (Del Arco 2017).

According to the Indians of Açaizal village, the organisation and mobilisation of the region's domestic groups, whether indigenous or quilombola, is a form of resistance against the "colonising project" of the Amazon, which has tolerated violence, both physical and symbolic, regarding constituent elements of the "domestication" and exploitation of the region studied.

In outlining the local transformations linked to a global Amazon exploration project, the Munduruku emphasise that prior to the 2000s, there was no concern among the Indians regarding the imminent destruction of the forest, since the Plateau area was occupied by "us and a few owners". However, from the moment that "the large *sojeiros* [soybean agribusiness owners] began to occupy and take possession of our territory, they began to prevent us from using this territory that has always been ours".

According to the Munduruku, the process of change in the local landscape, with the replacement of native forests by soybean and corn, has concrete and immediate implications in their lives: "because what was natural for us to use (the territory) began to be restricted. (...) Then we began to realise that something was wrong, the use that was ours, that was always ours, for some reason ended up being restricted from our lives". For this indigenous people, the "only way out", the only way to stop or combat the onslaught of the farmers was through social organisation:

We began to create our own indigenous peoples' associations because we could see that the pressure was coming and we had to defend ourselves somehow. During these years, we had great clashes, real confrontations: we stopped tractors, we denounced irregularities and the destruction of archaeological sites, silting the streams... through all this, the pressure comes very quickly and we end up having to do something, otherwise we end up being suffocated by this action and trampled on by these large ventures. (Interview with Munduruku leaders, June 2018)

Further, according to the reports by the Munduruku during ethnographic fieldwork:

Even with our quilombola relatives and brothers, we had a conflict that we ended up resolving after discussions, because there was an overlap. We reached a consensus and now they're brothers in the struggle who can help us and we can help them. While we were arguing among ourselves, the *sojeiros* took advantage and ended up infiltrating ideas (contrary to demarcation) among our people. We know we're brothers, but legally, we need this delimitation. And today, we assume that everything is united and when the quilombola needs our support we're there, and when we need them, they're there to support us. (Interview with indigenous leaders of the Açaizal village, June 2018).

The Munduruku leaders reported that conflicts between the Murumuru quilombola community and the indigenous village of Amparador, and between the Ipaupixuna and Açaizal villages and the Tiningu quilombola community were partly resolved. Due to the agreements, the Tiningu and Murumuru Technical Identification and Delimitation Reports (RTID) were published. Negotiations are still pending between the Murumurutuba quilombola community and the São Francisco da Cavada village, but note that the proposal has advanced.

Although the indigenous leaders claimed that they were not properly informed about the onset of the process of territorial recognition of quilombola communities, prior to 2010, based on the negotiations during the period of contestation of the recognition studies of quilombo lands, it was possible to conclude that these form part of the common use territories, currently under dispute for demarcation.

Such intergroup conflicts have also contributed to the advance of land grabbing, as some Munduruku leaders acknowledge. The attempt to incorporate Indians and quilombolas within the logic of employer domination strengthened the prejudice and racism against Indians and quilombolas themselves and facilitated the process of territorial expropriation.

Negotiations concerning the division of these traditionally occupied territories advanced between the parties and in 2015, the MPF recommended “that within a maximum of 45 (forty-five) days, the President of the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) take the necessary steps to constitute the multidisciplinary Technical Group (TG) that will conduct identification and delimitation studies for the indigenous territory of the Munduruku of the Santarém Plateau” (OFÍCIO/PRM/STM Nº, of November 18, 2015).

In an interview with an indigenous leader of the Ipaupixuna village, it is possible to observe the urgent need for the creation of the TG:

We’ve been in this fight for 11 years. During this period of 11 years, we’ve suffered great threats, and the deforestation continues. And now, with this whole situation, it will never end. Not just with the *sojeiros*. In the area of lakes, there’s also a lot of this issue of predatory fishing. (...)

We see around here that there’s not even a minimum of respect for our ethnicity. It’s always been like this, this thing of: “ah, there’s no such things as Indians, there’s no quilombolas”. I think it is the *gaucho*<sup>11</sup> who should not exist inside this area. Because their land is very far from here. So, we live within this conjuncture, this very difficult moment, because there is great concern. (...) Intimidation leads to murders and we really need this working group. (Interview with Munduruku leaders, June 2018).

The categories of *sojeiro* and *gaucho* often represent the same group: large landowners who plant soybeans and who, for the Indians, cause the destruction of the environment and the consequent production of social suffering materialised in threats. The intimidation suffered by Indians and quilombolas occurs in various spaces. The year 2018 was extremely troubled for these collectives, because of the presidential elections, as the major soybean producers aligned themselves with one of the presidential candidates who publicly stated that “not one inch will be demarcated for indigenous reserves or for quilombolas” in his pre-election campaign.

In January 2018, a meeting was held in Açaizal village, organised by the MPF, to discuss the issue of land regularisation and environmental crimes. According to reports of the Indians, the president of the Santarém Rural Union and several allies attended the meeting and created turmoil. At the time, one of the *sojeiros*’ lawyers made the following statement: “I recognise you as Brazilian citizens, but Indians you have to prove to me! Is this Indian?”

The Munduruku, previously recognised by travelling naturalists when describing the landscape of the Aiaiaí territory, currently suffer two forms of prejudice: on the one hand, due to their ethnic status as indigenous, and on the other, they are accused of being “fake Indians” because they no longer speak the Munduruku language. However, this “absolute competence” has long been recognised by linguists as “myth or fallacy” (Figueiredo 2011: 68), especially in the regional context of the Lower Amazon immersed in power relations inherited from the colonial period.

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11 This term is widely used by local Amazonian populations to refer to migrants from the south of the country, who have settled on the margins of the federal and state highways established since the 1970s. The designation *gaucho* marks not only the geographical distance between northern and southern Brazil, but very different cultural practices in the appropriation and use of territory.

## Networks of Historical Interactions

On the basis of the Taperinha estate, the presence of American Confederates in Santarém allows us “to lay out fields of historical interaction and encounter, however fragmentary” (Van der Veer, 2001), such as the distinctions between the ethnic categories of *Indians* and *slaves* that emerge in the reports of travelling naturalists concerning the labour force on the Taperinha estate. According to the letters written by the naturalist J. B. Steere in 1871:

The hands, Indians and slaves, were cleaning off the logs and brush from new land and planting tobacco and the thorough way in which they did their work showed that their master was trained in a more thorough school of farming than is found in this country. (Steere 1871, apud Papavero et al. 2008: 139)

Moreover, according to this travelling naturalist, *Indians* and *slaves* were equally destined to perform specific tasks, with the Indians skilled in “gathering the different kinds” of wood and proceeding with the collection of Brazil nuts taken to Santarém along the river “from whence they are shipped to Para [Belém], and thence to foreign ports” (Steere 1871, apud Papavero et al. 2008: 141).

A few years later, in 1879, Herbert Huntingdon Smith, another travelling naturalist visiting the Taperinha estate, the “joint property of Mr. Rhome and the Baron of Santarem”, describes work in which “half a dozen stalwart negroes are employed in ‘feeding’ the great cane-mill, and carrying away the refuse” (Smith 1879: 153). Both accounts of these naturalists seem to presuppose a certain type of skill specialisation, between *Indians* and *blacks*, in commercial agricultural production in the slave trade circuit, with which the Confederate colonies were associated in Brazil, like that in Santarém, with a view to the “revival of southern society” (Silva 2011) in a region of the Amazon.

Family work on farms through the division of tasks according to gender and age is further described by Smith when he mentions the activities observed:

Fifteen or twenty men and women are employed here in preparing tobacco by the Amazonian process (...). The leaves are picked from the stalks one by one, as they are large enough; slightly dried for a day or two, under shelter, and brought to the house in great baskets. Here the midrib is removed by boys and women and the leaves—two, four or eight pounds together—are spread out in layers, one over the other, rolled together, and bonded with strips of bark. Next, the roll is wound tightly with heavy cord, as thread is wound on a spool; the strongest workmen are chosen for this part of the process, and one of them can wind no more than fifteen or sixteen *molhos* in a day, twisting the roll with his hands, while the cord, throw about a post, is held tightly with the foot. In this manner the tobacco is very strongly compressed. (Smith 1879: 157-158)

In the last stage of tobacco fabrication, a few pages later, and with the racial stigmata characteristic of the slave-like perspective, Smith notes:

A dozen or more women, preparing tobacco on the piazza, form a group the like of which would be utterly impossible at the north [US]; and yet I could no more analyze the scene than I can describe one of the cocoanut-palms outside; I see here only a number of decidedly ugly faces and black or brown arms, with not overclean sacks and skirts. (Smith 1879: 158-159)

In these fragmented historical narratives about Taperinha, two passages written by Smith about the daily life observed on the estate should be highlighted:

One evening, Mr. Rhome arranges a rustic dance among the people. It begins in the orthodox Amazonian way, with a singing prayer-meeting in the little chapel, to which worshippers are called by the monotonous beat of a great drum. Then, when the concluding *Pai-Nosso* is sung, and the saint's girdle is kissed, the leader turns master of ceremonies, and such nondescript dances follow as could only originate in the fertile brain of a negro. There is an indescribable mingling of weird and comic in the scene: the dark faces and arms, set off by the white dresses; the octogenarian negro, striking his tambourine with a trembling hand; the half-naked babies, tumbling about under the feet of the dancers; the dim, flaring lamps, half lighting, half obscuring the moving figures. We sit and watch them until midnight, and then go away as one goes away from a theatre, dropping out of dream-life into the dark street. (Smith 1879: 160-161)

Again, according to Smith, as he had done at the *festa de santo* and drumming dance party, Mr. Rhome acted as cicerone to ensure "Every-day life at Taperinha gets its dash of the forest", thus it was Mr. Rhome who incidentally introduced the traveller to the regional fauna, by asking, "Have you ever seen a tapir?" – the animal had been killed the day before and pieces of its meat had been served for breakfast. Hence, "the *Indians* bring deer, sometimes, and wild hogs, and cotias, and pacas; Mr. Rhome shows us the skins of half a dozen jaguars and puma which have been shot about the estate" (emphasis added). According to the travelling author's comment:

One might hastily infer that the forest is crowded with game (...); but in point of fact the hunters often search for hours, without seeing so much as a monkey or a squirrel. The provision houses are the lowland lakes and channels. We can go out any evening with the fishermen, who supply not only the proprietor's table, but the people of the estate. (Smith 1879: 162-163)

This "shared colonial history" in the dichotomisation between *Indians* and *blacks* on the Taperinha estate, within the context of enslavement, each specialised, respectively, in the extractive activities of logging, and hunting and fishing; much like in the fields of tobacco, sugar cane, and working in the mills and stills, they seem to be updated in the present by dividing the territories of traditional occupation, recognised by the state as indigenous or quilombola lands.

The current process of the recognition of Munduruku lands and quilombos by the Brazilian state has also provoked intergroup conflicts due to partial overlaps between the territories of the quilombo communities on the banks of the Maicá and the villages of the Munduruku of the Santarém Plateau, which were promptly negotiated, particularly in the case involving the Munduruku village Ipaupixuna and the Tingu quilombola community.

Both toponyms maintain continuity with the names of places that have existed since the nineteenth century on and around the Taperinha estate. When describing the archaeological site of the Taperinha mountain range for the first time, in the section entitled "Taperinha e os sítios dos moradores dos altos" [Taperinha and the sites of the residents of the highlands], Hartt mentions the fertility of the highlands in his 1885 work:

The civilised *Indians* who have cultivated the black earth of Taperinha and Pá-Pixuna [present day Ipaupixuna], established their residences at the foot of the escarpment, since it is a convenient place, especially for the supply of water. As expected, these ancient sites were cultivated in recent times [1870] (...). Mr. Rhome informed me that in a place called Tingu-grande [present day Tingu], about a league above Mr. Wallace's farm, there are signs of a very large settlement. (...) At the Taperinha estate, I was informed by an *Indian* that there is a tradition that the residents of the highlands were the bravest in the country, who having no canoes, crossed the Ayayá on tree trunks (...). [Thus], one might ask whether the inhabitants of the highlands were the Mundurucús [of the nineteenth century]. (Hartt 1870, apud Papavero & Overal 2011: 108)

The shared colonial experience between Munduruku and quilombolas as a captive labour force on the Taperinha estate and their resistance and protagonism on the margins of the enslaving, agro-exporting power, results in the relative autonomy of these groups in the occupation of territories, including shared common use areas in the former surroundings of the Taperinha estate in the region of Maicá-Ituqui, also known as the Aiaia territory.

Consequently, regarding the construction, whether conscious or not, of these collective identities today, such as the remnants of quilombo or quilombolas and Indians who vindicate the collective title of their lands, we can say, as per Eriksen (2001: 66), that “nothing comes out of nothing”. It is therefore of no use to situate these political identities in a universalist construct, since they change historically and vary geographically; nor is it of any use to situate them within the sovereignty of the state by imposing ethnic categories, but rather in the social life where individuals and groups attribute meaning to the world.

Thus, the agency of ethnic identities, indigenous and quilombola, defined from the colonial experience shared by rules imposed by the slave regime are reversed and re-appropriated by the social actors in the present, creating “new spaces of freedom” (Fassin 2010: 284)<sup>12</sup> in the regional context of the Lower Amazon.

### **Ethnic identities and new power relations**

At the present time, the political reconfiguration of ethnic identities – indigenous and quilombola – as territorial collectives that resist the advancement of economic exploitation on renewable environmental resources in territories of traditional occupation has generated intense conflicts, some of them inscribed in the public space and in local political action, as occurred in the Tiningu quilombola community, on the shores of Maicá Lake, and the indigenous villages of the Munduruku of the Santerém Plateau. Both conflicts impose themselves as empirical evidence of a broader political context of resistance to agribusiness expansion within the regional scale in which they are situated.

Particularly following the 2018 presidential election, which was preceded by a context of uncertainties and political confrontations that ended in the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff, the result of the last election entails a paralysis of the policies of the recognition of indigenous and quilombola lands with constant violations of the cultural rights protected by the Federal Constitution of 1988. Currently, we are observing the flexibilisation of environmental legislation and control, together with authorised political incentive on an unprecedented scale regarding deforestation, land grabbing and ecosystem destruction through the advancement of agribusiness over forest areas and Amazon river systems.

Thus, the two cases presented below allow us to relate a variation in the scale of analysis between the local and national levels, and to problematise essentialised categories by focusing on social and political experiences from the margins within an “interactive” and historical perspective.

#### **1. The murder of the leader of the Tiningu quilombola**

The processes of expropriation of traditionally occupied territories are embodied in the situation of territorial conflict in the Tiningu community, initiated in 2017, through the clearing of certain areas, the prevention of access to water, the destruction crops and contamination by pesticides, with the tragic outcome of the murder of a quilombola on September 29, 2018.

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12 Regarding political subjectivation, see Fassin (2010).

The background to this conflict involved several lawsuits filed with the MPF, MPE and complaints made to INCRA, and in February 2018, the Agrarian Court granted an injunction prohibiting the closure of the community's water supply system; and a ban on the felling of trees or vegetation of any kind that involves environmental devastation in the area. Despite these determinations, the conflict continued to intensify and seven months later the quilombola leader was murdered.

From the point of view of the quilombolas, this murder is a sign of the progress of violence in quilombola territories in western Pará and the growing pressure of businessmen and farmers regarding traditionally occupied territories.

Tingu is one of the twelve quilombos of Santarém and its Technical Report on Identification and Delimitation was published in 2015 by INCRA. However, this murder is not an isolated fact. During the same period, another quilombola leader was murdered in the municipality of Óbidos and others are still being threatened.

In a story published on a local newspaper's website, the quilombola identity of the victim was questioned and the public debate has shifted from the violence of the murder to fraud in the recognition of the "alleged" Tingu quilombo by INCRA, according to the website.

The question of "ethnic fraud" has been seized on by the Santarém Rural Union (SIRSAN), which represents large local landowners and agribusiness entrepreneurs. The text published on the site also includes the terms "ethnogenic conversion" and "ethnicising social engineering" as responsible for the "transformation of mestizo populations into self-declared indigenous or quilombola groups". From the perspective of SIRSAN, the policy of recognising indigenous and quilombo lands aims to attack so-called productive enterprises and areas of "private property" in the Lower Amazon region.

In response, the Federation of Quilombola Organisations of Santarém (FOQS) published a note of repudiation from the quilombola communities, "publicly expressing their deep indignation". In this note, they reaffirm the historical existence of the quilombos of Santarém by saying that "those who arrived later are the farmers and businessmen who do not live in the territories, who exploit nature and promote the devastation of our forests through deforestation, the destruction of igapós, extensive soybean planting, pollution by pesticides, [and] improper breeding of cattle and buffalo in a floodplain area". They further argue that "in our traditional agriculture, we preserve nature and our territory. Quilombolas, indigenous people and traditional peoples, are the true groups that preserve nature".

The accusations of "ethnic fraud" against Indians and quilombolas claiming recognition of territorial rights granted by the Brazilian state have been used in the political debate since the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry of FUNAI and INCRA, instituted in November 2015 by the National Congress and conducted by the *Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária* [Agribusiness Parliamentary Front] against the demarcation processes of traditionally occupied lands.

Use of the term "ethnic fraud" related to miscegenation refers to a theoretical problem that has already been scientifically surpassed, marked by nineteenth-century biology, in which linking groups to their presumed origins does not exempt them from racism (Amselle 2001). Instead of focusing on a historical production of identities and societies endowed with an agency regarding the circulation and re-appropriation of enunciations, by vindicating categories like indigenous and quilombola in the production of ethnicities and ethnic and social belonging to defend cultural and territorial rights<sup>13</sup>.

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13 "The coloniality of power based on the imposition of the idea of race [has been used] as an instrument of domination ... (it is considered) a limiting factor in these nation-state building processes" (Quijano 2005: 136)

This supposed nineteenth-century racist scientific anthropology is heir to the colonial enterprise, imposing a classificatory logic founded on an ethnic-colonial divide, following an imposed race policy, as occurred on the Taperinha estate in Santarém, which divided labour into *Indians* and *blacks* for the purposes of forced labour.

## 2. Visit by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to the Açaizal village of the Munduruku of the Santarém Plateau

In 2017, with the purpose of “observing the human rights situation in the country,” members of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) visited several Brazilian cities and communities, at the invitation of the Brazilian state. In its final report, the Commission noted that it had received “extensive information from the indigenous peoples of Açaizal, in Santarém, Pará State, concerning the pollution of rivers, waters and underground aquifers due to the indiscriminate use of pesticides and other chemicals” (IACHR 2018: 7). This information was verified *in loco*. The meeting with Indians and quilombolas of Santarém was held in November 2018 in the Açaizal village, on the Santarém Plateau, with the purpose of listening to the testimonies and recording the conflicting situations that have occurred in the region.

On the day of the meeting, before it even began, the members of the Commission (IACHR), the leaders present, members of the indigenous and quilombola communities of Santarém and non-governmental organisations were surprised by the arrival of a group from the Santarém Rural Union (SIRSAN), who began questioning the members of the Commission. The purpose of the representatives of the *sojeiros*, according to reports, was to prevent the meeting from being held. To this end, according to a video released about the visit, they resorted to all manner of intimidation: photographing the license plates of the vehicles parked near the village hall and questioning the presence of the Inter-American Commission, through mock interrogation, as if they were vested with police authority. They then approached one of the members of the Commission arguing that ILO Convention 169 was a mistake and, once again, made accusations regarding the Indians, claiming that “no Indians existed” there.

Those present responded to the arrival of the *sojeiros* by demanding that they leave the meeting place. One of the strongest moments of conflict of this episode was the aggression suffered by an indigenous woman, who was video recording the situation on a cell phone. Only after the arrival of the police, did the group of *sojeiros* finally withdraw and the programme of the meeting began. Following the discussions, the interpreter of the Inter-American Commission finalised the discussions reaffirming the IACHR’s commitment to follow up on situations of violation of human rights. He also pointed out the perplexity of the members as they had also participated in a conflicting situation: “We were able to see personally the kind of threats and intimidation you suffer. (...) We will formulate a report that will contain what we saw. (...) This report makes recommendations to the Brazilian state to comply with its international obligations”. Another highlight in the speech was about Brazil’s obligations to enforce human rights as a member of the Organisation of American States: “these recommendations are for the Brazilian state as a whole. Thus, whether or not the government changes, it has to comply with the international obligations that have been assumed”.

Both situations record the occurrence of human rights violations through threats, murders and environmental crimes, also characterised by the devastation of forest areas and the pollution of water resources through the indiscriminate use of pesticides. These different aspects of deterioration of the environment and social relationships, observed and denounced by the Indians and quilombolas at the present time, represent a risk to the reproduction of their cultural practices and ways of doing, creating and living typical of traditional peoples.

## Final considerations: the risk of entropy

Less than a year after the visit of the IACHR to Santarém, major forest fires in the Amazon are being reported in the national and international news. On BR 163, the main route of soybean transshipment from the Midwest to the ports of Miritituba and Santarém in Pará, which crosses one of the most resource-rich regions in the country, there has been an explosion of fire outbreaks registered by the National Institute for Space Research (INPE). Forest fires of criminal origin, according to press reports, were orchestrated in Altamira, Transamazônica, and Novo Progresso, BR 163, by “rural producers, traders and land grabbers”<sup>14</sup>, aimed at opening up new areas for commodity advancement.

The systematic destruction of the Amazon, considered one of the last frontiers “which stands between humanity and an uninhabitable planet” (Ryan Grim, 2019)<sup>15</sup>, rings out like a catastrophic signal. According to the article:

Beginning with the military dictatorship in Brazil, when agribusiness was fully empowered, roughly a fifth of the jungle was destroyed by the mid-2000s. If the Amazon loses another fifth of its mass, it is at risk of a phenomenon known as dieback, where the forest becomes so dry that a vicious, cascading cycle takes over, and it becomes, as Zaitchik writes, “beyond the reach of any subsequent human intervention or regret”.

In this apocalyptic scenario, the notion of “captivity of the Beast”, developed by Velho (1995) from a field research experience in the Amazon, which began in the 1970s, references the notion of captivity, highlighting the biblical origin of the notion<sup>16</sup>, and could serve as inspiration when reflecting on the alternatives constructed by these ethnic and social groups, faced with the hegemonic advance of agribusiness, as a means of guaranteeing their own ways of doing, creating and living versus other models of spatial occupation and the exercise of power.

However, the risk of entropy in the current political context<sup>17</sup> is real and affects not only renewable forest and aquifer resources, but also the social existence of traditional peoples and the recognition of cultural differences (Pereira 2002), guaranteed by the Brazilian state in the Federal Constitution of 1988.

The process of the systematic destruction of the Amazon rainforest is experienced as an imminent risk, by indigenous people, quilombolas and other categories of traditional peoples, of “becoming nothing” through the gradual precariousness of their livelihoods and the threat of loss of knowledge and cultural traditions.

Finally, within the winds of authoritarianism blown in from outside and celebrated within Brazilian society, like them, and even us, we can resist to live the life that can be lived in practice.

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14 According to an article published on the website of Revista Globo Rural, on August 25, 2019. Source: <https://revistagloborural.globo.com/Noticias/noticia/2019/08/grupo-usou-whatsapp-para-convocar-dia-do-fogo-no-para.html>

15 The Intercept, source: <https://theintercept.com/2019/08/27/amazon-rainforest-fire-blackstone/>

16 See also Oliveira (1996).

17 The risk of entropy can also be expressed by the concepts of ethnocide and genocide: “It is permissible to speak of ethnocide, understood as a political process imposed on one or several ethnic groups and that comprises cultural and linguistic “disintegration” that can, but does not necessarily, imply physical destruction, and develops in contexts of extreme violence or alleged cordiality. The process of ethnocide can assume more serious contours, which can be configured as genocide, taken as racial and ethnic hatred committed against specific groups, structured as an action that erodes interethnic relationships and leads to physical extermination known as genocide. (Beltrão 2013: 10)

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# Environmental Governance and Regularization of Land Ownership: development and multiple territorial dynamics in the Amazon<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This article examines how in the past two decades development standards have been established for the Amazon based on both strengthening environmental governance and expanding agriculture. It describes how the process of construction in time of an ambiguous development policy model for the Amazon, which has oscillated between territorial management based on a “green agenda” perspective and investment in policies that favored territorial security of land occupancy implemented through changes in laws and regulations concerning the environment and land ownership. Finally, I emphasize the recent convergence of interests of international cooperation, the state and agribusiness around public policies for environmental regulation based on a perspective of harmonious conviviality and positive and systemic alignment between the economy and the environment.

**Key words:** Amazon, deforestation, environmental regularization and of land ownership, agribusiness, sustainable development.

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<sup>1</sup> The data presented in this article are based on documental and field studies conducted in Amazonas between 2008 and 2018 in the realm of projects that I coordinated, which were financed by CNPQ (Edital Universal 2010, Edital Casadinho-PROCAD 2012 and Edital de Ciências Humanas CNPq 2015); Fapeam ( PRONEM-Fapeam 2012) and CLUA (2017).

# Governança ambiental e regularização fundiária: o desenvolvimento e as múltiplas dinâmicas territoriais na Amazônia

## Resumo

O artigo examina como nas duas últimas décadas constituíram-se padrões de desenvolvimento para a Amazônia baseados tanto no fortalecimento da governança ambiental e quanto na expansão agropecuária. Descreve-se o como o processo de construção no tempo de um modelo de política ambíguo de desenvolvimento para a Amazônia que oscilou entre a gestão territorial fundado na perspectiva de uma “agenda verde” e o investimento em políticas que favoreceram a segurança territorial da posse da terra implementadas através de mudanças nos marcos jurídicos fundiário e ambiental. Finalmente procuro destacar a recente convergência de interesses da Cooperação Internacional, Estado e agronegócio em torno das políticas públicas de regularização ambiental ancorada na perspectiva da convivência harmoniosa e alinhamento positivo e sistêmico entre a economia e meio ambiente.

**Palavras-chave:** Amazônia, desmatamento, regularização fundiária e ambiental, agronegócio, desenvolvimento sustentável.

# Environmental Governance and Regularization of Land Ownership: development and multiple territorial dynamics in the Amazon

*Thereza Cristina Cardoso Menezes*

In early August 2019, the large surge of forest fires led the government of Amazonas state to declare a state of emergency and request federal government assistance. Data from the Instituto de Pesquisas Espaciais (INPE) [the Institute of Space Studies] demonstrated that by August 2019, the number of fires in the state increased 99% over 2018. Approximately 70% of the fires were in southern Amazonas state, where the number of fires increased 400% over 2018. The municipalities with the most fires were: Apuí, Novo Aripuanã and Lábrea.

This article will review changes in territorial policies over the past three decades in the Amazon, highlighting the tensions, accords and ambiguities between environmental organizations, the agribusiness sector and the state in the promotion of sustainable development and agriculture in the Amazon. To do so, we sought to review the process of affirmation of a standard of environmental governance for the Amazon and the concomitant investment in agricultural development in the region. I consider data gathered in research conducted in Lábrea, a municipality in southern Amazonas state, with high levels of accumulated deforestation and where tensions between the two development models are evident over time.

I would like to emphasize that the impetus to agricultural development focused on the expansion and consolidation of the region as an epicenter of agribusiness in Amazonas has guided public policies in the region since the first government of President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, an effort that gained strength with changes in the legal framework concerning the environment and land ownership in the government of President Michel Temer, (2016-2018), helping to understand the conditions that made it possible for southern Amazonas to become one of the regions with the highest concentrations of criminal fires in the entire Amazon.

## **Environmentalism and developmentalism**

Since the 1990s the Amazon has been a target of important investments that sought to promote sustainable development by providing financial support to the promotion of territorial policies aimed at protection of forests and traditional communities and to increase regularization of land ownership. For nearly three decades important actions were promoted in the region under the Pilot Program for Protection of Tropical Forests of Brazil (PPG7), a program that was launched in 1992 during the United Nations Environment and Development Conference, the event known as Eco-92. The legacy of the program was the demarcation of 43 million hectares of indigenous lands, an area equivalent to half of the indigenous areas in the Amazon.

The PPG7 combined proposals and resources from the world's seven wealthiest countries with counterparts from the Brazilian government, the World Bank and various international NGOs. The German government was the largest donor and responsible for 40% of the multilateral resources in the program, which sought to become "the largest program for protection of tropical forests and natural resources management in a single country, that is, the program was innovative in terms of global public policies for protection of the Brazilian Amazon Forest and Atlantic Forest" (Valente 2010: 26).

According to information provided on the World Bank's website, with an allocation of US\$ 428 million, twenty-eight projects were supported and organized based on four components: 1) the creation of a national policy for natural resources management; 2) the establishment of areas of conservation and natural resources management through the demarcation of 2.1 million hectares of forest, monitored to identify deforestation and degradation in the nine states of the Brazilian Amazon; 3) financing of research centers and 110 studies about Brazilian forest systems and 4) promotion of innovative sustainable development projects in Amazon communities.

In a seminar held in Brasilia to conclude and evaluate PPG7 in September 2009, the representatives of the Ministry of the Environment highlighted among the positive results of the program the creation of more than 100 million hectares of protected areas in the Amazon and Atlantic Forest, of which 2.1 million hectares are extractive reserves, 44 million hectares of demarcated indigenous lands and 72 million hectares of ecological corridors; support for sustainable forest management initiatives, particularly sustainable lumbering; support to the organization of producer associations and the use of new production models adapted to Amazon conditions, with special attention to the use of fire in agricultural management and sustainable use of fishery resources, through agreements between communities of fisherman and companies.

The program supported the strengthening of environmental management through perfection of tools for land monitoring, inspection and regulation such as Ecological-Economic Zoning (ZEE) and the Environmental Licensing System for Rural Properties, and collaborated to the institutional strengthening of various non-governmental organizations such as the Grupo de Trabalho Amazônico (GTA) [Amazon Working Group network]<sup>2</sup> and the Coordenação das Organizações Indígenas da Amazônia Brasileira (COIAB) [Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon], created by indigenous leaders in 1989.

In the realm of environmental policies, the PPG7 encouraged experiences for shared management between state entities such as the Public Ministries [the state prosecutors] and state environmental agencies, allowing the creation of the Forum of the Public Ministry, which joined the nine states of the Amazon region to strengthen legal defense of the environment. The PPG7 also steered the preparation of the Sustainable Amazon Plan (PAS), which sought to adapt planning for Amazon development proposed by the federal government to the standard of environmentally oriented development underway in the Amazon through a planning policy expressed in the Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Amazon (PPCDAm), and a Sustainable Regional Development Plan for the Area of Influence of Federal Highway BR-163 (BR 163 Sustentável program).

In 2008, another important program to protect forests and combat climate changes was the Amazon Fund, the main financial support for which came from the Norwegian and German governments, which was implemented by the Ministry of the Environment and administered by Brazil's National Development Bank (BNDES). The Amazon Fund became the most important tool for promoting conservation actions in the Amazon and for preventing, monitoring and combatting deforestation.

Approximately R\$ 1,8 billion was issued to projects. Nearly 60% of the fund's resources were aimed at the federal government, states in the Legal Amazon<sup>3</sup> and agencies that work with the environment and inspection such as the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (Ibama) and the National Institute for Space Research (Inpe). Nearly 40% was invested in non-governmental organizations and universities. In 2018, Norway and Germany threatened the Brazilian government that they would withhold funds due to

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<sup>2</sup> The GTA network is formed by 20 organizations from nine Brazilian states, combining some six hundred entities that represent farmers, rubber tappers, indigenous peoples, quilombola residents, fishermen, *ribeirinhos* and representatives of various traditional communities, as well as environmental and human rights entities.

<sup>3</sup> The Brazilian Legal Amazon corresponds to a region legally defined for purposes of regional planning and public policy with a total area of 510 million ha, encompassing all of the northern region and parts of the centre-west and northeastern regions. Legal Amazonia includes seven states of the North Region (Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Pará, Rondônia, Roraima and Tocantins), as well as part of Mato Grosso in the Center-West Region and most of Maranhão in the Northeast Region.

the growing rates of deforestation from 2015 to 2016. According to data from INPE, in mid 2019, deforestation was 88% more than in the same period in 2018. Also in mid 2019, the minister of the environment proposed that resources from the Amazon Fund be used for the regularization of land ownership, that is, employed to indemnify rural land owners who had their lands appropriated because they were within environmentally protected lands.

Among the interpretations for the large amount of investment in sustainable development in the Amazon, Paula (2013: 24) proposes that this set of actions is based on the concept of “green capitalism”. This is an expression of real transformations operated in capitalism to promote a simultaneous movement of adaptation to a new international division of labor, to reordering of a geopolitical nature, reconfigurations in state-market relations and the assimilation of environmentalism in the process of global accumulation”. The green economy would constitute a new cycle of capitalist growth, based on *greening* of the entire economy, a concept based on the presumption of “ecoefficiency” as a new support for capitalism. Based on this interpretive scheme, Harvey (2016: 231) affirmed that “environmental protection” functioned as *greenwashing*, a mask to disguise actions with profitable purposes with practices for collective well-being.

According to Rist (2007), since 1949, when the term “development” was mentioned in a speech by US President Harry Truman, it has been used as “an evasive buzzword for beliefs and suppositions about social progress that vary as a function of where and by whom it is used, an undebatable truth that permeates the modern world”. Since then, in the circle of international relations, colonizers and colonized, became converted into more or less developed countries, “apparently equal members of a single family”, in which time, money and policies would resolve the differences between the two sides.

For Rist, the word development began to acquire a performative character, related to the implementation of that understood development to be a more homogeneous process, which promoted a wide and contradictory variety of measures justified in the name of “improvement of life of poor people or in defense of a fair and desirable world order”.

In 1987, the promotion of the Brundtland Report by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development of the United Nations (CMMAD 1988) coined the term “sustainable development”, proposing the conciliation of objectives for environmental protection with guarantees of economic growth. According to Rist (2007), “sustainable development is nothing more than a paradox, a figure of rhetoric that unites two opposites, such as capitalism with a human face and “humanitarian intervention”. To neutralize and overcome the beliefs of the jargon of “development” and its association to adjectives that seek to dignify it Rist (2007, 2008) proposes a sociological and non-normative definition of the term, by considering the historic process that consolidated it, that is “it should not be based on what it thinks that development is or what it wants it to be, but on its real social practices and their consequences”.

In the case of anthropology, various readings about the theme of development arise at the heart of the criticism of the discipline as being a form of “colonial knowledge” (Asad, 1973; Said, 1990). Inspired by the work of Michel Foucault and supported on the concept of governability, Ferguson (1990) and Escobar (1995) sought to address the functioning of the mechanism of development. Ferguson (1994), based on a study conducted in Southern Africa, analyzed how transnational discourses are incorporated to the construction of states, conferring special attention to the production of an apparatus of international agencies, aimed at classifying and characterizing less developed countries, and in this way, imposing on them state interventions that they supervise. The development agencies create what Ferguson calls an “anti-politics machine”, that is, a process that naturalizes neoliberal paradigms of development and self-determination associated to a certain concept of progress defined from the outside, producing internal resistance that culminates in the failure of external intervention.

Escobar (1995), based on an examination of development initiatives implemented in Colombia, highlights that the process produced disciplines (as an effect of the instrument) based on a rational mode of government founded on economic growth programs for the production of well-being in populations characterized as “poor”. From this perspective, development would constitute a mode of understanding the real. In more recent studies about indigenous and Afro-descendent populations of the Colombian Pacific, Escobar (2008) complexifies this approach and calls attention to the possibility for reconfiguration and the transformative potential of certain alternative development practices.

## The Case of Southern Amazonas

In early 2011, representatives of government agencies and civil society from Amazonas, Mato Grosso and Rondônia, presented the Ministry of the Environment a letter calling for the creation of the so-called Mosaic of the Southern Amazon. The document made official the request that the federal government create a “mosaic”, which is an instrument determined by article 26 of federal law 9.985 – the National System of Conservation Units (SNUC). A mosaic is a combination of various conservation units into a single legal entity, which encompasses the territories of various protected areas and has the objective of strengthening the integrated management of the units, to promote institutional articulation in a broad territorial base and reinforce the identity and territorial order of a single region.

In August 2011, the Mosaic of the Southern Amazon was recognized by the Ministry of the Environment, combining 40 state and federal conservation units, totaling some seven million hectares in southern Amazonas, north and northwestern Mato Grosso and western Rondonia – an environmentally vulnerable region, because it is part of the “Arc of Deforestation”, a region recognized because of a large number of burnings and the advance of deforestation.

The guidelines for the creation of the Mosaic were discussed at length in five workshops held over four years with participation of the State Center of Conservation Units of the Secretariat of Sustainable Development of Amazonas (Ceuc/SDS); the secretariats of the environment of the states of Rondonia and Mato Grosso; ICMBio; the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ) and the World Wildlife Foundation Brazil (WWF-Brasil). The measure was expected to encourage a conjugation of efforts at state and federal levels to execute activities for protection of the region, which would serve as a barrier to the strong surge of deforestation coming from Mato Grosso, and Rondonia towards Amazonas.

As efforts were concentrated for the creation of the Mosaic of the Southern Amazon, in August 2011 state law nº 3.645 was implemented, the Economic-Ecological Zoning (ZEE) for the sub-region of Purus, in southern Amazonas, including the municipalities of Lábrea, Canutama, Tapauá, Pauini and Boca do Acre. This area has 252,985 km<sup>2</sup> and corresponds to 16.1% of the territory of Amazonas state. The ZEE of Purus allows recomposing of the Legal Reserve<sup>4</sup> on only 50% of the deforested area.

The proposal to reduce the Legal Reserve for purposes of recomposition encompassed a total area of 4,216.84 km<sup>2</sup>, corresponding to 1.68% of the territory of the sub-region of Purus. The proposal for the area sought to benefit 582 properties in the region, of which 434 are located in the municipality of Lábrea. According to the then president of the Federation of Agriculture of Amazonas, the ZEE would be a historic mark for rural farmers in the region, who for years awaited recognition of the area of the BR 317 (the Trans-Amazon Highway) region and southern Lábrea as areas where agricultural production had been consolidated.

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<sup>4</sup> “The preserved area, known as the legal reserve (reserva legal), must be recorded in the land title and the location of the preserved area cannot be subsequently altered (...). In addition to being prohibited from removing the vegetation from areas along rivers and other water bodies as well as steep slopes and hilltops, private landowners are obligated to keep parcels of their land in native forest” (Alston; Miller 2007).

Since 2007 I have conducted research in southern Amazonas, and as mentioned, the region has become a scene where a wide variety of development policies have been promoted. The region, especially the municipality of Lábrea, has stood out in the past two decades for the presence of socio-environmental organizations that have executed projects to promote sustainable development, particularly for communities on Indigenous Lands and on Conservation Units, thus constituting instruments for command and control of territorial zoning, understood as the dimension of “administrative policy” (Nitsch 1994).

The initiatives of these entities concentrated on actions for technical-pedagogical assistance to the implementation and strengthening of local instances of governance of the Policy for Territorial Management of Indigenous Lands, initiatives for training in sustainable management and integration of chains of forest products and territorial monitoring. In parallel to the impetus to socio-environmental development for the region, an increase in pasture land was observed, especially in the advance strip of the agricultural frontier, which is how the advancing area of pasture land is known, as well as growing violence against leaders and pressure to appropriate traditional territories.

The financing of socio-environmental projects in the southern Amazonas came from Brazilian and international agencies.<sup>5</sup> The actions focused on the better preserved areas of the region with limited action or no action in the areas of greater pressure from the “agricultural frontier”. In the municipality of Lábrea, which is considered the most violent and that which has the most conflicts over land ownership in the state, particularly the regions that border the states of Rondônia and Acre, interviews with technicians of the socio-environmental project staff in the region revealed a lack of knowledge about the most combative regions. On various occasions I was asked with curiosity about “how things were there in the south of Lábrea”, given that the area frequently appeared in the news about agricultural conflicts in Amazonas. The offices of the socio-environmental organizations are located in the center of the municipality, which is relatively far from the center of conflicts.

Although they do not act directly in the areas of greater tension, it should be highlighted that the administrators of the organizations were always aware of the gravity of the territorial conflicts. During the study, one of the socio-environmental organizations that works in Lábrea promoted an event at the municipal offices that brought together many of the leaders who were being threatened in the municipality, with representatives of the National Agrarian Ombudsman, and helped to place community leaders in witness protection programs and those for human rights defenders.

I accompanied the trajectory of some leaders in the municipality and found that these support actions were isolated and that the permanent accompaniment and support for threatened leaders in the southern region of the state was made mostly by members of the Pastoral Land Commission of Amazonas, based in Manaus, which for many years accompanied the daily conflicts and helped leaders in southern Amazonas.

It should be noted that in the areas that were the focus of action of the socio-environmental projects, there were also numerous conflicts. At the workshops for social mapping that I conducted in various indigenous communities with extractive activities in the municipalities of southern Amazonas, through the Projeto Nova Cartografia Social da Amazônia, [The New Social Cartography Project for the Amazon],<sup>6</sup> I conducted various interviews in which I heard frequent reports about the advance of cattle raising, work analogous to slavery, interdiction of extractive activities by land owners, and the presence of lumberers, hunters and fishing on Indigenous Lands and in Conservation Units. A dynamic was observed in which environmentalists and landowners each executed their projects in southern Amazonas, respecting the established borders of action.

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5 The financial partners include, for example: the Amazon Fund, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ), Brazil's National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), and Petrobras.

6 I was a researcher in the Project from 2007 to 2014 and conducted various workshops for mapping leaders and residents of Indigenous Lands and Extractive Reserves in Lábrea, Canutama, Tapauá and Pauini.

Significant ruptures in this division took place through investments by the state that obeyed the conjunctural dynamics of coalition building, which would harm or benefit the forces that operated in the Amazon.

One example of the ambiguities of government action was the creation in May 2016 of five new federal Conservation Units in the Amazon, one day before President Dilma Rousseff was deposed. The act was considered a reprisal to legislators from Amazonas who voted for impeachment. The conservation units totaled 2.7 million hectares, all located in southern Amazonas, in municipalities which concentrated large agribusiness, mining, and energy production interests and that had a steep rise in deforestation between 2014 and 2015.<sup>7</sup> These new areas coincide with the territories of traditional communities that have long been demanding official recognition of their lands, and constitute a barrier against expansion of cattle raising, lumbering, and soybean farming in southern Amazonas and northern Mato Grosso and Pará.

The reaction was immediate and legislators, mayors and the Federation of Agriculture and Husbandry of Amazonas (FAEA) emphasized that the implantation of Conservation Units would bring great harm to the state and proposed the reduction of the reserves. According to a technical note from Instituto Socioambiental (2017), in 2017 205 mining processes had been registered in the five conservation units. Most of the processes referred to authorization for research about the presence of gold. Also in 2017, there were 162 properties with an average size of 6.2 thousand hectares, that is large latifundium, registered in SICAR (Rural Environmental Cadaster System) within the areas of the five conservation units.

The analytical horizon adopted in this reflection perceives the state as a non-monolithic object, but one in a process of formation and constant revision that manifests a convergence of symbolic forms and structures of apprehension of the world, constituting itself as an instrument that not only imposes or reduces outside impositions, but gestates and administers them (Souza Lima 2002). The argumentation presented seeks to understand how the Brazilian state assumed multiple forms and prerogatives, establishing distinct coalitions due to the political support, reprisals and various interests in play, in particular configurations of the political field.

My objective is to demonstrate how the Brazilian state incorporated a standard of territorial policy for the Amazon anchored on proposals for sustainable development. It is thus clear that the process of territorial reconfiguration based on the presumptions of a “green agenda” did not expand homogeneously and consensually. An examination of regional configurations such as those found in southern Amazonas demonstrate the ambiguities of state actions that either favored or created obstacles to development processes of quite distinct natures. This process obeys conjunctural and structural logics related to the interdependence between the state and internal and external political forces.

It should be noted that this examination of local configurations is also essential to understanding the scope and field of possibilities for action. Environmentalism exercised decisive influence on recent development in the Amazon, with international support and from various excluded social segments, but was also characterized by a difficulty to construct local and regional alliances, which usually manifest a tendency to support local elites and reproduce the hegemony of the developmentalist discourse (Garnelo and Sampaio 2005).

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<sup>7</sup> The conservation units are located in the municipalities of Apuí, Novo Aripuanã and Manicoré. According to data from PRODES/INPE, between 2014 and 2015, Manicoré had a 237% increase in deforestation, Nova Aripuanã (122%) and Apuí (41%). In 2015, Apuí and Manicoré were among the municipalities of the Amazon with the most deforestation. The new conservation units created in 2016 include: three for sustainable use: the Environmental Protection Area of the Campos de Manicoré, the National Forests of Aripuanã and Urupadi; and two for integral protection: the Biological Reserve of Manicoré and the Acari National Park.

## The dynamic of the advance of agribusiness

An analysis of cadastral data from INCRA, Teixeira (2011: 7) detected that in the first decade of 2000 land concentration in Brazil, particularly in the Amazon, become more imbalanced, indicating that despite the formation of a large socio-environmental mosaic, the frontier of expansion of agribusiness was expanding. In the period from 2003 to 2010, according to Teixeira, the area registered within the category of large properties increased from 61% to 84% of territory in the Amazon (including all of Maranhão).

The numeric explosion in the areas registered in the Amazon would be linked to a surge in declarations generated by expectations of federal actions related to land ownership regularization in the region. Historically, one of the main difficulties in promoting regularization of land ownership in the Amazon was the so-called “unorganized process of occupation” (Idem p.2), which in large part had been stimulated by the federal government in the second half of the twentieth century. It has been common to find various lands illegally registered due to a combination of collusion between private land deed registration offices with the criminal action of land grabbers, as attested by a Parliamentary Investigative Commission Land Grabbing of Public Lands in the Amazon (2001) formed by Congress, which led to the cancelation of 50 million hectares of land registrations in Amazonas state alone.

The Lula government (2003-2010) provided strong stimulus to commercial agriculture, a fact revealed by Lula’s naming of the leader of the Brazilian Association of Agribusiness, Roberto Rodrigues, to be Minister of Agriculture. The harvest in the first year of the Lula government was a record and the international agricultural trade had a strong surplus in the first years of his government. Great efforts were made to meet the financing needs of the sector and facilitate international business to reduce export barriers to the United States and the European Community.

In 2004, as a result of the advance of agriculture in the Amazon, denunciations rose in Brazil and abroad that widely reported the explosion of deforestation in the Amazon. In that year, 27 thousand km<sup>2</sup> were destroyed (equal to the size of Alagoas state). The data revealed an increase of more than 100% in deforestation in relation to 1997, and a considerable expansion in soybean farming in the northern region, which was an important cause of deforestation. In 2006, the Greenpeace environmental group published the report “Eating Up the Amazon” (Greenpeace 2006), which demonstrated how agribusiness and the international soybean market financed the opening of new crops in areas of Amazon forest, nourishing a productive chain that began with the deforestation of the Amazon and ended on European tables.

Concerned with their public image, international food sector corporations and soybean traders operating in the Amazon began a dialog that resulted in an agreement to reduce deforestation in the tropics, known as the “soybean moratorium”. That is, after 2006, companies agreed to not purchase soybeans cultivated on deforested lands in the Amazon biome and or from farmers who exploited workers in conditions analogous to slavery.

The effects of the agreement and increased monitoring were felt from 2004 to 2015, a period during which a sharp drop was noted in deforestation in the Amazon, resulting from integrated actions like increased exploration of already deforested areas, rational management of cattle herds and intensification of inspection actions by environmental agencies. Environmental organizations and agribusiness sectors took credit for the decline in deforestation. In the media, Greenpeace highlighted the Soybean Moratorium as “an enormous step to stop deforestation of the Amazon” and the multinational soybean producer Cargill promoted the pact as “a resounding success” (Torres, M. and Branford, S. 2017).

Since the 1990s, the federal government was pressured to halt the historic uncontrolled occupation of lands in the Amazon and seek means to execute a policy of land ownership regularization in the region through the implantation of Law no 8.666/1993, which limited to 100 hectares the maximum concession of property of public lands for those who reside or produce on them. In 2005, this law suffered important changes that expanded

this limit to 500 hectares, ( Lei 11.196/2005) and then, through provisional measures that became law, the limit reached 15 fiscal modules, or up to 1,500 hectares, a size that can hardly be considered a small family property.

Legal insecurity was always seen as an obstacle to the advance of the agricultural frontier in the Amazon, a region that had at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century between 58.8 million (federal lands) and 100 million hectares to be regularized, if counting the lands under the control of the states and under management of their land institutes. In 2008, the Secretariat of Strategic Affairs (SAE) of the Presidency of the Republic and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) held in Brasilia the International Seminar “The Challenge of Regularizing Land Ownership in the Amazon”, which supported the federal government’s negotiations with the nine governors of the Legal Amazon region, concerning regularization of land ownership in the region. The conditions converged to have regularization of land ownership considered the primary problem in the Brazilian Amazon.

In keeping with the new situation of growth of production of commodities in the region and a progressive tendency to place federal public lands under the administration of state governments in the Legal Amazon, the process to accelerate regularized allocation of public lands became imperative. To combat the “chaos in land ownership” in the Amazon in 2008, the political scientist Mangabeira Unger was made responsible for the “Sustainable Amazon Program” (PAS), which was organized within the formulation of a development agenda for the Amazon region that emphasized the regularization of large areas of public lands. During his administration, Mangabeira Unger traveled to states of the Amazon region in meetings with representatives of the agricultural sector and formulated the proposal that gave origin to the law that would regulate the Programa Terra Legal [Legal Land Program]. This measure created legal mechanisms to authorize the transfer of public lands to private parties without a public bid process.

The federal government launched a proposal to conduct georeferencing of all lands in the country by 2020, to create a single data base that would be fed by Incra and state land institutes. Based on this perspective the Legal Land Program was launched in 2009 to promote the regularization of land ownership of occupations based on peaceful and uncontested possession within federal lands in the Legal Amazon. The program was based on Law 11.952, which was sanctioned by former President Lula in 2009. Federal lands in the Amazon encompassed an area equivalent to more than 1/3 of the Amazon territory.

The allocation of public lands was to be justified by their use for public and collective purposes, as in the case of indigenous lands, conservation units and agrarian reform settlements, or that is, uses that take precedent over private ones. The Legal Land Program was an ambitious program, proposing to regularize 8% of the Legal Amazon with the goal of providing legal security to farmers in the Legal Amazon, associated to the reinforcement of public policies for environmental preservation.

One of the main effects the new program was to reduce the participation of INCRA in the legalization of lands, although the program used the agency’s land ownership base and some of INCRA’s experienced technical staff. In Amazonas, for example, the Legal Land Program even occupied INCRA facilities. The conflicts over responsibility for the program soon arose, and the National Confederation of Associations of INCRA employees accused the Legal Land Program of promoting agrarian reform as a complementary program to regularization of land ownership.

Immersed in a trajectory of institutional tensions, polemics and suspicions of irregularity since 2009, the year of its implementation, the Legal Land Program was audited by the Federal Budget Court (TCU), which examined some operations of the program from February 2009 until July 2014. The survey found low operational production and insufficient level of internal controls of the operations.

In southern Amazonas state, the collective projects for land registration under the Legal Land Program were episodes rife with irregularities. Interviews with small farmers indicate that large farmers in the region were treated with privileges by the program’s land registration staff. The coordinator of the Technical Division

of the Legal Land Program in Amazonas argued at a meeting in the south of the municipality of Lábrea “that the documentation of that area where they live for many years was already regularized and that their only remaining option was to leave immediately” (Menezes 2015: 126). The perspective of regularization intensified the processes of appropriation of lands. The conflicts intensified and the pressure from large farmers on small farmers to sell land for low prices forced many small farmers and extractivists to abandon the location. Local leaders were assassinated or received death threats and had to leave the region.

The Monitoring Report for the Legal Land Program prepared by the Federal Budget Court (2014, 14) concluded in mid 2014 that of the 7,951 processes for granting land deeds, 5,607 refer to areas smaller than a fiscal module (MF) [one thousand hectares] totaling 174,577 hectares; 2,056 processes were for land from 1 to 4 MFs totaling 263,429 hectares and 292 processes were for lands larger than four MFs totaling 170,947 hectares. The states with the most land deeds larger than four fiscal modules were those with greater impulse in expansion of the agricultural frontier: Pará, Mato Grosso, Tocantins and Maranhão.

The report of the budget court also highlighted that 47% of the land deeds issued were questioned for reasons such as the beneficiary held a full-time public or private job, was a partner in a non-agricultural company or was resident in another state. Although direct occupation by the property owner was one of the conditions of the program - to assure the social function of land - in 47 situations directly analyzed by the Budget court there was no direct occupation in 13 of them. The court found that there was a lack of any accompaniment or checking of the use of the properties for which title was granted under the program.

At the rhythm of issuing titles attained by the program from 2009 to 2014, four more decades would be needed to reach the proposed goals. The inefficiency and slow movement of the land ownership regularization process in the Amazon was the basis for the creation of the Intergovernmental Executive Group for the Regularization of Land Ownership in the Legal Amazon (GEI). This group was created to establish guidelines to accelerate the process of allocating public lands in the Amazon, led by the following government representatives: the Office of the Presidency of the Republic, the Secretariat for Strategic Affairs of the Presidency of the Republic, the Secretariat for Institutional Relations of the Presidency of the Republic, the Ministry of Agrarian Development, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management, the Ministry of Cities and the National Institute for Agrarian Reform and Settlement (INCRA).

To accelerate the procedures for regularization of land ownership, the meetings of the Intergovernmental Executive Group included participation of state governors, and other government representatives such as state coordinators of the Amazon Legal Land Program. The meetings improved ties between the Legal Land Program, secretariats of land ownership programs, and land institutes and ministries, bringing together those who implemented land ownership policies to simplify the legal measures, leading to a debureaucratization of regularization. As a result, agreements were signed to make more flexible the documentation needed for regularization, assuring simplicity and agility, to increase the number of rulings favorable to the issue of definitive land titles.

Beyond the simplification of technical procedures, one of the bottlenecks to increasing the number of definitive land titles was the need to make more flexible the norms associated to Law 11.952. During a meeting of the GEI an agreement was approved that changed a normative guideline of the Legal Land Program, making it possible to regularize title by occupancy within plots of land without requiring that the perimeters be georeferenced, as long as there was no limit with the land plot itself.

Simplifying and accelerating the regularization of land ownership became a way to escape the criticisms traditionally aimed at INCRA, which accused the agency of not having the ability to implement its responsibilities in the Amazon. During the government of President Dilma Rouseff, the GEI adopted measures to simplify the land ownership regularization process, through administrative measures that increased agility and the number of definitive titles under supervision of the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ). With this

orientation, the size of lots in agrarian reform programs increased from 1 fiscal module to 2, based on the experience of the Legal Land Program in the Amazon, undertaken in the area destined for the regularization of the Rio Juma/AM Settlement Project (Law nº 13.001, 20 June 2014).

Beyond the requests to regularize rural properties larger than 15 fiscal modules, there were also requests to renegotiate debts of the former title holders and to legalize regularization processes that had been denied due to land grabbing, as took place in the southern portion of Lábrea, the region mentioned earlier. These procedures contributed decisively to the change in the process of land regularization, with a considerable increase in the issue of definitive land deeds.

According to an interview with the Secretary of the Special Secretariat for Family Agriculture and Agrarian Development (MDA 2017), the changes and innovations brought by Provisional Measure (MP) 759 (known as the Land Grab MP and later sanctioned by President Michel Temer as Law 13.465/2017 ) were essential to the continuity of the work developed by the Legal land Program, especially in terms of its debureaucratizing, pacifying, egalitarian and universal aspects. Interviews with technical staff from the Legal Land Program revealed that the Provisional Measure responded to many demands presented to the GEI, that sought to significantly increase the legalization of lands, therefore MP 759 would be an outcome of this movement, or better, a result of the articulations undertaken over time in the GEI that sought to construct a Legal Land Program without bureaucracy.

The new legislation allowed for the regularization of continuous areas up to 2.5 thousand hectares and that occupants prior to July 2008 participate in the process. Incra set values for bare land based on values applied to agrarian reform. Areas of more than 2.5 thousand hectares could be partially regularized up to this limit and payments could be spread over 20 years, with a three-year grace period, maintaining the previous rule. The new law was seen by opposition senators as a “present to large landowners” to promote the reconcentration of lands, facilitate the actions of land grabbers throughout the country and weaken small property owners.

Before the law was sanctioned it began to effects due to the expectations for regularization, influencing the price of land in the Amazon. Data collected by satellites of the National Space Research Institute (INPE) and released by the Deforestation Monitoring Project of the Legal Amazon (PRODES) revealed that some 8 thousand square kilometers of land were deforested between 2015-2016, a 30% increase in relation to levels in the previous decade. Given the alarming data, Norway, one of the most important international financers of projects for environmental protection and to prevent and monitor deforestation in the Amazon, announced a large financial aid cut.

After the president sanctioned the law, the estimate was that 27 thousand rural and urban titles would be issued in the nine states of the Legal Amazon, benefitting more than 300 thousand people. As demonstrated, the new Legal Land Program was derived from the eight previous years of attempts to make the implementation of land regularization in the Legal Amazon more agile. The new law reduced the bureaucracy involved in land regularization as it has been conducted, issuing title to millions of hectares of federal lands that attracted agribusiness investments. Below I present some of the changes brought by the new law that allowed accelerating the process of formalization and making lands available in the market:

- A change in the method of calculating the value of the titles, which came to use a table of prices more accessible to farmers, by considering the purchase price of land by the land agency and not market values;
- Uniformization of the base for calculating prices between the policies for land regularization and agrarian reform;
- Change to the clauses of the deed titles, to allow demonstration of their compliance in a more objective and quicker manner;

- Prevision of the legal hypothesis for release from conditions after the three-year grace period;
- The possibility to adjust the values of the titles already issued to the new parameters;
- The possibility for financial compensation of beneficiaries in case of social interest for the creation of agrarian reform settlement projects;
- The concession of a time period to renegotiate delayed payments for land titles;
- Prevision for direct sale of property, to expand the reach of the Legal Land Program in the Amazon

Another important change related to the new laws and regulations governing land regularization is that since 2017 the employees of the National Institute for Agrarian Reform and Settlement (INCRA) have been encouraged to distribute individual titles of land property to the largest possible number of occupants of agrarian reform settlements. When INCRA employees turn on their computers, they find on the screen a “deed-meter”, which is a ranking that establishes goals for land regularization and rewards the regional offices that issue the most titles with laptop computers. The deed-meter reveals the current priorities of land policy, that is, to abandon the policy of agrarian reform and promote family agriculture in detriment to the emphasis on individual titles.

According to INCRA data, between 2015 and 2016 the number of families settled in agrarian reform projects fell 94%, while the number of title deeds for occupancy issued increased 502%. Once families receive land deeds, they are no longer served by agrarian reform policies and no longer beneficiaries of low interest financing. In this adverse context, there has been a tendency for them to sell lands, leading to a reconcentration of land ownership and an intensification of the land market. It is important to highlight that the policy for emancipation of rural settlements has been accompanied by a progressive reduction in the provision of resources to support settlements and individualized regularization has become the only remaining way to access land.

In addition to the change in the legal conditions for land regularization, another important change took place in 2012 with implementation of the country’s New Forest Code (Lei nº 12.561/12). The approval of the law generated a strong polemic. Environmentalists and sectors of civil society perceived the new code as a norm that would drastically reduce the parameters of conservation in comparison with the previous law and would favor the intensification of deforestation in the Amazon.

One innovation brought by the code was related to the monitoring of large properties and areas for family farming, which were now subject to implementation of the Rural Environmental Cadaster (CAR), which was proposed as a mechanism to help government administer the use and occupation of land in relation to environmental issues. It was an electronic public record, created in the realm of the National Environmental Information System (SINIMA), and was mandatory for all rural properties.

The objective of the CAR was not to recognize ownership or title to occupancy and did not substitute registration with the National Rural Cadaster System of the National Institute for Agrarian Reform and Settlement (INCRA). However, its implementation has already had important influence on the dynamics of land ownership in the Amazon. Since 2012, the date of implementation of the CAR, the deadline for registration has been postponed four times and only 5% of cadasters have been validated.<sup>8</sup>

CAR is a management tool that gained legitimacy through previous experiences (nearly 21 projects, in nine states) that used remote sensors to identify, control and fight deforestation in the Amazon region (Savian et al 2014). The origin of the Cadaster is linked to the Environmental Licensing System on Rural Properties (SLAPR), which has been implemented since the year 2000, through the Mato-Grosso Program for Rural Environmental Regularization (MT LEGAL). Currently, the inscription in CAR is mandatory and self-declaratory.

<sup>8</sup> In September 2019 an agreement between agricultural associations and environmentalists allowed the federal Chamber of Deputies to turn into law the Provisional Measure (MP) for the Rural Environmental Cadaster (CAR), MP 884. The measure allows registration and updating of information in CAR at any time.

From the moment that an inscription is activated, it allows farmers to access benefits foreseen in the Forest Code. The responsibility for the information is up to the declarant and must be updated periodically and evaluated by the responsible environmental agency.

Once inscription in CAR is made, those responsible for properties with environmental damages, or that have Areas of Permanent Preservation (where building, land clearing, or grazing is not permitted) or considered Legal Reserve before 22/07/2008 can adhere to the Environmental Regularization Programs (PRA) of the states to regularize the property. Rural properties that have more native vegetation than required by law or of legal reserve, an environmental “right-of-way” or quotas of environmental reserve, can negotiate these surpluses with those properties pending regularization, as long as they are located in the same biome. This negotiation can take place through different modalities, including the Acquisition of the Environmental Reserve Quota (CRA).

Although the CAR cannot be used for the purpose of regularization of land ownership, but only for environmental purposes, representatives of the Federal Public Ministry of Pará have been warning about the use of CAR as a document for regularization of properties or as proof of title of occupancy and ownership, allowing access to public policies to obtain benefits from federal programs such as a Declaration of Aptitude in Pronaf (a family farm program with low interest loans), Minha Casa Minha Vida (a low cost housing program) and access to ICMS Verde (tax benefits). In various cases the CAR has been used to begin a process of land regularization on public lands, that are later sub-divided and sold (CHIAVARI et al 2016). In southern Amazonas, the 11 largest CARs registered overlap with conservation units created in the region in May 2016. The largest cadaster was made five months after the creation of the areas and has 250 thousand hectares, coinciding with the Acari National Park and the Ecological Station of Alto Maués, as well as the National Forests of Urupadi and Pau Rosa. Two other cadasters have 70 thousand hectares and 20 thousand hectares (ISA 2017:9).

The CAR has been broadly supported by international socio-environmental organizations. The Amazon Fund is an important financial supporter of the CAR. In the case of Amazonas state, the Fund allocated R\$ 29.867.722,00 for the implementation of the CAR on 55,588 rural properties with up to four fiscal modules in 36 municipalities through their inscription in the Rural Environmental Cadaster (CAR), and assisted Amazonas state to improve infrastructure for implementation of CAR. The Amazon Fund recognizes CAR as an inductor of production systems that are better adapted to the Amazon, allowing formal identification of those responsible for environmental infractions on the properties. The CAR, as an effective monitoring tool, has in recent years become the central instrument for international investment in environmental sustainability in the Amazon. According to the representation of The German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ), which also provides financing to CAR, the cadaster “is a good opportunity for two things: to know who is responsible for the land and to map land use on rural properties, which is essential to conduct sustainable forest management”.

According to the representative of the Confederation of Agriculture and Husbandry of Brazil (CNA)<sup>9</sup>, “CAR expresses the dimension of agriculture, the locomotive of economic development of Brazil, leading production and export of a dozen agricultural products. One thing is certain: the planning of Brazilian agriculture will make a qualitative leap”. According to Márcio Bittar (MDB-AC),<sup>10</sup> “the data from CAR have been demonstrating that the farmer is the leading agent for environmental protection in the country”.

9 José Zeferino Pedrozo - President of the Federation of Agriculture and Husbandry of Santa Catarina (Faesc) and of the National Rural Learning Service (SENAR/SC)

10 Author of the request to debate data from the Rural Environmental Cadaster (CAR) and environmental preservation, approved by the Senate Environment Commission.

This configuration of financial capital stimulated the formalization of the market for public land available in the Amazon through the accelerated regulation promoted by state intervention to guarantee the prevalence of the private right to land in detriment to the public right to land for family farmers, the indigenous, artisan fishermen and traditional communities. Two processes are articulated in this logic of private appropriation and control of land: “the territorialization of the monopoly and monopolization of the territory” (Oliveira 2010).

## Final considerations

Soon after he was elected in 2018, Jair Bolsonaro affirmed that his environmental minister “would come from the productive sector”, making clear the reorientation of environmental policy in the country. This change was the object of a promise announced during the presidential campaign. In a discourse issued in regions in which Brazilian agribusiness prospers, he affirmed “not one centimeter more” would be conceded to the demarcation of indigenous lands, preaching the end of “Shiite ecological activism” or practices of environmental agencies that “harmed those who want to produce”.

In the first semester of 2019, the campaign discourse became materialized in actions such as the rejection of millions of reals in resources from Norway and Germany for protection of the Amazon, and the decision to withhold financing for environmental monitoring actions by the federal agencies IBAMA and ICMBIO. In late August 2019, the eighth month of the new government, the Amazon registered 30,901 forest fires, an increase of 196% over August 2018 (INPE, 2019), exceeding the historic average from 1998-2018. Images of the Amazon in flames became national and international news.

The Federal Public Ministry (prosecutor’s office), under public pressure, began investigations of denunciations referring to the so-called “Day-of-Fire”, an event organized on 10 August 2019 by farmers, land grabbers and traders to start forest fires and clear a large area of land around federal highway BR-163, thus demonstrating support for President Bolsonaro’s initiative to weaken environmental inspections by federal agencies. It should be emphasized that the federal public ministry in the interior of Pará warned the federal environmental agency Ibama about the planning for the “Day of Fire”, which responded by alleging it could not act because of a lack of resources and support from the Pará state police and national security forces.

Only after a series of news reports and Brazilian and international mobilizations did the president call on the Federal Police to investigate charges of criminal action, given that the fires continued out of control in various parts of the Amazon. The large increase in fires in 2019, a year with a less intense dry period than in recent years, indicated that deforestation was a factor in spreading the flames, as proven in the comparison between the locations of the fires and the deforestation recorded from early 2019 until July. The ten Amazon municipalities with the most fires<sup>11</sup> were also those that had the highest rates of deforestation in the period, therefore, the forest fires took place in recently deforested areas (IPAM 2019).

During the period of transition of government, the president-elect announced the fusion of the Ministries of Agriculture and the Environment, but reversed the idea days after protests from civil society, particularly socio-environmental organizations. The scene of Blairo Maggi, then Minister of Agriculture, was emblematic; he was caught by the press leaving the house of the president after convincing him reverse the decision to combine the ministries. As we sought to demonstrate, the state reacted by attempting to balance the forces of agribusiness - which feared retaliations from large importers who did not want to buy products stained by destruction of the Amazon forest - and environmental groups that publicized the environmental aggressions to the forest, influencing global public opinion.

11 Among the ten municipalities in the Amazon with the most fires, three are in southern Amazonas: Apuí (1754 fires), Lábrea (1170 fires) and Novo Aripuanã (665 fires).

Sectors linked to Brazilian agribusiness foresaw the possible financial cost from retaliations from international partners. The government discourse, insisting on minimizing the increase in deforestation, had caused apprehensions in relation to the future trade agreements and the possibility of a drop in exports. Agribusiness learned over recent decades about the delicate balance between market demand and protecting the Amazon Forest.

In this article I sought to show how changes in laws and regulations allowed a convergence of interests between international cooperation, the state and agribusiness around public policies for environmental regulations. The presumption that sustains these actions is that rural production and environmental conservation can coexist harmoniously through “recuperation and consolidation of sustainable landscapes, considering a positive and systematic alignment between the economy, the environment and people” (TNC 2015:31).

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# Grammars of Damage and Suffering in Brazil Today

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## Abstract

The purpose of this reflection is to draw attention to the effects that recent political transformations have produced on people's subjectivity by observing clues to how these events are inscribed in daily relations. We approach both those who feel affected by or vulnerable to escalating discourses and practices of sexist, racist, homophobic and class violence, and others who have in some way adhered to conservative and exclusionary discourse. We are directly interested in the subjects, many of whom are devastated, who in their efforts, amazement, and negotiations interest us, not specifically the events to which we refer. As will be noted, the category "suffering" is central to this debate.

**Key words:** Suffering; violence; subjectivity; social markers of difference; interseccionalidade; far-right.

# Gramáticas do dano e do sofrimento no Brasil atual

## Resumo

O objetivo dessa reflexão é chamar atenção para o efeito que as transformações políticas recentes têm produzido na subjetividade das pessoas: trata-se de observar pistas sobre como esses acontecimentos se inscrevem nas relações cotidianas. Procuraremos uma aproximação tanto daqueles que vêm se sentindo atingidas ou vulneráveis diante da escalada dos discursos e das práticas de violência sexista, racista, homofóbica e de classe como dos que de algum modo aderiram ao discurso conservador e excludente. São os sujeitos, muitos dos quais devastados, que em seus esforços, espantos e negociações nos interessam e não os eventos aos quais nos referimos diretamente. Como será possível notar, a categoria “sofrimento” se mostra central nesse debate.

**Palavras-chave:** sofrimento; violência; subjetividade; marcadores sociais da diferença; interseccionalidade; extrema direita.

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## Introduction

“Migues! Are you there? I’m not well! I dreamt that the military broke down the door, invaded my house, dragged me outside and arrested me in the middle of the night because I’m gay”.

This anguished message, a call for help in distress, was received in the middle of the night by one of the authors on a WhatsApp group of university students and professors at the time of the coup and impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff, in 2016.

Little did we know at that time that we were in the middle of a process that would lead gender, sexuality and race to become central aspects of a discourse that arose not about difference or respect, but about inequality and exclusion. This grouping of social markers of difference has become central in the current political debate.

In fact, a retroactive perspective reveals that signs had appeared earlier on the horizon. In other situations and moments, gender and sexuality on one hand, and affirmative action policies based on race on the other, were led by a conservative reaction. Flávia Biroli (2018) recalls the “ambivalence” of the 1990s, when the Catholic Church reacted strongly to sexual and reproductive rights, which were gaining recognition in nation states. In Brioli’s words:

The redemocratization [of Brazil], combined with the international environment of the 1990s, raised new opportunities to politicize citizenship based on categories of gender and sex (as well as race and ethnicity). The decade of 2000, in turn, saw an increase in forums for participation as determined by the Constitution of 1988. The arrival to the presidency of the republic of a party whose historic social bases were in social movements, the Workers Party (PT), allowed an “unprecedented permeability of the State” (...) to movements such as feminists and LGBT. Simultaneously, the ambivalences of a government that depended on conservative alliances in Congress were particularly poignant in the agenda of reproductive and sexual rights. (Biroli, 2018:88)

To this “permeability”, it is necessary to add the affirmative action policies based on race and ethnicity, which divided the country and Brazilian academy with fervent positions for and against the measures known as PPI (to refer to blacks, browns and indigenous - *pretos*, *pardos* and *indígenas* in Portuguese). While the state first recognized racism during the Presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, it was only in the administration of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva that quota policies began to be effectively implemented with a dual focus (which was also controversial, because many only wanted elitist identity measures) to include these groups in socio-economic terms, while simultaneously recognizing them as subjects of rights, opening space and legitimating their voices and life experiences. It is not possible to ignore the fact that the governments commanded by the Workers Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores - PT) had alliances with conservative Evangelicals, which influenced policies concerning these issues (Biroli, 2018). Even with the growing presence of religious fundamentalist groups, which culminated in 2013 when a pastor from a far-right party was selected to preside over a congressional human rights commission, most analysts were focused on another situation.

That is, in various realms of the social sciences – in particular religion, social movements, race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality – we saw efforts to give intelligibility to these new agendas that produce subjects of rights, previously ignored or persecuted by the state. These agendas also took shape in articulation with international forums and marked by recent experiences of (re)democratization: South Africa and Brazil are actors of great importance in this field, celebrated for the construction of new Constitutions, which consider social groups that had previously been ignored and discriminated against. Both countries are paradigmatic in the field of human rights.

Since the turn of the millennium, race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality became fields of growing and innovative intellectual production and a significant focus of political concern for social sciences in Brazil. Nevertheless, we now face the effects that stem both from this greater visibility and from the social transformations associated to emerging political subjects, especially in the realm of jurisprudence and public policies, but also in the organized reactions against these transformations. Different groups with various interests and relations with the current government have violently attacked black, quilombola, indigenous, women and LGBTI+ people. Their rights as minorities are threatened, and the scientific competence of the social sciences is equally questioned – with a special focus on Brazilian anthropology. The discipline has gained visibility in Brazil in recent decades along with the development of “identity politics” (Machado, Motta, Facchini, 2018)

The relationship between political insertion and knowledge is an ethical imperative that contributes to refining understanding of the role of the social sciences, problematizing contexts and conditions in which their discourses emerge and incorporate the conflagrated fields. However, this relationship is now denounced as “ideology”, precisely by those who strive to substitute paradigms and scientific theories with certain beliefs or religious concepts. The attacks against anthropology in particular explore various flanks, including attempts to criminalize the production of reports on ethnic groups and their territories as well as educational and cultural actions related to gender and sexuality, spreading a movement that seeks to criminalize emerging political subjects to make them even more fragile (Carrara, França, Simões, 2018).

We return to the epigraph that opened this article to stress that the objective of this reflection is to call attention to the effect that recent transformations have produced on the subjectivity: it is an effort to observe clues about how these events are inscribed in daily relations (Veena Das, 2007). We have made an effort to approach both people who feel affected or vulnerable in the face of the escalation of discourses and practices of sexist, racist, homophobic and class violence and others who in some way adhere to the conservative and exclusionary discourse. It is these subjects, many of whom are distressed, who in their efforts, alarm and negotiations are of interest to us and not specifically the events to which we directly refer. We intend to show that the category of “suffering” is central to this debate.

In this reflection we also react to those who understand attacks on “gender ideology” and or LGBTI+ and ethnic and racial rights as “smoke screens” to deviate from supposedly more “serious” and or structural problems such as reform of the social security system. We understand gender, sexuality and race as categories that intersect in multiple modes and structure not only daily relations but also the fundamentals of the nation (as representation) and the state itself (in its technical-administrative political apparatus), as shown in different approaches (Souza Lima, 2002; Vianna, 2014; Vianna and Lowenkron, 2017; Moutinho, 2004, 2012 and 2017).

In *Life and Words*, Veena Das argues in favor of the idea that the state is not purely a rational-bureaucratic organization, nor is it a fetish. Taking another direction, Das postulates that the state – which should never be considered in monolithic terms, as Antônio Carlos Souza Lima affirms in *Gestar e Gerir*, or as a complete and finished project, as Veena Das and Deborah Pole maintain (2004) in another text – oscillates between rational and magical modes. There is an entire legislative web composed of laws and institutions, but the state still shows its face, especially when observed from the perspective of subjects and how their daily lives relate

to the law – as rules performed and represented in modes of rumor, gossip, ridicule and even a type of mimetic representation. Das also adds that, in the context of the revolts that followed the assassination of Indira Gandhi, a clamor for justice was also aimed at the state. This clamor is certainly not restricted to India. The apartheid regime in South Africa was no different in this regard, for example. Veena Das names as magical practices the presence of the state in the daily lives of the communities studied. In this article we attempt to follow the tracks found in general fragments of a clamor that in Brazil today has been questioning, confronting and even appealing to a state in complete reconfiguration. This state, in its legal-bureaucratic format marked by forms of exclusion, produces what Herzfeld (2016) has called social production of indifference.

With Zethu Matebeni (2017) we also rely on a body of knowledge that incorporates the reality lived by subjects. We therefore distance ourselves from an intellectual project that is based on normalizing regimes of knowledge. This is important to stress at a time when the government is supported by fake news, and fetishizes the “other” as difference and inequality, and operates with fragments that drain the humanity from those represented in their messages. We invest in coetaneity, thus understanding the “other” as different and contemporary and not as unequal, to be living in another time, or another era (Fabian, 2013). The analysis that follows is inscribed within studies about intersectionality and social markers of difference that not only reflect on “how some become ‘us’ and others ‘them’” (Moutinho, 2014:203) but also why, as Flavia Rios and Edilza Sotero (2019) affirm “intersectionality, based on gender studies, has established itself as an unavoidable paradigm in the social sciences” (:01).

### **Images, phrases, effects: fundamentalist (re)founding of the State**

Before Brazil’s current president was freely spouting his hates on social media, we found this photo in the news upon waking up after the impeachment of President Rousseff, elected by the Worker’s Party two years earlier.



The image is emblematic. Its acts on the subjectivity of many and convokes us to an ethnographic work about the recent transformations. Perhaps this can effectively be a rich moment for reflecting on what we have done, as anthropologists, and on what has been done to us as citizens and researchers in the human sciences. In fact, it is necessary to confront the anti-intellectualism that is now dominant and a first step may be to inquire about the effects of recognition of racism, homophobia/transphobia and sexism during 13 years of Workers Party rule, and of the recent denial by the state that these prejudices exist.

It can be said, without exaggerating, that we have reached a point of dispute over the very format of the state, which is closely articulated with epistemic power. It is not by chance that conservatives are taking aim at the human sciences and anthropology. In other words, there is a dispute over who has the power to define the subjects who deserve rights, and also a dispute over who has the authority and strength to define what is violence and against whom: the nation-state has been reinaugurated through the perpetration of a violence that intersects particularly with certain social markers of difference. At the center of this undertaking are subjects who embody both difference and inequality.

The photo that inaugurated the rule of President Michel Temer [who had been Rousseff's vice president], after what many called a parliamentary coup, substituted not only a white man for a white woman to lead the nation. The image juxtaposes the diversity of gender, race, color, ethnicity, clothing and origin with a monochromatic representation of white men in suits and ties – not all are effectively white, but this is what they performed.

This photo was followed by another equally emblematic one, entitled: the “beautiful, reserved and domestic”.



(in <https://veja.abril.com.br/brasil/marcela-temer-bela-recatada-e-do-lar/>)

The woman in the photo and accompanying interview had just become the First-Lady. She was presented as being 43 years younger than the president, as liking “knee-high dresses” and said she was dreaming of having another child. In another headline, with a profile photo, carefully coiffed and made-up, the “the government’s best bet” is presented in bold letters as having a function, beyond a decorative one: “with an agenda of national appearances, the young and beautiful first lady will become the show card of the Palácio do Planalto [the Presidential Palace], to lift its popularity from the dumps”.<sup>1</sup> This was a challenge to the strength of recent feminism, which in articulation with the state, through a series of policies for inclusion, had expanded the spaces for women in Brazilian society. A reflection on this theme and this process becomes necessary.

<sup>1</sup> <http://ametadesul.blogspot.com/2016/12/marcela-temer-garota-propaganda-do.html> - last accessed on 16 October 2019.

## **Violence, suffering and rights: a synthesis of intersectioned processes**

The modern feminist, black and gay movements (the latter are now called LGBTI+) emerged in Brazil in the 1970s at the heart of the struggle against the military dictatorship and through an interlocution, often combative, with democratic forces and with the left (MacRae, 2018; Machado, 2010; Hanchard, 2001). Their respective trajectories of constitution as political movements shared an emphasis on experiences of discrimination and violence in the composition of collective identities that sustained the demand for rights and the interpellation of the state and its institutions. Since then, efforts of varying levels of success have been made to forge and popularize notions capable of synthesizing the specific forms of violence and discrimination that women, blacks, gays, lesbians and trans people suffer daily, in their private lives and in the public sphere – misogyny, sexism, racism, homophobia – which each movement sought to denounce and combat (Ramos, 2005). Therefore, violence, discrimination and suffering, in articulation with demands for rights, are organizational themes of production of subjectivities and collective action of these movements, since the time when they were called “minorities”.

Two other shared aspects mark the recent route of these movements in Brazil, through the end of the decade of 2000: the articulation before state agencies, as the main strategy to obtain citizenship, and efforts to denounce, punish and criminalize gender violence, racism, homophobia and transphobia, as central fronts of struggle, even if different markers, paths and rhythms are followed.

The insertion of feminist activists into the structure of the state dates back to the initial periods of redemocratization, which were marked by the creation of the National Women’s Rights Council (CNDM) in 1985, which was linked to the Ministry of Justice and actively participated in drafting articles for the Constitution of 1988, and in the re-elaboration of legislation about work and early childhood care. Feminists also took part in the implementation of the Program for Integral Women’s Health Care and in the support for Specialized Police Stations for Women. Activists from the black movement developed the constitutional determination that racism is a crime, with no statute of limitations and for which bail would not be available. These concepts were included in a law enacted in 1989. Militants were also active in 1995, when a call for action was sent to the government by the Zumbi de Palmares March Against Racism, and in the creation of the Inter-ministerial Working Group to Valorize the Black Population (GTI). Meanwhile, LGBTI+ people did not gain any specific protection from the constitution and would have to wait until the new millennium to obtain some recognition of their rights. In the 1990s, the struggle against the HIV-AIDs epidemic, which received some financial support from state healthcare agencies, did help sustain the movement and improved cooperation between activists and the state. This allowed the appearance of new associative and public expressions of sexual and gender diversity, marked by a policy to seek mass visibility and the strong exposure of LGBT Pride Parades, as they are called (Facchini, 2005; Simões and Facchini, 2009). The mid 1990s also saw a multiplication of initiatives in the legislative realm at municipal and state levels, criminalizing forms of discrimination by sexuality, as well as jurisprudence favoring the extension to same-sex partners of social security rights and access to healthcare for companions.

During the governments of Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, the articulation of activists from the feminist, black and LGBTI+ movements with state agencies intensified and reached another level, although with different scopes and effects. In 2003, the Special Secretariat for Women’s Policies (SPM) and the Secretariat for Policies to Promote Racial Equality (SEPPIR) were created, with ministerial status, linked to the office of the president, as well as the National Council for the Promotion of Racial Equality. The synergy between these state agencies allowed various and important initiatives, especially in the realm of education, through the Secretariat of Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion (SECADI/MEC). The Secretariat for Human Rights (SDH) created the Brazil Without Homophobia Program in 2004, and in 2008 implemented a cycle of national conferences to discuss public policies for the LGBTI+ population (Aguião, 2018). At the end of the second

Lula government, the bases were launched for what LGBTI+ activists called the “tripod of citizenship”. The first component was the National Plan to Promote LGBT<sup>2</sup> Citizenship and Human Rights, launched in 2009, based on a systematization of proposals approved at the I National LGBT Conference, although it was not supported by the approval of a decree, edict or resolution. In 2009, a General Coordination for Promotion of LGBT Rights was established within the SDH as the second element. Finally, the National Council Against Discrimination (CNCD), which had been created in 2001 in the presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, was reorganized as the CNCD/LGBT. Other initiatives were formalized in the fields of healthcare (The National Policy for Integral Health of the LGBT Population was launched in 2011), and of culture (with the formation of the Technical Committee for LGBT Culture). But the main focus remained fighting violence and discrimination, a National System to Confront LGBT Violence was launched in 2013 by the Secretariat for Human Rights, to construct a national network of LGBTI+ policies.

In terms of legislative actions, the fight against gender violence was reinforced in 2006 with the special law on domestic violence known as Lei Maria da Penha. A law that defined the crime of femicide was enacted in 2015, while another law consolidated the policy for racial quotas in 2012. No legal measures were enacted, however, for the LGBTI+ population. The advances came only in judgements of suits presented to the Federal Supreme Court, which, in 2011, extended conjugal rights and responsibilities to same-sex couples; and in 2018 recognized the possibility to change one’s name and sex in civil records, independent from any judicial process or surgical intervention. In 2019 the court equated discrimination by sexual orientation and gender identity to the crime of racism.

These important Supreme Court decisions took place precisely when the situation favorable to government policies related to demands for gender and sexuality rights was undergoing a drastic change. The mark of this reaction was President Dilma Rousseff’s decision in 2011 to suspend distribution of the didactic material “Schools without Homophobia”, ceding to pressure from morally conservative legislators, linked to so-called religious caucuses in Congress, which called the initiative the “gay-kit” and accused it of being part of a scheme to sexualize children, destroy the family and implant communism. In 2012, the Ministry of Health canceled the government’s promotional campaign for HIV-Aids prevention, which included a video of two men hugging in a nightclub, frustrating the attempt to present messages favorable to care and respect for sexual diversity at the heart of prevention actions. The rise in moral panic continued in 2014, mobilizing the rhetoric of “gender ideology”, with attacks that led to the removal of references to gender, diversity and sexual orientation from state education plans. The “School without Party” campaign, supported particularly by the Movimento Brasil Livre (MBL) [Free Brazil Movement], produced a series of public mobilizations and proposed state and municipal laws against a supposed “ideological indoctrination” at schools. Amplified by social networks, the moral reaction spread to the prohibition of artistic expressions (such as the Queer Museum exhibit in Porto Alegre), and sparked demonstrations against intellectuals, as at the arrival of philosopher Judith Butler to Brazil, in 2017. This anti-gender campaign was a key element in the discourse of the winning candidate in the presidential elections of 2018.

Since the beginning of this regressive situation, the institutional mechanisms for LGBTI+ participation and insertion in state structures that had been implemented in the previous decade became a reason for concern and criticism among LGBTI+ activist groups. Throughout the cycle of the Conferences (from 2008 to 2016), discouragement grew about participation in state activities and decision making. The movements did not seem to gain enough visibility to have LGBTI+ demands be considered important in broader forums and instances. The disillusion felt by many activists about the effectiveness of these mechanisms was expressed in the evaluation that the policies for the LGBTI+ community were “fragmentary, isolated and peripheral”

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2 At the time when these Plans, Conferences and Councils were implemented, the term used was “LGBT”.

(Aguião, Vianna and Gutterres, 2014). Militants who participated on federal councils and technical committees regularly expressed frustration with the fact that they “participated in meetings without certainty that any of that would be enacted” (Facchini and Rodrigues 2017). The perception was that a lot of energy was aimed at spaces that ultimately and effectively produced very little (Bulgarelli, 2017).

In the background was the financial crisis of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), an associative model that had been predominant in the LGBT movement since the mid 1990s, made possible by financial support derived above all from agreements with the World Bank, which were active from 1994 until 2006. The reduction and bureaucratization of the financing limited the resources available for local HIV-AIDS prevention projects, which were also essential to support LGBT citizenship initiatives.

Concomitantly, during the decade of 2010, there was an important inflection in the realm of HIV-AIDS prevention policies (Calazans, 2018; Pinheiro, 2015). Since the first phase of the epidemic, prevention measures focused on population segments most affected, through efforts to articulate them to the construction of support groups, guided by the principle of “peer education”. Currently, the emphasis has shifted to preventive technologies and encourage individualized efforts that promote adherence to a certain therapeutic scheme, accompanied by global guidelines for universalization of testing and immediate and systematic adherence to treatment. A perspective of preventive responsibility tends to predominate in the guidelines for care, indicating the importance given to individual responsibility for behavior (which is either “safe” or risky”) in relation to prevention, frequently leading to attributing guilt to people who are infected or simply exposed to the virus, particularly when involving sexual transmission.

The main criticisms to the growing emphasis on prevention and personal responsibility came from social movements working with HIV-AIDS, especially from entities and support groups with an expressive presence of gay and transvestite leaders. These criticisms warned about the fetishization of the use of statistical data that supposedly indicated the success of preventive actions, calling attention to the resurgence of the epidemic among “gays and other MSM”, emphasizing the disproportionate risk related to AIDS among gay men. (Beloqui, 2008).

Amid a situation of moral panic in the decade of 2010, 2015 witnessed revolting attempts to criminalize allegedly intentional transmission of the HIV virus, in the wake of a moral panic invoked by a sequence of reports in the major media (notably the “O Estado de S. Paulo” newspaper and the popular program “Fantástico”, on Brazil’s leading television network, Globo), about a supposed network of men dedicated to deliberating transmitting HIV through inducement or coercion to the practice of anal sex without a condom.<sup>3</sup> The reaction of organizations, activists and professionals in defense of the rights of people with HIV and AIDS was effective, at least until now, to impede the creation of a specific law in Brazil to incriminate HIV positive people for transmitting the virus to their partners through sexual relations. In any case, insistent initiatives at criminalization are characteristic of how polemical social issues that involve suffering and discrimination have been handled in Brazil. They illustrate the ambivalent moral status of people living with HIV-AIDS, who are portrayed as either victims or agents of violence, considering the danger that they represent to themselves and to others. The “promiscuity” associated to gays and transvestites continues to be emphasized as an expression of irresponsible sexuality, due to a personal lack of control and moral weakness that generates suffering and tragedy. This materializes a danger that is said to be represented by those who, because they cannot control their own desire, place their own health and that of others at risk (Zamboni 2014 Carrara 2015; Simões 2018).

3 “Os homens que passam o HIV de propósito.” (22.02.2015). Available at: <https://brasil.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,os-homens-que-passam-o-hiv-de-proposito,1637673> [Accessed on 23.07.2018]; “Polícia investigará homens que transmitem HIV de propósito.” (24.02.2015). Available at: <https://brasil.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,policia-investigara-homens-que-transmitem-hiv-de-proposito,1638495> [Accessed on 23.07.2018]; “Veja como age o ‘clube do carimbo.” (15.03.2015). Available at: <https://globoplay.globo.com/v/4037058/> [Accessed on 23/07/2018]

As a part of and consequence of this political reaction, of a moral and religious nature, which was consecrated in the victory of Bolsonaro in 2018, the government structures working with issues of race, gender and sexuality in the executive branch were submitted to a rapid recomposition and dissolution. The attempt to combine them into a Ministry of Women, Racial Equality and Human Rights, in 2015, was terminated in the following year, then under the government of Michel Temer, who transferred their responsibilities to the Ministry of Justice. At the time we were writing this article, the current government had a Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights (whose minister proclaimed herself to be “terribly Christian”), in which the entities responsible for policies for women and promotion of racial equality were reduced to secretariats, along with those for the family, youth, and people with disabilities, the elderly, children and adolescents. The emphasis on the family is to be emphasized. The LGBTI+ question, which always faced more difficulties to formalize its existence in the government structure, and was never consolidated into a secretariat, was reallocated into a directory within the Secretariat for Global Protection, which formally also cares for issues such as amnesty,<sup>4</sup> torture and slave labor. With the concomitant suppression of the transversal agencies aimed at promotion and inclusion of diversity, notably the Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy and Inclusion in the Ministry of Education (which also affected educational initiatives concerning ethnic-racial relations, the indigenous and quilombola residents), and the extinction of the Secretariat of Human Rights, the LGBTI+ question was reduced to a minimal and formal structure for protection against violence.

Thus, the conquests attained in previous decades have been quickly destroyed: a discourse of hate was instilled, which disfigures citizenship into privilege while promoting moral pain and normalizing violence.

### **Gender, intersectional feminism and the construction of new categories of violence: public exposition of suffering in the search for recognition**

As we saw, the progressive “wave” of recent decades placed policies for racial equality, and the rights of women and LGBT populations at the heart of the debate. Nevertheless, in the universe of gender studies, during the still progressive years of Worker’s Party rule, many criticisms were raised about the difficulty of effectively implementing some of those policies, considering for example, the sexist and heteronormative structures (and professionals) of the police, judiciary and other state structures such as social assistance and healthcare. The institutional structures, as well as the normativity of gender found in certain spheres of the state, restrained the implementation of certain progressive policies and laws. The attitude of state agents (at all levels from police to judges, healthcare agents to teachers) revealed that they were also part of a sexist society or a “rape culture”, as feminists say. Even if a certain feminist political approach and one committed to the rights of the LGBT population has penetrated the state and administration, the issue of “changing the culture” had to be faced in education. It would be possible to “teach” another way of seeing minorities that is more respectful of diversity. But feminists always knew that “changing the culture” would be a slower process than producing and approving a law.

With the rise of the rightwing, the (international) anti-gender movement and discourse has also gained strength, which produces the accusation that there is an “evil” infiltration of “gender ideology”(sic) in schools. The anti-gender policy, perhaps originated with initiatives of the Catholic Church (for which Cardinal Ratzinger was an important agent, before he became Pope, demonstrating its conservative origin). But in Brazil it was incorporated in association to Neopentecostals and gained status as new public policy with the election of Bolsonaro. This discourse has supported a notion of the “natural family”, composed of a heterosexual couple – and the recourse to “nature” reinforces binary, essentialist, and complementary notions of the couple.

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<sup>4</sup> The Commission on Amnesty created in 2002 to address reparations for victims of political repression from 1946 until 1988 is now within this Secretariat.

The attack on women's rights and gender and sexuality dissidences is made in the name of a supposedly irrefutable nature (Corrêa, 2018; Junqueira, 2018; Fassin, 2016; Paternotte and Kuhar, 2018).

The destruction of equal rights policies and state facilities for care has proceeded rapidly in 2019. And the attack on, and even the prohibition of the use of the term gender in education has appeared on an equally devastating scale since 2016. Nevertheless, in this context, some conflicts make visible the intensification of the struggle for rights. The young feminisms (as were visible in works such as the dossier organized by Facchini and França, 2011, Ferreira, 2015, Gomes and Sorj, 2014) that have been constituted in the last decade, made broad use of new communication technologies to produce texts, images and new feminist pedagogies.

While various feminisms dispute the scene – liberal-, intersectional-, radical-, Marxist-, black-, lesbian-, trans-, and even whore-feminism – increased emphasis has been placed on policies of the body and sexuality (as affirmed by Almeida, 2016), and on the recognition that these various trends speak of various types of *women*, with differences of class, race, sexual orientation, and even genitalia. Although this diversity is recognized within the feminist field, externally the political struggle takes place both in terms of opposition to what is seen as “traditional” and ingrained (such as the emic categories in the social movement of “patriarchy” or “rape culture”), as well as the conservative wave that was reborn after the coup and more sharply after the election of 2018. Also in the European context, the attack on gender ideology is associated to an attack on women's rights and to a semantic field that can easily be incorporated to the vocabulary of the new right-wing leaders (Paternotte and Kuhar, 2018; Fassin, Éric 2018).

Moreover, a certain feminist solidarity and pedagogy was enacted in an intensely affective process produced in online and offline sociability, through the use of hashtags and first-person narratives: “Chega de fiu-fiu” [Cut the whistling], “Meu primeiro assédio” [My first harassment], “Meu amigo secreto” [My secret friend], “Meu professor abusador” [My professor the abuser], among others, problematized situations of sexual violence (harassment, abuse) and produced in the public scene a notion of “sexual abuse” that is still new. In 2018 this notion culminated in a proposed law about “sexual molestation” and in a revision and more severe categorization of certain types of rape, such as “collective” and or “corrective” [which the law defines as rape conducted to “control the victim's social or sexual behavior”].<sup>5</sup>

Those feminist campaigns presented scenes of suffering on the social media hashtags and posts that denounced the existence of a sexist “culture” that is naturalized through practices such as harassment. With first-person narratives that depict how young girls, children and youth were harassed or abused, the stories revealed scenes and experiences from childhood, marked by a difficulty to understand what had happened, in which the aggressor was usually a relative, or neighborhood or school acquaintance. The unknown aggressors were men who had harassed women while walking in the street.

One person told how at 9 years of age, when she was going to visit the city of her grandmother with whom she usually spent her vacation, she was touched by her grandmother's husband at the time, who was about 60 years old and was considered her grandfather. He even threatened her, saying that if she told anyone, her grandmother would not believe her and would punish her. The text revealed that the youth had never told anyone until the revelation in that tweet (published on Twitter). Following texts (tweets) reported the story in more than the 140 characters possible on the platform at that time, which also revealed that the “grandfather” had also molested another 12-year-old girl, but that no one believed the girl's story. Another story told how a 4-year-old girl was taken by “them” to the backyard, where they touched and kissed her, although she never said who “they” were.

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5 As in law n. 13.718, from 24.09.2018

Similar to the cases of sexual violence that were reported, the aggressors are usually people who are acquaintances, relatives, from the victim's network of social relations (which is similar to the findings of a study about rape by IPEA).<sup>6</sup> They are usually adult or older men while the victims are children or adolescents. The reports were published on social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, but were also highlighted by the commercial and hegemonic media, especially since 2015, the year that the commercial media called the “women's spring”.

By denominating these episodes as “harassment”, the feminist field sought to construct a new category of violence. This appeal took place through narratives of suffering – both those that reported facts and scenes of sexual aggression, as well as reports about the scars left by these experiences. The notions of victim and of trauma were central to the recognition of suffering, but were also used to demand rights (Fassin and Rechtman, 2009), by denominating that the suffering was caused by acts of violence perpetrated by specific people. Unlike the #MeToo campaign in the United States, the campaigns in Brazil did not seek to judicially accuse the perpetrators (although they may have been exposed in some cases), to the contrary, the intent was to show how acts of harassment are commonplace. More than accusing certain men, the campaigns denounced the machismo in society, showing how society itself is violent: solidarity networks were formed based on first person reports about suffering from the past, some of them never before mentioned. The act of revealing an event that had been silenced and omitted was also common practice in the denunciation of various forms of violence, in a feminist perspective of revealing the daily violences experienced by women in a “rape culture”, which sexually objectifies and abuses girls and women.

The semi-public exposition<sup>7</sup> of reports of *shame, fear* and *guilt* in situations of victimization and violence, promoted affective identifications with new reports of abuse. These reports also entered the environment of universities, and accusations were made of sexual and moral violence among colleagues or between teachers and students. One report on a social network led to another, and the sensation arose that the victims appeared to be experiencing similar situations, which appeared to promote greater intra-gender solidarity and greater identification among women (and not only cisgender women) or people with feminized bodies. These reports and denunciations promoted new feminist groups within universities, both feminist collectives of students, and of professors who sought to confront the institutional situations and omissions at their universities (like the Rede Não Cala - Rede de Professoras e Pesquisadoras pelo fim da Violência Sexual e de Gênero na USP) [The Don't be Quiet Network – Network of Women Teachers and Researchers for the end of Sexual and Gender Violence at USP].

We are also inspired here by the work of Sergio Carrara (2015) which addresses a new apparatus of sexuality, in which the issue of consent became central. The particularity of these cases is that while in 2015 there was a public and more visible struggle to qualify acts as violent, precisely because there could not have been consent (especially regarding harassment and abuse of children), on the other hand, the new conservatism function as an important force of backlash that revictimizes even the activists (see Facchini and Sivori, 2017).

As acts common to daily life (such as street harassment) were increasingly denounced as aggression or violence, a conservative reaction also gained space. Such reaction reinforced a style of hyper-masculinity and treated these demands for rights as a joke, or even reacted brutally, threatening the activists in the same digital sphere in which they were articulated. Feminists were also ridiculed during the presidential campaign.

6 Instituto de Pesquisas Econômicas e Aplicadas (IPEA): “Estupro no Brasil: uma radiografia segundo os dados da Saúde”, Nota Técnica N. 11, Brasília, Março, 2014, in: [http://www.ipea.gov.br/portal/images/stories/PDFs/nota\\_tecnica/140327\\_notatecnicadiest11.pdf](http://www.ipea.gov.br/portal/images/stories/PDFs/nota_tecnica/140327_notatecnicadiest11.pdf)

7 Semi-public because it is aimed at an imagined public, on one hand, and on the other because it is restricted to “bubbles”, that is to networks of relations made possible and limited by the digital network through algorithms beyond the users' control.

Moreover, the militants and women who posted reports were also directly attacked online – even with threats of rape, attack in their homes, and of violence against their families – as occurred to the feminist blogger Lola Aranovich, who was attacked by “male” and “incel” groups. Some of the activists had their psychic suffering revived and even became ill, some disappeared from the online environment. Such attacks are often associated to the ease of online communication (Baym and Boyd, 2012) and the broad impact of the new media that let girls and young women stand out, simultaneously made them more vulnerable to attacks.

On different scales, a certain hypermasculinity that is not ashamed of being sexist and homophobic has gained legitimacy in the public arena through the speech of the current president (who is well known for telling a congresswoman “you don’t deserve to be raped”) or even of the Minister of Women, the Family and Human Rights. They both emphasize a “traditional” femininity of the elites – the “beautiful, reserved and domestic” wife of former President Michel Temer, or even the evangelical pastors placed in government posts.

## A look at the girls

At this point it is necessary to review some of the arguments and actions of groups of women who call themselves feminists and contrast them with “conservative” women. The latter have organized in the wake of what was called the “digital feminism boom”. In the shift to daily life it seems interesting to inquire about that which the Free Brazil Movement (MBL, mentioned above) calls “feminism of the right” and the relationship between religion, race and racism.

Erica Santana de Souza, in her doctoral thesis *Formas de Militância Feminista em Cenário de Auto-organização e Ciberativismo no Brasil Contemporâneo: tendências atuais a partir do caso de Aracaju/SE* [Forms of Feminist Militancy in a Situation of Self-organization and Cyberactivism in Contemporary Brazil: Current trends based on the case of Aracaju/SE], examined this situation in Brazil, mapping and researching the new feminisms and conservative groups of the city.

As in other locations, it was since 2012 and more specifically since the first SlutWalk, that a strong feminist movement began to take hold in Aracaju. According to Souza, the event was

Constructed in a decentralized manner and used social networks to organize and promote the event. Some youths, friends and acquaintances initiated the event on a Facebook page they created. Since then, the march continued to be organized annually, and, each year a main theme is chosen, but all have revolved around the theme of how the female body is treated in contemporary societies, strongly influenced by patriarchal culture, and have addressed other broader and current themes. The construction of the SlutWalk in Aracaju directly influenced the organization of some youths into study groups and the creation of the Women’s Collective of Aracaju (2017:131).

These collectives, Souza observes, have incorporated a growing number of black women and took on an intersectional agenda, operating with a perspective that includes trans and transvestite women. The apparent boom of 2015, the “feminist spring” as the commercial media labeled it without recognition of previous movements, broadened and renovated the spaces and repertoires of feminist actions in Brazil as a whole. As we indicated above, forms of self-organization (the collectives) and the sharing of experiences on social networks, provided an important repertoire that gave intelligibility to experiences that, although difficult, were widespread: “a nameless bad feeling” (Souza, 2017:57). These women often referred to situations of frustration, exclusion, and oppression that only became stronger than a diffuse sentiment through contact with the feminist repertoire: it is possible to perceive how the collectives in Aracaju reveal the strength of an emotional language and a movement of recognition (of oneself and of others, in particular), but also the policies of inclusion through *suffering*. In other words, they recognize and produce a change in the self through the support found by sharing difficult experiences.

This also dialogs with the digital feminism around the visibility of the category “harassment” and of the redefinitions of rape (Almeida, 2019).

As one of the girls quoted by Souza said:

When you recognize yourself as someone who suffered oppression, when you know what you are going through, that what you are suffering is oppression, and you are aware of this, you begin to fight it, when you also have strength for this and when you have the conditions. So when I discovered [feminism], I began to realize that most of the things that I suffered, many of my traumas, you know, I already told you this, I think I already said this, were due to machismo, right? So I thought: it's obvious, since our society, the foundation, right, of capitalism, is socio-economic inequality, right, and in turn the inequality of race and of gender strengthens this economic inequality right? (...) I had, my first child, he, is...I lost him with eight months and fifteen days, and I suffered obstetric violence. I lost my son, in reality, through medical carelessness when I was pregnant. I won't talk about this, or I will cry. But, I suffered obstetric violence at the time [...] I, I had the child normally (...), I didn't have the strength to push him out, and my son, and my son died inside at eight months and fifteen days, he wouldn't leave, because, its mostly the baby that makes the effort to leave, he wants to leave, right? The doctor and nurse got on top of me to force the boy out (...) They used forceps and cut. Now I know that the use of forceps and cutting, I forgot the name, the perineum, this is obstetric violence. (...) So afterwards, with feminism, I discovered that, obviously I felt pain there, I knew, but for me it was normal, it was a normal procedure. Today, I know that it is not normal (...) and they put me together with the women, with the babies of the women crying, the women getting up to care for their children. And I spent the whole night listening to babies crying. And I was catatonic the whole night. I didn't react, no reaction, I wanted to give up, so it was the second depression (silence). This was violence and a violence of gender and class as well, because they did this because I was poor. So when the doctor from the other shift arrived and saw my situation, he got my family's [phone] number, because they weren't allowed to be with me. I had no one with me, and he spoke with my father, and said: I will release her because she does not need to be here with the others (...) (girl from the Auto-organização de Mulheres Negras de Sergipe Rejane Maria, [Self-Organization of Black Women of Sergipe Rejane Maria]). (:58)

In the collectives they get together to read texts and share life experiences. The reflexivity, a shared self-reflection, proves to be essential in this situation of transformation of the self and the world. The themes most present at the encounters are: “black women and affectivity”; needs and desires, marginalization and public disregard for peripheral women, who are in general, but not only, black: transsexuals and transvestites; abusive relationships; the “loneliness of the fat woman” and “compulsory heterosexuality”.

It is important to hear what another young woman said about this:

My mother cannot read, she is a farm worker, but in reality, the first person who told me things that Simone de Beauvoir had spoken of, without her knowing, was my mother. When I asked her, if in another life she would like to be born as a woman or a man, she told me she would like to be born as a man. And I asked why? She said: because a woman is not valued in society, because my word has no value, because I earn less than your father. Understand? She cannot read and she said things that Simone de Beauvoir spoke of in her book. So, if you think about it, some things came from her [in terms of influence], even if she did not know, even though she never heard of feminism. (Woman from the Coletivo Feminista Ana Montenegro) [Feminist Collective Ana Montenegro]” (Souza, 2017: 67/68).

Another girl also took an interesting direction in the resignification of her actions:

Today I understand, even based on black feminism. Today I understand that, even before we knew what feminism is, we practiced it. I have practiced feminism for a long time now (Souza, 2017:68)

In the polarized situation that has gripped Brazil since the massive street demonstrations of 2013, rightwing movements, some that are more liberal and others with a fascist tinge, came to dispute meanings and agendas at the interior of a series of actions and social programs that, since the Workers Party government, became involved with the state. The conservative groups grew in the realm of the mobilizations for and against impeachment. Once again, Aracaju serves to illuminate this movement.

Erica Santana de Souza mapped and interviewed people linked to various groups in the city. *Damas de Ferro* [Women of Steel], is composed of liberal and conservative women. A second group was created through the incentive of the boyfriend of one of the women mentors, *Juventude Conservadora de Sergipe* [Conservative Youth of Sergipe] which defines itself as “a group of people who struggle for real conservatism and tradition, for the traditional family, human values, for traditional morality, for integration of the people, valorization of national identity, valorization of our origins and a diffusion of spiritualism”. A third group is *Movimento Aliança Estudantil (MAE)* [Student Alliance Movement], which does not believe that the legal order can “resolve the problems of humanity”; and joins those who oppose abortion, defend a minimum state and a neoliberal economic agenda.

There is no homogeneity in these groups: they have differing ideas about justice, conservatism, exclusion, the role of the state and gender relations. They share an anti-feminism, defending the biological function of women and their traditional role. These groups are active on social networks, organize events and interventions at the Federal University at Sergipe (UFS), and conduct study groups and self-reflection groups.

In the words of one of the young women interviewed by Erica Santana de Souza:

There are people who say: “ah, if there had been no feminism, if not for the feminist movement, we never would have conquered rights”. To the contrary, I think that they may have taken longer to be conquered, but it is the natural path of life that human questions are taken into consideration. So, the rights of women, like other rights, worker’s rights, for example, were also a question of time, but sooner or later they would arrive, do you understand? But I do not attribute this to a movement. I do not attribute my conquests, for example, to a movement. “Ah, I study today in a public university because of feminism or because of some ideology, because someone offered me this”. No. I study today because I was able to pass. It was not a movement that placed me here, no (*Damas de Ferro*). (:196)

In addition to the anti-feminist sentiment, and the focus on individual effort, Santana noted a perception about racism that also challenges those who speak about intersectionality and the loneliness of the black woman. See what another girl said:

In the group *Levante Popular da Juventude* [Popular Youth Uprising] (on Facebook), they conducted a consciousness raising campaign, in quotes, about racism (...). People wrote about situations of racism that they had suffered at some time in life. And there was a girl there, who is well known here at the university, she is a feminist, she leads this movement, she put up a poster that said something like “men say they are “lady-killers”, but they are truly afraid of a powerful black woman”, something like that (...). So I wrote, as a black woman, I raised some questions about this, affirming that what is wrong with a man not wanting a black woman. Is this racism or a question of taste, understand? And why does all of this have to be raised in a public forum if it is only a personal and intimate issue (young woman from the collective *Damas de Ferro*). (:196)

Some fundamental differences are noted when comparing feminism to its conservative reaction: the women of the right highlight they are encouraged by their boyfriends to take these positions publicly and they do not feel excluded or discriminated against. The most important point is that they do not feel vulnerable. What called the most attention in the nascent feminism in Aracaju was the place of suffering in the constitution of self and the sense of vulnerability, which we also noted in the online feminism about harassment discussed earlier.

*Suffering* in this context is a key category of differentiation, of identification and permeability to certain narratives. Those that are not conservative mobilize experiences of exclusion and humiliation. The centrality of this category does not seem to be limited to the current situation and may say something about contemporary policies and the construction of rights.

In South Africa the mobilization of suffering – of situations that reveal human suffering – was central in the struggle against racism, apartheid and above all in the construction of a common humanity (Moutinho, 2012). The country’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission presented human dramas through testimony about human rights violations and investigations of cases, seeking out information and evaluating the possibility to promote amnesty and reparations. For the reflection proposed here it is interesting to consider an important aspect: the architecture of gender that informed its elaboration. It was the women at the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission who exposed the violence suffered by their husbands, brothers and sons in the community and with the women (Ross, 2001; Moutinho 2012). We thus argue, that an important gender bias is found (experienced in an intersectional perspective) in contemporary moral economy. This process mobilizes feelings of piety in conjunction to a call for order and policies for control (Fassin, 2014), policies that through sensorial and discursive mechanisms elide the temporality of the “other” and drain it of meaning.

### Daily transformations and new conflicts

What do these youths from the new right think? Who influences them?

On a Facebook post, a young white woman with straight black hair and makeup, explained on a non-professional but clearly well-planned video, that for the Movimento Brasil Livre (MBL) [Free Brazil Movement] the difference between what they call “feminism of the right” and “the left” is that the left wants women to be “better and have more power than men” and that “the right wants equality”.

The MBL, created in late 2014, had an important role in the movement to impeach the president elected from the Worker’s Party. With actions aimed particularly at youth, the conservative right-wing movement had support at its base from the Estudantes pela Liberdade (EPL) [Students for Liberty] which has ties with the Atlas Network think tank (Casimiro, 2018), and promoted videos and discourses against minorities, organizing demonstrations, and presenting poor and historically inaccurate information, as well as personal ridicule, attacks and disqualifications, but which had a strong appeal among a young public.

Another video, featuring Pedro D’eyrot, one of the founders of MBL, who works in advertising after working with funk music, was entitled “*Bolsonarismo: feminismo de direita??*” [Bolsonarismo: right-wing feminism?], explains to the public this relationship that even the presenter highlights as surprising: “what is this madness that I am talking about?”. Let’s see. For D’eyrot,

feminism began with a base in liberal values, values of the enlightenment, guided by reason, and morality. It began struggling for institutional equality for women: women had to have the right to vote, the right to participate in politics (...) had to be considered by law and by institutions as citizens who are equal to men. But as history proceeded, this feminism became misrepresented. And today we find a third generation feminism (...) which defends things that make no sense like the right of a woman to have hairy armpits or to paint her armpits orange [he shows a photo of Madonna with her arm raised and an unshaved and painted underarm] or to say that if you don’t have a uterus you can’t give an opinion about anything related to women (...) things that are far from the enlightenment ideal of using logic and involve a subjectivity that leads nowhere.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zekswHuh3w4> – last accessed 29/09/2019.

He then focuses on

“third generation feminism”, which he affirms, “incorporated an aspect of Marxism” which is the class struggle [...] of the confrontation of the boss against the employee. Except when third generation feminism uses the logic of confrontation, it begins to antagonize men. So, it is no longer a feminism that seeks equality, but that seeks conflict between men and women. And the base of our society is men and women living in harmony.

The presenter then explains that this relationship of feminism with Marxism creates something very dangerous which is the “concept of toxic masculinity”. The “geniuses” of feminism created a concept to say that “everything that is masculine is toxic (...), causes a problem in society”. And then he plays feminism against specific relatives. Pointing to the camera he says: “everything that your parents taught you, your grandparents taught you about what is a man is wrong”. He specifies: his grandfather who has been married for 65 years “(...) he is the big villain of society [ because] they are in the logic of Marxist conflict. (...) There are thinkers who say that all sexual relations are rape, various crazy things (and shows a photo of Andrea Dworkin at this point) because you are in this logic of conflict you must fight this male and create this toxic masculinity”.

The video continues playing the students against women professors and then moves, just after four minutes to explain why young men adhere to Bolsonarism.

He offers a virile symbol (...) of masculinity, whoever says that to be a man is bad (...) is wrong...he is charged up about this. [...] he is authentic. [...] So, he says that what young men want is only to be a man, to be a boy (...) what they are calling for through the symbol of Bolsonaro is to be a man and express this hormonal thing.

Bolsonaro is presented as the “cathartic thing” against the “little feminist friends” and against the “oppression” of teachers in the classroom. “He is a sexual identity phenomenon”. And he makes the discourse of hate banal: “Bolsonaro doesn’t say anything that any taxi driver or uncle in a bar doesn’t say. All common Brazilian citizens know this”.

The video posted on 29 September 2018, before Bolsonaro’s election, had 173,660 views, 26,000 likes, indicating approval of the ideas and 744 dislikes, which indicates rejection or criticism of the content. At the end, the presenter convokes the audience to comment on the ideas presented, which has a certain adhesion: there are 2,168 comments, most of which reinforce the ideas presented.

The broader objective is to explain Bolsonaro’s rejection by the feminine public. The post was published in the wake of the broad popular movement #elenão [Not him].<sup>9</sup> The general content is, in itself, absolutely crude: it lacks historic foundation. It cites classic authors – like Hegel and Marx – in a cryptic and foolish manner, it dismisses serious issues like rape and incites male students against women professors and female colleagues. Even though, it does provide an explanation of why young men adhere to Bolsonaro.

## Conclusion

As revealed in the epigraph at the beginning of this reflection, the absence of recognition by the state, articulated to bellicose narratives and discourses of hate, produce devastating effects on many of us. However, not on everyone.

The material presented indicate that experiences expressed in narratives about “suffering” had been mobilized even before the coup against President Dilma. A field of identification among women was being produced through a sharing of situations that revealed similarities upon being vocalized. The process produces a didactic/pedagogy of feminism (always intersectional) to the degree that it shows how that which is lived as

<sup>9</sup> A national movement that took to the streets in 2018

personal, is in reality broader, or that is, political. The slogan, “the personal is political” functions in practice, that is, the statements of suffering allow perceiving that which had been experienced only as individual suffering is a collective experience and is revealed to be a question of social inequality of gender, race, class and or sexuality intersectioned according to various dynamics.

In the opposite direction, it was possible to note that those who present themselves as conservative women from the right do not use narratives marked by suffering and a sense of vulnerability. There is a desire for order, at times control. And a voice marked by resentment emerges in various situations. Most of the narratives presented do not share values and representations with those who vocalize, based on various experiences, a subalternized position in the broader social situation. A series of mechanisms has been producing a cultural anesthesia (Feldman, 1994), feeding what Achille Mbembe has called necropolitics (Mbembe, 2003)

This is a process of inflection in the sense that it affirms ideas and experiences of gender, sexuality and race now lived from a bellicose and militarized, arrogant and virile perspective, mobilized by an economy of resentment that imposes a fixed<sup>10</sup> temporality. The hypothesis that we present in this text is that there has been a diffusion of a sense of distress and annihilation at a time when the state itself has assumed a discourse of hate against women, blacks, the indigenous, LGBTs, and more recently towards the environment.

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<sup>10</sup> for a similar perspective in international comparative view (South Africa), see Moutinho (2012 and 2017)

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# Anthropology and the State in Brazil: questions concerning a complex relationship

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## Abstract

In this article we argue that, in order to understand the “attack” made on anthropology in Brazil, undertaken in the public sphere since the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century, we need to look at how anthropological knowledge has become disciplined and institutionalized in the medium to long term. We refer, in particular, to the relationship between what has been constituted as a “field of anthropology” and issues related to the public sphere. It is also necessary to consider the configuration with other institutionalized knowledge throughout the period spanning from the end of the nineteenth century to the present, with discontinuities but also with some important continuities. We look to show that the anthropology initially undertaken in Brazil was basically committed to furthering the interests of the agrarian-based political elites, a situation that continued from the turn of the nineteenth century to the twentieth century and into the first decades of the twenty-first, not only at the level of nation building, but also in the formation of the State. However, since the 1950s, and especially following creation of the new postgraduate courses in the late 1960s and early 1970s, anthropologists developed knowledge that led them to make an ethical and moral commitment to the communities with which they worked, combined with a critique of the military regime’s developmentalism and dictatorial authoritarianism. During a third moment ranging from the constituent process to the present, a portion of Brazilian anthropologists began to work directly in the recognition of rights constitutionally assigned to differentiated collectivities, generating a growing and progressive zone of friction with the hegemonic sectors at the economic-political level.

**Keywords:** Anthropology and the public sphere; history of anthropology in Brazil; state formation processes in Brazil; culturally differentiated rights.

# Antropologia e Estado no Brasil: questões em torno de uma relação complexa

## Resumo

Neste artigo, argumentamos que para compreender o “ataque” dirigido à antropologia realizado na esfera pública no Brasil, desde o início da segunda década do século XXI, é necessário olhar para o modo como o conhecimento antropológico se disciplinarizou e se institucionalizou no médio e longo prazo. Referimo-nos, em particular, à relação entre o que se constituiu como um “campo da antropologia” e questões relacionadas com a esfera pública. É preciso considerar, também, a configuração com outros saberes institucionalizados ao longo do período que vai do final do século XIX até a atualidade, com descontinuidades, mas também com algumas continuidades importantes. Procuramos mostrar que a antropologia inicialmente empreendida no Brasil estava basicamente comprometida com a promoção dos interesses das elites políticas de base agrária, situação que se prolongou da virada do século XIX para o século XX e nas primeiras décadas do século XX, não apenas no nível da construção da nação, mas também na formação do Estado. No entanto, desde a década de 1950, e especialmente após a criação dos novos cursos de pós-graduação no final da década de 1960 e início da década de 1970, os antropólogos desenvolveram conhecimentos que os levaram a assumir um compromisso ético e moral com as comunidades com as quais trabalhavam, combinado com uma crítica ao desenvolvimentismo do regime autoritário civil-militar. Num terceiro momento, que vai desde o processo constituinte até a atualidade, uma parcela dos antropólogos brasileiros passou a atuar diretamente no reconhecimento de direitos constitucionalmente atribuídos a coletividades diferenciadas, gerando uma crescente e progressiva zona de atrito com os setores hegemônicos no âmbito econômico-político.

**Palavras-chave:** Antropologia e esfera pública; história da antropologia no Brasil; processos de formação de Estados no Brasil; direitos culturalmente diferenciados.

# Anthropology and the State in Brazil: questions concerning a complex relationship<sup>1</sup>

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In 2015-2016, a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (*Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito: CPI*)<sup>2</sup> was created with the purpose of identifying irregularities in the administrative procedures undertaken by the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) and the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) for the official recognition of indigenous lands, quilombola communities and land reform settlements. Such recognition is based on rights enshrined in Brazil's 1988 Federal Constitution.

In a political context in which the impeachment of President Dilma Vana Rousseff was orchestrated and consummated – made definitive in a second vote in the federal senate on August 31, 2016 – the CPI was set up by representatives of the Farming Parliamentary Front (*Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária: FPA*),<sup>3</sup> including the current Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply, Tereza Cristina Corrêa da Costa Dias.<sup>4</sup> The focus of the CPI's investigation was, in the counterfactual way in which everything has been pursued in Brazilian public life since 2015, to push back against the important – but far from decisive – involvement of anthropologists as specialists in the administrative identification of the lands of collectivities with forms of land appropriation ethnically distinct from individual private ownership. According to the arguments of opponents, official anthropological reports have been produced in a fraudulent way, 'inventing' indigenous and quilombola populations where none exist.<sup>5</sup> This accusation has been formulated by various actors since the 1990s at least.

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2 "Using the investigative powers of a legal authority, the CPI inquires into a specific fact for a specified period of time. The CPI can be instigated by either the Senate or the Chamber of Deputies, at the request of one third of the respective parliamentarians, or by the National Congress as a whole, at the request of one third of senators and one third of deputies. The CPI can summon individuals to testify, hear statements, request documents and determine arrangements, among other measures. On completion of its work, the commission sends a report and its conclusions to the Chair for submission to the Plenary Session. The report may conclude with the presentation of a law bill and, where appropriate, its findings may be sent to the Public Prosecutor's Office in order to initiate civil and criminal prosecution of offenders." Source: Agência Senado. Available at <https://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/glossario-legislativo/comissao-parlamentar-de-inquerito-cpi>. Accessed on 27/12/2019.

3 In the Brazilian political system, a parliamentary front is a cross-party coalition of members of the legislature committed to pursuing legislative action on a topic of shared interest. Although not included under any statutory provisions, these powerful interest groups can use the space of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate to act, making their involvement inevitable in the real and main political articulations. Some dominate specific commissions, which do possess statutory powers and resources.

4 Tereza Cristina Corrêa da Costa Dias is an agronomist and agro-entrepreneur, who exercised various parliamentary mandates in her home state, Mato Grosso do Sul (in the Pantanal region on the border with Paraguay, Argentina and Bolivia), where her family has a history of abuses perpetrated against indigenous peoples and their lands. She acted as the principal leader in the approval of law bills favourable to agribusiness and clearly opposed to defence of the environment and of traditional populations, especially the so-called pro-pesticide law (Law n. 6299/2002), approved in 2018, which liberated the use of numerous pesticides previously banned as highly toxic substances. For an official biographical resumé, see <https://www.camara.leg.br/deputados/178901/biografia>. For her personal website, visit <http://terezacristinams.com.br/biografia/>. On her activities as a parliamentarian, see [https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2018/09/26/politica/1537970891\\_279915.html](https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2018/09/26/politica/1537970891_279915.html). On the historical activities of the families from which Tereza Cristina descends in the seizure of indigenous lands, see <https://amazonia.org.br/2019/03/avo-da-ministra-da-agricultura-entregou-terras-para-grandes-empresas-no-mt-e-encolheu-parque-do-xingu/>. Accessed on 27/12/2019. Finally, in relation to the specific case of the Alves Corrêa family and the Terena indigenous people, see Eloy-Amado 2019.

5 A quilombo is a type of Brazilian rural settlement founded by people of African origin (Maroon communities are an example) either before or after the end of slavery in Brazil. The identification of indigenous or quilombola lands is an administrative procedure through which, based on ethnographic research regulated not only by the ethical and scientific principles of anthropology but also by administrative regulations based on constitutional principles, anthropologists and other professionals (biologists, agronomists, cartographers, forest engineers, and so other experts) study and present boundary proposals for indigenous and quilombola lands in the form of a report. On this subject, see Souza Lima and Barreto Filho, 2005; Pacheco de Oliveira, 2006. Like other specialist report procedures involving the scientifically grounded work of anthropologists, identification has been the topic of numerous reflections and productions by anthropologists, channelled by the Brazilian Anthropology Association (ABA) in seminars, books, ethical positions, and videos. On the recognition of indigenous lands, see the dossier "Fighting for Indigenous Lands in Modern Brazil. The reframing of cultures and identities" in *Vibrant*, 15(2). Available at [https://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci\\_issuetoc&pid=i809-434120180002&lng=en&nrm=iso](https://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_issuetoc&pid=i809-434120180002&lng=en&nrm=iso). The entire issue can be read at <http://vibrant.org.br/downloads/v15n2/Vibrant15-2.pdf>. Accessed on 27/12/2019.

More significant, though, is the fact that the attack was aimed at anthropology as scientific knowledge, especially the practice of ethnography. Its actions were treated as ‘non-scientific,’ even though they had been practiced by scholars with postgraduate degrees in anthropology from highly prestigious institutions in Brazil. In this scuffle, frequent attacks were made on the Brazilian Anthropology Association (ABA), accused of propagating ‘ideological’ positions and colluding with international institutions (a reference to projects financed by the Ford Foundation, a fact of open public knowledge). These organizations allegedly wished to promote the erosion of Brazilian sovereignty over the national territory, especially in Amazonia. ABA and its president at the time (2015-2016) had their financial confidentiality broken as a result.<sup>6</sup> This measure was suspended by a court injunction issued by the Federal Supreme Court, though the repercussions of the CPI remain unknown, which, still uncompleted within its statutory time limit (which ended in July 2016), was reinstated a second time, while the process of Rousseff’s impeachment was still unfolding, and eventually terminated in May 2017.

For the purposes of the present argument, it is crucial to stress that the CPI was established through administrative procedures that were highly irregular from the viewpoint of the regulations of the Chamber of Deputies. It was negotiated at the same time as the political articulations surrounding Rousseff’s impeachment by the federal deputy Eduardo Cunha, president of the chamber at that moment, an Evangelical from the same party as Brazil’s vice-president at the time, Michel Temer, the main articulator of Dilma Rousseff’s removal from office, today himself in prison for corruption. Set up to intimidate and criminalize those anthropologists working in these land recognition processes, whether they were employed by FUNAI or INCRA, connected in some way to academia, or linked to NGOs active among indigenous or quilombola peoples. Its final report solicited the criminal indictment of 67 people, including lawyers, indigenous leaders, employees of FUNAI and INCRA, individuals linked to NGOs, federal prosecutors, the former Minister of Justice José Eduardo Cardozo, and 21 anthropologists. This led to the realization of an old dream of the agribusiness sector and the big rural landowners: the complete paralysation of all indigenous and quilombola land recognition processes. This posture would later be transformed into an electoral promise by Jair Messias Bolsonaro in his 2018 campaign. As proof of these connections, members of the FPA heading the CPI are all now in important posts in the current government, simultaneously underlining its conservative and ultraliberal character.

It is not our intention to dissect the CPI here. We set out from this critical event (Das, 1995) since it affects us anthropologists directly and forces us to review the self-image we have constructed about who we are and how we act as anthropologists in Brazil. We also have to take into account the influence of the work of other social scientists in Brazil, as well as other anthropologies produced in diverse national contexts. In any event, widely circulated texts (Ramos, 1990; 2003; Peirano, 1999; Ribeiro, 2014) have projected our professional activity as (always) engaged and our production as (always) expressively heard and respected in the public sphere in Brazil. Given this image, the concerted attack on anthropology in Brazil over recent years has puzzled many people.

While political engagement and activity are hallmarks of a large portion of Brazilian anthropology, and while a certain ‘anthropological subjectivity’ leads us to position ourselves ethically and politically in response to the attacks on the lives of the collectivities with whom we work, this does not mean that all, nor the most internationally well-known, strands of our production are so politically engaged: taking a stance as a citizen does not signify analysing the power mechanisms impinging on such populations, notably those involving state action. On the other hand, what many see (only) as ethical engagement and positioning is, in fact, the product of an ethnographic endeavour and a theoretical production that seldom reach beyond our borders due to the language barrier and the fact we base our work on studies conducted in Brazil. As Oliveira (2008) has

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<sup>6</sup> Antonio Carlos de Souza Lima was president of ABA over this two-year period and coordinated the structuring of the entire wide-ranging process of defence of ABA and all those anthropologists accused in the CPI’s final report, measures continued under the presidency of Lia Zanotta Machado (2017-2018).

emphasized, this sometimes leads to a clear asymmetry in how our academic output is received: “specialists on Brazil” absorb our production as a source of ethnographic data, sometimes appropriating the theoretical tools that we ourselves elaborate and that inform our work without due mention. Dossiers like the present are, therefore, for these and many other reasons, especially significant because they enable a broad-spectrum approach to Brazilian Anthropology.

But how then did we pass from the status of specialists – asked to provide our input to a new national roadmap (Pacheco de Oliveira, 2008), as set out in the 1988 Constitution, advocates for sociocultural diversity – to fraudulent and self-interested zealots, compromised by ‘international capital’ and, simultaneously, ideologues of an ‘environmentalist left’ whose contours remain obscure even to ourselves? For any foreign reader – and, it is important to add, for many Brazilians too – the conjunction of these terms would have been seen as extraordinary until fairly recently. But have we actually, all of us, become fraudulent in this era of fake news and the growing supremacy of right-wing groups articulated with the US alt-right? What is specific about the Brazilian setting and the present scenario of attacks on the practices (both academic and applied) of anthropology within the more global resurgence of totalitarianism?

To formulate responses to these questions, we argue that it is essential to examine how anthropological knowledge became disciplinarized and institutionalized over the medium to long term, or else risk attributing the effects of transformations to various patterns configuring anthropology in Brazil merely to a conjuncture. We refer specifically to the relationship between what evolved into the ‘field of anthropology’ and issues concerning the public sphere. We also need to consider the configuration with other institutionalized forms of knowledge over the period spanning from the end of the nineteenth century to the present-day, with numerous discontinuities but also important continuities.

Before advancing further, it should be emphasized that the literature on the history of anthropology produced in Brazil is relatively scarce and seldom taught in the country. Little or no reflection has been developed on the social conditions of anthropological production or how the profession of anthropology is exercised in reality, either on the basis of documental archives or ethnographic research. In other words, much as the anthropology practiced in the country is postulated to be different, the descriptions adhere to the canons of the discipline’s mainstream historical narrative in which ‘practice’ is always treated as a spurious terrain.

Our argument here is simple but, we believe, no less significant for being so. After all, as Darcy Ribeiro (1986) reminded us, we write about the obvious in order to discover other kinds of obviousness, and that is our greatest challenge. The argument is as follows: we propose to interpret the construction of hegemonic power in twentieth-century Brazil as a successful attempt by our political-economic elites – whose profile has changed over time, but maintaining its essential features of exclusion and arbitrariness – to control access to land and the use of labour, an endeavour in which anthropology in its versions of that period was a fundamental ally of those wielding power. This was achieved through processes based around the use of violence, frequently delegated to sectors outside the official military forces, involving a biased judicial system and police practices with a strongly inquisitorial and arbitrary inclination, as shown in the works of Roberto Kant de Lima (1989; 1995) and an extensive group of researchers. In collusion with these processes, the anthropology pursued from the start of the twentieth century until at least the 1950s – which many discount as part of our ‘tradition’ – was already committed to providing the raciological grounds that would ‘scientifically’ inform diverse administrative practices. During this period, technologies of power were developed that ensured the continuing tense relationship between egalitarian and hierarchical values, as underlined by Roberto Da Matta (1979), allowing the construction of an image of a nation state that was becoming modernized yet simultaneously entrenched a pattern of profound social inequality. In this self-image, the characteristics of a State emergent from Portuguese colonization, associated with the slavery regime and marked by the idea of the monarchy as a

guarantor of social order, are all visible, whether objectivized in organizations or subjectivized in behavioural patterns and feelings.

It should be recognized, then, that a significant proportion of the anthropology produced in Brazil in the 1960s and afterwards contributed substantially to the study of phenomena of change at large scales of time and space. Having emerged in response to the social effects of actions implemented by a State run by a dictatorship, and subsequently developed in studies on the gradual return to democratic life, an important strand of Brazilian anthropology has contributed to the revision of units of analysis, methodological approaches, ethical debates and investigative policies, many of which have been marked by the presence of the imaginary of the Nation State as a political form (Souza Lima, 2004; Teixeira & Souza Lima, 2010).

Later in this text, we seek to show that over the course of the twentieth century, over which short periods of democracy were punctuated by dictatorships, the anthropology produced in Brazil responded to different social demands and presented distinct scientific bases for the development of national narratives. Although anthropological production has not always questioned the bases of this highly unequal domination, the production generated via the modern form of postgraduate studies, established under the civil-military dictatorship installed by the coup d'état of March 31, 1964, did not emerge entirely uprooted from the discipline's trajectory over the first half of the century. In any event, combined with the fight of social movements and large sectors of the Brazilian population in the shared belief in the need to construct a democratic State based on the rule of law, anthropology contributed – albeit in a somewhat timid way – to questioning the automatic reproduction of the dominant elites.

The struggles that developed from the 1970s on were punctuated by the search to build a democracy founded on popular participation, recognition of the right to ethnic, racial, sexual and age diversity, labour rights, and the fight for greater equity of opportunities and equal rights. In these processes, anthropologists contributed through their research and technical work, as well as by forming new citizens imbued with different values. These struggles were coterminous with the installation of new social conditions for postgraduate training that produced professionals in anthropology. Whether through research or social intervention, they contributed especially by supporting collective demands based on forms of land appropriation distinct from individual private ownership.

Just as important as the work relating to the lifeways of indigenous or quilombola populations – especially their fight for the right to the lands they traditionally occupied, even more eloquent today – were the activities of feminist anthropologists, alongside other social scientists, in the analysis of gender violence and forms of patriarchy. To this we can add the support that – not without controversy – anthropologists have given to affirmative action, breaking the historical omission of anthropological production, save for rare exceptions, concerning racial issues in Brazil from the 1950s on. We shall return to this moment and its repercussions later. But first, without attempting to exhaust the analytic possibilities, we need to describe the anthropology produced in Brazil over the course of the twentieth century and its ideological and epistemological commitments.

### **From *race* to *culture*: images of the *Brazilian people***

As stated earlier, it is a well-known fact that anthropology, like the other social sciences, emerged in Brazil strongly marked by its commitment to the process of national construction (in addition to Peirano, 1981, see Schwarcz, 1993). This point applies whether anthropology supported or opposed (according to the precise moment of its trajectory) the racist questioning of the viability of a 'Brazilian people' emerging from the miscegenation of 'races' – the Indian, the Black and the European White – stimulated by the Portuguese crown

and later by imperial and republican governments after independence from Portugal in 1822. This perspective is closely related to government policies designed to control or manage these populations (Skidmore, 1974; Maio and Santos, 1996; Telles, 2006).

Elaborating a disciplinary trajectory of anthropology through an emphasis on both the dimension of ‘social thought’ and its contribution to national construction has worked to obscure the forms through which medicine-anthropology (Santos, 2008) – or *physical anthropology* to use the terminology of its time – was central to this trajectory, leaving legacies in institutions essential to our understanding of the present, especially the police forces. The discussion on the positive or deleterious character of miscegenation – and the limits to the viability of a Brazilian people – were not only part of an erudite debate, they were also materialized in State administrative practices and policies. They became part of an extensive process of ‘conservative modernization,’ to use the phrase of Barrington Moore Jr (1967), a form of dampening the trend towards greater access to citizenship from the beginning of the twentieth century. In Brazil this process was always mediated by people’s differential access to agencies and agents of the government public administration (what the political scientist and historian José Murilo de Carvalho (1987) called *estadania*, ‘statizenship,’ state-filtered citizenship, for the first period of the twentieth century). At the same time, a mask (Abrams, 1988) was fabricated of a powerful State capable of taming, conquering, pacifying, protecting and civilizing, integrating territories and social networks with a strong centre of power, conjuring the belief in the supposed effectiveness of education in stimulating the advance of the diverse populations under its aegis.

In effect, this comprised – and we could approach the phenomenon in more systematic and deeper fashion this way – a magical act of enormous potency in response to the reality of the precarious means available to the state centre of power. This sedimented the real control over space and the exercise of violence by social networks of large rural landowners, territorially dispersed and possessing substantial autonomy – consolidated despite the fragility, even today, of the administrative structure and resources possessed then (and now) by the public administration (federal, state or municipal) in the promotion of what was never more than a pale imitation of a Welfare State at most.

At that time, those practicing anthropology were essentially trained physicians – since the only higher education courses available in Brazil then were in medicine, engineering and law – who worked primarily in the study of three demographic sectors that had emerged as politically dangerous to maintenance of the privileges of the rural-based neo-Brazilian elite: immigrants, simultaneously a solution and a problem; the black population recently liberated from slavery, whether settled on lands free of private ownership, or already living in the urban centres or in the process of migrating there from rural properties; and indigenous peoples, many of whom responded with force to the invasion of their lands by economic agents on the expanding frontiers in diverse regions of Brazil’s territory.

Questions like the limits of civil responsibility attributable to the black population given their “mental state” (Nina Rodrigues, 2011 [1894]), the possibility of exploiting indigenous peoples as a labour force in the development of farming in Brazil, or the potential adaptation and merging of immigrants from different ethnic-racial origins, were the topic of public debates and also, in accordance with the science of the time, informed government agencies and policies.

Examples of this are the raciological and racist content of police classifications, or the policy of civil identification based on dactyloscopy (Carrara, 1984; Corrêa, 2013), directly associated with physical anthropology and clearly connected to the control of so-called *vadiagem* (Cunha, 2002), or the construction of republican indigenist action with the creation of the Indian Protection Service (*Serviço de Proteção aos Índios: SPI*), which was initially assigned the task of the ‘Localization of National Workers’ (Souza Lima 1991; Souza Lima 2018 [1995]), transferred in 1918 to the National Settlement Service (which in 1931 became the National Settlement Department), a State agency responsible for regulating the entry and allocation of foreign immigrants,

as well as the colonization of ‘national workers,’ a category that encompassed the heterogenic reality of the people freed from slavery in the rural environment (Ramos, 2006).

Founded by one of the emblematic figures of republican Brazil, Cândido Mariano da Silva Rondon (O’Reilly, 1969), with the backing of researchers from the Museu Nacional (Souza Lima, 1989), the SPI presented a ‘practical solution’ for the country in which control of the workforce and the national territory were explicit objectives: inspired by orthodox positivism, an ideology self-designated scientific that was fundamental to constituting republican life in Brazil (Carvalho, 2012) and guaranteeing a tutelary State, the intention was to use a “civilizing pedagogy” (Souza Lima, 1991, 2018 [1995]) to convert those indigenous peoples in a state of war with the invading waves of Brazilians into rural workers, a cheap workforce for the rural elites. Consequently, it was argued, they would need no more than small portions of land. This policy of demarcating diminutively-sized indigenous areas generated problems and tensions between indigenous and white populations in various regions of Brazil with repercussions that are still felt today, including in the context of the CPI (Eloy-Amado, 2019).

Since the nineteenth century when Brazil was still under imperial rule, immigration policies had been premised on the selection of ‘desirable’ immigrants, based on their supposed potential contribution to strengthening the ‘white’ component of the Brazilian population and thus replace the ‘stain’ left by black and indigenous ‘blood.’ Ideas included the ‘fusibility’ of immigrants of different ethnic origins with characteristics attributed to components like ‘Latinness,’ ‘Arianism’ and so on in the case of whites, and those surrounding the tense debate over allowing the entry of ‘Oriental’ or black immigrants (Ramos, 1996). The extensive and in-depth work of Giralda Seyferth (1990; 1991; 1995; 1996; 2002; 2007; 2008; 2014a; 2014b; 2016 among others) has shown us how, from the end of the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth, this was a fundamental public and theoretical discussion, with the Museu Nacional located at the epicentre of these debates. Race, ethnicity, immigration and colonization were indissociable, composing ideas and practices both for managing populations and for limiting access to the Brazilian territory and land ownership.

Despite the important participation of researchers from other institutions – like the Bahia Faculty of Medicine and the Recife Faculty of Law – in the production of the arguments of the political elites of a country where republican universalism never went beyond a mirage, it was at the Museu Nacional that these discussions most clearly developed, whether in the form of the physical anthropology of João Baptista de Lacerda (director of the institution from 1895 to 1915), who asserted the need for and inexorability of the whitening of the Brazilian population (Seyferth, 1985), or the approach that would go on to highlight the positivity of racial mixture in connection with the environment, under the influence of German anthropogeography and the exploration of Brazil’s interior.

Prominent in this latter direction was the towering figure of Edgard Roquette-Pinto, a physician by training, who directed the Museu Nacional in the period 1926-1935. A complex figure who worked in many areas of Brazilian public life, Roquette-Pinto was a pioneer in educational cinema and radio broadcasting, as well as in the production of systematic works of scientific divulgation, among many other things. In an anthropology based on expeditions and the collection and study of material culture, enabled by the support of the SPI, in a country like Brazil forever lacking resources for science and technology, Roquette-Pinto, an intellectual from coastal Brazil (like nearly all at the time), was able to achieve what until then only foreign researchers, especially German, had managed: an extensive period of investigation in the country’s interior. The work, although not breaking entirely from the idea of a differentiation between races, resulted in publications – among which *Rondonia: Anthropologia, Ethnografia* (Roquette-Pinto 2005 (1917)) became the most prominent – along with scientific collections and exhibitions at the Museu Nacional, which over time shifted from being classified as *sertanejas* to *regionais* (Dias, 2020).

As Ricardo Ventura Santos (2012) reminds us, Roquette-Pinto performed an important role in the racial debate in Brazil. Although rooted in racial differentiation, the anthropologist's approach posited a kind of defence of the value of Brazilians of all the 'racial types' without, therefore, falling into line with the theories of degeneration then in vogue. This distinct approach could be interpreted to derive from meetings with Franz Boas in the 1920s (Stepan 1991:160), but Roquette-Pinto's positions on this topic in fact preceded them historically. Whatever the case, though, the researcher's trajectory was significant both for the anthropological research carried out at the Museu Nacional and for the broader setting of discussions on race in Brazil. It is in this sense that at the "beginning in the 1920s there was a decreasing emphasis on indigenous studies by anthropology at the National Museum and an emerging interest in the 'types' that made up the Brazilian people" (Santos, 2012, p. S24). This trend would be reversed in the 1940s, however, again with the support of the SPI, when the exploration of the territory of the Xingu river led to a substantial interest in the indigenous peoples of the region. Furthermore, the Museu Nacional also participated on diverse State councils, including the National Council for the Protection of Indians (Freire, 1990), and the Council for Supervising Artistic and Scientific Expeditions in Brazil, a state agency responsible for controlling the scientific expeditions venturing into Brazil's inland regions (Grupioni, 1998).

While the production surrounding a particular brand of physical anthropology had a kind of epicentre at the Museu Nacional, it was also mobilized in other areas of reflection. The argument on miscegenation proposed by Gilberto Freyre in *Casa Grande & Senzala* (1933) alludes to Roquette-Pinto (Santos, 2008, p. S18). To illustrate this correlation, we can highlight the way in which the author grounds his book on a distinction between *race* and *culture*:

It was the study of anthropology under the supervision of Professor Boas that first revealed to me the Negro and the Mulato in all their true worth – separating the effects of the environment or cultural experience from the racial traits. I learnt to consider the difference between *race* and *culture* to be fundamental; to distinguish between the effects of purely genetic relations and those of social influences, cultural heritage and the environment. This criterion of a fundamental differentiation between race and culture provides the groundwork for this entire essay. (Freyre, 2003 [1933], p. 32)

The extent to which this distinction is viable<sup>7</sup> is questionable, but the fact is that cultural description – equivalent here to an essentializing narrative of the construction of a people – led to the emergence of a type of analysis in which conflict resolution and pacification come to the fore. In this sense, the structural and symbolic components of the processes underlying the production of inequality are subsumed in a culturally fatalistic perspective. The potency of a miscegenated culture is interpreted as an indication of this analytically instigated process of pacification, but also enormously as a justification for government actions.

In this sense, while the symbolic production of the country was disputed – a process that influenced the formation of the Brazilian State – certain aspects can be comprehended as organizing factors. One useful interpretation of this presence of the cultural – or social or even economic – formation of Brazil through miscegenation is to think of it as a kind of *dominant symbol* (Turner, 1967: 27-29) – that is, as a trigger for social action.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Discussions on the effective adoption of an idea of culture in detriment to the concept of race can be found in Lima (1989), Araújo (1993) and Souza (2000). The reflection of George Stocking Jr (1966) on the way in which the notion of culture is modified in Franz Boas's work would also help deepen this debate.

<sup>8</sup> It is worth recalling that Turner formulated this expression while reflecting on the symbols relating to numerous ritual elaborations, whose multiple presence is ensured by their polysemy.

The narratives surrounding a Brazilian people, whether informed by a culturalist approach or by the physical anthropology that provided a basis for typological processes, were affirmed through a teleological view of miscegenation.<sup>9</sup> These explanatory models tend to ignore hierarchical processes in which they were embedded and the production of inequalities that they systematically produced. In this sense, the plasticity of these narratives is one of their fundamental characteristics. It is through this plasticity that political assemblages as diverse as those cited above could be justified. They are connected, therefore, to a series of institutional innovations that, in a feedback process, they helped to institute.

### **Brazilian anthropology, university institutionalization and the establishment of postgraduation as a process of State formation**

These discursive constructions were not dispersed in later decades. On the contrary, they can be seen still as organizing factors behind a series of intellectual and governmental practices. In the populist drive towards national development that emerged in the 1950s, especially after the collapse of the Getúlio Vargas dictatorship (1937-1945), we can observe the grounds being prepared for the large expansion into Amazonia that occurred after 1964, especially after 1969, with the selling of lands through legal machinations in the regions of Central Brazil and Eastern Amazonia. These processes had an impact on the development of anthropological studies, but were equally important to an increasing demand for rights from rural and urban sectors. This period also saw the emergence of democratic institutions and practices, especially during the period of Getúlio Vargas's constitutional government, from 1950 to 1954, when, under strong pressure from so-called liberal sectors, Vargas committed suicide in one of the political acts of greatest significance in Brazil's republican history.<sup>10</sup>

Over this period, the anthropology produced in Brazil gradually abandoned the assimilationist narrative of acculturation and turned to examine the sociological problems posed by a racist society, rurally based but increasingly hegemonized through urban sectors in a perfect articulation of what was then already called unequal combined development<sup>11</sup>. The role played by the colonization of the country's interior via federal government initiatives would only tend to increase. Once again the history of indigenism and anthropology intersected: in 1942, the SPI was restructured (Souza Lima 2018 [1995]) and a studies section was created where, for a short time in the 1950s, three anthropologists would work whose trajectories are emblematic of prominent aspects of contemporary anthropology in Brazil: Darcy Ribeiro, who, as well as an interpreter of Brazilian nationality, became a writer and politician of considerable importance (Mattos, 2007; 2018); Eduardo Enéas Galvão, the first Brazilian anthropologist to obtain a PhD from the University of Columbia in 1952 (Pacheco de Oliveira, 2018); and Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, perhaps the most prominent figure in the inauguration of the modern institutionalization of anthropological training on contemporary foundations (Pacheco de Oliveira, 2008; Silva, 2018).

It was also in the 1950s, more specifically in 1951, that the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) and what was then the Campaign (today the Coordination) for the Advanced Training of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) were created with the mission of training personnel for public administration and for research and technological development in Brazil. Under the auspices of CAPES,

9 It is important to emphasize that physical anthropology did not simply vanish. Morales (2002) shows us how it was institutionalized in the form of a candidate selection process run by the service that managed the recruitment of so-called 'rubber soldiers,' individuals who applied to work as rubber tappers in Amazonia following the revival of rubber extraction in the region as part of the Second World War effort.

10 For information on the Brazilian history of the period, see Fausto, 1999.

11 Here we refer to the appropriations made by Francisco de Oliveira (2013) of the theories of León Trotsky (in *The Permanent Revolution*, Trotsky 2007) and Rosa Luxemburg (Luxemburg 1964) concerning the maintenance of tardiness and precapitalist social forms (relations of production, but also worldviews, notably those based around the slavery regime) in his interpretation of the Brazilian economy and society. Oliveira's first text dates back to 1972 and was first published in 1975. In the international setting, these ideas became better known through the work of the Egyptian-French economist Samir Amin (Amin 1976).

as well as the Indian Protection Service (SPI), which had created the Indian Museum in 1953 as part of the campaign to combat racism promoted by UNESCO in the post-war period, the first Advanced Training Course in Cultural Anthropology was set up under the coordination of Darcy Ribeiro, implemented in 1955-56.

UNESCO's initiative was fundamental and much broader in terms of the research on race relations in Brazil (Maio, 1997; Maio 2001; Maio 2005; Pereira & Sansone, 2007), reflecting its mandate to combat racism and overcome the legacy of colonialisms. The same applied to research on indigenous issues, given that under its auspices Darcy Ribeiro was able to develop nationwide studies using material available in the SPI to which he had privileged access (Mattos, 2007). The intention of Ribeiro and his collaborators was to set up a more wide-ranging centre for research and postgraduate studies in anthropology based at the Indian Museum. However, the course was discontinued when the entire organizational team left the SPI during this same period due to political changes following the end of the Vargas government. With the dispersal of these professionals, Luiz de Castro Faria, from the Museu Nacional, invited Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira to join the institution and create specialization courses along similar but distinct lines to the course at the Indian Museum (Souza Lima, 2005; Mattos, 2007: 113-126).

Years later, in a broader articulation, Castro Faria and Cardoso de Oliveira created, along with David Maybury-Lewis (Prins and Graham, 2008), the Postgraduate Program in Social Anthropology (PPGAS) in 1968, with the support of the Latin American Centre of Research in Social Sciences (CLAPCS) in Rio de Janeiro and the Ford Foundation (Bringel, Nóbrega, Macedo, Macêdo and Machado, 2015; Blanco, 2017). It also received support from CAPES and CNPq, compliant with the guidelines for modern postgraduate studies in Brazil, established by an official report in 1965 from the Federal Council of Education, called the Sucupira Report (Cury, 2005). PPGAS was created to train professionals with a grounding in ethnographic research within the framework of social anthropology, in dialogue with sociology and political science, situating our discipline at the centre of debates on Brazilian society, whether in the rural or urban environments, in contrast to the previously dominant culturalist anthropology (already criticized earlier by Darcy Ribeiro). Between the establishment of specialization courses and the institutionalization of PPGAS, the civil-military coup d'état of March 1964 put another dictatorship in power.

It is not our intention here to venture a reconstruction of the history of how modern postgraduate teaching in anthropology became institutionalized in Brazil, or the close relationship this involved with the political conjunctures through which we passed, but rather to point out that the over-emphasis on those aspects connecting our discipline to the process of national construction in studies analysing the themes in question – based more on collecting testimonies and interviews than analysing documents – has tended to overlook the relationship between anthropology and State formation.<sup>12</sup>

Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (1997a; 1997b) highlighted the link between anthropology and State, not just in the Brazilian case, but also in numerous other Latin American countries – a link that if it is not to become one more sterile denunciation (like the obvious relation with historical colonialism) would require research yet to be undertaken, at least not in the Brazilian case, including focusing attention on its relation to 'internal colonialism.' But the relationship with the State also – and primarily – involves the centrality of the promotion of postgraduate education and federal regulation of the procedures for organizing and recognizing courses.

Anthropology, like the other social sciences, grew in Brazil under the shadow of the military dictatorship's post-1964 investment in the training of a technobureaucracy capable of managing its developmentalist plans. These were largely focused on training engineers to implement infrastructural works that would have serious impacts on the more vulnerable sectors or inhabitants of the regions across which the new wave of colonization was directed: the Centre-West and, especially, the North – Amazonia in particular.

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<sup>12</sup> On the distinction between State formation and nation building, see Elias, 2006 [1972].

Thus, however contradictory it may appear to a foreign readership, at the same time as anthropological production adapted to the guidelines set for postgraduate studies by the authoritarian governments, it did so very often through a critical approach to the military's initiatives. This did not happen without major tensions and disputes, including within areas of anthropology itself, much of whose history still needs to be studied and analysed.

Browsing the lists of dissertations and theses produced on the postgraduate programs created or reformulated in Brazil during this period, we can observe that the studies of such aspects were extremely important, setting out from an ethical and moral commitment to our interlocutors. After all, the country was going through a major transformation in which the urban world's influence seemed to be surpassing the rural world(s) and not just the ways of life of indigenous peoples were under threat. In the urban environment too, the government's 'spectacular interventions' made themselves felt, especially in Rio de Janeiro, with the compulsory removals of favelas in a context of increasing demographic flow to the cities.

Although it is worth recalling that meetings of the Brazilian Anthropology Association (ABA) had included a session on indigenist policy since the association's creation in 1955, the ethical commitment to indigenous peoples and the defence of their life and rights being founding principles of ABA, it was without doubt from this period that a particular ethos became dominant in our anthropology that presumes its own unique style of engagement. It is important, however, to emphasize that anthropologists do not necessarily adopt such a stance through their research, but rather as an exercise of citizenship that, while significant, does not imply a reflexive, critical and propositional involvement.

As has already been shown (Souza Lima and Barroso-Hoffmann, 2002), the young anthropologists trained in the new postgraduate departments created or restructured from 1968 became intensely involved in the social movements that organized to fight for rights in response to the civil-military dictatorship, many setting up NGOs or working from positions in university, especially on indigenous and land ownership issues. At that moment, anthropologists became identified as *personae non gratae* by the authoritarian regime, placed under duress and threatened. The Brazilian Anthropology Association frequently spoke in their defence. However, there was no attempt to discredit anthropological knowledge per se or the ABA.

This intense public activity is constructed in a context in which research and intervention work in tandem, where the theoretical, ethnographic and critical production of state action combine not just to construct a theoretical and empirical corpus active within the borders of academia, but also to suggest and debate alternatives for public action, solutions more convergent with the interests of less privileged sectors of the population with whom anthropologists usually work. These questions are characteristics of the mode of research and action particularly apparent during the years of 'redemocratization' (1985-2013).

These processes are thus signals of the disputes surrounding the production of persistent long-term inequalities in Brazil. Hence they impacted anthropological production in a systematic way – whether through its insertion in postgraduate studies as an indication of state articulation, or in the defence of the rights of diverse populations. If we consider this scenario as a political process underway, with unequal disputes that allow those groups in power to perpetuate their structural positions, land issues – especially those involving so-called 'traditional' populations whose logic of use and belonging appear to challenge individual private ownership – naturally emerge as central to political articulations. And here, as already outlined earlier, anthropologists performed a fundamental role. If we compare the situation with the period from the beginning of the twentieth century to the 1950s, what the new postgraduate courses offered was an anthropology committed to those with whom it works, whether in rural or urban contexts, and to the deconstruction of hierarchies of power and forms of maintaining inequality.

## Contemporary scenarios of a 'dangerous' anthropology

Over the period of redemocratization, the anthropology produced in Brazil paid serious attention to the resumption of elections and the analysis of the patronal and clientelist practices typical of public life in Brazil (Teixeira and Souza Lima, 2010), as well as the implementation of governmental policies focused on differentiated rights, among which the territorial rights of indigenous and quilombola populations and other social collectives are central. Anthropology's contribution and the presence of anthropologists themselves went far beyond the sphere of issues relating to the territorial rights of indigenous and quilombola communities, extending to innumerable other areas like women's rights, LGBT+s groups, cultural heritage and policies, affirmative actions in the access to higher education and postgraduate studies in public, federal, state and municipal universities. We work with social sectors whose access to citizen participation has been mediated historically by diverse forms of violence and domination, meaning that, among other things, they have acquired the basic knowledge needed to represent themselves in a form unprecedented in Brazilian history.<sup>13</sup>

This happened especially during the years when the Workers' Party was in power (2003-2016), which saw a significant, though always insufficient, expansion of funds for research and education, especially higher education, including the creation of diverse new federal universities and federal technology institutes, the latter combining secondary, undergraduate and postgraduate education.<sup>14</sup> Following the directives of the national plans for postgraduate education (Feldman-Bianco, 2018), the postgraduate training programs in anthropology and archaeology tripled in number and strove to train a new generation of researchers, largely coming from less privileged sectors of Brazilian society.<sup>15</sup>

This expansion occurred in tandem with the creation of undergraduate courses and closely accompanied government plans for the Central-West, Northeast and Amazonian regions, breaking, at least partially, the regional asymmetries that have historically situated the South-Southeast-Federal District axis as the centre of Brazilian academic life.<sup>16</sup> The results can be assessed when we travel through Brazil and come into contact with the research, training and social intervention activities undertaken by colleagues working on courses in the most violent regions of the country, like the states of Mato Grosso do Sul, southern Bahia, or Pará.

In this process of generating knowledge and training new professionals, anthropologists find themselves embroiled in such discussions, producing knowledge, debating with the national and international literature, becoming immersed in ethical-scientific discussions, mediating initiatives to liaise with sectors of the government public administration and channelling their scientifically-founded professional activities to provide support for policy formulation. It seems plausible that various of these policies (sometimes called identity policies) may have indeed contributed over time to changing historical patterns of social inequality and income concentration, reconfiguring the Brazilian State and the relation between classes, class sectors and social strata, thereby altering the conditions of hegemonic power in the process. So-called cultural policies, in particular, had an unprecedented prominence, becoming, despite their contradictions,<sup>17</sup> as a central sphere in which scenarios of real change in certain political exchanges were observable. This applies especially to the *Cultura Viva* program – created when Gilberto Gil was the Minister of Culture (2003-2008) and continued under the administration of his successor, Juca Ferreira (2008-2010) – which, operating on the basis of a supposedly anthropological idea of culture, financed important cultural initiatives at a community level.

<sup>13</sup> For a survey of anthropology's investments in the public sphere in Brazil and its 'social impact' (one of the new measures that CAPES seeks to measure in the process of evaluating postgraduate education), tracing the actions of ABA, see Souza Lima, Beltrão, Lobo, Castilho, Lacerda and Osorio, 2018.

<sup>14</sup> It is essential to point out to foreign readers that Brazil's system of higher education and research institutions is essentially public and supported by public funds, meaning that federal, state and municipal institutions responsible for almost all the growth in these areas.

<sup>15</sup> For recent data on the area of anthropology and archaeology in Brazil, see Souza Lima, Almeida and Miranda, 2019a and b.

<sup>16</sup> For the Amazon region, see Almeida, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> For an analysis of the construction of cultural policies as a category of intervention in contemporary Brazil, see Gonçalves Dias 2014 and 2015.

However, these timid alterations took place in parallel to the economic strengthening of sectors like agribusiness and the mining industry under the influx of the commodity boom, leading to an increasing financialization of lands and their sale to international corporations.<sup>18</sup> This scenario was combined with the construction of large infrastructural works that would have major impacts on the traditional local inhabitants, principally in Amazonia where large construction firms expanded and made huge profits, accompanied by the rapid diffusion of Evangelical churches and their own forms of generating profit, progressively acquiring the capacity to assume management of significant areas of social policies. Just as exuberant as these previous sectors was the growth and enormous profits made by the large private higher education establishments. All this without mentioning the untrammelled power of investment capital, largely materialized in the huge revenues generated by the banking sector.

The effects of the minimum income transfer policies, one of the essential instruments of an attempt to extend citizenship through consumption, were not accompanied by any effective redistribution of resources: income concentration persisted and indeed increased, accompanying more global trends. In parallel, the price of the services consumed by the middle classes rose as part of the more general and positive partial valorisation of labour, which served as fuel for a growing social rancour of these sectors, historically conservative in their values and identified with elites that know nothing of them, but whose way of life emerges as a paradigm, whether to be attacked or emulated.

Everything appeared to be going relatively well while international commodity prices, including oil, fed the surplus that enabled a few years of apparent social well-being. This was the economic scenario that enabled, contradictorily, some of the changes mentioned earlier to unfold, especially access to land (and here overlooking just how problematic and imperfect this process was), and that gave the impression of Brazil living under a real democracy and a new pact emerging between classes, albeit not for those on whom our interest was most focused: in the rural sphere, indigenous, quilombola and river-dwelling communities and landless rural workers, and on the periphery of the major Brazilian cities, black or brown young people whose route to the world of work via education finally seemed to be opening up.

Political developments from 2011 to the present and the aftermath of the election of the current government of Jair Bolsonaro – a period in which the so-called June 2013 movements retain a singular political and symbolic importance, along with the presidential election of 2014 – are known but not yet sufficiently studied, and doing so would be impossible in this text. However, this does not mean that we can avoid pointing out the absence of any profound ruptures. Although they are not the same elites today as the start of the twentieth century, attempts were made to maintain control over access to land for other motives. The intense work of the fairly heterogenous Farming Parliamentary Front (FPA) to force through changes to the legislation relating to the environment – in which the changes made to the Forestry Code were a turning point – were continued through what some parliamentarians openly call a “war over indigenous lands” (Rauber, 2019).

Outlining this scenario is imperative, however. It shows how we anthropologists have worked seriously and ceaselessly to help bring about social transformations capable of breaking these long-term patterns. In doing so, our efforts have been backed by legal frameworks and policy directives present, though not dominant, during the period of the return to democracy, albeit with splits and divergences among ourselves, and never with sufficiently generous budgets to respond adequately to the task at hand.

Data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) shows that in 2018, for the first time, students self-classified as black and brown formed a majority compared to white students enrolled in the country’s federal, state and municipal public universities, matching the demographic reality of Brazil.

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<sup>18</sup> This process has a huge impact on indigenous lands and their possession. On the indigenous fight for lands, see the dossier “Fighting for Indigenous Lands in Modern Brazil. The reframing of cultures and identities.” *Vibrant*, 15 (3), organized by João Pacheco de Oliveira (2018); see also Eloy-Amado (2019) and Alarcon (2019).

In the space of a decade and a half, the indigenous population – a numerically very low proportion of Brazil's total demographic – rose from an estimated 1,400 students in public and private higher education to around 50,000. In both scenarios, the actions of anthropologists and anthropological production itself played a fundamental, though by no means solitary, role: we were in tense dialogue with broad sectors of society.

It was because we touched on this ample universe of the production of inequality, even if few advances were made given the brutal reality in which we live, that anthropologists became noticed and increasingly visible as a profession: today it is unlikely that a representative of agribusiness is unaware of what anthropologists do, although his or her view may be extremely distorted. Our scientific work, we repeat, touched on some of the possible ways to mitigate inequalities, challenging the maintenance of privileges and, potentially, the social reproduction of both the country's hegemonic sectors and the middle classes that mimic them. While the sectors in power today are different, the mechanisms that ensure the maintenance of inequality in our society are, it seems, long-lasting, not only in terms of values but also their own political and financial means. Positions are entrenched in order for these privileges to be defended and perpetuated – even if this entails that some things must be changed and other things are already effectively different.

Far from being merely a crude and ignorant group that came to power, even though they may be this too, this right-wing political block, still relatively formless, has known how to attack the very conditions for the development of our work and our professional lives, and, in certain cases, even our personal lives. Disparaging and disqualifying them as ignorant or incompetent is to reveal an arrogance typical of the old elites of the colonial era, which certainly do not correspond to the profile of these contemporary factions identified with the international far right.

To return to our opening arguments, we have rapidly traced some of the key points of Brazil's history over the twentieth century with an emphasis on how anthropology acted to influence and inform state practices, stressing the degree of continuity in the patterns of inequality that extend from at least the beginning of the republican period when control over access to land and the means of production central to the political work of domination were – and continue to be – essential.

We have sought to show that from the end of the nineteenth century to more or less the 1950s, the anthropology produced in Brazil was predominantly, albeit not exclusively, committed to assisting the elites in their State formation processes. This was especially evident in the debate on the 'formation of the Brazilian people' – that is, the constitution of a workforce and the possibilities for creating a Brazilian civilization based on its contribution. It was thus a question of governing a diversity conceived as racial in nature and then, towards the end of the nineteenth century, of building a nation, an imagined collectivity in which the different racial components were hierarchically organized with the 'whites' (the end point of miscegenation) at the top.

Changes to this pattern occurred from the 1950s due partly to transformations in Brazil and more widely in the context of the post-war period and the fight to overcome colonialism, and partly to the absorption and reelaboration of anthropological theories about processes of cultural transformation, reframed in light of autochthonous experiences of research and intervention. These changes converged with a broader restructuring of higher education at postgraduate level at the beginning of the 1960s, in a new model of postgraduate studies, by now under the 1964-1989 military regime. This model was based on the close association between research and teaching, and was guided by a strong ethical-moral and political commitment to the populations studied by us anthropologists within the Brazilian 'continent.' Anthropological research, even when not directly focused on the authoritarian capitalist development in course, had to respond to its effects on the studied collectivities.

This shift involved the intense participation of a significant portion of Brazilian anthropologists (though not all of them) in the fight for the return to democratic life in the country, eventually resulting in the elaboration of the text to the 1988 Constitution, in the struggle for its subsequent implementation, in the assistance given to social movements in pursuing their demands for basic rights and, above all, in the construction of government

polices for their implementation. Here the old ties with the elites were definitively broken, replaced by a no less committed endeavour to help build a democratic, less unequal society, more diverse and plural too at the level of the exercise of political and economic power. The political elites, especially those rooted in the rural environment, but also those allied with them, have competed for space in the political arena through the defence of so-called '(neo)conservative' values. More precisely, as Oliveira (2013) has shown, such elites seek to perpetuate their commanding position by maintaining brutal inequality and the physical extermination of those opposing them, gradually acquiring more space, in parallel with wider movements towards democracy and a less unequal society that have reflected the more general political setting in Brazil and internationally.

The Brazilian Anthropology Association continues to protest through its diverse committees and commissions. Statements proliferate along with the inequities. A democratic arena is emulated and the importance of these actions celebrated. Arbitrary power grows, impunities multiply, the Constitution is maintained at the same time as it is quotidianly torn apart through administrative and judicial actions. Public resources are limited to the most elementary actions, a panorama inaugurated by the post-impeachment government of Michel Temer and only continued and deepened by Jair Bolsonaro's administration.<sup>19</sup> The dramatic setting of the Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated the stark limits of this modality of action. Indigenous peoples and other social movements have worked intensively via the judiciary, especially the Federal Supreme Court, which is not always receptive to them.

If we take *state formation* and *nation-building* as dynamic and inconclusive processes, we are compelled to make explicit what we understand by each of these terms with each new analytic investment made, thereby ethnographically approaching the prescriptions inscribed in laws and regulations too, taking them as part of the cosmologies that we internalize and that guide us acritically, very often raised to the status of theories. In this way, we can theorize on the basis of ethnographies, rather than making ethnography in order to prove pre-established theories. The anthropology we produce has a singular contribution to make in the study of ideas and systems of State that heavily shape the contemporary social alternatives in many postcolonial States. These perspectives have, for example, provided important guidelines for the re-elaboration of the notion of citizenship in all its multiple meanings, both as a moral community and as a legal concept.

As for the rest, what can we do? It seems to us that we need to continue doing what we do well, in the available conditions while these remain viable: research, analyse, teach and train new generations, now originating from sectors that have been historically excluded, even though this may require us to reinvent ourselves in the process. In this work, scientific associativism and the connection to social sectors that desire a more equitable society at national and international level is, we believe, indispensable. We need to find comfort and build alliances to replace the permanent psychopolitical war in which we live today, and continue to invest in breaking the masks, always renewed, of the same old modes of domination.

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<sup>19</sup> For a broader survey of the situation of pandemic among indigenous peoples, quilombola collectivities and river-dwelling communities especially, but not solely, see Almeida, Acevedo Marin & Aleixo, 2020.

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# “Our time has come! It’s time for the church to govern”: evangelicals in Brazilian politics and in our ethnographies

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## Abstract

This article analyzes how religious values, around which the campaign of Jair Bolsonaro was organized and which continue to be used to maintain the fidelity of the religious bases of his government, originate from the actions of the Evangelical Parliamentary Front in the National Congress, which since its establishment has demanded that the values of “the moral majority” be observed by the state. To achieve this, members of the Front instrumentalize legal principles, while also evoking moral panic. These steps, allied to support for other conservative proposals, form the political agenda of a new right that has acted effectively in Brazilian politics and become the political base of a government for which a moral agenda is the backbone of a new state that is “terribly Christian”, extremist and conservative. Given this challenging situation, what are the impacts of this sole truth becoming state policy for social diversities, and on our anthropological reflections about the imbrications between religion and politics?

**Key words:** Parliamentary Evangelical Front, moral majority, Bolsonaro government, moral agenda, social diversities.

# “Chegou a nossa hora! É o momento de a Igreja governar!”: sobre evangélicos na política brasileira e em nossas etnografias

## Resumo

Este artigo analisa como valores religiosos, que organizaram a campanha de Jair Bolsonaro continuam sendo usados a fim de fidelizar as bases religiosas ao seu governo, são originários das atuações da Frente Parlamentar Evangélica do Congresso Nacional que desde a sua instauração tem demandado que os valores da “a maioria moral” sejam acatados pelo Estado. Para isso, instrumentalizam princípios jurídicos, mas também evocam pânico morais que aliados a outras pautas conservadoras formam a agenda política de uma nova direita que tem atuado eficazmente na política brasileira e se tornou base política de um governo que tem a pauta moral como espinha dorsal de um novo Estado, “terrivelmente cristão”, extremista e conservador. Diante desse cenário desafiador, quais seriam os impactos dessa verdade única tornada política de Estado para as diversidades sociais? E para as nossas reflexões antropológicas sobre as imbricações entre religião e política?

**Palavras-chave:** Frente Parlamentar Evangélica, maioria moral, governo Bolsonaro, agenda moral, diversidades sociais.

# “Our time has come! It’s time for the church to govern<sup>1</sup>”: evangelicals in Brazilian politics and in our ethnographies

Tatiane dos Santos Duarte

## Current suppositions in light of the future-past that is knocking on the door!

When Jair Bolsonaro<sup>2</sup> won Brazil’s presidential election in 2018, I was immediately taken back to the fieldwork I conducted for my master’s in anthropology in the National Congress<sup>3</sup> with the Frente Parlamentar Evangélica [Evangelical Parliamentary Front], between March and July 2010, when I participated in worship services, events, public hearings, and ordinary Commission sessions, especially those that involved political priorities of the group. I accompanied congressional aides in their daily activities and legislators in action in political activities (Duarte, 2011). Considering some knowledge that I acquired during the time that I moved through that space (Duarte, 2014), three questions arise and continue to hover in my thoughts.

The first concerns how Jair Bolsonaro’s speech and behavior, considered spontaneous and not concerned with being politically correct, were validated by a large portion of his electoral base (Solano, 2018). During the campaigns, he affirmed his political profile as a legislator of the so-called “low clergy<sup>4</sup>”, a defender of authoritarianism, of military and police forces, and of arming the population as a solution to the country’s problems. Supported by these agendas, he participated in commissions whose themes involved public safety, and was more likely to react to issues than make proposals in debates<sup>5</sup>.

1 Declarations taken from preaching in 2016 in a Baptist church by Damares Alves, current Minister of Women, Family, and Human Rights of Brazil. Available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2bJl\\_W1ovI&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2bJl_W1ovI&feature=emb_title) accessed on 09/09/2020.

2 Bolsonaro was elected president with 57,797,847 million votes. At the time of my fieldwork with the Evangelical Parliamentary Front, he was a federal deputy from Rio de Janeiro, a position he held for seven mandates, from 1991 to 2018, in different political parties always aligned to right wing parties.

3 The Chamber of Deputies, in native terms, is referred to as the *house*. The plural, two houses, refers to the National Congress, which also includes the Senate.

4 Expression used to designate legislators who do not have an important role or the necessary capital to influence the manipulations and mechanisms of legislative politics. Bolsonaro was seen as a legislator of the “low cleric”, that is, with having a limited capacity for political articulation and definition, an understanding used by the opposition during the campaign to attack his ability to govern the country. This disqualification was made to seem favorable by the antipolitical rhetoric forged by Bolsonaro’s political allies, as a legitimate indication of his honesty and distance from the old corrupt political class, despite his 30 years of political life and with three sons who are professional politicians. This discourse that he was an *outsider* despite being an *insider* resonated with portions of young voters who, according to Solano (2018:22), “identify Bolsonaro as a rebel, as a political option who communicates with them and opposes the system, as a different proposal. If in the 1970s, to be a rebel was to be from the left, now, for many of these youth, it is to vote in this new right that presented itself in a form that was cool, disguising its hateful discourse in *memes* and fun videos”.

5 One of the scenes that shocked me the most at the time of my research was during the convocation of the Minister of the Special Secretariat of Human Rights Paulo Vannuchi by the Commission of Human Rights and Minorities and by the Commission of Foreign Relations to “provide an accounting” of the National Human Rights Plan-3 (PNDH-3). The meeting took place on 20 April 2010, in the largest chamber of the congress. When the topic of the Commission of Memory and Truth entered the discussion, legislators aligned to the armed forces entered the hall, Bolsonaro was one of them and he made a point of affirming that this was a “commission of calumny” that sought revenge against the military, and accused the Workers Party of having political ties with terrorist groups and the then presidential candidate of Dilma Rousseff to be a “criminal”. Other legislators immediately reacted negatively to this declaration. In 2016, the political climate appeared to be more accustomed to hateful discourse. Perhaps this allowed Bolsonaro to publicly praise the recognized torturer Coronel Ustra (1932-2015), the first military officer condemned by Brazilian courts for crimes committed during the dictatorship, without receiving institutional sanctions, on the day of voting to open impeachment proceedings against President Dilma Rousseff. Various parliamentarians used the podium to refer to their electoral supporters, but particularly to God, country and their families. The majority of the Evangelical Parliamentary Front voted to open the impeachment process.

The second question concerns how Bolsonaro successfully performed an anti-political representation without a need for a party affiliation (Solano, 2018), and which through a “digital political body” (Cesarino, 2019) presented alarmist messages, often not true, but which easily gained wide attention on social networks. Through his electors, who became followers, pre-existing moral values in Brazilian society were mobilized, expanding adherence to Bolsonaro’s political campaign. According to Cesarino (2019), the process of constructing the “myth” (as he came to be referred to with reverence during the electoral campaigns), his political rise, and his electoral success is characterized by this digital populism.

This occurred largely because Bolsonaro was presented as an integral representation of “conservative, neoliberal grammar” (Cesarino, 2019: 549), distinguishing him from the “old right” by linking a defense of arms and severe punishment, a neoliberal economic foundation that emphasizes the self-made-man and a minimum state, support for international anticommunist action and a moral religious agenda that defends the patriarchal family (Lacerda, 2019). During the campaign, these themes stimulated fear, interests and aspirations and above all, religious and moral values that were affirmed while slandering and attacking enemies in hateful discourse presented as freedom of opinion.

My third question, which is as important as it is challenging, stems from a reflection on field data from my research about the Evangelical Parliamentary Front. What is the political importance of the Evangelical Parliamentary Front in the construction of the presidential candidate and his political success and governability?

Bolsonaro attained electoral success by connecting religious values with the political discourse that the Evangelical Parliamentary Front had been shaping and revising through the action of its members, particularly in congressional commissions that addressed issues of the family, customs, women’s rights, religious freedom, gender and sexualities (Baptista, 2009; Duarte, 2011; Trevisan, 2015, Vital da Cunha and Lopes, 2013).

As we will see, The Evangelical Parliamentary Front has been establishing relations between the sacred principles that they profess and the political positions that they defend through a politicization in reaction (Vaggione, 2006: 26) to agendas of feminist movements, and those to defend sexual and gender diversities and human rights. In part because their political capital appeared to be weak and they had few significant political gains until the 53<sup>rd</sup> legislature (2007-2010), these legislators had minimal dialog with constitutional principles and participated in various political alliances to strengthen their moral agenda, (in support of the traditional heterosexual family, against legalization of abortion, for conservative social values and against the rights of women and for sexual and gender diversities).

Since the 54<sup>th</sup> legislature (2011-2014), there has been a strengthening of the Evangelical Front, which based on moralist positions, was able to combine other conservative political positions to compose a new right-wing movement (Lacerda, 2019) capable of changing the direction of a government and a presidential mandate, while influencing social and electoral perceptions. Perhaps most importantly, it became the political base of a government for which a moral agenda is the backbone and a fundament of a new Brazilian state that is “terribly Christian”, extremist and conservative.

Although the objective of this article is not to analyze how and why Jair Messias Bolsonaro won the elections (cf. Cesarino, 2019; Almeida, 2019, Burity, 2018, Py, 2020a) or the ideological-political structure of his government, I want to affirm that moral values that organized his campaign and that are being instrumentalized to maintain the fidelity of the religious bases of his government, originate from the actions of the Evangelical Parliamentary Front which, since it was established, has demanded that the state accept the values of the Christian majority for all of Brazilian society.

In this context, I provoke my own anthropological analyses about the evangelical participation in the legislature, understanding that it no longer involves disputes for space within a plurality of political voices and representations, but the solidification of an alliance of conservative sectors in Brazilian politics to form a

base for a government that is self-entitled Christian, which conceives the state as a sounding board of a single “truth” to which all others must submit.

This involves a new governability which is closely affiliated to the Evangelical Parliamentary Front and its religious bases. The technique employed proliferates fear and hate, doctrines and dogmas, under the cloak of political theories and discourses that threatens social pluralities and constituted and emerging rights, rejects scientific knowledge and challenges anthropological presumptions.

### **Present pasts: reconsidering some legislative actions of the Evangelical Front**

The causes and effects of evangelical participation<sup>6</sup> in public life, the forms of social, cosmological and ritual organization of evangelical churches and their relations with the times of politics, with disputes over concepts of the secular and religious and secular freedoms as well as their effects on religious, legal and political fields, have had effects beyond the political field and that are highly influential in society, in the social sciences of religion and in the anthropology of religions and politics.

I consider it important to ponder a certain surprise over this sociological novelty (Duarte, 2017) because for centuries the Roman Catholic Church has been hegemonically part of national political life, formulating principles for constitutions, supporting and capillarizing religious values in society, influencing policies and making demands on the state<sup>7</sup>. It is important to recall that historic Protestant sectors also participated in political life in the republican state (Campos, 2010).

In any case, as Baptista (2009) highlights, in the 1950s and 1960s Pentecostal groups were ignored by Brazil’s intellectual and political elites and seen as alienated from political processes, despite their strong adherence to the military regime (Cowan, 2014). Nevertheless, until the 1980s, evangelicals broadly followed a religious sectarianism in relation to the world (Freston, 1993). For this reason, their representations in the legislature and in the National Constituent Assembly (ANC)<sup>8</sup> were reserved, as has been indicated by Freston (1993) and Baptista (2009). If in the past they had been ignored, today they are leading and not secondary figures (Freston, 1993) in our analyses, due to the political capitals that they have conquered and their effects on politics in the country, the public expression that they have attained, as well as their numeric growth in each census<sup>9</sup>.

The theological turn in the early 1980s when evangelical sectors, particularly those religious corporations with a significant number of faithful, such as the Assembly of God<sup>10</sup>, ran “candidates of the church” in the elections of 1986 to dispute the religious field with Roman Catholics, seats in institutional political spaces, relevance in the political debates about projects and moreover, guarantees of benefits from the state for

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6 In Brazil, evangelicals is a term used by the media, by the demographic census (Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal evangelicals) and has been technically and scientifically established by the vast production in the social sciences of religion about the religious fields and their relation with politics and public space (Almeida, 2017). The category describes a breadth of religious belonging in the historic Protestant field ranging to the Neopentecostal. I use it here to categorize non-Roman Catholic Christian groups and in the case of legislative politics, Pentecostals and Neopentecostals. I will specify the denominations if and when they are pertinent.

7 On 31 May 1931, Getúlio Vargas, then president, proclaimed Our Lady of Conception, the Virgin Mary, the Patron Saint of Brazil. In 1980, during the visit of Pope John Paul II to Brazil, the military government declared 12 October [the day of this patron saint] as a national holiday.

8 The National Constituent Assembly was installed in the National Congress in 1987 by the deputies and senators elected in 1986. Its function was to draft a new constitution after 21 years of military rule. The work of the Constituent Assembly was conducted by thematic commissions that would establish the base for the final text of the Constitution to be voted on by the full the house.

9 Alves and Barros and Cavenaghi (2012) project a growth trend among Pentecostal and Neopentecostal groups that could shape an evangelical majority in coming decades, going beyond Catholics for the first time. These authors indicate the need to better analyze and detail the new religious cartography that is shaped, while also remaining attentive to the increase, indicated by the 2010 census, in people who declare they have no religion.

10 The Assembly of God is a Pentecostal church founded in 1911 in the city of Belém, Pará (in northern Brazil) by the Swiss men Gunnar Vingren and Daniel Berg who were Baptists who brought the doctrine of baptism in the holy spirit and speaking in spiritual tongues that they had learned, in 1906, in the Azusa Street Revival, in Los Angeles, led by pastor William Joseph Seymour, the creator of the Pentecostal movement.

the groups that they represent. Given a “new national pact” (Baptista, 2009: 160) that would establish a new foundation for Brazilian society after the National Constituent Assembly, the argument “evangelicals do not get involved in politics” shifted to a biblical reading that justified a new undertaking: participating in the Constituent Assembly allowed the evangelicals to “rewrite” Brazilian history, reshaping the place of the “People of God” in society (Freston, 1993). How prophetic!

## A Front of many Fronts

The Evangelical Parliamentary Front<sup>11</sup> was only established in the National Congress in the 52<sup>nd</sup> legislature (2003-2006), on 18 September 2003 in a special session in honor of the National Day of Missions. Deputy Adelor Vieira<sup>12</sup> (Brazilian Democratic Movement Party/Santa Catarina) was elected as the first president, and the executive board was composed mostly of deputies affiliated to the Assembly of God. At that ceremony, Deputy Pedro Ribeiro (Party of the Republic, Ceará) acclaimed “by the mercy of God and in the name of Jesus” the establishment of the Evangelical Parliamentary Front of the National Congress and prayed for the life of the legislators and for “unity” among them<sup>13</sup>.

The strategy adopted by its leaders was of partisan plurality to expand the capillarity of the evangelicals in the Congress to attain the political objectives of the group, the defense of the family, morality and good customs (Duarte, 2011: 55-56, Baptista, 2009). To do so, deputies Adelor Vieira, Raimundo Santos and Pedro Ribeiro proposed the realization of weekly religious rituals<sup>14</sup> when they could engender both a “strategic mobilization” (Baptista, 2009) around the agenda of the Evangelical Parliamentary Front, and promote evangelization and evangelical conversion in the legislative space.

I conducted field work among the daily legislative activities of the Evangelical Parliamentary Front at the end of the 53<sup>rd</sup> legislature (2007-2010), which had lower Evangelical presence due to the so-called “scandal of the leaches<sup>15</sup>” in the previous legislature (2003-2006). It was early 2010, at a time of heightened political activity due to the presidential elections that would be held in October. Nevertheless, even with only 56 legislators<sup>16</sup>, the Evangelical Parliamentary Front established its presence in the House, especially through opposition to the National Human Rights Program-3 and through representation of a controversial bill known as the Statute of the Unborn Child.

11 Although it was established in that legislature, it was only in 2015 that the Front was formalized when it attained signatures of 199 deputies and 4 senators, that is, more than one-third of all the legislators as required by regulations of the house.

12 This composition refers to the name of the political party of the legislator and the state he represents.

13 José Duque, a member of the Assembly of God, an aide to deputy Pedro Ribeiro, exercised the function of “master of praise” of the worship services since the establishment of the Evangelical Front and said that the engagement of legislators in the activities proposed by the Front was not broadly cohesive, self-seeking and participatory. I observed during my field work that few deputies participated regularly in the services and they were the same ones who organized their political action based on the “the activities of the Front”. As José Duque, warned in the 53rd legislature (2007-2010) nearly fifteen attended the services weekly, although many identified themselves as evangelicals. There were also those who did not have specific interest in correlating their political trajectories to the positions of the Front.

14 The Constitution of 1988 reaffirmed the prohibition of establishing, assisting or encumbering the operation of religious services. It does allow for the possibility of “collaboration in the public interest” between the state and churches, as had been foreseen by the Constitutions of 1934 and 1967.

15 In May 2006, an operation of the Federal Police and the Federal Public Ministry uncovered a scheme to appropriate public health funds by a group composed of business owners, politicians and public employees. The Congress established a Parliamentary Investigative Commission (CPI), at the request of some parties, to analyze the cases of deputies and senators accused of involvement, requesting opening of procedures for deviating from parliamentary decorum. One third of those accused were evangelicals, especially from the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God and the Assembly of God. The impact of this case was significant for the Evangelical Parliamentary Front, and even on municipal elections (Almeida, 2017).

16 The profile of the Evangelical Parliamentary Front in the 53rd legislature was composed by a mostly male group (only five were female) whose average age was above 40, mostly members of Pentecostal and Neopentecostal churches. In the current legislature (2019-2022) the profile is quite similar, the only change perhaps is that we have a Congress classified as more conservative and with more new members than ever (DIAP, 2018).

On my first day of research, I encountered a worship service, during legislative hours, in one of the rooms of the Commission. Even taken by a disorienting shock to my certainties about forms of political representation and participation and their sacred agencyings (Duarte, 2014), over time, I began to understand the importance of that ritual as an “anthropological find” (Duarte, 2012). Due to long experience with ethnographic analysis of evangelical services and their policies (Damasceno, 2004), I considered their worship services as one of the spaces for the Front to establish their presence, because it involved an “effective performance of [religious] discourse” (Bourdieu, 1996: 82) that provided those legislators with capital needed to conduct alliances, defend bills, benefit their churches, influence policy and the religious field itself.

To do so, they often used the metaphor of “being a missionary in the legislative House” which gave meaning to the radical defense of life from conception, the traditional family and moral values that represented the nation. However, they affirmed they should also be “servants of Christ”, marking other abilities that they should grasp to justify their political vocations. As servants, not public, but of Christ, they serve their bases and churches and would be the leaders in the constitution of a society “redeemed by the lamb”.

In this way, they occupy politics through a “war of images” (Latour, 2008) between religious values and the pernicious values raised by feminist movements, intellectuals and relativists, establishing emblems, constructing their reputations, evoking feelings and producing religious truths to fight against bills, groups and themes that are enemies of the Gospel. Since then, the Evangelical Front has been developing a technical staff specialized in political action not only in the legislature, but also in the executive and judiciary branches to act in the name “of life” as is the case of Minister Damares Alves<sup>17</sup>.

The moral agenda was the calling card of the Evangelical Front in its radical action in the legislature “for life and for family”, especially because it was always more closely aligned historically to conservative positions towards customs and economic liberalism. Nevertheless, at the time of my research, the executive branch was highly conciliatory, but did not consider itself Christian. Thus, the Evangelical Front, in various ethnographic situations invested in the need to be “players” in the legislature and no longer “beggars” (Vital da Cunha and Lopes and Lui, 2017: 126), to make their moral agenda not only a bargaining chip in exchange of votes, but an influential tool in the House, in public policies and in society.

The political action of the Evangelical Front was not limited to citing biblical verse in bills, members understood that they had to learn the political strategies needed to play to win. As we saw, they instrumentalized legal principles so that religious moral precepts would be validated in bills proposed, thus exploiting the conservative trend in a population extremely discriminatory towards social changes and new cultural, sexual and familiar parameters. For example, they evoked moral panic by affirming that the government would teach children in school about sex, to oppose discussions about gender. And they were able to gain adhesions, particularly in moments of economic and political crisis as Brazil experienced since 2013, and above all in electoral periods characterized by divisions, threats, and conflict and more recently, by the proliferation of hate on social networks and radicalization of political polarizations.

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<sup>17</sup> Damares Alves is an attorney and for more than two decades was an aide to various evangelical legislators, in the Evangelical Front and in the Parliamentary Front in Defense of Life and Family. She also serves in the National Evangelical Forum for Social and Political Action (an entity that conducts activities and leads initiatives in defense of Christian principles in Brazilian society) and in the Brazil Without Abortion Movement. Since the 1990s, she has participated in religious missions to indigenous populations and adopted a child from the Kamayurá village in Xingu. Damares was author of a bill known as the “Muwaji Law” (2007) that sought to intervene in the cultural practice of child killing that she maintains is widely accepted among indigenous peoples and supported by the National Indian Foundation and by anthropologists and their professional association. Damares Alves was one of the founders of the National Association of Evangelical Juristas (ANAJURE), which is composed of judges and legal professionals, and acts in Brazil and abroad under the theme “Defense of Fundamental Civil Liberties”, in particular, religious freedom, freedom of expression and dignity of the human person. Since its creation in 2012, the association has provided legal support to bills of the Evangelical Front and other conservative fronts in the legislature.

## Ideologization and religious truth, moral majority, modalities of secularism and human rights in the discourse of the Evangelical Parliamentary Front: previous notes, but current questions

21 December 2009

The Secretariat of Human Rights of the government of President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva published a decree that approved the National Human Rights Program-3 (PNDH-3)<sup>18</sup> which sought to strengthen principles in the Brazilian Constitution and ratification by Brazil of international declarations and pacts about human rights. Reactions in opposition from part of the Congress were immediate and endorsed and promoted by major media outlets, which in name of freedom of the press, opposed a proposal to create a legal framework for radio broadcasting supported by a culture of human rights and with possible warnings about violations. The newspaper headlines in Brazil strongly accused the government of attempts to censor the press and control the news. Evangelical and Catholic groups and their religious supporters in Congress also manifest their support for freedom of religious expression and in defense of the family and life.

17 March 2010

It was my first day of fieldwork. After the service, the National Human Rights Program-3 was the topic of political discussion that generally followed the sacred time of the religious service. One of the aides to the Evangelical Front warned the deputies that on the following Wednesday after the religious service, a meeting would be held among evangelical leaders to discuss the National Human Rights Program-3 and develop strategies. The president of the Evangelical Front made a point of emphasizing “the Front’s victory” in removing three points of interest of the religious community from the National Human Rights Program-3. In that election year, the National Human Rights Program-3 prompted indignant reactions in Congress, not only from religious sectors, but also from representatives of agribusiness and military interests<sup>19</sup> who mobilized sufficiently effective opposition to shake inter-ministerial relations and the Lula government and influence the 2010 campaign. They may have given origin to the rhetoric that lifted Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency and that in many ways support him politically in power (Solano, 2019).

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<sup>18</sup> The process of construction of elements of the National Human Rights Program-3 had involved 11 conferences throughout Brazil. It was approved by state governors from different political parties, and by a tripartite working group that once again debated the agenda of the program. The National Human Rights Program-3 was presented as a tool for strengthening Brazilian democracy which does not have the strength of law but would serve as a suggestion of the federal executive branch for other entities of the republic. The National Human Rights Program-3 had six thematic lines: democratic interaction between state and civil society as a tool for strengthening participatory democracy; Development and Human Rights; Universalizing Rights in a Context of Inequalities; Public Safety, Access to Justice and Combating Violence; Education and Culture in Human Rights and the Right to Memory and Truth. On 12 May 2010, then President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva changed nine points of the plan to attend demands of the military, religious interests and agribusiness.

<sup>19</sup> The National Truth Commission operated from 2012 to 2014 and documented human rights violations and violence provoked by state agents, between 18 September 1964 and 5 October 1988. Its objective was to improve memory and understanding of the truth about the Brazilian civil-military dictatorship, strengthening the struggle for justice. There is an understanding that the establishment of the Commission for Memory and Truth was seen as revenge against the military and provoked a strong reaction in the military forces, which was interested in maintaining the narrative that they are saviors of the nation, to preserve the official memory and not impute blame for crimes committed by the military (Adorno, 2010). Leirner (2019) indicates that from this situation arose the organization of the Military Forces in relation to the new political participation in the executive branch, and in the federal government, using rhetoric that defined the enemy to be fought in a new and now political war with a communist ideological threat. According to the author, the army command had authorized Bolsonaro to conduct an internal campaign in military barracks since 2014. Lacerda (2019) affirms that since the 55th legislature the National Congress began alignments around the candidacy of Jair Bolsonaro. Vital da Cunha and Lopes (2013) interviewed Bolsonaro in late 2010 during discussions about the project “School without Homophobia” (a proposal of public policies issued by the federal government to be implemented by public schools to fight discrimination and violence related to sexual orientation and gender identities) and raised some issues that he came to defend in the Congress that brought him closer to the religious caucuses. Over time, he began to adhere politically to the agenda of the Evangelical Front (Py, 2020a).

24 March 2010. Seminar “Family, Church, and the National Human Rights Program-3 (PNDH-3)”

The Evangelical Parliamentary Front held the seminar in conjunction with the National Program in Defense of Life and Family and participants included federal deputies, senators, various local political representatives, and those with an evangelical and Catholic base. The objective was to promote a Christian union against the “lascivious content of the National Human Rights Program-3” which was a threat to the Brazilian family, as Deputy Henrique Afonso (Green Party/Acre) proclaimed. The event included among its organizers then aide to Senator Magno Malta (Liberal Party/Espírito Santo), now Minister of Women, Family and Human Rights, Damares Alves<sup>20</sup>.

Given that the electoral campaigns were approaching, the tone of the discourses evoked the Christian responsibility to vote in candidates committed “to life”. Then president of the Evangelical Front João Campos (Brazilian Social Democratic Party/Goiás) emphasized that the evangelical base must demand that candidates be committed to “Evangelical issues”, and to those of the churches present at the important political moments and also to monitoring the campaigns of candidates to executive positions.

In this sense, the Evangelical Front sought not to be limited to aggregating or trading votes in the legislatures, but to act as a negotiator capable of earning benefits from the support offered to candidates and influencing important political decisions. For this reason it is pertinent to review some of the rhetoric used at that event about the National Human Rights Program-3, to understand how the Evangelical Front constructed political capital needed to influence the 2010 elections. This marked its break from the (impious) Workers Party governments, and the formation of a new Christian right-wing political force that would later become capable of winning an executive election for a candidate known to be from the far-right (Burity, 2018; Almeida, 2019).

The first was the ideologization of the National Human Rights Program-3 through the theology of Spiritual War (Mariz, 1997), which is particular to Pentecostal and Neopentecostal denominations, which believe that religious and political disputes involve a conflict of good against demons (personified in other religions, political ideologies, social movements), which act in the lives of evangelicals through difficulties, scarcities, illness and addictions. Thus, the decree was the work of the enemy, which was articulated to leftist political and social sectors – “post-modern culture”, cultural relativism, intellectuals, the non-religious – who promote the moral decay of the population by ignoring the nation’s religious values. In this context, legislators and religious leaders emphasize the need for prayer and the intercession of religious communities to undermine the spiritual forces behind the National Human Rights Program -3.

Nevertheless, a political mobilization of the evangelical bases was also necessary, especially because this diabolical ideology that supported the National Human Rights Program-3 sought to establish a communist dictatorship in the country to “muzzle” religions and suppress the religious liberties of the moral majority. The theological rhetoric about the enemy to be fought was combined with attacks on “post-modernity”, atheist humanism, intellectualities and the equally atheist sciences, because they were ideologies that did not respect religions and supported the “culture of death” promoted by intellectuals and feminist and LGBT+<sup>21</sup> movements, in detriment to the “culture of life” that religions defend. Relativism and cultural relativism at times were used to affirm that non-religious culture is dangerous because it threatens Christian values.

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<sup>20</sup> On that day, Damares Alves spoke about the right to life of indigenous children affirming that the cultural relativism of the Brazilian Anthropology Association (ABA) sought to justify their death, as did the omission of the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI). She added that the Evangelical Front had been pioneer in these issues and their defense in the legislature, and mentioned her adoption of an indigenous daughter and the formation of a group she created to defend the lives of indigenous children. Damares was issued a medal in recognition of her work in defense of life, family and indigenous children.

<sup>21</sup> Following the acronym used by the Brazilian Association of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transvestites, Transexuals and Intersexuals (ABGLT).

Thus, the National Human Rights Program-3 was depicted as a document made by “a bold intelligence” (Bishop Rodovalho, Progressive Party/Distrito Federal) that by using a language permeated by “evil, misleading and lying words”, sought to “oppose the truth” (the only one, the exegetically fundamentalist Christian religious truth). “They do not say that it is homosexual marriage. No! It is a homo-affective union of people of the same sex. Homo-affective! 90% of the Brazilian population will not know how to interpret this. They are sophisms!”, shouted Deputy Miguel Martini.

Based on the presumption that the National Human Rights Program-3 sought to implement “a dictatorship of minorities” through ideas that would be gradually spread through society and become “natural”, these legislators determined it was necessary that Christians fight that evil not only in the legislature, but in their own spaces of faith. This is because many religious people were already seeking, according to the deputy, “anti-Christian ideologies, borrowed because they no longer believe in the ideology of the gospel”. This would be one of the reflexes of atheist intellectualism in society.

Thus, the National Human Rights Program-3 was considered by the Evangelical Front to be a text of the militants of the “dictatorship of relativism” (Duarte, 2011) that would attack the secular (not atheist), democratic state (which respects religions) and the moral values of the majority of the population. That is, relativism as a paradigm of post-modernity appeared to relativize various customs, except religious ones. For this reason, projects such as the criminalization of homophobia<sup>22</sup> would be seen as mechanisms that, appearing to defend secularism, promote “the gagging of people who dare to express a different opinion, and even religious ministers who dare to teach the Bible, teach the word of God about this”, as congressional aide José Duque affirmed. Edward Luz<sup>23</sup>, in his talk at the Seminar, and various legislators of the Evangelical Front at other events that I witnessed, affirmed that democracy is the government of the majority and therefore, it would be up to them to legislate for and according to its values that represent the nation. Thus, the legitimate national Brazilian culture (Ranquetat Jr., 2012) must be respected by all of society. It was this population that the Evangelical Front imagined to be moral and mostly religious that must be served by the state.

During the campaign, Bolsonaro affirmed that he would have “a government of the [Christian and conservative] majority” and that minorities would have to submit. This discourse, which some described as “Brazilian Christofacism” (Py, 2020a), was based on a Manichaistic theology of spiritual war and an authoritarian and violent rhetoric that decreed a war must be “sustained in the memory of Christ, European and colonizer: sacrificial and atoning of social minorities” (Py, 2020a:25). It is with this reading of Christianity that the evangelical bases – the result of the recent configuration of the conservative Christian right that affirmed that its religious truth and conservative moral values were representative of the nation, while denying rights to diversity and those of social minorities – nourished the current Brazilian government, but also broad portions of society.

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22 Nevertheless, as José Duque affirmed, even if the Evangelical Front opposed criminalizing homophobia, the evangelical sector “did not wish aggressions against anyone or violence against any human being”, because “we have no type of fury, anger or intention against the homosexual”. Thus, “we are not homophobic because we are not opposed to homosexuals, but against a practice that is considered a sin, antibiblical, the person is loved by God”.

23 With a bachelor’s in the social sciences, Edward Luz was questioned by the Associação Brasileira de Antropologia in 2013 for violating the association’s code of ethics for attacking indigenous rights and accusing people of passing themselves off as Indigenous. He wound up asking to be removed from the association. Known as the “anthropologist of agribusiness” he had aligned himself to agribusiness and other conservative interests against the demarcation of lands and the constitutional rights of Indigenous peoples, *quilombola* residents. He is the son of the president of the entity Missão Novas Tribos which has operated in indigenous territories to promote religious missions since the 1950s. About Edward Luz and Novas Missões see [https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2015/12/25/politica/1451067360\\_021971.html](https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2015/12/25/politica/1451067360_021971.html) accessed on 10/09/2020 and <https://apublica.org/2015/12/truco-o-antropologo-dos-ruralistas/> accessed 09/09/2020.

Correlated to the idea of the moral majority are the modalities of secularism<sup>24</sup> (Giumbelli, 2008) formulated and used by the Evangelical Front in their debates and proposals in Congress. The first affirms the validity of the secular state that, not being atheist, should embrace the participation of religions in public and political space, which Zylbersztajn (2016) calls this “separation with collaboration”. For this reason, they refute criticisms of their presence in politics, because if feminist movements can propose bills and laws, as representatives of the majority, they can as well<sup>25</sup>.

The second conceptual modality of secularism used by the Evangelical Front denies a number of democratic principles, while affirming that their equality before the law and right to freedom of expression guarantee that Evangelicals are free to profess their faith. In this way, when they defend religious liberty, the Evangelical Front uses secularism as an absolute principle to serve the moral majority, while denying the rights of other peoples and groups.

The final modality of secularism defended is that a state that does not encompass the convictions of religions would impose a “secular dogma”, violating its own principle, given that the state must respect religions (Christian ones of course). Also based on the argument of the moral majority, they understand freedom of expression and individual liberties to be absolute rights, correlating them to biblical texts taken out of context, either to demonize other religions or to affirm that religious leaders can preach what is written in the Bible, even if this violates the laws of other people<sup>26</sup>.

Given these dangers, Henrique Afonso (Green Party/Acre) from the Evangelical Parliamentary Front had no doubts when he affirmed that the “prophetic voice of the People of Christ” should rise against the evil points of the National Human Rights Program-3 which would lower the Holy Bible in detriment to non-religious culture.

We must position ourselves as protagonists in the construction of a Brazil that is different for each of us. A different Brazil, afflicted by the hope given to Brazil by the announcement of the Gospel, of law, of love, of the complete establishment of justice, that is, of a redeemed Brazil. A Brazil whose politics can be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. An economy redeemed by the lamb. The communication media, art, literature, education, healthcare, leisure, culture, that is, all aspects can be at the foot of the cross and be redeemed. We are thinking of a Brazil that can simultaneously be subject to the concrete establishment of the good news of Gospel here on earth!” (Duarte, 2011: 100)

In this way, Henrique Afonso made clear the need of the church not only to vote, but to begin to exercise citizenship through more active participation in politics and government taking to these spaces the words whose “truth is unquestionable”. For this reason,

This seminar must raise the word of God and say that this truth belongs to yesterday, and to today and will be eternal. That this truth is light for our paths and a lamp for our feet. And that the nations that look to this truth, and have this truth as light, as a lamp for the construction of their society, will be a nation like a spring of water, will be a nation like a garden irrigated by God and will be a nation that will extend its hands to the poor, to those

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24 According to Zylbersztajn (2016:42), “there is no measure in the constitutional text that expressly determines that the federative Republic of Brazil is a secular state”. There is only a general guideline about the correlation between democracy, liberty and equality as elements that shape the principle of secularity.

25 I often think of the criticism made by a student during a lecture at an event about religion and politics, when the student questioned: why can't he as a Christian make demands upon the state based on his beliefs? Why was democracy constructed as if beliefs were not guaranteed by the Constitution? And finally, if other social sectors could participate in political life, why can't the Evangelical Parliamentary Front, in a representative system, represent millions of evangelicals in the country? But there are questions he did not ask? What are the effects of the introduction of religious beliefs and moralities in the state, especially when it seeks to impose specific moral and religious values on the entire population? Wouldn't this establish an hierarchy and differentiated power among religious beliefs? Would it permit those who have other beliefs and those who do not have religion to enjoy freedom of expression? Would there be repression of those who do not adhere to religions or to religious moralities? (See Machado, 2016).

26 About this theme, the Evangelical Parliamentary Front has made political efforts in the realm of the Federal Council of Psychology to strike down guidelines that establish norms for ethical clinical activity by psychology professionals to prevent treatment of sexual orientation and non-binary gender identities as illnesses.

treated unjustly and to the afflicted. It will be a nation that will look to the children even from the maternal womb and will give dignity to children, offering the right to be happy from the maternal womb. This nation that looks to this truth, raises the Gospel and sees this word as a light and a lamp, concluding, she will ride, but she will ride in high places of the earth. And the Lord will call to say: my nation, sheep! And we will be a redeemed people, a redeemed nation. A nation where one can look to the future and say: we are in the hands of Our Lord. This is the reason for this Seminar (Duarte, 2011: 111).

The word of God, as he says, has the power to construct the society desired by Christians, and for this reason, they should go to the world and preach the Gospel so that all people know the truth, not that of the relativists, but the only truth – which for fundamentalist hermeneutics is atemporal, unerring and undebatable – which will free the nation. Despite using rhetoric based on the biblical text to justify political action against the National Human Rights Program-3, deputy João Campos emphasized that evangelicals were not opposed to human rights, but opposed to certain points “that do not have our agreement, our conviction”.

He thus made clear that he supports “a human rights policy for all”, as long as it follows the interpretations of the conservative evangelicals. Contradictorily, the Evangelical Parliamentary Front also positioned itself, at that time, as a defender “of those people who depend very intensely on public power and on the social security system” (Duarte, 2011:100), and to be against criminality, corruption in politics and in public service, social injustices, social inequalities, the non-distribution of income and for respect for children and the elderly<sup>27</sup>.

The Bolsonarist bases (a term coined by defenders of Jair Bolsonaro) also do not consider themselves to be against rights, but conceive human rights partially: in that they only apply to “good citizens <sup>28</sup>” (Solano, 2019; Kalil, 2018). This idea gained strength in Bolsonaro’s electoral campaign, which depicted his followers as a representatives of the patriotic population that worked for the country’s development and who do not benefit from public policies, particularly, those created by the Workers Party government. Thus, a new group rose as a government priority, which saw itself represented in the candidate who joked about his intolerance, hate, racism, discrimination and even promoted violence, and presented this as a legitimate way to conduct and participate in politics.

This polarized logic distinguishes between those who conquer material gains on their own merit and those who benefit from state policies. The Bolsonarist bases also demonize other mediators among individuals, knowledge and political participation – teachers, intellectuals – thus moralizing the “public debate, presenting adversaries as enemies not only of political order, but also of moral and religious order” (Solano, 2019:17).

This evangelical political action declared that its enemies wanted to spread evil through the world created by God and subvert the moral values of society by anti-religious political proposals. This also stems from connections between politics and religious truths, which are not the same, made by the Evangelical Parliamentary Front in various political times and spaces where it effectively defended an absolute right to life from the moment of conception and that the sole model for the family is that established by God.

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27 This position changed, given that most voted to support the Proposed Constitutional Amendment (PEC) to freeze public spending, a bill that authorized outsourcing work in all economic sectors, and a proposed constitutional amendment to reduce the age of criminalization from 18 to 16. The broad majority of the Evangelical Front also positioned itself in support of labor and social security reforms proposed by the Temer Government (2016-2018).

28 Other electors of the current government (Kalil, 2018) included: Feminine and “bolsogatas” [Bolsochicks]; women “empowered” beyond the “mimimi”; Right-wing mothers: who supported schools without “gender ideology”; religious leaders for the defense of the family against the “gay kit”; and against other sins; religious Christians for the “traditional family”; anticommunists and neoconservatives; as well as “good citizens”; those who support virile masculinity; arms, the armed forces and the police, and even those who are politically neutral.

## Anti-gender and pro-life: how non-people become protected by law and how those protected by law become non-people

20 April 2010, Chamber of Deputies, Hearing with the Minister of the Secretariat of Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic, Paulo Vanucchi<sup>29</sup>.

Christian religions were supported, in various historic spaces and times, by patriarchal cultural bases that affirm a biological difference between the sexes that “naturally” establishes asymmetrical roles and places for men and women in societies. These standards and stereotypes of men and women continue to be reproduced in contemporary religious communities and reified in schools, churches, policies and in the ways that people organize gender repertoires. Supported by this theological hermeneutic of inequality, most Christian communities (but not all) have refused to discuss agendas raised by feminist movements, given that gender equality has been understood to be contrary to biblical principles and to religious moral values.

However, the intensity of the defense of a binary sense of inequality by conservative religious sectors grew in response to the expansion of social movements that defend the rights of women and rights to sexual diversity. Over the decades, this articulation has intensified social fears, particularly in conservative families that consider it important to maintain authority and control over the education of their children. The expression “gender ideology” – formulated in the 1990s by the Vatican – has been promoted as an evil proposal of women’s and feminist movements and sectors of the left interested in contradicting the binary order of the sexes and imposing a new order (considered to be disorder) on relations between men and women.

In a hearing with the Minister about the National Human Rights Program-3, the Catholic Deputy Paes de Lira (Christian Workers Party/São Paulo) affirmed that the decree included a “pernicious expression” – “deconstruction of heteronormativity” – and thus sought to impose “gender ideology” on families, denying parents their right to educate a boy as a boy and a girl as a girl. For these groups, sexual and gender diversities, personified in gays, lesbians, transvestites, bisexuals, transsexuals, transgenders and others identities, are deviations from what is normal, moral and naturally established by the word of God and accepted by the broad majority of society.

As Biroli (2018) and Machado (2016) indicated, since the numerous debates in governmental and non-governmental spaces in the 1990s about public policies to support sexual and gender diversity, conservative religious sectors, above all Catholics, raised their voices against the rights of women, and sexual and reproductive freedoms, which they saw as attacks on religious morality. These conservative religious groups thus began influencing, although in lower intensity in that decade, political agendas raised by the feminist movements. Since the middle of the decade of 2000, to counter the influence of international conferences in support of human rights, there was an international alignment of conservative forces to compose a global policy against gender equality and sexual diversities and to affirm the sanctity of the “traditional and natural family”. This has been an important front in the political battle of these sectors.

Junqueira (2017) affirmed that the formation of an anti-gender lexicon among ultraconservative Catholic groups established the foundations these groups needed to politically counter the agendas of sexual diversity and gender in government policies and social spaces such as schools. By stigmatizing feminism as a negative political movement that is opposed to religious beliefs and moralities, feminist theoretical formulations are “captured, decontextualized, homogenized, drained, reduced to a theory, distorted, caricaturized and imbued with grotesque elements to finally be denounced and repelled” (Junqueira, 2017: 29).

<sup>29</sup> He held this post from 21 December 2005 until 31 December 2010, during the governments of Luís Inácio Lula da Silva (1 January 2003 until 1 January 2011).

For Junqueira, this can create an opening in society to support “antiseccular, antifeminist, and antidemocratic concepts, values and dispositions” (2017:47) reviving male domination, gender norms of a heterosexual matrix and mainly establishing “moral, religious, traditional, dogmatic, intransigent and antipluralist marks” (2017:48) as legitimate values for the political action of the secular state.

The anti-gender lexicon incited the structural misogyny of our society and consequently gender violences and the legitimations of gender inequalities. At the heart of debates in 2014 about new guidelines for the National Education Plan, religious and conservative sectors made considerable noise and were able to bar use of the term gender, preventing a variety of discussions in schools. Opposition to use of the term gender supported by the Evangelical Parliamentary Front is present in the current presidential policy. One of the main guidelines of the Bolsonaro Government to the Ministry of Foreign Relations is that public agents who represent the country in international forums not approve agreements and guidelines that contain the word gender.

It is important to say that Minister Damares had solid relations with the Catholic caucus and conservative groups in Congress to establish a Christian unity “for life and for family”, which is now reflected in a ministry that has abolished the term gender from its policies and promoted an international ideological anti-gender crusade. Soon after she became Minister of Women the Family and Human Rights, Damares Alves affirmed: “this is a new era for Brazil!: boys wear blue and girls wear pink”. She thus used “a rhetorical tool to demonstrate that from that point on, the rigid division of criteria for sex without other variations of gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation, would be the concept that would guide her human rights policy” (Camurça, 2020:98). In this way, in dialog with the fears of the evangelical bases, she distanced Brazil from the broad international human rights agenda and brought it closer to conservative theocratic countries that are highly violent towards women and sexual and gender diversities.

In this sense, it is by making gender a tool for moral panic in the religious fields and in society that these groups have challenged women’s movements and the conquests of women in society. It is by instrumentalizing conservative ideas, in a society still permeated by the political influence of truly patriarchal religious truths, that these conservative evangelical sectors, organized around the Evangelical Parliamentary Front, continue to have a perverse influence on the human rights agenda and particularly on the rights of women. Their political effectiveness has substantially increased because since 2019 they are aligned with and are participants in a government that has instrumentalized these moral positions even more, thus nourishing its bases of support.

28 April 2010, “Government officials for life”, held by the Parliamentary Front in Defense of Life and against Abortion, in partnership with the Evangelical Parliamentary Front, the Catholic and Spiritist caucus and “pro-life” entities.

Vote on the Statute of the Unborn Child in the Commission on Social Security and Family of the Chamber of Deputies.

The event “Government Officials for life” was organized to improve relations among the religious and conservative sectors of Congress and society to prevent the direction given to the question of sexual and reproductive rights in the National Human Rights Plan-3 and to guide to religious bases in relation to the 2010 elections. The national campaign “Legislators and Government Officials for Life – Life depends on your vote” held by the National Citizens for Life, Brazil without Abortion Movement, was launched to warn voters about the positions of all candidates about abortion. Thus, as proposed in the Seminar of the Evangelical Parliamentary Front, about the National Human Rights Program-3, the objective was to unite the evangelical bases to pressure not only Congress, but the candidates, to influence the elections.

On the same day as the meeting, evangelical and catholic deputies were warned that the Statute of the Unborn Child would be voted on that day in the Commission of Social Security and the Family (CSSF). As soon as they were warned that the proposal would be voted on, I ran with them to the commission meeting. The arguments followed those presented in the public hearing about the National Human Rights Plan-3: life begins at conception and this is not a religious position but is scientifically validated. The issue was voted on and defeated in the Congress.

Catholic deputies in particular led debates to affirm the importance of Christians committed to “that little person in the mother’s womb” that “is not an embryo, is not a fetus, but a human” (Deputy Paes de Lira; Duarte, 2011: 134), to continue to oppose bills that may be deliberated on in Congress to support legalization of abortion. The fact is that the government withdrew its recommendations for abortion legislation in the National Human Rights Program-3 even before the beginning of the electoral campaigns.

The meaning given to the category life by the Evangelical Parliamentary Front uses Catholic natural law according to which a person, even before their concrete existence, is already materiality, and therefore their right to live precedes any law of the state. Therefore, Catholic natural law is given precedent over rights established by modern democracies and cannot be legislated by human will and by cultural changes. Thus, the family (patriarchal, in the singular) is seen as a natural entity that results only from the relationship between a man and a woman, that life is given by God, and a human being is created at the moment of fertilization.

The Statute of the Unborn Child gained considerable attention in the news not only because it intended to guarantee the right to life of the fetus, from the moment of conception, making it an absolute unconditional right, but because the sole paragraph of article 13 of the proposal emphasized “if the genitor is identified, he will be responsible for the food support referred to in clause II of this article; if he is not identified, or if he is insolvent, the obligation falls on the state” (notes to the bill). Deputy Jô Moraes (Communist Party of Brazil/ Minas Gerais) argued: “suddenly we have created mechanisms that nearly decriminalize rape”. He added: this law “establishes the right of a rapist to provide support to a child! The poor rapist! [...] This is a Rape Grant!”. The proposal was approved in the Commission for the Family and Social Security, marking an important victory for the religious caucuses.

In the first round of the presidential election of 2010, the issue of legalizing abortion became central to the debates and campaign ads of candidates José Serra/Brazilian Social Democratic Party and Dilma Rousseff/Workers Party (Duarte, 2011; Vital da Cunha and Lopes, 2013). Right-wing political sectors and some Christian denominations (Catholics and evangelicals) campaigned nationwide “for family values” and “life since conception”. There was thus a division even within religious and political sectors because affiliation to one of candidates was justified by a commitment to the “culture of life” or the “culture of death” (Duarte, 2011).

That war of images (Latour, 2008) in 2010 marked not only distinct political projects and positions disputing their amulets, but how through well-oriented rhetoric and strategies, the conservative ideas that compose the nation drove public controversies that steered the election. Since then, religious opposition to the legalization of abortion has become increasingly more critical. I had conducted an ethnography of the defense of Statute of the Unborn Child – which would not only influence elections, but the lives of women and girls – but I could not imagine how the argument of the “life itself” of the embryo, in detriment to the rights of women, would become even more dogmatic in the current conservative religious movements that seek to setback the law of legal abortion<sup>30</sup>.

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30 In Brazil, abortion is permitted in three situations: if the pregnancy is due to rape, if the pregnancy threatens the life of the mother and if the fetus has anencephalia (the lack of formation of the brain). The procedure can be conducted in any hospital that offers gynecological and obstetric services and must have proper equipment and a staff trained in legal abortion. Nevertheless, many healthcare services and professionals still refuse to conduct legal abortion.

A ten-year-old girl was made pregnant by an uncle who authorities said had abused her since she was six. Although the interruption of a pregnancy in the case of rape is legal, the girl was forced to take a *via crucis* through state institutions to have an abortion. Even after attaining a judicial order, the procedure could not be realized in her state and she had to travel 1,000 kilometers to have the procedure. Religious groups were convoked on social networks to demonstrate at the hospital, local legislators and religious leaders stood at the entrance door to prevent the girl and her mother from entering. They prayed for the life of the fetus and repeatedly shouted “murderer”!

Unfortunately this case of a girl from Espírito Santo state is not an exception in a country with high rates of sexual violence<sup>31</sup>, including against children, but points to new forms of instrumentalizing and debating the concept of life, seeing it in a dogmatic manner not interested in scientific arguments (Machado, 2010), based on a religious truth whose power disciplines bodies and creates discourses capable of dehumanizing women by naturalizing their places and opportunities as citizens. For this reason, if this rhetoric was previously fighting at the margins of the state, to reach the center of power, and often seen in the public debate as absurd, it is now made legitimate by federal government positions, and brutal and misogynous state policies<sup>32</sup>.

I understand that the religious legislators have taken a radical position against precepts of “post-modern culture” (which defends contraceptives, abortion, sexual relations outside of marriage), so that the state exercises techniques of behavioral control and control over policies related to sex, gender and reproduction to produce the “society that they want” and the women that they want. Perhaps that society is composed by the pain of the rapes and sexual violations to which we all are subjected to daily in a patriarchal society, which is ideologically misogynous and that establishes as a woman who “follows the nature that God gave her” (not feminists, lesbians, bisexuals, transexuals, those without children or deviants).

In this sense, the woman in the singular, separated from that which may cause a deviation, theologically and socially becomes a receptacle of semen, a body without desire and will, an exemplary mother, the caretaker of the home, a submissive wife, qualifications that appropriate her self, through means symbolically promoted in society and reorganized and reverberated as the force of truth by religious groups. It is this woman that the Ministry of the Woman, Family and Human Rights of the current government appears to protect<sup>33</sup>. Once again, it involves a gender perspective that has strong dialog with the evangelical bases still broadly shaped by patriarchal and fundamentalist readings of the biblical text, which are even used to legitimate violence against women in the name of God (Vilhena, 2011).

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31 According to the Commission on the Defense of Women’s Rights in the Chamber of Deputies, 32.916 cases of rape were reported in Brazil from January to November 2018. Nearly 35% involved girls younger than 14 (which by law is considered rape of a vulnerable person). In this group, relatives, people known to the family and friends represent 86.4% of all sexual abusers of girls. Available at <https://www2.camara.leg.br/atividade-legislativa/comissoes/comissoes-permanentes/comissao-de-defesa-dos-direitos-da-mulher-cmulher/arquivos-de-audio-e-video/MapadaViolenciaatualizado200219.pdf> accessed on 11/09/2020.

32 Some counter positions should be highlighted given that no group is cohesive, particularly in the religious field. A broad portion of the Christian population has still publicly positioned itself against the death penalty (Almeida, 2017; Solano, 2018), but has validated the social order through greater police repression from the state (Almeida, 2019) although with reserves (Fundação Tide Setubal, 2019). In the last election they adhered widely to a campaign that defended expanding the right to carry guns, lowering the age of criminal responsibility, and militarizing and giving broad powers to police forces. Nevertheless, the correspondences between religious bases, discourses, mobilizations, adherences and political representations were more complex (Vital da Cunha and Lopes e Lui, 2017). But it must be recognized that according to data from the 2018 elections, Bolsonaro won two-thirds of the valid votes of evangelicals. Yet a few questions must be problematized: were these votes taken because of indications of religious leaders or for other religious reasons? Was this a vote against the Workers Party, considering that other groups, such as Blacks and other social minorities also voted strongly for Bolsonaro? It is thus important to better understand the meanings of the evangelical vote for Bolsonaro, which probably do not contain only a single variable, and certainly not only ideological religious content.

33 The most controversial proposal of the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights was related to the confrontation of pregnancy in adolescence through sexual abstinence and incentives to not begin sexual life precociously. It should be emphasized that few resources available for the year 2020 were used by Damares to fight domestic violence, protect traditional peoples and support the most vulnerable during the new coronavirus pandemic.

## Current pasts: evangelical ruptures and reconfiguration in political alliances in Congress

The Evangelical Parliamentary Front has been able to more strongly counter the demands of feminist movements and those of LGBT+ people, influencing the political debate through the dispute over democracy and legality, influencing interactions in Congress, and local elections, including those for executive branch positions. Beginning with the 54<sup>th</sup> legislature (2011-2015), the Evangelical Parliamentary Front improved its articulation as a block and with other congressional fronts<sup>34</sup> in the so-called “*Bancada da Bíblia, do Boi e da Bala*”<sup>35</sup> [the Bible, Cattle and Bullet Caucus] to defend the neoliberal agenda of the economic, political and media elite that finance campaigns and political mandates to guarantee that their agendas are approved in the national Congress.

Articulating the rules of Brazil’s political process with partisan demands, social fears and requests from electoral bases, the Evangelical Parliamentary Front, for example, was able, in alliance with the Workers Party government, to install Deputy Pastor Marco Feliciano (Social Christian Party/São Paulo) as president of the Commission of Human Rights and Minorities. Acting according to the agenda of the Evangelical Parliamentary Front and its religious bases, and later, also through accusations against the Workers Party, Feliciano, through this Commission, articulated various conservative positions in contradiction to the Commission’s objectives. Even if the adherence of the Evangelical Parliamentary Front to Workers Party governments had been marked by conflict and contradictions, especially given the greater insertion of identity politics in the government and policies of State, the Evangelical Front came to mobilize religious bases to participate more actively in political spaces for discussion of bills of its interest, making its religious and moral values increasingly resonant in Congress and increasingly challenging the government (Py, 2020a).

The new political articulation of the Evangelical Parliamentary Front through extremist actions gave new impulse to its “moral agenda”, mainly in an innovative and technological manner with a broad reach on social networks. In 2016 the Evangelical Front broke with the Workers Party government and supported the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff. This initiated the construction of a new neoliberal alliance with right-wing parties, with a “massive and unanimous launching of the candidacy of Jair Bolsonaro in 2018, as an essential and decisive ally, which made the group now shift to a far-right political spectrum” (Camurça, 2020: 83). Despite occasional support for and participation in more progressive governments, it is not possible to deny the historic evangelical affiliation to religiously and socially conservative positions (Burity, 2018).

In recent elections, not only did the evangelicals support Jair Bolsonaro, but sustained and incorporated the discourse of hate against the Workers Party and the rhetoric of its administrations and of the entire political field of the left, declaring identity politics, social policies and distribution of income, universal school access, etc. as “diabolical representations” (cf. Almeida, 2019).

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34 It should be emphasized that only the evangelical group defines itself by religious belonging and is organized in a parliamentary front to act on positions it considers to be a priority. Catholic representatives act in Congress through other strategic mobilizations and only in the current 56th legislature formally organized a Roman Catholic Apostolic Mixed Parliamentary Front. This conservative religious base also participates in fronts such as those in Defense of Life and Family, against Abortion and in Defense of Life.

35 Nomenclature that gained public space and the media that expresses sectors that align to the rightwing political project in Congress, but not all of them. According to DIAP (2014:94), the evangelical, agribusiness and security caucuses are “supra-party groups or informal caucuses which have the purpose of promoting causes, ideas and interests. They organize the debate and seek to influence decisions in support of the public policies they defend”. In this way, legislators accumulate strength within Congress, organize positions and influence other legislators so that their projects of interest are voted on in the commissions and by the full house. Nevertheless, the Federal Supreme Court established a requirement for party fidelity (a rule that allows parties to control votes of their representatives) which came to override legislative fidelity to informal caucuses. DIAP (2014) also reported that in 2015, the Evangelical Front had 75 legislators in the National Congress, the Agribusiness Front 109 and the Security Front 22.

For this reason, the politics of hate also promoted by and through religious bases had effects on the new configuration of Congress, which, despite having an indigenous deputy, more women, a higher number of blacks and young representatives, is considered the most conservative of the past 30 years<sup>36</sup>. The majority of legislators in the current congress are liberal from an economic perspective, fiscally austere; and conservative from a perspective of values, more to the right on the ideological perspective and recalcitrant in relation to the environment and human rights (DIAP, 2018: 29).

The Evangelical Parliamentary Front of the National Congress in the 56th legislature (2019-2023) had 85 members, 44 of them new, 41 reelected and two who returned to the house. Only 19 were women. The Senate has 7 evangelical senators (DIAP, 2018). Once again, a broad majority are from Pentecostal and Neopentecostal churches. It should be emphasized that recently, Pastor Marcos Feliciano of the Podemos [We can] Party/São Paulo, was chosen by Bolsonaro to be the vice-leader of his government and has taken an evangelical agenda to the president through participation in worship services and in church events and through declarations supporting the evangelical segment<sup>37</sup>.

During the campaign, Bolsonaro's base of support came from leaders of large Pentecostal and Neopentecostal churches, while his government has a strong presence of historic protestants<sup>38</sup>, particularly Calvinists. Theologist Fábio Py (2020b) affirms that while religious leaders linked to a moral agenda and business-prosperity like Bishop Edir Macedo and Silas Malafaia gain more attention, traditional Protestants, such as Baptists and Presbyterians, have held various government posts, because of two ideological priorities: one that is "legal-educational" and another indicative of "authoritarian policies". They occupy the Ministries of Education, Foreign Relations and of Women, Family and Human Rights, and lead the Coordination of Improvement of Personnel in Higher Education/CAPES, one of the main agencies for support to technology and science in the country.

I understand that the choice of historic Protestants for certain positions is a result of the alignment with the Evangelical Parliamentary Front and with a clearly right-wing policy, because Bolsonaro guides his direction towards them and they wind up supporting the indications of Christians. Given these new connections between religion and politics in Brazil, some authors emphasize the effects of this neoconservatism for the human rights agenda (Lacerda, 2019; Machado and Motta and Facchini, 2018; Machado and Motta, 2019) while other studies examine the meanings of religious conservatisms and their impacts on Brazilian politics and society (Almeida, 2017, 2019; Burity, 2018).

In this context, what will be the position of evangelical groups that support the leaders of the Evangelical Parliamentary Front and that elected and have supported the Bolsonaro government in positions that support the weakening of the welfare state, with an investment in neoliberal individualism and a reduction of labor and social rights? These agendas do not benefit these groups that are mostly poor and who hold more precarious, low-paying jobs. The controversy arises through some finding that perhaps the society desired by a broad majority of Christians is composed of the wills of a single God whose truth provides support and care and not by government policies. More God, less state, may be the slogan of Bolsonaro's campaign in 2022.

36 According to DIAP (2018:30): 210 deputies are in the right-wing, the center-right has 94 deputies, the center has 76, the center-left 60 and the left 73. In relation to the socioeconomic profile, the new Congress has a predominance of professionals and business owners, reaching about two-thirds of the House, while one-third is composed of salaried workers and those with various other activities. In numeric terms, close to 160 are professionals, while 200 are in business and approximately 150 are salaried and conduct various activities.

37 Despite the approximation with the evangelical sectors, Bolsonaro manipulates the religious fields. He affirms that he is Catholic, although he was Baptized in the Jordan River by a pastor of the Assembly of God. He emphasizes the Evangelical identity of his wife, and his devotion to the Virgin Mary. He attends Catholic masses, and evangelical services, and says he is Christian by moral values, thus maintaining fidelity from the religious bases. Bolsonaro commemorated his victory with a prayer from then evangelical senator Magno Malta, who was one of the coordinators of Bolsonaro's campaign (Camurça, 2020).

38 The Lutheran Onyx Lorenzoni was Chief of Staff, Minister of Tourism Marcelo Álvaro Antônio is a member of the Igreja Maranata, the Attorney General for the Federal Government André Luiz Mendonça is a Presbyterian pastor, and the chief minister of the Government Secretariat, General Luiz Eduardo Ramos is Baptist.

## **Final considerations - The present that destroys the future: a terribly extremist Brazil and not at all evangelical<sup>39</sup>!**

As we saw, since its creation, the Evangelical Parliamentary Front has used interpretive modalities of legal principles to affirm that it is up to religious legislators to propose laws that support a social order, whose cultural base is Christian and informed by a fundamentalist exegetic reading of the Bible. In various moments of parliament, to the degree that they dispute the religious field, the range of evangelicals act in politics together with other religious and conservative groups to combat a supposed “devil’s agenda”.

According to Pereira (2014: 44), Brazil as a nation-state was forged by hegemonic Western interpretive models whose religious ties are expressed in a colonialist, exclusionary and sexist manner. For this reason, two facts must be emphasized. The first is that Christian religious values were never absent from the legislative, political and public debates in Brazil and broadly influence democratic values of the state as well as the political, ethical and social values of the population. The second is that Brazil never experienced a process of political and social secularization or a consolidated welfare state as intensely as some European countries. These two facts are widely raised and discussed in the Brazilian social sciences.

For this reason, the concept of secularism that supports the privatization of the religious in democratic contexts, as an interpretive paradigm of modern reality, is incapable of grasping the strong presence of religiosity in public space. The advent of the Brazilian Republic (1889) separated Church and State, but religiosity and church participation make their presence clear and act not only in private but also in public spaces. While the Brazilian Constitution does not regulate or explicitly mention secularism, it does not establish a relation with any religion. Secularism is implied, but not made clear, therefore, it is in dispute. Especially in a society that has little experience with political and participatory formation and whose democracy still needs to be more democratized and intensified (Souza Santos, 2013).

In this light, the Christian religions have always participated in political decisions. However, the novelty of the years that follow the Workers Party governments is the intensity of the success of the conservative evangelical sectors against the agendas of “fundamental rights” present normatively in the Constitution, and until then maintained as a reference in public space. In Brazil today, an agent of the state can declare they are “terribly evangelical”, affirming that the church occupies politics and legislates in its interest, because “God is above all”.

Perhaps for this reason, the slogan of Bolsonaro’s political campaign – “God Above All!” – is aligned to a Brazilian history marked by the action of religious groups to legitimate their values by presenting them as clauses of bills, public policies and other government pacts (Miranda, 2013). It is necessary to consider this historic and controversial public presence of Christian tradition in the formation and construction of the democratic state and in the social values of our country, while recognizing that the connections between religion and politics have changed.

Since the last elections, we perceived some indications that some of these religious groups conducted a process of ideological formation of their bases that allowed greater capillarity in the propagation of their conservative proposals and ideas, resonating the moral agenda of the Evangelical Parliamentary Front in the churches. This capillarization went beyond the churches, reaching other non-religious, but conservative social groups. For this reason, the social networks were an important tool for promoting that there is “a single truth” for overcoming the fears, afflictions, and apprehension stemming from uncertainties and rapid changes. This same truth is also the route to improving economic, political and social conditions.

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<sup>39</sup> It is important to indicate that the religious fields include sectors that are not fundamentalist, conservative and extremist, and those that have placed themselves in another theological and political place since the civil-military dictatorship (Dias, 2013; Steil and Toniol, 2012; Montero, 2012). In addition to the ecumenical movement that, despite its immense contradictions, has historically acted to defend democratic values (Duarte, 2017), collective Christian groups have recently organized to discuss secularism and that God should not be used as a political tool in a plural democracy such as Brazil’s.

The biblical verse “Know the truth and the truth will set you free” [John 8: 32], became a motto of the Bolsonaro campaign, which announced the “monoliptic” evangelical truth (merging monopoly and apocalyptic) which they sought to make exclusive in the state and in society.

God is above all and “there is only one truth” is the new social pact of a state whose political project places a centrality in God – who is white, male, heterosexual, a provider, who possesses and controls women, the head of a traditional family – who publicly appears to be authorized to not recognize the rights of social pluralities. The effects of this participation, not because they are religious conservatives, but because they base themselves on truths that validate extremist actions that do not recognize these pluralities, can be perverse for the agenda of strengthening and expanding the democratic state of law. And also for the sciences, knowledges and education.

For this reason, I believe that there is no fakery or distraction in the public speech of agents of the Bolsonaro government, especially when they raise a moral agenda, given that Brazil is a country of low democratic intensity and high fundamentalist religious intensity that has consequently slipped in the process of construction of a broad and participatory democracy. The effects of this anti-politics that describes itself as “terribly Christian” may be perverse because it uses the political structure of the state and benefits from it, while it criminalizes and demonizes issues raised by its political adversaries. In this situation, politics has been attacked, democracy drained of meaning and the state reduced by its own political agents to solidify the moral and religious values forged by representatives of “the majority of the population” allied to a highly liberal and individualist economic agenda as the core of this new Brazil.

As Machado and Motta (2019) affirm, the advance of intolerant, authoritarian conservatism is not restricted to Brazil but appears here as the voice of a past to be revived and marked by order, hierarchy, morality, traditions and proper behavior. In this context, for Machado and Motta, anthropology is provoked and questioned by this new conservatism whose political adhesions are strongly engendered through social networks, occupying politics to bar new discussions, concepts and social proposals, especially to oppose an expansion of rights in support of social diversities<sup>40</sup>.

For anthropology, as a social science and political insertion, the challenge remains to create new forms of approximation and dialog with these fears and social uncertainties and the truths and forces proclaimed by religious groups whose moralizing precepts have historically formulated subjectivities, experiences and social and political constructions of the broad majority of the Brazilian people with which we are politically concerned. The epistemological presumption of anthropological studies consider subjects, with their territories and ways of life, as citizens who have the right to demand that their diversities be considered by the state. Politically, through our ethnographies, we can support the defense of human rights and the understanding of human diversities, correlated to cultural traditions. And we can analyze the political challenges in relation to persistent inequalities, violences and social, racial and gender injustices. But, what is the reach of our presumptions and contributions for lay society in general?

Anthropological work has been criminalized recently in Brazil and criticized by religious agents (Machado and Motta, 2019). Our studies point to the need for a democracy that is not abstract, but concrete and plural and that guarantees the right to exist and disagree, without being eliminated or ignored as a citizen. Anthropological studies are constantly facing the challenge of continuing to place the political rights of diversities on the agenda, even under governments with projects for state and society that seek to pacify conflicts and erase differences. We are also confronted in these cultural wars by a government that chooses to be antidemocratic and anti-anthropological.

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<sup>40</sup> The Brazilian Anthropology Association (ABA), through its directories, Human Rights Commission and Committee on Gender and Sexuality, has accompanied the problematics presented in this article, and others, and has raised discussions and encouraged academic, institutional and political production. It has used public spaces to defend sexual and gender diversities, the rights of women and Indigenous peoples, quilombola residents and others traditional peoples and communities.

The new facet of participation of Christian groups, both conservative evangelicals and Catholics in various spaces of politics, congregates many people beyond political leaders in legislatures and federal, state and municipal executive branches, who understand that they are exercising their right to political citizenship, which perhaps they never had the chance to do before, even in progressive, scholastic or scientific spaces. Moreover, their rhetoric affirms that those who are not aligned with their positions do not have rights, besides that, demonstrate a strong disdain for the sciences and secular and critical scholastic knowledge.

In this way, these new imbrications between religion and politics made by the Evangelical Parliamentary Front and its bases, but not only by them, must be seriously analyzed and considered. Above all, they should provoke reflections by anthropologies of religions, politics and gender so that we can promote partial relativisms capable of communicating with the conservative portion of the population and also hearing the other diversities that occupy the religious field that will perhaps allow us to repopulate, not only our ethnographies, but our political beliefs.

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# “*Terreiro* politics” against religious racism and “christofascist” politics

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## Abstract

The present article discusses the processes of political and social mobilization of the Afro-religious in the face of the religious racism and “christofascist” politics deployed by groups with an Evangelical-Pentecostal profile. Based on ethnographic research conducted since 2008 in Rio de Janeiro, Brasília, Aracaju and Maceió, the article analyzes how these mobilization strategies are constituted in a modality of “*terreiro* politics” as a means of “doing politics”, delimiting public identities, and debating accusations of increased and growing symbolic and concrete violations of Afro-based religions. The article also discusses how the categories intolerance, racism and genocide are part of a civic grammar that seeks to charge the State – most particularly the police and the judiciary – and push it to guarantee of rights in face the face of growing religious extremism characterized by narratives and actions aimed at building political agendas fueled by religious dogmas (“christofascism”), which result in violent acts against afroreligious *terreiros*.

**Key words:** religious racism, afro-religious mobilization, *terreiro* politics, “christofascist” politics, conflicts.

# A “política dos terreiros” contra o racismo religioso e as políticas “cristofascistas”

## Resumo

O artigo discute os processos de mobilização dos afroreligiosos em ações contra o racismo religioso e as políticas “cristofascistas”, desenvolvidas por grupos com religiosidade de perfil evangélico-pentecostal. Baseando-se em pesquisas etnográficas, realizadas desde 2008, no Rio de Janeiro, Brasília, Aracaju e Maceió, pretende-se analisar como as estratégias de mobilização se constituem numa modalidade de política “dos terreiros” como um modo de se “fazer política”, que delimitam identidades públicas, trazendo para o debate as denúncias de acirramento e crescimento de violações das religiões de matrizes afro, no plano simbólico – a demonização de suas práticas – ou no plano concreto – a destruição dos terreiros e expulsão dos religiosos de suas casas. Discute-se também como as categorias intolerância, racismo e genocídio fazem parte de uma gramática cívica que busca cobrar do Estado, a partir principalmente das polícias e do judiciário, uma atuação de garantia de direitos, diante de um cenário de extremismo religioso, que se caracteriza por narrativas e ações com vistas à construção de agendas políticas, alimentada por dogmas religiosos – “cristofascismo”, que resultam em atos violentos contra os terreiros.

**Palavras-chave:** racismo religioso, mobilização dos afroreligiosos, política “dos terreiros”, políticas “cristofascistas”, conflitos.

# “Terreiro<sup>1</sup> politics” against religious racism and “christofascist” politics

Ana Paula Mendes de Miranda

## Introduction

How does religious (in)tolerance affect the constitution of subjectivities of those who are (in)tolerated to the point of resistance? To what extent is a conflict between religious groups a tension that produces governmentality, when the contradictions of discourse are explicitly contrasted with the practices of state agents? These are some of the questions that have guided my research into complaints regarding violations of rights and demands for recognition involving the Afro-religious<sup>2</sup> in the current context of a “neoconservative” expansion that calls into question the democratic order in Brazil and the rights of *terreiros* and their members.

In the present article, I show how the relationship between religion and politics does not take place in a binary fashion, but results in different grades of (de)naturalization of conflicts and ethnic-racial difference involving African-rooted religiosities, particularly Candomblé. To this end, I show how mobilization strategies constitute a type of “*terreiro*” politics that arises in response to “christofascist”<sup>3</sup> politics. Here, we will be thinking about how “politics are made” and identities are delimited, based on the construction of strategies that react to projects of eliminating Afro-rooted religiosities, whether symbolically (demonization) or concretely (destruction of *terreiros* and expulsion of members from their homes).

In 2008, I began my research aiming at understanding the dynamics of victimization of the Afro-religious in Rio de Janeiro. I looked at their strategies of making themselves visible and their demands known through complaints in the media, their demands on the public power structure (police and court records), and the institutional treatment and administration of these conflicts (Miranda 2010; 2012; 2014; 2015; 2018a; 2018b; 2019). I identified and analyzed forms of Afro-religious mobilization in public space in support of claims to rights, revealing different practices, discursive operations, and motivations that initially pointed towards the resurgence of “religious intolerance”. Over time it became evident to me that the phenomenon, once exclusively conceived of as a social problem (that is, a conflict in relation to values, beliefs, and customs) was also becoming a public problem (Cefaï 1996), demanding specialized treatment by public authorities, institutions, and social movements (Miranda, Corrêa and Pinto 2017; Miranda, Corrêa and Almeida 2019).

My research findings indicated that intolerance involving the Afro-religious should be understood as a category that involves experiences of victimization through prejudice and discrimination, rooted in belonging to an identity – both ethnic-racial and religious. These experiences were mainly caused by a growing number of conflicts involving religious groups with an Evangelical-Pentecostal profile<sup>4</sup>.

1 *Terreiro*: a religious sacred space in Afro-Brazilian religious tradition.

2 Referring to African-rooted religions, which are active in both social and political movements (Almeida 2015).

3 The term was created by Dorothee Sölle (1970), a German theologian, to describe those segments of Christianity that she considered to be totalitarian and imperialist. The term returned to usage in the late 20th and early 21st centuries to identify contemporary tendencies in public and social policies that, in the name of Christianity, exclude “non-traditional” subjects (Heyward 1999).

4 Considering the diversity of self-proclaimed “evangelicals”, Ronaldo Almeida (2009) defends the idea that analysis should not be via institutions (churches), but rather following an empirical cut that privileges contemporary Brazilian religiosity and, for this reason, he prefers to employ the term “Evangelical-Pentecostal profile”.

The worsening of these conflicts over the years has revealed how the Brazilian State asymmetrically treats the recognition of Afro-religious' rights in relation to those of Christian groups. Christian churches usually benefit from legal privileges in Brazil that do not apply, in practice, to minority religious groups (in this case, the Afro-religious). In many situations, furthermore, it is the State itself that causes discrimination.

We can already conclude that religious intolerance directed against the *terreiros* is a "national problem" due to its visibility, the centrality of its presence among groups with an Evangelical-Pentecostal profile (particularly in the public sphere), and the breadth of its reach (Miranda and Boniolo 2017; Miranda and Corrêa 2015; Miranda, Corrêa and Almeida 2017; Miranda and Silva 2017).

However, there are still those (usually religious people who are not involved in social movements) who deny that there is racial discrimination to this intolerance. They tend to represent the *terreiros* as spaces "congregating" people of different ethnic origins who are united by Afro-religiosities. This belief is manifest in the oft-heard phrase that the "*orixás* have no color"<sup>6</sup>. For these people, intolerance is the result of ignorance with regards to "spiritism", and this can be remedied interreligious dialogue.

The resurgence of religious intolerance in the Brazilian public scene can be interpreted as a form of "civic discrimination" (Cardoso de Oliveira 2002), marked by the denial of rights to certain segments of the population. This occurs in Brazil because moral classification takes precedence over respect for formal rights, transforming the act of recognition into expressions of "consideration" and deference.

It is for this reason that the strategy of publicly presenting cases of religious intolerance has helped ensure that the Afro-religious, regardless of their color, are treated as full political subjects in the public sphere. This struggle has brought together Afro-religious groups, mainly from Umbanda and Candomblé, in collective groups struggling against discrimination, contradicting the idea that these religions do not unite.

Discussion of the tolerance paradox<sup>7</sup> - intolerance cannot be tolerated - needs to be carried out from a postmodern point of view (Carre 2017). In this, tolerance functions as an instrument for recognizing differences between subjects. It operates through political-institutional interventions regarding the limits of citizenship and the ways of exercising this. In this sense, tolerance cannot be treated as an abstract principle, but must be seen as a process of social interaction that sets boundaries against violent expressions of racism in the religious field. In the case of "*terreiro* politics", these borders are built through the incorporation of narratives proclaiming the equality of rights. They express expectations regarding the State's actions in curbing those who are identified as oppressors. This is not a question of believing that the State - which has historically persecuted Afro-religions in Brazil - will magically change sides. Rather, it is a conscious manipulation of discourses and forms of oppression to build recognition as subjects (Butler 2004), particularly when one believes that others do not recognize oneself as such.

Thinking about the tolerance in this way overcomes the modernity expressed in Locke's (1964 [1689]) liberalism, which argued that the political force of the State should only intervene in the regulation of religions when these acted against the people's rights or the functions of society. Today's conflicts show that we must not only pay attention to the physical security of people and property, but also to follow the discourses and

5 Afro-religious spiritual entities in the Yoruba tradition, generally deified ancestors.

6 The de-Africanization of Umbanda is a subject that lies beyond the scope of the present article. It is a fundamental theme for thinking about the "myth of racial democracy" that is still very much present in this religious field, however, and is especially obvious in the popular representations of Iemanjá, the *orixá* of the sea, as white. Another dimension that should be explored (but, again, is beyond the scope of the present work) are the racial conflicts within *terreiros*, which demonstrate the limits of 'racial harmony within these spaces.

7 This paradox was analyzed by Karl Popper (1974: 289), who claimed that tolerance can only work in Western society when liberty is not understood to be absolute. The idea that the intolerant must not be tolerated is not a form of aggression, but a higher form of freedom of expression that is always limited by "rational arguments kept under control by public opinion".

opinions of subjects involved in conflicts. We must problematize the belief that overcoming oppression is not simply a matter of guaranteeing self-affirmation and self-expression. We must also ask to what extent the opinions expressed cause pain to others. If they do, it is necessary to look for ways to transform the situation.

### “The People of the Saints Occupy Brasília”

On June 10th, 2014, I followed the first national public demonstration promoted by the Afro-religious in the *Praça dos Três Poderes*<sup>8</sup> in Brasília. Some one hundred people<sup>9</sup> gathered there denounce the systematic violation of the rights of Afro-Brazilian religions. The group then proceeded to the National Congress, where they delivered the “Violence against the *terreiros*” dossier, documenting the depredations, physical attacks, and murders directed against the Afro-religious across Brazil.

This mobilization drew on dissatisfaction with the decision by the judge in charge of the 17<sup>th</sup> Circuit Federal Court of Rio de Janeiro, who denied a request mad by the Federal Public Ministry (MPF). The request was based on a complaint from the National Association of Afro-Media (ANMA), which called for Google Brasil Internet Ltda. To remove videos posted by the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (IURD) on its YouTube channel that contained “messages of intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religions”. In his argument denying the request, the judge cited the of right to freedom of expression and the non-recognition of Afro-religious traditions as religions.<sup>10</sup>

I will never forget the reactions of astonishment expressed in the eyes of the people observing the Afro-religious walking through the halls of Congress dressed in their beads and ritual costumes, rich in African lace, embroidery and cloth<sup>11</sup>. Some spectators made the sign of the cross and asked why “they were there that day? After all it wasn’t the 20th of November<sup>12</sup>”. Then there were those who turned their heads and proclaimed “I am protected by the name of Jesus”. Silently or not, the onlookers expressed the view that the Afro-religious did not belong in that public space; that they did not conform to its protocols.

The demonstration ended at the headquarters of the Ministry of Justice, with an audience with Minister José Eduardo Cardozo and the National Secretary of Public Security, Regina Miki. The demonstrators demanded “responses” to the attacks on the “people of the *terreiros*”. It was the first year of the second term of President Dilma Roussef, whose first of thirteen campaign points was “the expansion and strengthening of democracy”, including the “unrestricted guarantee of freedom of the press, expression and religion”<sup>13</sup>.

8 Brasília’s analogue to Washington D.C.’s National Mall or Moscow’s Red Square.

9 The demonstration was organized by the *O Povo de Santo Ocupa Brasília* (The People of the Saints Occupy Brasília) movement under the coordination to the *Coletivo de Entidades Negras* (Black Entities Collective), an organization of the Black Social Movement that works to guarantee the civil rights of Brazil’s Black populations. At the demonstration, there were representatives of groups from Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Pernambuco, Maranhão, Goiás, Rio Grande do Sul and Amazonas (Almeida 2019; Venâncio 2015). The first public demonstration in the National Congress took place in 2009, when members of the *Fórum Permanente das Religiões de Matríz Africana e Afro-brasileiras do Distrito Federal e Entorno* (Permanent Forum of African and African-Brazilian Rooted Religions of the Federal District and Adjacencies) washed down the ramp of the Congressional building in protest against religious intolerance and in defense pf public policies that favored the group. See: <https://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/materias/2009/09/23/comunidades-de-terreiro-lavam-rampado-congresso-em-protesto-contraintolerancia-religiosa>, accessed on 27/04/2020.

10 The repercussions of this case were so big that the judge changed his earlier arguments “to register the belief of this Court that the Afro-Brazilian beliefs are religions” without, however, changing his decision. See: <https://www.jfrj.jus.br/conteudo/jfrj-reconhece-cultos-afro-brasileiros-como-religiao>, accessed on 03/03/2015. The videos were only removed on 13/06/2014, when a higher court determined that Google should remove 14 videos, establishing a fine of R\$50,000 for every day in which they continued up. See: <https://www.oabrj.org.br/noticias/videos-ofensivos-religioes-afro-terao-ser-retirados-web>, Accessed on 16/06/2014.

11 The vestments reveal the hierarchies, functions, and seniority of the Afro-religious, as well as the division of daily activities in the *terreiro*’s public life.

12 Since the 1960s the Black Movement has celebrated this date in commemoration of Black resistance to slavery, symbolized by the death of Zumbi dos Palmares. In 2003, this date was officially consecrated as a national school holiday, becoming a general holiday in many places in Brazil.

13 See: [http://deputados.democratas.org.br/pdf/Compromissos\\_Programaticos\\_Dilma\\_13%20Pontos\\_.pdf](http://deputados.democratas.org.br/pdf/Compromissos_Programaticos_Dilma_13%20Pontos_.pdf) . Accessed on 02/05/2020. The theme did not appear, however, in the 2014 Platform of the Dilma Roussef government, See: <https://pt.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Prog-de-Governo-Dilma-2014-INTERNET1.pdf> . Accessed on 02/05/2020.

Roussef's administration was the third of three consecutive Workers' Party (PT) governments that stimulated experiments in institutional democratic participation. These followed the principle that public policy is a deliberative process formed in stages, usually beginning with the definition of an agenda built through dialogue with society.

The "answer" of the Executive Branch authorities was the creation of the "Working Group Against Religious Violence"<sup>14</sup>. This refused to use the term "intolerance" because it considered the word inappropriate in describing the conflicts the *terreiros* faced. The group aimed to "study and propose measures and actions necessary to combat this problem in Brazilian society". Two meetings took place, but these did not have subsequent governmental developments due to the departure of José Eduardo Cardozo<sup>15</sup> from the Ministry of Justice and his subsequent assumption of the office of the Federal Advocate General.

The decision of the head judge of the 17<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court not to classify Afro- traditions as religions was interpreted by the Afro-religious as a "political attack". By refusing these traditions recognition as a religion, judicial authorities were denying them access to a set of public policies produced by the State, which enshrined "traditionality" as an essential part of the formation of Brazilian culture. This therefore represented a negation of "Afro-descendant rights", conquered by the struggles of Brazil's Black movements in the face of the myths of "racial democracy" and "black passivity" (Moura 1972; Nascimento 1978; Gonzalez 1984).

Another relevant aspect of this decision is that the judge's opinion about the meaning of religious freedom was the equivalent of the defense of a markedly evangelical Christian paradigm, (Giumbelli 2018). According to this view, the IURD could post its videos because their content was protected by the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of conscience and creed, which was immune to State intervention. This employment of a concept of religious freedom guided by the ideological references of classical liberalism may be present in legal discourses, but it contradicts itself in the face of the political agenda of the "Christian right" (Pierucci 1996). This began to emerge more strongly in Brazil beginning with the Constituent Assembly of 1988, when one began to hear mentions of an "Evangelical Caucus"<sup>16</sup> with a "conservative", "fundamentalist", "moralistic", and "traditionalist" profile, concerned with sexual morality, demonic forces, and the "return" of the communists. In this context, the "boundless freedom of religious belief" began to be exercised in the form of proselytizing speeches attack different groups in the name of Jesus, violating the rights of many minority groups.

Ronaldo de Almeida (2017) draws attention to the fact that these terms function as accusatory categories, confusing a broad spectrum of conjuncturally common political values and interests. Brazilian Evangelicals have never declared themselves to be "fundamentalists" unlike the New Christian Right in the U.S., which has publicly recognized as such since the 1980s and which has used various tactics to influence the political process: media campaigns, lobbying, public support for certain presidential candidates, and even civil disobedience (Midgley 1990).

The representation of religious freedom as a right that cannot be limited by external pressures, as proposed by the 17<sup>th</sup> Circuit court judge, was interpreted by the Afro-religious as a way of legally marginalizing the peoples of the *terreiros*, particularly when coupled with the disqualification of Afro-based religions.

14 This was implemented by Portaria Conjunta n. 01, 08/01/2015, of the Secretaria de Assuntos Legislativos e da Secretaria Nacional de Segurança Pública (the Secretariat for Legislative Affairs of the National Public Security Secretariat), with 13 sitting members: Adailton Moreira Costa (RJ), Firmino Inácio Fonseca Neto (CE), Jocenilda Barbosa Bispo (BA), Jersonita Euede Sinha de Azevedo Brandão (BA), Jane Maria Silva Diogo (PA), Elias Pontes de Cerqueira (SP), Luiz Fernando Martins da Silva (RJ), Marcos Antônio Pinto Xavier (RJ), Marcos Fábio Rezende Correia (BA), Roberto dos Santos Rodrigues (BA), Rosiane Rodrigues de Almeida (RJ), Joselito Crispim dos Santos (DF), Josemundo Dario Queiroz (RN).

15 The Minister was the target of much criticism, including from his own party, regarding the way he conducted his Ministry's policies. This was one of the forerunners of the political crisis that would lead to the impeachment of President Dilma Roussef.

16 It is important to emphasize that this "conservative Christian political activism" (Machado 2017) is constructed in partnership with the Catholic caucus in Congress, as well as other movements and associations such as the Fórum Evangélico Nacional de Ação Social e Política (FENASP), and the Associação Nacional de Juristas Evangélicos (ANAJURE) among others (Vital da Cunha and Lopes 2013).

These groups had already experienced legal discrimination under the 1890 and 1942 Penal Codes<sup>17</sup>, which criminalized manifestations of Afro-religiosities. The specter of renewed “illegality” was interpreted as the denial of the right to question judicial decisions (Sampaio 2014, 2019) and thus a means of reviving practices that denied rights to Afro-descendants. This hierarchical way of treating religious freedom in Brazil illustrates how the State deals and has dealt with guarantees of freedom of expression, contrasts sharply with the provisions of several international treaties to which Brazil is a signatory.

For the judge in question, “freedom” was defined, semantically, as “a space of action free of state and third party interventions” (Sampaio 2014: 57). The IURD was thus understood to be exercising its “fundamental right to freedom”, because it met the requirements of what was understood to be a religion in the understanding of the court. This understanding, in turn, presupposed the existence of “a basic sacred text”, a hierarchical structure, and an overarching (and monotheistic) “God”.

According to those who worked on the case, what was under discussion was not the classification of Afro-Brazilian traditions as religions (these, of course, are quite varied and complex), but rather how guarantees to the right to freedom of opinion and expression are interpreted. These should be understood in light of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965)<sup>18</sup> and Brazil’s Racial Equality Statute (Law No. 12,288 / 2010), which -- in its Chapter III -- regulates the right to freedom of conscience and belief and the free exercise of religious groups of African origin. This interpretation ended up being expressed in a legal appeal to a higher court, that resulted in the final condemnation of the IURD’s videos. The document produced by that decision affirmed that religious freedom is a modality of freedom of expression and conscience and includes the freedom to have no religion. It also stated that this freedom “is *subject to limitations* regarding the exercise of other fundamental rights” (emphasis added). In the case of conflict, consideration should be given to the interests involved<sup>19</sup>.

This controversy over the meanings of religious freedom explains the asymmetry of State treatment to Christian and Afro-Brazilian religious beliefs. This has been a characteristic of the Brazilian secularization process, been marked since the beginning of the Republic by disputes in the political, legal, and social fields (Montero 2015). In the past, demands for the State to arbitrate religious conflicts tended to be made by Brazil’s Protestant religions. Today, however, the plaintiffs are the Afro-Brazilian religious who are trying to defend their rights in the public sphere as part of a strategy of the “*terreiro* politics”. This links together the power to act with a responsibility in choosing which paths need to be followed, because everything that is done in the Afro-Brazilian religious field has consequences in terms of relationships between individuals, the community and *Axé*<sup>20</sup>. This is a re-enchantment of politics that reconfigures the boundaries between the private and the public. The power of the divinities is activated in the songs for Exu and Xangô sung in Congress, but – in traditional fashion – it is good, old secular politics that allowed the protestor to schedule a meeting with the Minister.

17 This theme has been extensively explored in the Brazilian academy (Maggie 1992; Giumbelli 1997; Schritzmeyer 2004; Couceiro 2008).

18 This decrees that signatory States should reject any activities inspired by ideas based upon the belief in the superiority of a race, color, or ethnic group, as well as activities that seek to justify or encourage any form of racial hatred or discrimination.

19 See:

[https://www10.trf2.jus.br/portal?movimento=cache&q=cache:wYqIMtkfkocf:ementas.trf2.jus.br/apolo/databucket/idx%3Fprocesso%3D201400001010430%26coddoc%3D40280%26datapublic%3D2014-09-16%26pagdj%3D667/688+videos&site=v2\\_jurisprudencia&client=v2\\_index&proxystylesheet=v2\\_index&lr=lang\\_pt&ie=UTF-8&output=xml\\_no\\_dtd&access=p&oe=UTF-8, acesso em 25/05/2020.](https://www10.trf2.jus.br/portal?movimento=cache&q=cache:wYqIMtkfkocf:ementas.trf2.jus.br/apolo/databucket/idx%3Fprocesso%3D201400001010430%26coddoc%3D40280%26datapublic%3D2014-09-16%26pagdj%3D667/688+videos&site=v2_jurisprudencia&client=v2_index&proxystylesheet=v2_index&lr=lang_pt&ie=UTF-8&output=xml_no_dtd&access=p&oe=UTF-8, acesso em 25/05/2020.)

20 The spiritual energy that imbues everything with real material effects.

The demonstration in the *Praça dos Três Poderes* also serves as an introduction for us to discuss the contemporary meanings of “religious intolerance”. While the “attacks” on Afro-Brazilian religions are not a recent phenomenon in Brazil, one can certainly describe differences that have been generated by what is called the “new conservative wave”<sup>21</sup>. These have implications for the democratic political order and the plural manifestation of religiosities.

### Religious freedom for whom?

The demonstration was one of several that I have followed since 2009 -- in Aracaju, Brasília, Maceió and Rio de Janeiro -- when I started researching the ethnic-religious and racial conflicts in Brazil that commonly understood as “religious intolerance”. The emergence of these cases on our public scene is directly related to the processes of Afro-religious social and political mobilization, as well as the institutional forms of administration of these conflicts through the police and the courts.

But what was special about this particular demonstration? In the first place, it showed how the Afro-religious have nationally organized themselves to publicly present the “violence” to which they are subjected, in opposition to the idea that the “people of the saints” are not politically organized<sup>22</sup>. It also allows us to analyze how this mobilization is connected to a public sphere that discusses “coping strategies”, which are quite different from the submission of demands to the Judiciary in the form of lawsuits.

Religious intolerance is not codified in Brazil’s penal code. Instead, it is folded into a more general law regarding discrimination in its multiple aspects (racial crimes), qualified as a bail-less crime (Law No. 7.716 / 89). This allows us to analyze how ethnic-religious and racial conflicts (generally considered to be within the scope of private relations) become transformed into crimes that are registered with the police and forwarded to the judiciary. This, in turn, allows us to unravel forms of institutionalized conflict management that disqualify plaintiffs, as is also observed in gender conflicts (Lima and Silva 2015). Disqualification results in the re-privatization of these conflicts, reinforcing humiliating situations for the victims (Sarti 2014)<sup>23</sup> whose presence in public space is only made possible through their being “involved” with a crime (Cecchetto, Muniz and Monteiro 2018).

It is necessary to register that the “victims” do not seek justice with the expectation of seeing “their problem” resolved. Interest in criminalizing “cases of intolerance” is mainly a political act of rights recognition, based on the State’s mandate to tackle discrimination (Miranda 2014). Police are held responsible for their past invasions of the *terreiros* and changes are demanded with regards to the ways in which institutions should assist the Afro-religious. In this situation, the role of “victim” is taken on as a form of social recognition of suffering, which it is only possible by incorporating the notion of rights (Sarti 2011). When assuming the role of victim, Afro-religious people reveal themselves as immersed in scenarios of political violence, making it evident that their struggles are difficult, but necessary. In doing so, they set aside the “alleged passivity” caused

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21 The use of the term “wave” is associated with a representation of relatively rigid historical contexts, as if we could envision time in a static fashion. According to this sort of narrative, after the “wave” has passed, it will be possible to return to what is considered to be “normal”. This way of looking at things hides the dialectic processes inherent in historical events. The “wave” becomes seen as an interruption that perturbs a given, idealized social order, without identifying—let alone analyzing—the movements and transformations taking place in social life.

22 This representation is present in the *terreiros* and also in many anthropological works. I do not agree with this premise, which takes as its basis of comparison “traditional” Brazilian religious groups, which are obviously guided by different interests and, consequently, have resources and strategies to maintain the status quo.

23 According to Mezarobba (2010: 12), the first time that the republican Brazilian State “admitted, outside of the context of a court decision, the State’s objective responsibility for the unlawful performance of its security agents” was when Law no. 9.140 / 1995 (known as the Law of the Missing) was passed. It is in the same decade that bills began to appear in the National Congress from black organizations, asking the Brazilian federal government for financial reparations for the descendants of slaves. Public demonstrations around this cause also began to take place around the same time (Domingues 2018).

by repression while creating commotions as a strategy for “transforming mourning into struggle”<sup>24</sup>. All this in a context that some call the Brazilian latter 20<sup>th</sup> Century “holy war”.

The boundaries of subjectification instituted by discourses that model, classify, and hierarchize the Afro-religious result in a “framing” (Butler 2015) of political-religious conflicts as something that occurs between Afro-Brazilians and Evangelicals, revealing polarizations and the naturalization of identities and ultimately reducing the diversity antagonisms in play. In this context, the State presents itself as ambivalent, playing the dual role both the initiator of violence (through omission or open discrimination) and as the protector and guarantor of rights. One of the consequences of this process is that the recognition of subjects triggers representations of an eternal present of violations, which can be seen in the footage of the destruction of *terreiros* that became viral on social media beginning in 2017. These images remain in the public memory as if the victimization never stopped.

### Religious intolerance and religious racism: the two faces of a social and public problem

On December 27, 2007, the Brazilian federal government instituted the National Day of Combating Religious Intolerance (January 21) through Law No. 11,635 as part of the Brazil’s official commemorations. The bill was authored by Congressman Daniel de Almeida (PCdoB-BA) and was the result of the mobilization of the Movement Against Religious Intolerance organized in the state of Bahia. This mobilization took place following the publication, by the *Folha Universal* in 1999, of a photo of Yalorixá Gildásia dos Santos (known as Mãe Gilda) in a report entitled “charlatan *macumbeiros*<sup>25</sup> damage the pocketbook and lives of their customers”. In the photo, Mother Gilda had a black stripe over her eyes and was dressed as priestess, with an offering at her feet. Later, her *terreiro* was invaded by another religious group (the Assembly of God) and the Yalorixá and her husband were verbally and physically assaulted. Mother Gilda had a heart attack and died as a result of these attacks. Her daughter, Yalorixá Jaciara Ribeiro dos Santos, initiated a lawsuit and a movement to claim and protect the rights of the Afro-religious in Bahia. This led to a series of struggles, ending with the condemnation of *Folha Universal*, the creation of the National Day of Combating Religious Intolerance, and -- in 2016 -- the inauguration of a bust erected in memory of Mãe Gilda in the neighborhood of Itapuã. This bust has subsequently been the target of constant desecration.

The first book dealing with the theme of religious intolerance in Brazil analyzed cases in São Paulo (Silva 2007), labeling as “attacks” against Afro-Brazilian religions aggressions that took place during the worship in neo-Pentecostal churches as well as in the media. It also detailed physical attacks on the Afro-religious and offenses carried out against Afro-Brazilian religious rites in public spaces.

The academic debate around the use of “intolerance” as a category has shown that the idea of religious freedom as something that cannot be restricted is the result of neo-Pentecostal Protestant interpretations that can lead people to violate the freedoms of others, putting the very idea of freedom at risk.

As politics takes place through consensus and dissent, the public debate ended up exhausting the utility of the expression “religious intolerance”, which has now been left behind by the Afro-religious. Researchers and activists began to demand the use of “religious racism” due to the worsening of the conflicts involving African-rooted *terreiros* across Brazil.

24 Adailton Moreira, babalorixá of the Ilê Omiojuáro *Terreiro*, son of Mãe Beata de Iemanjá, launched the “I mourn in the fight against religious racism” campaign, which was inspired by a sign with the slogan “This city belongs to Lor Jesus” that was placed at the entrance to Nova Iguaçu in the Baixada Fluminense. The *terreiro* was in mourning due to the death of its matriarch, but in the face of the attacks directed against other *terreiros* and this violation of religious neutrality on the part of the city government, the *terreiro* did not completely close, continuing with its political struggles. See <https://extra.globo.com/noticias/rio/placa-na-baixada-diz-que-cidade-pertence-ao-senhor-jesus-vira-alvo-de-criticas-22951395.html>, accessed on 06/08/2018.

25 The word is used sometimes as a pejorative meaning to refer to any ritual or religion of Afro-Brazilian origin, referring to all kinds of “superstitions”. Among its practitioners it is not seen negatively.

“Religious racism” therefore appeared as a political counterpoint to “religious intolerance”. This latter term is not considered to be adequate by the afro-religious political activists because it is associated with a liberal conception of rights based upon a Christian foundation, which serves to camouflage the already “invisibilized” Brazilian forms of racism (Cardoso de Oliveira 2004)<sup>26</sup>. This invisibility is understood to be a tactic of structural racism (Almeida 2018) that denies the existence of discrimination: even when there are a high-infinite number of complaints and even with laws and institutions in place to combat this sort of violence, almost nothing is done to stop the violations or transform the relationships that produce them.

In his analysis of cases in Bahia, Ordep Serra is one of the primary defenders of the idea that religious intolerance is, in fact, “racism’s warhorse”<sup>27</sup>. His reconfiguration gives visibility to the links between neo-Pentecostal churches and politicians and public agents in the Brazilian National Congress in their fomentation of what he calls a “war of religions, directed at the *terreiros* and the people of the saints, particularly in the poor neighborhoods of Salvador. Unfortunately, the term is not be useful to explain how these manifestations of structural racism actually work.

Wanderson Flor do Nascimento (2016; 2017) has highlighted the “insufficiency” of the term “religious intolerance”. He claims that it does not account for the “violence” directed at *terreiros* and people, believing that it is necessary to value the resistance of the “people of saints”. Nascimento also claims that it is necessary to understand that “combating” a religion necessarily attacks processes of identity constitution. In this particular case, when the “religions” in question are primarily made up of black and brown people and formed by African and indigenous elements, such attacks reveal a hidden face of racism in Brazilian society.

This category of religious racism was inspired by American black movements’ discussions of institutional racism, which explain how racism has been a structuring foundation for social relations. In this view, racism of “systematic form of discrimination that has race as its foundation, which manifests itself through conscious or unconscious practices culminating in disadvantages or privileges, depending on the racial group to which people belong” (Almeida 2018: 25). This concept has been widely disseminated in Brazil through a national network of mobilizations of *terreiros* in defense of their freedom of worship and which also works to discuss the formulation of public policies.

This classificatory transformation reveals the processes of learning a civic grammar that underlies the struggle for rights. The main distinction of this struggle has been the inclusion of religion as an important factor, in opposition to the Marxist approaches that had for years influenced Brazil’s black movements and which delegitimized religion (and gender) as an essential component of public debate (Domingues 2007).

A reorganization has thus taken place in the collective mobilization of the Afro-religious, who are defending their civil rights at the national level. This has resulted in yet another change, this time in relation to the black movements that, up until then, were the main political actors in building an anti-discrimination agenda in Brazil (Almeida 2015, 2019). The participation of Afro-religious in the construction of public policies breaks with a polarized approach to secularism that has always assumed that public space in Brazil is religious, but exclusively dominated by the Christian traditions.

This polarization between the categories “religious intolerance” and “religious racism” is therefore part of the political mobilization of the afro-religious. It reveals the tensions inherent in explaining conflicts in the public sphere – tensions that originated in past struggles in the legal field. This is how the classification of “hate crimes” (which are not even discussed in Brazilian law) began to be identified as collective attacks on

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26 It is worth mentioning here the expansion of advocacy actions aimed at racism, in particular the case of Extraordinary Appeal 494601 to the Supreme Federal Court (STF), in which the state law 12.131 / 2004 (RS) prohibiting animal sacrifice in religious rites was overturned as unconstitutional. Even though the term “racism” was not expressly mentioned by the Supreme Court Justices, the decision was considered a historic strike against the violence directed against Afro-religions as one of the facets of structural racism (Hoshino, Bueno 2019).

27 Testimony of Ordep Serra in the documentary “Intolerância Religiosa – A ameaça à paz”, 2004, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AabbL3Wl0o>, accessed on 21/07/2020.

human dignity, in accordance with an international model. Under this definition, however, it must be proven that criminal motivation was due to prejudice or hatred against victims who belonged to a group protected as a “social minority”. The incorporation of this sort of terminology conflicts with institutionalized practices for disqualifying conflicts regarding the manifestation of prejudices and discrimination in Brazil, considered to be “less offensive crime”, disqualifying the seriousness of their moral offenses.

The judicial disqualification of these cases ends creating a self-fulfilling prophecy: the intensification of conflicts following upon the widespread circulation in 2017<sup>28</sup> of the two videos showing the destruction of *terreiros*. Another controversy then erupted involving the emergence of the so-called “new conservative wave”, which has been termed “religious fundamentalism”, but which I prefer to call “religious extremism”, for reasons I will describe below.

The emergence of the terms “religious intolerance” and “religious racism” has therefore been the result of a political debate between different subjects (the Afro-religious, political activists, researchers, etc.) about what is the best way to describe, in the legal-political and religious fields, the multiplying cases of murders, destruction, threats, and intimidation involving supporters and leaders of Afro-religions. However, we must also pay attention to another face of these aggressions, often seen in the state of Rio de Janeiro, which is associated with the expansion of armed control (Miranda and Muniz 2018) over illegal markets (particularly drugs). Here, the expansionist projects of Evangelical-Pentecostal profile churches are guided by a two different growth strategies. On the one hand, they focus on converting criminals (especially drug dealers) in favelas and/or prisons, giving rise to a new actor who identifies themselves as an “evangelical drug dealer” or “*traficrente*”<sup>29</sup>. These people tend to adopt a belligerent stance against the *terreiros*, conducting violent attacks against them and spreading fear through the filming of their activities and the reproduction of these on social networks. This results in the closure of many of the *terreiros* so targeted. On the other hand, the churches also act in criminal “money laundering” scheme, according to information provided by the Federal Police and the Federal Attorney General’s Office. One indication that territories are being occupied by these Christianized criminal groups is graffiti with religious symbols (Christian or referring to Israel), biblical passages, phrases that clarify who dominates the region I question (“Jesus owns the place”), followed by signatures of the various criminal factions.

### **Violence against the *terreiros* as a form of “religious extremism”**

On May 13, 2019, I participated in a public hearing organized by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Rio de Janeiro’s (Alerj) Commission for Combating Discrimination. The hearing was chaired by the President of the Commission, State Congressman Carlos Minc (PSB), and it debated public policies combating religious intolerance. Three victims of religious discrimination took the floor, along with other parliamentarians and executive branch authorities, including the chief of the police precinct specialized in combating discrimination.

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28 One case occurred in Nova Iguaçu in the Baixada Fluminense; the other in Ilha do Governador in the city of Rio de Janeiro. In both cases, religious leaders were forced to destroy their own *terreiros* “in the name of Jesus”. The aggressors’ discourses mixed narratives of evangelical preaching with the “*esculachos*” (public degradation) characteristic of criminal groups operating in the favelas and who threaten the afro-religious with weapons.

29 Journalist Cecília Oliveira also refers to the existence of “*milicrentes*”. One comment made on Twitter, on 17/07/2019, references reports that talked about contacts between the boss of the militia in Muzema (an unofficial favela in Rio’s West Zone) and the son of the Mayor of Rio de Janeiro, Marcelo Crivella. The goal of these dialogues was supposedly cancel the demolition of irregular constructions in the favela, which were one of the sources of the militia’s finances. See: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/cotidiano/2019/07/miliciano-cita-conversa-com-filho-de-crivella-e-tentativas-de-contato-com-prefeito.shtml>, accessed on 17/07/2019.

Members of the judiciary also participated, including representatives from the State Attorney General's Office and the Public Defender's Office. Compliance with Federal Law 12,288/10 (which ensures the free exercise of religious services and guarantees protection to places of worship and worshippers) and State Law No. 7,855 / 18 (which determines that the reports of religious intolerance must be typified as such) were discussed.

The three victims invited to speak -- two Babalorixás and one Yalorixá -- reported the persecution they had been suffering and complained about the failure of the public institutions in dealing with the cases. I did not notice anything new in the course of this, the fourth public hearing on the topic in which I had participated in less than a year. What drew my attention was how the cases (which up to then had been called "religious intolerance") were now being designated by some of the witnesses as "religious racism" and "religious genocide against black people".

The adoption of the expression "religious genocide against black people" by the Afro-religious is a way of making racial discrimination visible and denouncing racist violence and its lethality, particularly against black youth<sup>30</sup>. It is important to highlight the influence here of the work of Abdias Nascimento, who -- speaking of black genocide in Brazil -- criticized the actions of the Catholic Church and State authorities for their oppressive practices against Candomblé and other Afro-religions. Nascimento qualified this as a form of systematic persecution, on-going since colonial times, directed against African culture as part of a policy of white supremacy that hid its true face behind the myth of racial democracy.

Genocide is a crime under international law, directly related to the socio-political phenomenon of the elimination of social groups in modern societies. It became codified as such when the UN defined it as a punishable crime under United Nations General Assembly Resolution #96-I, 1946. This was the first international document to mention "genocide", defining it as the "denial of the right of existence of entire human groups". It was in the debates regarding the Convention for the Prevention and Suppression of the Crime of Genocide (1948) that Article 6 defined that the power to try this offense could reside in the hands of "the competent courts of the State in whose territory the act was committed, or by the court international criminal law".

When it comes to guaranteeing the rights of traditional communities -- so-called ethnic rights -- there is no lack of national (Federal Constitution; Law 7.716 / 1989) or international laws (Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization), nor of organizations focused on the development of public policies for the protection of said groups. The difficulties in "materializing rights and repairing damages" in this case lie in the ways in which the judicial system emerges "as a new protagonist responsible for analyzing and judging these new social demands" (Oliveira 2014).

The conflicts reported in the hearing described above point to a new scenario. It was previously common to report situations involving close relationships (neighbors, relatives, co-workers). Now, the "executioners" were drug dealers and/or militia members, as well as the pastors of neo-Pentecostal churches. The reports (which included an ambush, with shots fired at the car of one of the victims) clearly signaled an aggravation of these conflicts, making the term "religious intolerance" (which the government is now only beginning to discuss inserting in police databases) insufficient to account for the events suffered by the victims.

Throughout 2019, I received some ten reports involving *terreiros* in the Baixada Fluminense whose religious leaders had been forced at gunpoint to destroy their *terreiro* and its sacred objects. Some of the cases reached the media, which did not, however, cover the result of these cases. As was the case in 2008, with the expulsion of the *terreiros* from the Morro do Dendê, Rio de Janeiro led the way in cases of violence against *terreiros*. Unfortunately, this phenomenon has not been restricted to that state.

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<sup>30</sup> The black movements have also employed "genocide" to denounce the Brazilian State as responsible for the murders of young black men, which they believe to be a part of state policy.

The effort to understand the relationship between criminals and the neo-Pentecostal religions emerged at the end of the 1990s in Rio de Janeiro, with the appearance of the “Theology of Dominion” and the concept of a “Spiritual Battle” (Vital da Cunha 2014; Silva 2007). Studies revealed the conversion of drug traffickers in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, associating this with the growing phenomenon of attacks on the Umbanda and Candomblé *terreiros*. In the spiritual narratives produced by these religious ideologies the devil and demons are associated with African origin spiritual entities. It is in this context that the categories “evangelical drug dealer” (Vital da Cunha 2014), “ex-bandit” (Teixeira 2009, 2011), and “evangelized drug dealer” (Silva 2016, 2019) emerge in the specialized literature, seeking to describe the self- and the hetero-identification of these actors. This literature also highlighted how attacks on the *terreiros* are part of the process of the conversion of these individuals to neo-Pentecostalism (which does not imply the abandonment of their ties to drug trafficking or other criminal practices).

We can see this same phenomenon in the Universal Church’s “Gladiators of the Altar” evangelization campaign, which emerged in the form of a paramilitary group that published the following text on the internet:

We will destroy all false religions until they disappear from our country! These pagan religions with African and Asian or Muslim origins will not be tolerated in our country! Nor will Homosexuality [sic]! We will do the job that the government is not capable of doing! Join us!<sup>31</sup>

In 2017, an investigation was requested to establish responsibility for crimes against national security and religious discrimination/religious intolerance at the Police Precinct for Racial and Intolerance Crimes in the State of São Paulo. After that, the IURD released a note condemning the Altar Gladiators’ words and removed several videos from social networks.

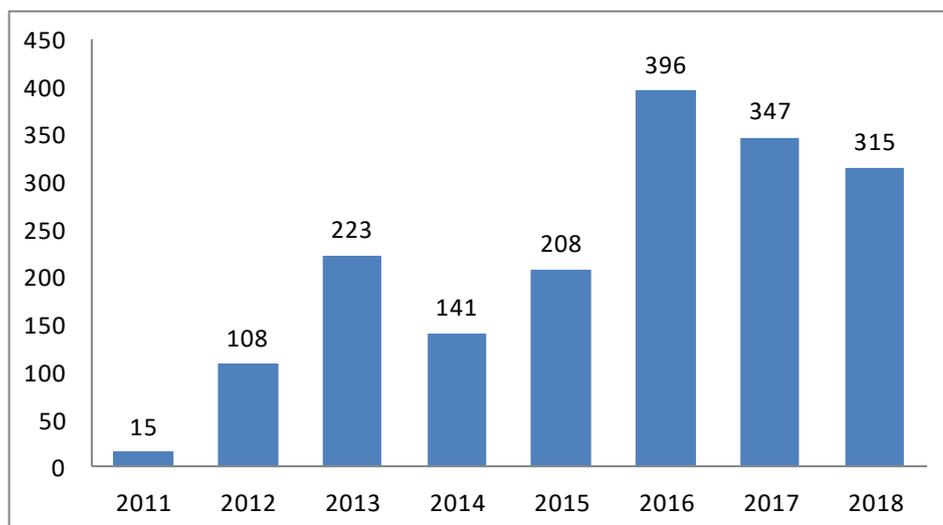
Rosiane Rodrigues de Almeida (2019) analyzed the performance of the “Bonde de Jesus”, which allegedly closed down the *terreiros* in Duque de Caxias<sup>32</sup>. She presents a hypothesis, based on documentation produced by the Federal Attorney General’s Office, that these persecutions of *terreiros* were localized actions, involving the interests of churches in “laundering money” from illegal activities taking place in the region. Almeida points out that the closing of *terreiros* in the Baixada Fluminense, based on strategies of spreading fear through with filming members and diffusing these through social networks, has the consequence of closing down all Afro-religious activities. This is what she feels happened in Parque Paulista, where six *terreiros* were attacked, but all the others shut down as well.

The diversity of actors involved in these attacks does not allow us to affirm (at least at the present time) that the aggressions directed against Afro-religions are orchestrated actions or the result of a common agenda among Evangelical-Pentecostal groups, which have more than 40 million members in Brazil. No one-dimensional analysis can be constructed when it comes to these expressions of religious violence, but the challenge of understanding the growth in the number of cases lies before us. Although little official data is available, it can already be said that cases of “religious intolerance” grew in Brazil, based on data from the Dial 100 denunciation hotline (Dial Human Rights).

31 The original text was removed from Facebook, but can be found at <https://umbandaead.blog.br/2017/01/12/5051/>, accessed on 01/07/2020.

32 See: <https://g1.globo.com/tj/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/2019/08/15/com-lider-pastor-facciao-tem-quartel-general-em-condominio-em-duque-de-caxias-rj.ghtml>, accessed on 10/10/2019.

Graph 1: Number of registered denunciations of religious discrimination (2011-2018)<sup>33</sup>



Source: Disque Cem (data consolidated by the author)

Another source that shows the growing problem in Brazil is the Pew Research Center, which conducts surveys monitoring religious conflicts throughout the world. According to its report on government restrictions on religion and social hostilities involving religion between 2007 and 2017<sup>34</sup>, Brazil can be classified as a country with a low level of “government restrictions on religion” but a high level of “social hostilities involving religion”, with rates ranging from 3.5 to 7.0 on a scale of 10. The Pew report highlights that there was of anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim in Brazil hostilities in 2017, as well as incidents related to Afro-Brazilian religions.

It has been common to use the terms “religious fundamentalism” and “religious extremism” to account for the worsening of these conflicts. It is necessary, however, to understand the different interpretations, beliefs, and attitudes involved in these conflicts in order to understand if we are facing extremist religious activities. Any religious group can be extreme in some dimensions and moderate in others, of course. To understand these conflicts we must analyze their dynamics in different dimensions, namely both the theological-ritual (which characterizes ways of dealing with religious representations and experiences), and the political/social (Wibisono, Louis, Jetten 2019). It is this latter axis of analysis that interests us in the present article, for it reveals how an agenda that affects (directly or indirectly) intergroup relations (both religious and non-) is constructed. It also shows the situations experienced within a given group that and their impact upon the rules regarding how the group how interacts with others. Conflicts can be considered “extreme” when we can identify an expansionist proposal that results in mythical-political narratives that can both correspond to denial and glorification of a nation. This narrative also has effects on the construction of a reactionary agenda in terms of customs, with emphasis on systematic discrimination against women. Another characteristic of extremism is a hostile view towards other religions and the refusal to accept strategies that promote interreligious dialogue, which are considered a threat to the faith.

In common sense, the use of the term “religious extremism” is associated with terrorism and ends up generating/reproducing negative stereotypes in relation to religious groups. This has consequences on the formulation of public policies, which is not the objective of the present article. My objective here is to understand under what circumstances extremism encompasses narratives and actions that build a political

<sup>33</sup> Available at <https://www.gov.br/mdh/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/2019/junho/balanco-anual-disque-100-registra-mais-de-500-casos-de-discriminacao-religiosa>, accessed on 02/07/2020.

<sup>34</sup> Available at <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/07/15/a-closer-look-at-how-religious-restrictions-have-risen-around-the-world/>, accessed on 02/07/2020.

agenda fueled by religious dogmas that result in activism in which individuals will intentionally commit violence in the name of their beliefs. This effort to promote a classification of conflicts from a multidimensional perspective is necessary for us to consider how the social and political dimensions of religion are interrelated. It is also absolutely fundamental to any attempt to understand the nuances involving conflicts in the face of groups that seek to impose their points of view through force.

The scenario currently found in Rio de Janeiro greatly complicates the analyses that have so far been developed. One can no longer think that we are simply facing the mere conversion of “bandits” to neo-Pentecostalism as part of a proselytizing action in a “holy war”. We need to understand what political roles these churches play in their interactions with armed groups (traffickers/militias/police), either in the consolidation of an “armed dominance” (Miranda and Muniz 2018) over a given territory or in the confection of “extremist actions” (Vital da Cunha, Lopes and Lui 2017). We need to identify which practices are adopted to punish those who are at odds with biblical interpretations of reality/ These involve religious and political narratives that reinforce stereotypes about the Afro-religious that are present in the Eurocentric Christian imaginary, situating those who follow Afro-religions as devil worshipers. This, in turn, has direct consequences upon the aggravation of prejudices in relation to the moralities, knowledges, and practices of peoples of African descent.

In the cases identified up to the present moment, we can see:

- Grave levels of aggression (physical, psychological, moral, and against property) directed against Afro-religions;
- The use of communication technologies and, in particular, social media, as well as traditional media (radio, newspapers, T.V.) to spread ideas and divulge violent acts;
- The impossibility of predicting such attacks, given that they have occurred in different regions, dominated by different criminal factions. In this sense, although each criminal faction has repressed *terreiros*, such repression has also occurred in places where they groups are not active and in places where militia are active. In the same way, a large number of different Evangelical tendencies have been involved in these attacks;
- The aggressions occur in areas of economic exclusion where there is little opportunity for social mobility through labor. This is an important variable because there is often land speculation occurring in the regions where the attacks take place and the invasions of *terreiros* are often connected to religious groups with financial interests in real estate speculation;
- Political exclusion and the reduction of civic space in the territories dominated by armed factions is associated with the inability of the Brazilian State to provide security to all, which is furthermore characterized by inequalities, injustices, and violation of human rights directed at black populations .

On the other hand, the fragmentary nature of these actions leads me believe that we cannot say that Brazil is facing religious extremism, at least in comparison to international levels of such. I consider it more appropriate to speak (at the moment at least) of a process of radicalization of racial ideologies that have been present in the national imagination since the 19th century. These served to justify the enslavement of blacks and indigenous peoples and continue to function today as narratives legitimizing the inferiorization of these same groups. Furthermore, they have been influenced by a resurgence of racist movements in the USA and Europe inspired by white supremacist ideologies (Fitzgerald 2020). What is new in Brazil is the association of these narratives with the religious discourse of the Theology of Prosperity<sup>35</sup> (Campos 1997). Begun in the 1970s, this theology understands that the faithful are divinely favored with good health and financial prosperity.

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35 First appearing in the United States, this theology spread to Brazil, headed by the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, rejecting traditional Pentecostal practices. Other churches that follow this trend are the International Church of the Grace of God, the Evangelical Community Sara Nossa Terra and the Renascer em Cristo Apostolic Church. The context of the emergence and expansion of the prosperity gospel in Brazil in the 1980s and 1990s took place against a backdrop of labor informality and job insecurity. The spread of the idea of ‘entrepreneurism’, and of being one’s own boss was an important element of this religious discourse, which is a theology that privileges the immediate.

This theological perspective holds that it is the action of the Holy Spirit that produces divine healing, but it can also be employed in spiritual warfare against the activities of the devil<sup>36</sup>. Ill health, financial failure, and unhappiness are thus understood to be closely related to supposed demonic action and this, in turn, is used as an argument for attacks on the Afro-religious.

From a political point of view, it is necessary to remember that the strategy of the Catholic Church and the State in relation to African-based religions has always been marked by persecutions of freedom of expression. This inequality of forces continues to be observed in the attacks now undertaken by Evangelical-Pentecostal profile groups, I thus do not think it is possible to say that we are facing a “holy war of Pentecostals against Afro-Brazilians”, as Luiz Eduardo Soares claims (1993: 31), which supposedly functions as a democratic reordering the Brazilian religious field. To the contrary: research data highlights the fact that, once again, Afro-traditions are under attack from a Christian and racist ideological worldview.

It is in this sense that we can conclude that the meanings attributed to religious intolerance are politically distinguished from the use of the terms “religious racism” and “black genocide”. The latter terms emerged in public controversies (Boltanski and Thevenot 1991) pointing to a reconfiguration of the established order. If, on the one hand, there has been an increase in attacks on Afro-religions motivated by “christofascist” politics, on the other, there has been the emergence of “*terreiro*” politics. This has encouraged “the people of the saints” to reflect and act in line with their interests, allowing an expansion of the discussion about the dissimulation of discriminatory practices in Brazil, in order to make demands of public bodies that can no longer be silent in the face of these increasingly serious cases. The destruction of the *terreiros* and expulsion of the Afro-religious leaves no doubt that ethnic-racial-religious discrimination has become a visible phenomenon across Brazil.

The increasing forms of mobilization of the *terreiros* around collective political agendas in pursuit of rights have expanded the lexicon of categories -- intolerance, racism and genocide -- as part of strategies for interacting with State practices that continue to deny the right to ethnic-religious identity. Today’s *terreiro* politics have emerged in a confrontation with a historic denial of rights. This is not exactly a new phenomenon: the history of religious resistance in Brazil spans centuries. Today, however, this struggle has become more explicit. This new version of old politics was built upon alliances forged between the Afro-religious (guided by their initiatic lineages), who then sought partnerships with public organizations and/or social movements. It is structured around the struggle for recognition of ethnic-racial-religious diversity and the socio-political belonging of marginalized subjects. It constitutes a specific religious activism that is not concerned with the insertion of their religious beliefs and values in legal normativity or in public policies. Instead, it demands from the State its right to exist and denounces the fact that aggressors’ motivations are directly related to their prejudices, which are amplified by the intensification of ideologies that glorify the supremacy of a specific group (“whites”), and which seem to resurface with for the colonial past, fortunately long behind us.

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<sup>36</sup> Although Native Brazilians and Africans did not have a representation of personified evil their pantheons, like the Christian Devil, the historical process of demonizing these religious practices resulted in associations between Native/African deities and the devil.

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# Control creep and the multiple exclusions faced by women in low-autonomy sex industry sectors

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## Abstract

This article unites the co-authors' years of empirical research with women in policed, stigmatized, and low-autonomy sex industry sectors in Brazil, China, Italy, and the United States to identify six prevalent forms of exclusion: economic, intersectional, health, safety, public vilification, and policing. We analyze the distinct manifestations of these exclusionary forces in all four sites to introduce criminal creep as theoretical shorthand for the global seepage of ideological, structural, and interpersonal exclusionary forces into social life, professional practice, and socio-legal procedures that marginalize women in the sex industry as victim-criminals in need of rehabilitation. Uniting and building upon literature on feminist engagement with and critiques of citizenship, conceptual uses of "creep", carcerality and crimmigration, and critical anti-trafficking studies, we argue that criminal creep facilitates a perfect storm of exclusion that promotes sex workers' de facto and de jure exclusion from citizenship through a set of wide-ranging set of harms. Furthermore, we identify "control creep" as a factor limiting – even radically – the political organization of and social scientific production regarding the vulnerable populations anti-sex work and anti-trafficking laws are supposedly designed to aid.

**Key words:** sex work, prostitution, anthropologies of repression.



# A capilaridade de controle e as exclusões múltiplas encaradas por mulheres engajadas em setores da indústria sexual de baixa autonomia

## Resumo

O presente artigo reúne os anos de pesquisas empíricas feitas pelos co-autores com mulheres policiadas, estigmatizadas, e de baixa autonomia em setores da indústria sexual no Brasil, China, Itália e Estados Unidos. Identificamos seis formas de exclusão social prevalentes nestes campos: econômica, de saúde, segurança, difamação pública, intersetorial, e policiamento. Analisamos as manifestações distintas dessas forças excludentes nos quatro países estudados para apresentar “control creep” – ou a criminalização sorrateira – como espécie de abreviação teórica que significa a infiltração global de forças ideológicas, estruturais e interpessoais excludentes na vida social, nas práticas profissionais e nos procedimentos sócio-legais que marginalizam as mulheres na indústria do sexo, as situando como vítimas-criminosas que precisam de reabilitação. Unindo e desenvolvendo a literatura sobre o envolvimento feminista com e as críticas feministas de cidadania, os usos conceituais de “capilaridade”, carcerabilidade, a criminalização da migração e os estudos críticos sobre o tráfico humano, argumentamos que a criminalização sorrateira facilita a criação de uma “tempestade perfeita” de exclusão, que promove a exclusão de fato e de jure das trabalhadoras do sexo da cidadania através de um conjunto abrangente de danos. Além disso, identificamos a “criminalização sorrateira” como um fator que limita – até radicalmente – a organização política de e a produção científica social sobre as populações vulneráveis que as leis anti-trabalho e anti-tráfico foram supostamente projetadas para ajudar.

**Palavras-chave:** trabalho sexual, prostituição, antropologias sobre repressão.

# Control creep and the multiple exclusions faced by women in low-autonomy sex industry sectors

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## **Introduction**

An extensive body of literature across a wide variety of academic disciplines employs the notion of “creep” in reference to the gradual expansion of particular ideological forces— state-sponsored or otherwise— into diverse and often subtle aspects of everyday social interaction. This article expands this existing literature by introducing *control creep* as theoretical shorthand for the unrelenting expansion of punitive socio-legal measures that marginalize women in low-autonomy sex industry sectors. Our focus here is on what control creep *does* with respect to its problematic and complex effects on its targets, with particular respect to the driving forces and contexts underpinning the pervasive creep of criminalization and control measures. We accordingly engage with expanding scholarship that analyses the criminalizing agenda in the regulation of commercial sex as a strengthening global trend, and draw on four case studies— China, Italy, the United States, and Brazil— to highlight ways in which control creep results in at least six strikingly similar forms of harmful exclusion among women in all four countries’ low-autonomy sex industry sectors: economic, intersectional, health, safety, public vilification, and policing (See “Table” for a tabular representation of our findings). We also emphasize how control creep’s contemporary manifestations are reinforced by heightened popular anxieties about security in Europe, Asia, and the United States. These anxieties take numerous forms, including militia/police control of prostitution in Brazil, anti-migrant/racist politics and anti-trafficking policies in Italy and Europe more generally, the war on drugs and racialized “tough on crime” measures in the United States, and anti-migrant and anti-trafficking campaigns in China.

Table: Six Forms of Exclusion Identified in All Our Field Sites

<p><b>Economic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jobs limited to migrant networks, bonded labor situation, or those that hire undocumented migrants/people with records</li> <li>• Need to support addictions/self/family members &amp; possibly repay debt to facilitator</li> <li>• Contained in sex work by addictions, lack of social supports; facilitators, immediacy of meeting daily needs/no other options</li> <li>• Alternatives: cleaning, food services, low visibility &amp; poorly paid jobs that make sex trading much more attractive</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intersectional</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Racism (also racialized sexualization), classism, sexism, prostitution-related stigma</li> </ul>
<p><b>Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthcare avoidance due to stigma; fear of provider reporting undocumented status</li> <li>• Difficulties negotiating condom use &amp; other safer sex practices</li> <li>• Mental health/stress of the everyday; physical stress of working outdoors in extreme cold, heat, inclement weather, pollution on the roads, poor/crowded living conditions, or in less-policed areas (industrial or parks)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Safety</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face assault with impunity and limited legal recourse</li> <li>• Fear of being stopped, searched, and detained/deported by police leads to significant psychological stress (hypervigilance)</li> <li>• Working in less well-lit areas and less safe areas reduces likelihood of condom use and other safety measures</li> <li>• Working with gangs or other criminalized groups for protection</li> </ul>
<p><b>Public Vilification</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative media representations of migrants/addicts; rhetoric of abhorrence</li> <li>• Hypersexualized &amp; demonized as vectors of disease but also victims</li> <li>• Moral threat as criminals/foreigners (“children will lose their moral compass if they see them”)</li> <li>• Live and work in totalizing, over-priced environment where everyone is involved in sex/drug trade in some way</li> <li>• Very limited peer support due to competition, undocumented status and addiction’s psycho-social dynamics</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police raids round up women and ask “are you a victim of trafficking?” and women need to prove that they are, which means they have to make a case against their trafficker</li> <li>• Criminalized prostitution/addiction</li> <li>• encourages informing on one another in exchange for reduced criminal charges/sentencing</li> <li>• Tough on crime approaches popular with the public; mayors’ initiatives</li> </ul>

In all four regions, the performative powers associated with global anti-trafficking agendas discursively position women in prostitution as victim-criminals in need of rehabilitation and/or re-education. Hence women who use prostitution as a means to navigate multiple marginalities not only face socio-legal scrutiny as criminalized “prostitutes” (often “foreign prostitutes”), “addicts,” “street people,” or unwanted migrants, but also as victims who require therapeutic and/or tutelary intervention. Given this range of systemic and interpersonal modalities of control directed at the women, we contend that control creep generates a totalizing exclusionary force through which women from marginalized communities experience severe limitations on their socioeconomic opportunities. This, in turn, impels them into low-autonomy sex industry sectors where they face significant stigma that results in over-policing and compromised health and safety. We offer a unique contribution to literature that has identified the global trend in expanded sociolegal and related measures by acknowledging the synchronous operations of law and policy endorsed by a general public supportive of

sex workers' stigmatization, and the enforcement of various socioeconomic exclusions at the interpersonal level during interactions between sex workers and street-level bureaucrats tasked with the enforcement of related laws and policies. We argue that control creep undermines sex workers' agency through systematic socioeconomic exclusion that requires these multiple levels of collusion, which occur with striking consistency across the authors' four very different cultural contexts.

As worrisome is the fact that all four authors, engaged in street- and brothel-level research with sex workers and sex worker activist groups over the past two decades, have noted that police and legal activities surrounding control creep have made it increasingly difficult for sex workers to organize themselves and make their needs understood to policy makers. It has also limited social scientific researchers' ability to interact with these populations. Control creep is thus implicated in creating a self-fulfilling prophecy regarding sex-working women. By squelching these women as political agents and threatening their allies and interlocutors in civil society, it (re)produces as social reality the stereotype of the "powerless victim/criminal" in need of tutelary intervention and rehabilitation. This situation has become increasingly acute with the intensification of the post neo-liberalism, militarized capitalism, and parahumanitarian policies (Amar, 2013 ) that make up what has been conventionally termed the "turn to the right" in the global political scene – a situation that has concretely manifested itself in all four countries studied here.

## Literature review

Analysis presented here adds a new dimension to the multi-disciplinary usage of "creep", a term connoting stealth in the form of a slow-moving, subtle, pervasive, and often-unnoticed yet inevitable phenomenon, as opposed to an ostentatious event. Chuang (2014), for example, uses the term to examine "exploitation creep" in U.S. anti-trafficking legislation focused on eradicating "slavery" while failing to advocate for labor and migrant rights, and Rathod (2015) employs "crimmigration creep" in reference to expanded legislation that prevents those with criminal records from entering the United States. Carver (2014) uses "control creep" to characterize the normalisation of state security measures that criminalise public protests, and Fox (2014) employs "interest creep" as shorthand for the mobilisation of vague concerns (such as "national security" or "child protection") to justify morality-based judicial decision-making. Researchers have also used "creep" to express concerns about the expansion and dilation of cultural meanings attached to vulnerability with respect to the criminalization of HIV transmission ("criminalization creep", Dej & Kilty, 2012), expanding victimization to encompass a wide range of previously normalized experiences, such as bullying ("concept creep", Haslam 2016), and the widespread growth of therapeutic discourse and practices to address university students' ostensibly fragile psycho-social wellbeing ("vulnerability creep", Ecclestone, 2017). As this brief overview reveals, "creep" derives its semantic power across a variety of literatures in otherwise unconnected disciplines from an implied sense of powerlessness vis-à-vis totalizing change. This change, as we also discuss in this contribution, "creeps in" through the, sometimes almost imperceptible, normalization of reductionist and ideologically-driven paradigms, policies and practices at the hand of political forces and social institutions that initiate and then drive such change.

The unrelenting and increasingly diffused expansion of socio-legal measures aimed at controlling sex workers' bodies and lives has been identified as a global trend in a growing body of scholarship in criminology, socio-legal and policy studies among others (Sanders and Campbell 2014; Dewey, Crowhurst, and Izugbara, 2019). These scholars' examinations of expanded criminal justice oversight ostensibly designed to reduce instances of coerced prostitution emphasize the resulting exclusionary measures that reduce women's opportunities to migrate, earn an income, or receive services they regard as meaningful (Pickering & Ham, 2014; Jahnsen & Skilbrei, 2017). In a recent contribution, for example, Graham (2017) usefully applies Simon's

(2007) concept of ‘governing through crime’ to delineate ways in which criminal law is deployed to manage and control sex work and to justify punitive interventions in this area also through other policy measures, including immigration laws and border control. Hence Graham argues that “by framing sex work as an issue of crime, with sex workers being both the perpetrators of crime and the potential victims of exploitative crime, the state is able to legitimize its actions against sex workers, while ignoring the harm done to sex workers by the state” (2017, p. 202).

Similarly, Jahnsen and Skilbrei (2017) argue that a ‘cimmigration’ approach, i.e. one that combines immigration and criminal laws is being adapted to target more efficiently prostitution markets that in Norway are rapidly changing as a result of globalization. Whilst the aims of these measures are seemingly to protect women from trafficking, they end up legitimizing their constant exposure to surveillance and “police intervention in the prostitution market and in the lives of those who sell sex, and for many this has meant that they have lost their homes and deposits, and have been subjected to widespread discrimination by landlords and hotels” (Jahnsen and Skilbrei 2017, 269). Outlining similar developments, Scoular and Carline (2014) use the notion of “creeping neo-abolitionism” to characterize the spread across Europe of a reductive victim/victimizer paradigm that drives many criminal justice initiatives to abolish prostitution. In this context, women’s agency is left unrecognized while “the rhetoric of victimhood consolidates and legitimizes law’s power over women’s bodies, foreclosing any discussion of forms of rights or recognition that could support counter-hegemonic challenges (Scoular and Carline, 2014, 622). Researchers also argue that a shift to coordinated law enforcement and social services responses in many countries’ prostitution-related regulatory regimes is little more than window dressing which only increases the exercise of state oversight in sex workers’ lives (Phoenix, 2009; Scoular & O’Neill, 2007) and inadvertently harms the very women such responses purport to assist, as has been argued in the case of anti-trafficking raids (Ditmore & Thukral, 2012). Even policies targeting prostitution that are viewed as examples of ‘progressive governance’ and part of benign rehabilitative efforts mask attempts to increase social control “under the rhetoric of inclusion, through techniques of risk and responsabilization” (Scoular and O’Neill 2007, 764). In this respect, Munro contends that the implementation of international law regarding trafficking, in the form of the United Nations Palermo Protocol, “may ultimately have produced a duplicitous response that permits its provisions to be manipulated in line with domestic agendas of border integrity and the suppression of vice” (Munro, 2006, p. 332). Scholars in this field have also been critical of initiatives that target particular sex industry participants, such as minors (Musto, 2016) or men who purchase sex (Ellison, 2015), because of the way that moralizing, rescue-based approaches predominate at the expense of meaningfully considering the deeper socio-structural issues that inform these participants’ decision-making.

While the intersections between social, legal, and economic forms of exclusion are apparent, in various ways, in the work of these scholars, researchers have not yet sufficiently theorized the totalizing impacts of these exclusions on sex workers. It is insufficient to examine the impacts of law and policy on women in sex work when, for instance, the experiences with poverty and violence endemic to the lives of women in low-autonomy sex industry sectors may be more important to the women than the legal status of prostitution. Likewise, studies that only critique the prevailing socio-legal focus on trafficking—often to the exclusion of sex worker rights discourse—fail to account for the reality that women in low autonomy sex industry sectors may indeed feel coerced into their work by force of circumstance.

The present article engages with and expands upon this existing work in its analysis of the quotidian operations of control creep in four very different sex industry contexts, emphasizing how these increasingly diversified socio-legal control mechanisms impact sex workers as they internalize and/or mobilize against six primary forms of exclusion— economic, intersectional, health, safety, public vilification, and policing— in the course of their everyday lived experiences.

## Globally Charting Control Creep: Four Case Studies

Following Jo Phoenix's (2017) call to locate contingent phenomena at work in prostitution within broader global context, we united our research conducted in four very different sex industry sectors to demonstrate how control creep operates in sex workers' lives cross-culturally. This approach emphasizes the regulation and governance of sex work as part of global governance by moving beyond context-specific analyses to highlight significant experiential and socio-institutional similarities that result from the criminalization of prostitution across cultural and geographic divides.

Reflecting on their twenty years of research experience with women in the sex industry while working together on a major international project on the sex industry that united 77 contributors from all over the world—the Routledge *International Handbook of Sex Industry Research*— gave the authors pause for reflection on the disciplinary and geographic silos that characterize sex industry research. These silos typically isolate or otherwise compartmentalize research findings as somehow unique to particular contexts, sometimes in ways that inhibit theorizing about globally pervasive phenomena. The authors' respective long-term ethnographic engagement in four specific contexts—Brazil, Italy, China, and the United States— provided unique insights into the particularities of geographical and cultural context as well as the similarities they noted in each other's previously published work. Working together in-person and by Skype in 2017, the co-authors reviewed the findings in each other's research and ascertained the existence of the six exclusionary forces identified here through extensive conversations about the specificities of each author's field site. Uniting the four studies' findings demonstrates how control creep operates by producing particular effects that are contextualized manifestations of a global issue.

Results presented here do not derive from a systematically comparative study, yet we contend that this fact makes the striking similarities between how women experience exclusion all the more relevant. Despite some differences in methodological approach, the four authors' respective research designs shared much in common.<sup>1</sup> All four authors engaged in participant-observation ethnography in low autonomy sex industry sectors occupied by women struggling with numerous forms of socioeconomic exclusion. Women in the Brazilian case (which focuses primarily on Rio de Janeiro) tend to be from the (non)working classes of the city's suburbs and favelas, many of whom are drawn into prostitution as an economic solution following failed "traditional" partnerships with male breadwinners who subsequently abandon them and their children.

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<sup>1</sup> Thaddeus Blanchette has lived in Rio de Janeiro for 20 years and has conducted street-level ethnographic research in that city's brothels and street scenes since 2005. He has been an active participant in and academic ally to sex worker organizations, helping represent them at the municipal, state, and federal level in anti-trafficking policy-making groups. His research and affective partner is currently president of Brazil's oldest sex worker association. Tiantian Zheng lived and worked as a low-tier karaoke bar hostess in Dalian, a city in Northeastern China, which allowed her access to hostesses' social networks, including their friends, siblings, romantic partners, paying clients, and men who protected them in exchange for sexual services. Isabel Crowhurst resided at shelters for migrant women leaving sex work in Italy, where she immersed herself in the everyday operations of government-funded organizations attempting to assist victims of sex trafficking. Susan Dewey lived in both a U.S. transitional housing facility for women leaving street prostitution and the neighborhood street contexts in which street-based sex trading, and the illicit drug economy it supports, occurs.

The authors also interviewed a variety of actors. Blanchette conducted open ended interviews with sex workers, their domestic partners and other family members, clients, bouncers, brothel owners and managers, police officers and an array of social workers and NGO members who interact with those who sell sex, as well as local and federal policy makers involved in the overhauling of his country's anti-trafficking laws. Zheng conducted open-ended interviews with hostesses, their clients, family members, medical doctors, police officers, and government officials whose decisions impact the women's lives. Crowhurst interviewed support staff at organizations that provided support to women in prostitution, including lawyers, social workers, cultural mediators, peer workers, volunteers, and managers. Dewey interviewed women with current and past histories of street prostitution and the criminal justice, social services, and healthcare providers who regularly interact with the women.

During the same period indicated above, the four authors engaged with a variety of documentary and archival resources. Blanchette conducted historical research into prostitution at the State Archives of Rio de Janeiro and the Brazilian national archives. He has maintained a database regarding media treatments of sex work in Brazil for 15 years. He is also involved in intense participant-observation research with the various governmental committees set up to combat trafficking in Brazil and redefine Brazil's laws so that these would be in accordance with the Palermo Protocols. Zheng closely followed media and other popular cultural accounts of hostesses' lives. Crowhurst engaged in documentary analysis of policies, bills, jurisprudential rulings, and political statements pertaining to the governance of prostitution in Italy. Dewey reviewed case file data at the transitional housing facility, reports and other documentary materials produced by criminal justice and social service professionals, and legislation related to the governance of prostitution.

Women in the Italian case study are primarily undocumented migrants who do not have the right to legal work, and are the targets of widespread xenophobia and racism. Hostess bar workers in China are women from rural areas who have migrated to the city without a residence permit and associated legal right to work and face widespread discrimination from urbanites who regard them as uncouth villagers. The disadvantages faced by U.S. women in street prostitution include inter-generational poverty, addiction, compromised health, exclusion from housing and legal work as a result of criminal convictions, and the structural violence of racism.

The following four case studies derived from our research with women in policed, stigmatised, and low-autonomy sex industry sectors demonstrate how control creep manifests in quite similar ways despite otherwise significant cultural differences between Brazil, China, Italy, and the United States.

### Case Study One: Brazil

Brazil is a qualitatively different from the other three case studies presented in this article because the sale and/or purchase of sex never been criminalized nor officially regulated in that country. This has led to the wide-spread, global perception that prostitution is “legal” in Brazil<sup>2</sup>. In fact, as has been pointed out elsewhere (Blanchette; Scettini, 2017, it’s better to think of it as “not necessarily illegal”. While formal legal controls over the sale and purchase of sex in Brazil are few, they are purposefully written in such an open and vague fashion that they can be situationally applied by street-level police officers and precinct commanders to promote the effective control and even regulation of prostitution (Blanchette, et al, in press). Police and government officials are and historically have been involved in the oversight and control of prostitution in Brazilian cities for over a century in what might be termed a system of “non-regulated regulation”.

An example of how this has worked can be seen in early twentieth century Rio. As historian Cristian Scettini remarks, late 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> century authorities in the city resisted the French and Argentinian model of prostitution regulation in closed houses and became an early supporter of abolitionism, following on the successful campaign to abolish slavery in Brazil (Scettini, 2006). However, as the League of Nations’ undercover investigator into human trafficking, Paul Kinsie, reported in 1924:

[N]o man or woman can operate a house of prostitution. A woman can, however, upon securing a license, conduct a boarding house, known as a pensao [sic], for prostitutes. The housekeeper may have as many prostitutes in her house as she has rooms, and may charge the prostitutes any amount that she sees fit for room and board. The housekeeper cannot share in the prostitutes’ earnings.... The housekeeper keeps a register of all inmates, which includes name, age, nationality, etc. This register is submitted to the local Police Precinct each time a new girl is registered, or a girl departs. (Kinsie, apud Chaumont, et al 2017).

In this way, the city authorities of Rio de Janeiro established what were effectively brothels, which paid a licensing fee, registered women, and were under police supervision without ever, officially, regulating prostitution. It is notable in this context that “pensão” merely means “boarding house” in Portuguese and at this time (the early 1920s) any female boarding house in Rio was legally treated as a brothel by authorities, whether or not its boarders sold sex.

While each city in Brazil has a different local story of administering prostitution, Rio – the ex-capital – has served as a template for the rest of the country. Over the decades, the police’s direct or formal control over the sex trade in Rio has waxed and waned according to the political winds, occasionally punctuated with brief outbursts of abolitionist fury and attempts to close down the sex trade for good (Pereira, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> As a thermometer of popular perceptions of the world, Wikipedia is quite useful. The entry on Prostitution in Brazil is particularly revealing of the common-sense notion that “prostitution is legal in Brazil”. Any number of other affirmations of this sort can easily be found by searching for “prostitution” and “Brazil” on the internet.

Typically, these efforts have only served to spread prostitution to other areas of the city without eliminating it in the older districts. Historical research has not been able to uncover any neighborhood in Rio where prostitution was quashed, once established (Schettini, Blanchette, 2017). Indeed, in the early '00s, the local sex workers' rights group, Davida, was located in the middle of what had been the city's slave brothel district in the 1840s, an area that today is plied by mostly late-middle aged hotel-working street walkers. In this sense, Rio de Janeiro has not yet been successful in implementing the "urban cleansing" schemes carried out in other countries like the U.S. or Italy, which have pushed prostitutes out to the peripheries and highways.

Evidence gathered by Thaddeus Blanchette and his co-researchers over the past 15 years suggests that the reason for this "failure" is the profit sex work remits to factions within the police and their paramilitary allies, commonly referred to as "militia". As many brothel owners and managers have told him, "You can't run a *puteiro* in Rio without police partnership". Thus, in spite of brothels being formally criminalized by the Brazilian penal code, Blanchette found close to 300 venues where sex is sold in Rio in 2009, more than 2/3rds of which were establishments identifiable as illegal under Brazilian prostitution laws. In such a scenario, it is difficult to clearly claim that Brazilian laws criminalize, decriminalize, regulate, or deregulate prostitution. It is better to say that the vagueness of the Brazilian penal code with regards to prostitution is not a "bug" but rather a "feature", allowing police and other municipal authorities the maximum amount of leeway in dealing with sex work. Unlike prohibitionist countries like the U.S. or China, the law does not commit authorities to repressing prostitution: like Italy, they have enough laws *surrounding* prostitution that they can go after any given establishment, street scene, massage parlor, or escort service they choose, if these upset the local bourgeoisie or do not pay the *arrego* – the informal tax police charge all sex working establishments.

Rio's contemporary system for dealing with prostitution is thus surprisingly similar to that documented by Kinsie in the 1920s, with the caveat that the *arrego* is now formally illegal (although practically universal). Women are allowed to work unharassed in police designated spaces as long as local residents are kept happy and money flows to the authorities. Today's "saunas", "massages", "nightclubs", and "entertainment clubs" do not sell sex: they rent rooms, sell drinks, and/or charge door fees. As in the 1920s, they do not formally touch women's earnings from sex, nor do they keep the women as "inmates". Police precincts still keep unofficial registry books of prostitutes, however, and these are updated when *arregos* are paid or negotiated, or on the very rare occasions that police raid an establishment (usually for political reasons or non-payment of the *arrego*).

This results in a situation where the women in the lower reaches of the Brazilian sex industry simultaneously have more autonomy, but no greater rights than their sisters in China, Italy, and the U.S. It is rare to see women "forced" into prostitution by anything other than economic need. One of Blanchette's sex-working informants expresses this economic pressure in the following manner, "My children are my pimps". As Ana Paula da Silva points out (da Silva, Blanchette, 2018) and Blanchette's fieldwork confirms, most women who sell sex in Rio shift in cycles through what da Silva calls the "triangle of women's work": poorly paid service economy jobs, traditional housekeeping with economic dependence on a male, and relatively well paid prostitution. Of the three positions, only prostitution offers some hope for capital accumulation or reasonable, independent improvement of the woman's socio-economic status. Sex-selling women are thus often seeking *escape* from abusive personal relationships, personified by violent husbands or boyfriends, or by abusive managers and bosses (who often sexually harass their female employees: Blanchette & Da Silva, 2017). Prostitution holds out to them the possibility of achieving independent economic survival and even prosperity without being beholden to a man – ironically, by selling sex to men.

However, as one of Blanchette's 60 year old sex worker interlocutors points out, "There are two things you can't put on your CV: mom and whore". The longer a woman stays in the prostitution pole of the "woman's work triangle", or the more often she passes through it, the more likely she is to become permanently marked by its stigma – which in socially conservative, misogynistic Brazil can be considerable. Minimally, she is likely

to be recorded as a prostitute in the police's "unofficially official" registries. The police and other third parties also hold the threat of "outing" a particular woman to her family or community, which can result in threats to her life, her custody of her children, or her ability to find other employment. Finally, there's what the women themselves call the "addiction" of prostitution, by which they mean that it is very hard to go back earning the minimum wage of 200 USD a month – or nothing at all, in the case of housewives – after earning upwards of five times that selling sex. Thus, the longer one sells sex, the harder it is to leave prostitution. At the same time, age and hegemonic standards of female beauty ensure that sex work is what sociologist Paul G. Cressey, in his classic study of the "taxi dance hall", calls a "decadent career" (Cressey, 1932), where every year passed in said line of work diminishes the worker's prospects and pay. Because of this, one of the common options for older prostitutes in Rio de Janeiro is to continue on in sex work as madams, managers, or brothel administrative personnel. This, in turn, puts them into personal relationships of reciprocity and control (à la Mauss' *The Gift*, 1950) with venue owners and the municipal authorities who ultimately profit from prostitution in Rio de Janeiro.

In the decades following the end of Brazil's military dictatorship (1985), police control over prostitution has often been exercised through third party "cut outs" (Blanchette, et al, in press). Locally known as the "militia", these paramilitary groups are generally formed by ex-police officers, firemen, soldiers, and other State security personnel, often owing allegiance to local politicians and having informal connections to State security forces. The response of the organized prostitutes' movement in Brazil in the face of this "privatization" of police control has been to call for the voluntary regulation of sex work, bringing prostitutes under Brazil's labor laws. This has received extreme reaction from certain sectors of the feminist movement in recent years, which sees such legislation as "legalizing pimps" (Piscitelli, 2012; Correa & Olivar Nieto, 2010). Meanwhile, in 2018, Brazil elected a president who is widely associated with militia groups, leading to the sponsor of the regulation bill, Federal Deputy Jean Wyllys, to flee Brazil after multiple death threats and the murder of his colleague, Rio City Councilwoman Marielle Franco, by the new president's neighbor. At the same time, a bill is advancing through Congress, sponsored by the far Christian right, to criminalize the purchase of sex. Hence while control creep takes a different route in Brazil than in China, Italy, or the United States, it nonetheless exists as a powerful force in sex workers' lives.

## Case Study Two: China

In 2010, rural migrant female sex workers, arrested in a massive police raid in Dongyuan, Guangdong province, were paraded down the street for public shame and open denigration (Qing 2010). Barefoot, these women were handcuffed and tied with long ropes like dogs, leashed and paraded by the police on the street for public spitting and public humiliation. Public shaming activities like this also took place in Hubei and Henan province respectively in 2010 and 2009. In Hubei province, police force in Wuhan city posted personal information such as the true names and ages of arrested rural migrant sex workers everywhere in the city from small alleys to large streets for public disgrace (Yu 2010). In Henan province, the police force in Zheng city publicized nude photos of female sex workers in the media for public denigration (Fu 2009). In one of the photos, a plain-clothed policeman violently pulled the hair of a sex worker, who was kneeling in front of him, naked, with arms across her chest, looking terrified and in pain.

Publicly vilifying and shaming rural migrant female sex workers epitomizes the stigmatization, marginalization, criminalization, and exclusion of rural migrant female sex workers from legitimate citizenship. Rural migrant women shoulder heavy historical baggage due to their rural origin. As a result of decades of prejudiced government policies against rural people, poverty and deprivation have driven 260 million rural people to cross the urban-rural border and enter the city. The household registration system (*hukou*) divides the population into urban "citizens" and rural/migrant people without urban residence permits, denied subsidized

housing, children's education, health care, employment, and other benefits associated with urban residence permits (Goodkind and West 2002; Li and Piachaud 2006). This system, despite some reforms since the late 1990s, is deemed as "the most serious form of institutional exclusion against mainly rural residents" that produces "rural-urban apartheid" in China (Chan and Buckingham 2008, 583-587; Zheng 2015).

Despite rural migrants' immense contribution to the local and national economy, they still face severe institutional constraints (*hukou*) and social, cultural, and economic marginalization and stigmatization. It was reported that in 2003, a college graduate was arrested by the police for failing to show a temporary resident card, mandated for all rural migrants to stay legal in the city (Chen 2003). He was subsequently beaten to death at the repatriation center. Like him, rural migrants are often subject to police harassment and search for legal documentation, deportation or detention, wage withholding, reduction of payments, and social discrimination.

Rural migrants are categorized as backward and barbarian "outsiders" who are not only excluded by the state and urbanites, but also maltreated and blamed for social problems. Rural migrant women are portrayed in the media as perpetrators of crimes and vectors of diseases as well as victims (Zheng 2009b). They are also represented as both chaste virgins and promiscuous, licentious, and sexually unbridled women whose sexuality is perilous, threatening, vicious, and detrimental to the moral fabric of society (Zheng 2009a). In this politically, socially, and economically hostile and discriminatory urban environment, rural migrant women are forced into the lowest rung of the labor market. They commonly work as factory workers, domestic maids, waitresses, and garbage collectors. In order to support their rural family, some take on sex work instead of these exhausting, low-wage physical labor, which often times involves not only a withholding or severe deduction of wages, but also rape by employers (especially in the case of domestic work). Their entry into sex work was either through the introduction by friends, sisters, and cousins, or through their own solicitation at the underground brothels. To the women, sweatshops, withholding of wages, and rape associated with the alternative labor are more exploitative than sex work, which has more flexible hours and is much more lucrative (Zheng 2009b).

Police raids of the entertainment places often lead to arrests and detention of sex workers in labor camps in the name of rehabilitation. Many women Tiantian Zheng worked with were arrested by the police during Zheng's fieldwork. After the arrest, they were told that a fine of 5,000 yuan (\$833) would earn their release. If they failed to submit this fine, they would be detained at labor camps for rehabilitation (which often involves forced labor) from 6 months to 2 years. In 2010, the amount of fine generally remained the same, though a much higher fine of 10,000 yuan (\$1667) was reported in some cities (Pan and Huang 2011). One of the reasons that the police can willfully extort sex workers and proprietors to serve their own interests is because they possess the arbitrary power to arrest, fine, and punish the women without the need to involve the court or the criminal justice system. As a result, sex workers find it imperative to obey the demands of the police including providing free sexual services and informing on other sex workers, in exchange for impunity from police arrests and fines.

All the women in the low-tier karaoke bar in Zheng's research lived in the bar to avoid the housing discrimination against migrants without legal documentation. Living in the underground brothel subjects them to sudden, constant police raids. Constant police raids and the illegal status as rural migrant sex workers without any legal recourse are conducive to a violent working environment wherein women suffer mental stress and physical harms perpetrated by thugs, police, clients, and bar bouncers. There is no political representation of their interests or support network in the city to which they can turn. Despite the 2006 Law on AIDS Prevention and the State Council 2012 Proposal, condoms continue to be used as evidence of sex work during police raids and police harassment (Pan and Huang 2011). Sex workers are thus discouraged from carrying condoms to avoid police arrests and subsequent detention, circumventing their engagement in safe sex and increasing their vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections.

Police raids also drive sex workers into dangerous, clandestine working environment. During Zheng's research, some sex workers chose to continue sex work during police raids, by following clients to their places. These unfamiliar, strange, and remote places such as rented apartments subjected the women to their clients' whim, including violence and unsafe sex. Others chose to return to the rural hometown as a hideout for several months until the police raids ended, when they found themselves in desperate economic deprivation. When they resumed sex work, the heavy financial loss precipitated them to engage in unsafe sex to offset the loss.

Zheng's research showed that the women employed a wide range of methods to thwart STIs, including emergency contraceptive pills, liquid condoms, and pre-sex antibiotic shots, which were not only ineffective, but also harmful in inducing infertility, heavy vomiting, irregular periods, severe abdominal pain, and frequent pregnancies and abortions (Zheng 2009b). Zheng's research at hospitals revealed that doctors were required by the police to relinquish the true names and information of patients with STIs, which was an effective way for the police to track down and arrest sex workers. Women in Zheng's research hence deliberately avoided these hospitals and visited low-quality, cheap, and unlicensed clinics, often operated by unqualified quack practitioners without formal or professional medical training. This kind of temporary symptom relief such as antibiotic shots often times leads to long-term physical suffering.

Without legal protection, women in Zheng's research found no alternative but to seek protective social networks with gangsters who offer protection against violence perpetrated by bar bouncers, clients, and other thugs (Zheng 2009a). As an exchange, the women provided free sexual services. Indeed, the illegal status of their work as well as their identity as rural migrants deprives them of any support network in the city. Their only option to cope with this hostile, stigmatizing, and marginalizing urban environment is to form a relationship with one or two gangsters such as skilled street fighters, formidable thugs, and ex-convicts who can be on their call to rescue them from impending physical assault, harassment, and violence perpetrated by clients and other gangsters. Control creep's totalizing force relies on systemic collusion between a wide range of socio-institutional, legal, and interpersonal forces to further exclude and stigmatise rural migrant women who sell sex in urban China.

### Case Study Three: Italy

In Italy, the advancement of the control creep discussed in this article can be observed in particular in the past two decades. During this time, the landscape of prostitution in the country has undergone rapid transformations resulting, to a large extent, from the growing number of migrant sex workers, with the sparse available data indicating that non-Italian nationals represent the majority of those who sell sex in both indoor and outdoor sectors. Since the 1990s, hostile attitudes towards immigration and its purported association with criminality have been fueled by the visible presence of migrant women and, to a lesser extent, migrant men and trans women selling sex in public spaces. Perceived and represented as a nuisance and as a social and public health threat, "foreign prostitutes" have frequently been the target of widespread campaigns concerned with the defense of public decency, Italian values, children's innocence and women's honor (Danna 2004), and of the explicitly racist and anti-immigration attacks of the ever-strengthening xenophobic party Northern League (Crowhurst 2007). But, in the context of intensifying anti-sex trafficking international mobilizations, public hostility and vilification have also been concomitant with growing concerns over the exploitative living conditions of these new migrants and their potential for being victims of sex trafficking. It was in the 1990s that an extensive network of support organizations was formed and was later firmly established through a successful and internationally praised government-funded system of assistance for victims of sex trafficking introduced in 1998 (Andrijasevic 2010; Crowhurst 2006). Today, the conflicting yet dominant (Anderson &

O'Connell Davidson 2003 Aradau 2004) double identification of “foreign prostitutes” as dangerous illegal migrants who must be removed with repressive measures and as victims of sex trafficking who need to be assisted and potentially reintegrated into the community is a dominant paradigm in Italy (Crowhurst 2012).

Indeed, the elimination of both street prostitution and of sex trafficking has been identified as the objective of many local municipalities’ so-called “anti prostitution ordinances”, widely issued since the mid-1990s by Italian Mayors across the country. These measures are mostly implemented with police raids during which hefty fines are issued to both clients and sex workers who, if undocumented, which is the case of many street sex workers, may end up being deported. Very rarely do these punitive initiatives contribute in any meaningful way to fighting sex trafficking or to reducing street prostitution in the longer term (CNCA 2009). Nevertheless, reflecting the key attributes of “control creep”, they are normalized and justified as concrete and tough measures to eliminate the criminal and criminogenic activity of street prostitution, the exploitation of those involved in it, and to protect urban safety and citizens’ wellbeing. They have therefore remained popular and recurrently adopted, often accompanied by hyperbolic media coverage which, on one hand, sensationalizes their alleged short-lived effects of ‘urban cleansing’ and ‘victim salvation’ (DiRonco 2018), whilst, on the other hand, it ignores their pervasive exclusionary effects on migrant women’s wellbeing.

The data Isabel Crowhurst collected between 2002 and 2006 during extensive fieldwork with support organizations operating in the field of street prostitution across Italy reveals the extent of the damaging impact that these anti-street prostitution measures have on the lives of sex workers, as also evidenced by the few other studies and reports of their effects (CNCA 2009; Cittalia 2012). As many of Crowhurst’s respondents lamented, consistent and repressive police raids had forced street sex workers to constantly change their working locations and travel great distances to work in less targeted, but also more secluded and dangerous areas. A report based on research carried out by a number of support organizations (CNCA 2009) states that to steer away from the police many sex workers have moved to unhealthy and overcrowded indoor premises. This has both increased competition and reduced earnings, resulting in sex workers having to work longer hours and take more risks, including not using condoms, to increase their dwindling profits. In an attempt to save money, some sex workers skip meals, or cannot afford to buy medicines and appropriate clothes for the cold winters, contributing to their deteriorating health conditions. Moreover, the constant fear of being raided, losing earnings, and being deported have a damaging impact on their mental health (CNCA 2009). Inevitably, as Crowhurst’s respondents relayed to her, anyone perceived to be an institutional figure, including themselves, is viewed with suspicion, for fear that they may be colluding with the police. Mistrust and enhanced mobility compromise the capacity of support services to get to know and build trusting relationship with sex workers and to provide them with health and emotional assistance, to distribute condoms and to inform them about their rights and legal options. Police forces, including those operating in areas where constructive relationships had previously been established with support services and street sex workers, are now avoided and feared by the latter. One of Crowhurst’s respondents told her that it was not uncommon for street sex workers to jump into the river flowing along the main road to avoid the police, or sometimes even to escape from moving police vans when they are escorted to police headquarters.

In 2008 the news that a Nigerian street sex worker was killed in a car accident trying to flee from a police raid (LuccioleOnline 2008) shed a less than triumphalist light on the effects of the punitive ordinances. It was in that same year that the grim circumstances of these repressive measures also reached national attention after an anti-prostitution raid did not go according to plans. The Mayor of a northern Italian city had arranged the raid as a media stunt to advertise his proactivity on the fight against street prostitution and its exploitation. However, the presence of the media during the police operations enabled the recording of allegedly abusive practices which generated strong public denunciation. During the raid, a Nigerian street sex worker, having unsuccessfully resisted being taken to the police headquarters, was locked up for the night in a

security cell. Here, exhausted, she lay on the floor where she was photographed by one of the invited journalists (Robusti 2008). The events of the night were later reported in many national and international newspapers which displayed the shocking photograph of the woman lying semi-naked on the dusty floor of the barren police cell. Many politicians and professionals operating in the field of migrant prostitution expressed outrage at the mistreatment and violence that the woman appeared to have been subjected to, and condemned the raids as measures which further contribute to the vulnerability of and stigma attached to migrant street prostitutes in the country (La Repubblica 2008). Challenging this view as an ideological misrepresentation, the Mayor and other local authorities, making use of racialized stereotypes, referred to the woman in the picture as a recidivist prostitute who had been aggressive and had refused the assistance offered by the police and the possibility of being rescued from her street life (TV Parma 2012; La Repubblica 2008). They kept justifying the raids they had ordered, and reiterated their importance as effective measures to improve the safety of public spaces and to contribute to putting an end to the exploitation of migrant women in the sex industry and to give them back their dignity, self-respect and self-worth (ibid.).

This very specific event is extraordinary for the access that journalists were granted to it and for the ensuing media coverage that it received. It also provides insight into the contexts of the normal and normalized anti-street prostitution raids that are routinely carried out on the national territory and of some of their damaging effects. Despite this, the authorities who ordered the raid kept making sense of it as a necessary operation with both punitive and “salvific” aims and refused to acknowledge any reference to the abuse and violence inflicted and resulting from these practices. The evidence of the harms they cause and of the multiple levels of exclusions they reproduce, as also revealed in the previously mentioned public report (CNCA 2009), remain ignored as more anti-prostitution measures are issued and implemented year after year.

#### Case Study Four: The United States

Women arrested on prostitution-related charges in the United States disproportionately come from intergenerationally poor communities and struggle with addiction, precarious housing, compromised mental and physical health, interpersonal violence, and child custody arrangements (Dewey & St. Germain 2017). Their arrests primarily stem from their high visibility as they solicit clients in neighborhoods dominated by the illicit drug economy, where they live and spend most of their time. The systemic and totalizing impacts of control creep in the United States, which has the world’s highest incarceration rate (Enns 2016; U.S. Department of Justice 2017), among women in prostitution is particularly evident in the case of a Colorado legal statute, “Prostitution with Knowledge of AIDS,” that imposes felony charges and prison sentences on HIV positive individuals who provide transactional sexual services.

Most street-involved women regard their involvement in street prostitution as a direct result of the significant economic need engendered by a drugs-prostitution-homelessness nexus described as “going hand-in-hand” (Sallman 2010). Many have grown up in a series of motel rooms and relatives’ government-subsidized apartments not far from the neighborhood where they trade sex for money, and a number of Dewey’s participants began turning tricks to buy food and other necessities for her siblings when a mother’s or caregiver’s drug addiction make her incapable of maintaining food stamps, stable housing benefits, and other government services available to the intergenerationally poor family. Entering prostitution as a minor is positively correlated with family members’ substance abuse and African-American ethno-racial identity (Clarke, Roe-Sepowitz & Fey 2012). The immediacy of meeting daily needs, caregiving obligations, and extremely limited income generation alternatives severely constrains women into a situation of “mutually reinforcing sex work and problematic drug use” (Cusick & Hickman 2009). These already limited economic prospects only worsen following their release from prison, when the difficulties associated with criminal background checks

by potential employers and the need to pay for drug testing and classes, with titles like “Anger Management” and “Parenting,” as a condition of meeting parole requirements increased a woman’s likelihood of re-incarceration. Many street-involved women leave jail or prison with no fixed address and a motel voucher for a few nights’ accommodation in what police term “a known prostitution area” and where they have previously traded sex for money.

African American women are over-represented in street prostitution and statistically more likely than their peers of other ethno-racial identities to face sexual assault, police profiling, as well as overall higher rates of violence and arrest (Campbell et al. 2003; Reid 2011). The sex industry reflects racial stratification and segregation prevalent in other socioeconomic sectors of the United States, with African American women targeted by a wide array of intersectional harms that contribute to arrest and incarceration (Richie, 2012). “Just another crack whore, a walking stereotype” is how one participant characterized the way in which most criminal justice professionals, including police patrol officers view her. These realities have direct relevance for street-involved women’s health, leading them to avoid disclosing involvement in prostitution to healthcare providers due to fear of judgment and, as other researchers have found, to face discontinuities in healthcare between correctional and free world settings (Sered & Norton-Hawk 2013). Particularly for women living with HIV and involved in prostitution, positive serostatus is part of police records as well as criminal record as a result of her conviction for Prostitution with Knowledge of AIDS. The mental and physical stresses associated with spending long periods of time outdoors in very hot or very cold Rocky Mountain weather are exhausting, and yet many street-involved women avoid shelters because they are mixed gender and house residents of uncertain mental health status.

The extensive criminal record and stigmatization as sex workers and illicit drug users make most street-involved women avoid police contact, as they fear that any encounter with police may lead to being stopped, searched, and arrested or otherwise detained as part of what her peers term “walking while female” in a neighborhood dominated by the illicit drug economy and the street prostitution related to it. Such gender profiling, which has been documented by other researchers with respect to transgender women (e.g. Edelman 2011), contributes to low levels of trust in authority, so that women in street prostitution rarely report assaults to police and perpetrators act with impunity. Soliciting in less well-lit and less safe areas likewise reduces women’s abilities to screen clients or insist on condom use, as other researchers have noted (Shannon et al. 2009). “People get left in dumpsters for a reason,” one participant told Dewey of neighborhood gender dynamics that she hopes that her streetwise self-presentation and connections to men involved in criminalized activities can help her to counter, “you gotta have protection.”

Unfortunately, such protection is often offered by men who are just as vilified by media representations and also facing their own battles with addiction, housing, and related issues. Enduring “tough on crime” media and political rhetoric in the United States as part of the War on Drugs continues to hypersexualize and demonize women in street prostitution as vectors of disease but also as victims of violence and abuse, rather than recognizing the tremendous agency they demonstrate on a daily basis (McCracken 2013). Social services available to street-involved women almost all have a faith-based mission to “redeem” or “rescue” her from her situation; court-mandated services, such as transitional housing that provides drug treatment, often takes a harsh punitive approach. Ghettoized living and working conditions are the result for street-involved women in a totalized, overpriced environment wherein everything—from motel accommodation to illicit drugs to food— operates in a cash economy sustained through prostitution and illicit drug use.

Daily encounters with police and the criminal justice system are status quo for street-involved women, who almost all engage in small-scale drug dealing with their clients, shoplifting, and other criminalized income generation ventures to meet their daily needs and manage their sometimes quite expensive addictions (Caputo 2008). Once arrested, as they typically have been many times before, a police patrol officer may ask

a street-involved woman if she is being forced into prostitution but this eventuality reduces relative to the number of arrests and convictions a woman accrues, such that her entrenchment in the criminal justice system as a repeat offender indicates she is farther on the volitional “criminal” side of the victim/criminal continuum that characterizes criminal justice (and dominant cultural) approaches to prostitution. The criminalization of prostitution, homelessness, loitering in public, and other activities related to women’s street involvement generates a fractious social context that encourages women to work as police informants in exchange for reduced criminal charges or sentencing, or to avoid arrest altogether.

### **Discussion: A perfect storm of oppression**

The synchronous operations of control creep have widespread social support that endorses and, in the case of criminal justice and some social services actors, mandates treatment that stigmatizes and excludes sex workers. The politician who criminalizes sex work to garner the popular vote in support of “family values” or even “women’s rights,” the police officer tasked with arresting the very poor women who are trying to earn a living, and the sex worker rights activists whose efforts are thwarted or impeded by widespread support for criminalization all act as individuals within collusive systems that support sex workers’ exclusion. The result is a perfect storm of oppression through which control creep manifests in six primary forms of exclusion.

Control creep’s exclusionary effects squarely situate sex workers at the center of this perfect storm by targeting them as criminals while simultaneously exploiting their vulnerabilities as marginalized women with few socio-legal and other citizenship rights. Taken together, these exclusionary forces— in their totalizing economic, intersectional, health, safety, public vilification, and policing forms—position street-involved women within a vortex from which they find it very difficult to emerge. In this section we discuss more in details these six forms of exclusion, drawing on a combined analysis of our empirical data in conjunction with a survey of global prostitution research on these six dimensions. All six forms of exclusion intersect with one another in ways that have not been previously explored by researchers, who often focus on one or more aspects of these exclusions without consideration of how they operate contemporaneously as a whole. These exclusions derive from control creep’s increasingly pervasive exercise of policies, modalities, and encounters that stigmatize and oppress sex workers in a systematic and totalizing manner.

### Control creep and its combined exclusionary forces

Women’s entry into sex work is often motivated by a lack of economic alternatives that offer similar income or flexibility (Plambech 2017; Sallmann 2010), a predicament which we identify as a manifestation of economic exclusion. Women who are treated as ‘second class citizens’ (as seen in the case of rural migrant women China), who are undocumented (migrant sex workers in Italy), or struggling with addiction and homelessness (in the US) tend to be further marginalized to sex industry sectors in which they have the least economic control, but which, as the Chinese example clearly showed, can be viewed and experienced as less exploitative and dangerous than other informal economy occupations. As the four country cases outlined above also show, many quality of work issues in the sex industry arise from the socio-legal sanctions that often accompany sex for sale, including stigmatisation, unpaid or unequally compensated labor, compromised health, limited social supports, and varying levels of state oversight (Adriaenssens et al. 2016). The US case also highlights the difficulties that sex workers can encounter in finding legal and/or less-stigmatised work when faced with criminal records, gaps in work histories, and being forced to hide their sex work activities in ways that can “trap” them in the industry even when they wish to leave (Cusick & Hickman 2009). Some sex workers confront these restrictions by capitalizing on their experiential and insider knowledge. In some instances, they take on

a managerial sex industry role that offers more power, control, and income with less invasive client contact than prostitution, such as becoming a madam (Cole 2006), or in other circumstances, as Dewey's work in the US shows, by acting as police informants to minimize, or avoid criminal justice sanctions. Sex workers clearly resist the operations of control creep even as its widespread impacts make it difficult to do so, just as police, social workers, and others exercise agency in their dealings with sex workers— even if in so problematic a gesture as accepting a bribe in exchange for not making an arrest.

A second form of exclusion we have identified –what we refer to as intersectional exclusion– involves the systemic impacts of structural racism, classism, and sexism in ways that contribute to the fact that in many local sexual economies, lighter skinned and more formally educated women earn more money in venues where they are far less likely to encounter police (Mahdavi 2010). In the US, we saw how racialized minorities dominate in lower-paid sex industry sectors, which they often enter at younger ages and under more disadvantageous labor circumstances, including limited control over their earnings, greater exposure to violence, and increased risk of arrest (Martin, Hearst & Widome 2010). In Italy and China, migrant sex workers, both undocumented and not, may likewise struggle with forms of sexualization that reflect neocolonial processes, racist sentiments, and/or deeply ingrained prejudice against rural migrants (Ifekwunigwe 2004; Lam 2016). The social networks marginalised sex workers cultivate to negotiate these intersectional exclusions operate in complex ways, such as third party offers of assistance with navigating a new country in ways that migrants and/or local law may regard as exploitative (Verhoeven & van Gestel 2017), or by seeking out 'protection' from men involved in criminalized activities. In contrast to these 'alliances', the sheer heterogeneity of transactional sexual services, significant differences between individuals who perform them, the divisive environment created by competition for clients, and, for some women, the psycho-social dynamics of addiction or undocumented status, further complicate activist organizing (Crago 2008; Zheng 2010).

National and municipal legislation, the presence or absence of sex workers' rights movements, and international legal and rights frameworks all impact on two further entwined forms of exclusion we identified: exclusions from healthcare services and safety (Overs and Hawkins 2011; Rekart 2005). Women may hesitate to disclose their involvement in transactional sexual activities to healthcare providers, or, as seen in the Italian case, to seek out for the assistance offered by outreach support services, missing out on their provision of much needed condoms and lubricants. In China, police confiscation of condoms as evidence of the intent to engage in prostitution results in further compromising women's health and safety and fostering their mistrust of police, as indeed reported in many studies across the globe (Scorgie et al. 2013; Shields 2012).

Unaffordable healthcare costs, stigmatising treatment, fear of deportation, travel distance, high costs, and wait times may prompt sex workers to delay or avoid medical care in favor of self-treatment (Porrás et al. 2008; Richter 2013). Working in less well-lit and less safe areas due to fears of being stopped, searched, and detained creates a culture of fear that decreases sex workers' abilities to negotiate condom use and seek services (Kurtz et al. 2005). This stress impacts women's relationships with intimate partners, who may suffer from jealousy, a desire to exercise sexual control, or coercion into sex work to support a partner's addiction, all of which occurs in tandem with client violence and police abuse of authority to threaten women's safety (Ulibarri et al., 2010).

Social exclusion through public vilification emerges clearly from the data presented in all four countries and enables assaults on sex workers with impunity. Indeed, murder rates are higher among women in prostitution vis-à-vis their peers outside the sex industry (Salfati et al. 2008). Mass media typically represent sex workers as either vulnerable subjects who must be protected from sexual exploitation or as pariahs who threaten the moral order and health of societies (Doezema 2010). However, as seen in the Italian case, these two opposite representations are often conflated, with migrant sex workers depicted and vilified as both threatening 'others' and as burdensome victims for the state. In China, the shocking images of mis-treated rural sex workers served to incite public hatred towards them as non-deserving citizens to be publicly shamed and punished.

Just as in the US the public demonization of female street sex workers should be understood in the context of the highly publicized ‘war on drugs’, so too in China and Italy, and indeed beyond these countries, these troubling yet pervasive negative representations serve to normalize punitive and often violent state interventions as ‘just’ and much deserved by these vilified populations.

Finally exclusion through policing is conspicuous in our data. The law plays a significant role in constituting the social organisation of commercial sex (Scoular 2015), with sex workers adopting an array of approaches to avoid arrest or other negative police encounters (Dewey & St. Germain 2014). As seen, in Italy, at least one migrant sex worker is known to have died trying to escape from the police, and in all four cases, sex workers have to compromise their safety by agreeing to follow clients to dangerous places in order to avoid the police. Sex workers in the most visible and public sex industry sectors are most likely to face public nuisance complaints and police harassment, and police raids, even when allegedly aimed at ‘liberating’ victims, cause further harms to a population which, for fear of them, is forced to operate in even more vulnerable and precarious conditions.

The perfect storm of oppression created through control creep actively works to impel and contain marginalized women, who already struggle with limited citizenship and other rights, within low-autonomy sex industry sectors. Our analysis of the stratifications and differentiations inherent to control creep among women in low-autonomy sex industry sectors emphasizes how citizenship more traditionally understood, i.e. related to holding a passport (or not), is just one of the many more complex factors that coalesce to limit sex workers’ recognition and access to rights and protection. Socioeconomically excluded, stigmatised, and policed as a result of intersectional factors that include sexism, racism, and classism, women in low-autonomy sex industry sectors face numerous mutually reinforcing harms to their health, safety, and abilities to self-actualize. We have acknowledged the deeply rooted and pervasive impacts of control creep as they manifest in six forms of exclusion that operate to limit or deny recognition and institutional and social protection of multiple intimate life arrangements—including partnerships, parenting, sexual identities and practices, and caregiving—and bodily autonomies, including access to health care, abortion and freedom to commodify one’s body and bodily services (Roseneil et al. 2012). In all these instances, the wide-ranging and far-reaching impacts of control creep further marginalize the most vulnerable sex workers. In so doing, control creep’s effects delegitimize the agency of women in sex work by reducing them to people devoid of rights and the ability to speak for themselves, even though sex workers clearly exercise resistance against control creep’s impacts.

## Conclusion

Using examples from our empirical research with women in policed, stigmatised, and low-autonomy sex industry sectors in China, Italy and the United States, we have argued that control creep facilitates a perfect storm of oppression. We identified six prevalent forms of exclusion that result from control creep’s seepage of increasingly diversified socio-legal control mechanisms into the everyday lives of women in prostitution and the various ways that the women navigate their victim/criminal status to internalize and/or mobilize these exclusions. Control creep has great utility as a theoretical-analytical concept because it captures how systematic and interpersonal modalities of control—as are apparent in the economic, intersectional, health, safety, public vilification, and policing-related exclusions—result in a wide-ranging set of harms for women in these sex industry sectors. While our analysis is specific to the sex industry, control creep has direct implications for scholars interested in questions of citizenship and the processes of state and socio-institutional legitimation that inform such questions.

Control creep’s authoritarian force relies on ignorance of the sex industry’s knowns, unknowns, and complexities to ensure that those who contribute to its diffusion solidify their position of power as epistemically superior subjects who ‘know better’— all too often, by willfully ignoring evidence. In each of our field sites,

evidence overwhelmingly suggests that control creep itself – rather than labor conditions within the sex industry— instigates and supports the six forms of exclusion identified. Migrant sex workers in Italy are subject to ordinances and socio-legal measures that, while ostensibly designed to reduce exploitation and improve public safety, derive from morally loaded and racist assumptions about both migrants and the sex industry. Rural migrant women who sell sex in urban China do so because they lack urban residence permits, face arrest, police harassment and extortion, and unsafe working conditions as a result of systemic collusion between socio-legal forces that stigmatize rural people and exclude them from the benefits of urban residence. High rates of arrest and incarceration among street-involved women in the United States result in interlinked forms of oppression through the criminalization of homelessness, addiction, and prostitution, which occurs in tandem with significant discrimination against individuals with criminal records. In all four instances, legal, social, and interpersonal forces collude in the production and reinforcement of control creep.

Also worrisome to the authors, as academics engaged with politically organized street- and brothel-level sex workers, has been the effects control creep has had on the possibilities for producing scientific, primary-sourced based data on the sex working populations most affected by control creep. It often appears to us that the law enforcement and social assistance actors who are the “front line soldiers” in the colonial appropriation of women’s lives and bodies described above agree with prohibitionist activist and journalist Julie Bindel’s<sup>3</sup> affirmation that if she had a gun and a single bullet, she would not shoot a pimp, but rather a sex work researcher (Agustin, 2010).

In countries like the United Kingdom, comments such as Bindel’s might be dismissed as mere hyperbole, but in nations like Brazil and China, it is not unknown for academics who research “improper” topics to disappear. Even in the relatively liberal U.S., rhetoric such as that espoused by Bindel, when operationalized by the new laws<sup>4</sup> supporting what Susan Dewey and Tonia St. German calls “the Alliance” (i.e. the interlocking, self-supporting and -justifying system of police repression and social service “rehabilitation” that traps sex working women in a state of quasi-permanent State tutelage: Dewey & St. Germain: 2016) has resulted in the cancelation of sex-worker/researcher symposiums and conferences such as the Desirée Alliance Conference (Trouble, C. 2018).

Brazil is a particularly dangerous case in this respect. The new government led by the extreme right under President Jair Bolsonaro has declared war on gender studies in schools and universities and, in particular, considers research into sex work to be “shameful”. While Bolsonaro has made comments that have been interpreted as encouraging (heterosexual) sex tourism, he has also put what’s left of the federal human rights secretariat – and, in particular, its anti-human trafficking committee – under the control of conservative evangelical Christians. The Bolsonaro family is widely alleged to have extensive ties to paramilitary militias in Rio de Janeiro, which have long controlled many of the city’s brothels. While it is still too early to say what the outcomes of the Bolsonaro presidency will be for sex workers, Blanchette and his team of co-researchers have been documenting a steady, solid growth of militia activities and control in Rio de Janeiro’s commercial sexscape, aided and abetted by police interventions.

In such a global scenario, international solidarity between sex workers, researchers, and their allies becomes even more important. This, however, is being undermined by the rhetoric of prohibitionist authors such as Julie Bindel in the global north and, particularly, in the Anglo-sphere. One only has to look at how Amnesty International’s meticulously researched report into the health and human effects of sex work

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3 Bindel is an anti-sex work, anti-trans- self-described “radical feminist” who has written extensively in the Anglo-sphere, supporting the criminalization of the purchase of sex and the rehabilitation (forced, if necessary) of sex workers, most notably for the British newspaper *The Guardian*. Currently, she is one of the most well-known voices writing in the English language in favor of the use of police power to “solve the problem of prostitution”.

4 And here we must highlight Donald Trump’s newly enacted FOSTA-SESTA law, which effectively criminalizes any on-line discourse that “favors” prostitution (see Godwin, 2018).

(Amnesty International, 2016) was greeted with a chorus of reprobation among U.S. and Western European feminist and faith-based groups to see this undermining in action. It is important to note here that this outcry was not due to any supposed methodological errors on Amnesty's part, but was simply due to the report's conclusions that sex work should be completely decriminalized as a health and human rights measure. In this case, one can see that even elements of the so-called "left" seem to be fully in favor of control creep, as long as it doesn't affect them, personally. Particularly problematic, in this respect, has been the position of certain feminists from the global north that the so-called "Swedish Model" (i.e. the criminalization of prostitution) be unilaterally and immediately exported to countries like Brazil where the police, in conjunction with paramilitary militia groups, directly administer prostitution (Blanchette, Mitchell, & Murray, 2017).

A vibrant body of literature already affirms that decriminalizing prostitution offers women in sex work with greater control of their working conditions while reducing some aspects of the stigmatization and exclusion they face. Such work demonstrates positive associations between decriminalization and increased access to healthcare and safer working environments among sex workers (Rekart 2005; UNAIDS 2012), with sex workers in decriminalized contexts reporting fewer instances of delaying or abstaining from healthcare due to stigmatizing treatment or fear of punishment (Overs and Loff 2013). This work also emphasizes how the law functions as a blunt instrument that is at best poorly equipped, and often entirely unable, to effectively account for the nuances that characterize transactional sexual encounters in practice (Wahab & Panichelli 2013). Our analysis and theoretical-analytical articulation of control creep echoes this literature by emphasizing the forms of exclusion enabled and even fostered by prostitution's criminalization.

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# From the Time of Rights to the Time of Intolerance. The Neoconservative Movement and the Impact of the Bolsonaro Government: Challenges for Brazilian Anthropology

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## Abstract

The present article discusses the recent neo-conservative movement in Brazil led by the Agribusiness and Evangelical Congressional Caucuses. Both fronts built and consolidated a confluence of objectives and political linkages in the National Congress to confront access to human rights. Neoconservative narratives centered on the “moral agenda” and based on the manipulation of Christian religious values have grown in Brazil’s public scene, countering concepts of gender equality, sexual diversity and reproductive rights. At the same time, an agenda of “legal certainty”, based on the interests of agribusiness, has dismantled environmental protection policies and blocked indigenous and quilombola rights to access land. This movement promotes the delegitimization of anthropological knowledge and of the sciences in general, while undermining the fundamental rights referenced by the Brazilian constitution. With the inauguration of a neoconservative government, intolerance has grown. As Bauman warns, one of the conditions of the dehumanization of the “Other” is authorization by government practices. The challenges facing Brazilian anthropology have increased dramatically in this scenario.

**Key words:** Agribusiness and Evangelical Congressional Caucuses; Neoconservatism; Human rights; Intolerance; Dehumanization.

Do tempo dos direitos ao  
tempo das intolerâncias.

A movimentação neoconservadora e o  
impacto do governo Bolsonaro:  
Desafios para a Antropologia Brasileira

### **Resumo**

O artigo apresenta o percurso no Brasil da recente movimentação neoconservadora liderada por duas frentes parlamentares : a Evangélica e a Agropecuária. As duas frentes construíram e consolidam no Congresso Nacional uma concertada confluência de objetivos e de articulação política para confrontar o acesso aos direitos humanos. As narrativas neoconservadoras centradas na “pauta moral” baseada na manipulação de valores religiosos cristãos crescem na cena pública e contraditam direitos à igualdade de gênero, à diversidade sexual e aos direitos reprodutivos. Na “pauta de segurança jurídica” baseada nos interesses do agronegócio, bloqueiam a materialização dos direitos indígenas e quilombolas de acesso à terra e desmantelam as políticas de proteção ambiental. Promovem a desautorização dos saberes antropológicos e das ciências em geral. Deslegitimam os referenciais constitucionais dos direitos fundamentais. Inaugurado um governo neoconservador, crescem as intolerâncias. A desumanização do “outro”, como alerta Bauman, tem uma de suas condições: o de ser autorizada pelas práticas governamentais. Os desafios para a antropologia recrudescem.

**Palavras-chave:** Frentes Parlamentares Evangélica e Agropecuária; neoconservadorismo; direitos humanos; intolerância; desumanização.

# From the Time of Rights to the Time of Intolerance.

## The Neoconservative Movement and the Impact of the Bolsonaro Government: Challenges for Brazilian Anthropology

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### **Introduction**

“Why do anthropologists bother people?” was the title of the speech I gave in October 2017 at the Brazilian National Meeting of the National Association for Research and Graduate Studies in Social Sciences (ANPOCS). “Who’s afraid of anthropologists?” was the question that guided the panel organized by the board of the Brazilian Anthropological Association (ABA) at this conference. As the President of ABA, I had organized the panel together with ABA Vice President Antonio Motta.

With these two questions, I sought to reverse the tensions and fears arising from the growth of a palpable “neoconservative movement” in Brazil, sustained and promoted by two Congressional Caucuses<sup>1</sup> in particular: the Evangelical Caucus (FPE) and the Agriculture and Livestock Caucus (FPA – which I will henceforth call the “Agribusiness Caucus”).

The two questions turn back my fears on their sources. These fears were and are concerning the negative impacts of the neo-conservative movement on human rights and on anthropology in Brazil. They inspired and guided the research for and writing of the present article.

My greatest fear was the deepening of the logic of exclusion: the increasing understanding of Otherness as those “who do not deserve to have the same rights”. Or, as Asad (2011) and Bauman (1998) point out, those who should not be recognized as “equally human”.

I begin the present article describing the fears I felt in 2017 in relation to the loss of the legitimacy of public references to human rights in Brazil. I characterize this loss as largely due to the country’s neo-conservative movement. In the article below, I present the reasons why I have labeled this movement as such. I argue that since the 2010’s, but especially in 2016 and 2017, the neoconservative movement organized under the leadership of the Evangelical Congressional Caucus (FPE) together with the Agribusiness Congressional Caucus (FPA). I follow the paths of each of these groups in their production of anti-rights rhetoric and their blocking of certain public policies that hurt their interests. I present and analyze how and why the FPA attacks the field of anthropology, charting the emergence of new challenges because of these attacks.

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<sup>1</sup> A *Frente Parlamentar* or “congressional caucus” is a supra-party association that seeks to promote federal legislation over a given sector of Brazilian society. The Ato da Mesa Diretora nº 69, of 11/10/2005, of the *Câmara dos Deputados* (lower house of the Brazilian Congress) establishes these as associations mad up of at least 1/3rd of the Congress. Article 4 of the Ato guarantees their right to be present at certain meetings, while Article 5 guarantees the widespread transmission of their activities through Congresses’ official communications. Nacional. <https://www2.camara.leg.br/deputados/frentes-e-grupos-parlamentares>.

I demonstrate how the neoconservative narrative has consolidated and show what its effects were on the 2018 electoral campaign and the ensuing Bolsonaro government. In short, I illustrate how Brazil has moved from a “time of rights” to a “time of intolerance”.

### **Fears and tensions regarding the future of fundamental rights, anthropological knowledge, and the social sciences**

Who’s afraid of “agro-pop/agro-tech”? is one of my questions.

“Agro-pop” and “agro-tech” are two allegorical ways of referring to the activities of Brazil’s agribusiness sector. They are nicknames that have been incorporated by the agribusiness sector into its television advertising, praising their productive capacity to put “food on the table” and sustaining the high technology and genetic improvements supported by survey Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA), which increase the productive capacity of the sector. “Agro-tech” and “agro-pop” advertisements are still on the air today, expressing this sector’s desire to expand agricultural land beyond environmental limits and in contradiction of the indigenous and quilombola rights provided for by Brazil’s 1988 Constitution. They also support the indiscriminate use of pesticides.

“Who’s afraid of the Evangelical Caucus?” is the second question that expressed my fears.

These fears were clearly not just my own. This question was the title given to an article published in 2017 by the renowned sociologists of religion, Reginaldo Prandi and Renan William dos Santos. These authors were bothered by the uncertainty of the political effects generated by the visible growth of the Evangelical Caucuses’ position in Brazilian public space. They concluded by calming their fears. In their article, Prandi and Dos Santos conduct a careful analysis of the contradictions and distances lying between the political positions of congressmen and the Evangelical electoral base. Their conclusion implies a forecast that, in my view, is not supported by the data they present. This is not because I believe that Prandi and Dos Santos should have arrived at an opposite conclusion: rather, I believe that they did not allow for the paths of voters and congressmen would take in the face of the then-uncertain political configuration that followed 2017 into the election campaign scheduled for 2018. In 2017, they authors stated:

Therefore, there is no justification for the fear that the growth of Pentecostalism in Brazil threatens democracy (Mariano, 1999, p. 231). (...) The Evangelical Caucus, which undoubtedly represents a new presence in the national public scene, gives visibility to Evangelical churches, but has not yet shown itself capable of effectively and legitimately guiding any change in Brazil’s course (Prandi and Santos, 2017: 209-210).

My speech at ANPOCS affirmed that in 2016 and 2017, the weakening of the narrative hegemony of the fundamental rights frameworks enshrined in the 1988 Constitution was already well underway, thanks to the growth of a neoconservative movement sustained by political linkages between the Agribusiness and Evangelical Caucuses. If could not yet see how these neo-conservative forces would actually behave in their pursuit of political hegemony, a public space had already been constituted resulting in a notable loss of references to fundamental rights. At the end of 2015, when the first moves to impeach President Dilma were being made, it was not yet possible to openly and carelessly undermine fundamental rights in the public political scene. This, however, had become possible in the course of 2016 and ’17.

This same feeling that I expressed in my speech at the 2017 ANPOCS was also present in the analysis of anthropologist Ronaldo de Almeida in that same year. Almeida’s fears seemed to echo mine. He related a similar perception of a “loss of rights”, pointing to the formation of a conservative wave and its connection to the Evangelical Congressional Caucus.

“The broken wave - Evangelicals and conservatism” was the title of Almeida’s article. In it, he pointed out that:

In recent years, Brazil has been undergoing political processes that have led to losses of certain conquests in the universe of rights, mainly constructed after the re-democratization [of the 1980s]. In recent years, forces working in favor of the containment, restriction and withdrawal of certain rights guaranteed with the establishment of the 1988 Constitution have consolidated themselves. Such a movement has been called a “conservative wave” (Almeida, 2017: 3.)

Was the feeling that of a “conservative wave” rising or of it breaking? Would the wave(s) all hit the “same beach”, as Almeida feared? Or would their “several vectors configured as playing boards” only “partially connect”, incapable of flowing in the same direction, but taking different paths?

What is configured as a “wave” is thus a tangle of several actors on different gameboards. It is divided into lines of force resulting from social processes which are by definition uneven, asymmetrical and with different temporalities. They are the social vectors of change operating across Brazil. I do not intend to attribute causality to any of these vectors for the current crisis, but rather seek to analyze how they connect to and configure the current conjuncture (Almeida, 2017: 25).

Almeida was aware of the crisis that the “conservative wave” caused and the uncertainty of the directions in which it would flow. However, what does a “wave” evoke? For me, it recalls movements that come and go, not necessarily the strength of a social movement that seeks to establish itself as permanent. Is the term “conservative” enough to express the current movement, its causes and consequences?

### **The neoconservative “movimentation”<sup>2</sup> (and why I name it as such)**

“Wave” didn’t seem to be an appropriate term any longer. I thus began to employ “*movimentação*”.

The usual metaphors in the political and intellectual fields call for either the employment of “wave” or “rhizome” when one wants to emphasize different temporalities in the linkages between certain similar concepts. When one talks of “waves”, temporal configurations of close but distinct political conceptions come and go, with variable degrees of permanence. When talking about “rhizomes” (see Costa, SG, 2009; Koselleck, R. 2006. and Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F, 2006.), political conceptions are organized in different temporalities through the intertwining of diverse conjunctural roots: they are not the product of single roots that split into different rootlets. I agree that these are both good metaphors for us to think about politics. However, I prefer to use more traditional terms drawn from the social sciences when referring to how segments and social groups go about achieving their proposed objectives.

The consecrated term for this in the social sciences is “social movement”. One talks about “social movements” when one encounters social subjects organized to achieve certain goals. This term was and is especially used in Brazil and in the world to indicate progressive mobilizations in favor of the expansion of citizens’ rights. (Dagnino, 1994, Gohn, 2013). I use “*movimentação*”, a word derived from “movement” which literally means “movimentation” (but which we will here gloss as “movement” in English). On the one hand, this neologism retains the idea of a socially organized form of reaching towards goals; on the other, it emphasizes the polyvocal and disparate character of a confluence of actors in reaching towards these goals. Alliances and articulations constitute ways in which social movements operate. Unlike the more common use of “movement” in referring to progressive movements, I use the word here to describe conservative mobilizations.

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<sup>2</sup> N.T. *Movimentação* in the original Portuguese – literally “movimentation” – which means more of a “moving” or “shifting”. In this case it is derived from strategies to link together movements to achieve common goals.

The objectives of these movements are antagonistic, but they act to link their leaders to broader bases while defending defined political objectives.

The concepts of social movement and social movementations emphasize processes of social organization, whereas the metaphors of waves and rhizomes shift social subjects and the organization of social forces at the side.

Why a neoconservative movement?

Simply because “conservative” does not seem adequate.

I use the expression “neoconservative” because “conservative”, fails to express the distinctions between conservative thought prior to and after redemocratization and the 1988 Constitution. These distinctions are both in relation to conservative economic and moral thinking and in relation to the social changes that have resulted in the transformations of the capitalism’s material base.

Since the 1990s, new economic interests of different business sectors and their elites have been built in the face of the advance of a neoliberal and rentier economic policy. This has taken place alongside an escalation in the valorization of identity (Fraser and Honneth, 2003) that increasingly -- and contradictorily -- demands policies of social protection.

The basis of the movement I am describing here is conservative and right-wing. Conservative thinking in the Brazilian political arena has lost ground since the redemocratization period, however. In the public arena general, the rhetoric of human rights that has become the legitimate reference that has occupied this space, even if only to invoke future paths while acknowledging a profoundly unequal present. In the face of this, the conservative narrative had to be rebuilt, being transformed into a “neoconservative” variant capable of confronting the legitimacy of the human rights narrative. This neoconservative narrative is also capable of confronting the perception that the State is properly a space for social protection. The new financial capitalist and rentier economic forms labeled as “neoliberal” need to produce social subjects that fail to legitimize the State as a provider of rights.

The Brazilian capitalist base of the ‘40s-‘60s was founded on large rural properties and industrial concerns that gained space through an “import substitution model”. The conservative movement that led to the 1964 dictatorship was based on the interests of class elites in opposition to labor movements, agrarian reform, and the leftist forces that were strongly anchored in sectors of the Brazilian middle class.

In the name of threatened conservatism, the conservative movement established a dictatorial authoritarian power that brutally confronted leftist movements head on. This conservatism maintained a developmental project that boosted industrial diversification and the national technological innovation, however.

In the 1990s, an economic restructuring took place in Brazil, linked to adherence to the Washington Consensus, driven by neoliberal globalization and rentier financial capitalism (Bresser Pereira, 2018). This drastically limited the expansion and diversification of public services and changed the interests of economic elites in view of the growing powers of financiers and rentiers.

The PT (Workers’ Party) governments between 2004-2013 took place during a commodity boom that strengthened particular sectors of Brazilian agribusiness: the agricultural production, livestock, and extractive industries, geared towards domestic markets and exports. The agribusiness sector and its rentier interests moved to occupy a strategic position in the Brazilian political economy, which is dependent on the financial sectors and benefits from the state sector (Martins, 2019).

The years 2016 and 2017 saw an agglutination of two neoconservative matrices: the rentier neoliberal and the moralist neoconservative. These two matrices were separated in the social movements of economic and political elites, as pointed out by Weyland (2004), Solano (2018) and Gonçalves (2019) but they tended to move closer through political articulations. This was the case with the link between the Evangelical and Agribusiness Caucuses.

In the resulting “entrepreneurship boom”, the advantages and interests of new forms of organization of Evangelical churches as enterprises are growing. Their rentier interests are growing, as they are dependent on benefits and new tax exemptions.

The Agribusiness sector, represented by the FPA from 2008 onwards, understands the risks of not achieving its objectives and of losing its privileges. The members of this sector oppose the expansion of the demarcation of lands and territories of indigenous and quilombola<sup>3</sup> peoples. They want to block this. They also want to curb the environmental sectors’ goals of limiting and monitoring deforestation and fires, while creating and maintaining parks and protected areas. The Agribusiness sector’s narratives are explicitly against constitutional environmental rights and indigenous and quilombola rights.

I call these forces “neoconservative” because they do not seek the long-term permanence of conservative economic, social, or religious thinking. Since the human rights movements (identity movements) erupted, the conservative forces that have wanted (or want) to oppose the secularization of Brazilian society and the growth of social movements for human rights, needed (or need) to organize themselves as a social movement. A reconfiguration of their agendas has become necessary for the production speech that is directly antagonistic to and critical of respectful references to fundamental rights.

In the political-electoral field and in the daily relationships of congressmen with the electorate, new social bases and new methods of “conversion” were necessary to break the legitimacy – at that point hegemonic -- of the rights to a diversity of lifeways and styles. The advance of secularization had largely eroded the conservative idea of a single and univocal model of family, morality, gender, and culture. The human rights narrative calls for subjectivity and self-identification and legitimizes plurality<sup>4</sup>.

In the face of this, Christian religious references have gained a visibility that they did not previously have in the Brazilian political scene.

We need to pause and reflect here, in order to show the distinction between present religious values and those of the past in conservative movements in Brazil.

Conservative religious elites (predominantly Catholic) remained comfortable until the years before the Constituent Assembly due to their close relationship with the State. They coexisted, albeit in conflict, with the heterogeneous political positions then prominent among Catholics. The Catholic Church, represented by the National Council of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB), had privileged (although differentiated) access to Brazilian governments throughout the dictatorship and redemocratization. The Catholicism that covered the majority of the Brazilian population remained divided between narratives of the “traditional Catholicism” of the elites, the “popular Catholicism” of the working classes and rural communities, and “liberation theology”, which “favored the left-wing” and was based in grassroots ecclesial communities (Boff, 1996 and Noronha, 2012). Catholic Bishops’ and Fathers’ positions were diverse. Some supported or mediated for the leftist forces that opposed the military coup while others clearly supported conservative movements.

“Tradition, Family and Property” was the slogan of the Brazilian conservative movement of the ‘60s. The term “tradition” indicated, in part, the religious character of the conservative Catholic bases that mobilized in favor of the military coup in the 1960s. This is in no way comparable to the strength of (Evangelical) Christian religious arguments today, however.

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3 Quilombolas are the current inhabitants of the rural black communities formed by descendants of enslaved Africans. They mostly live through subsistence agriculture on land that was donated, purchased, or occupied land a long time ago.

4 The neoconservative religious narrative opposes plurality, but it invokes the constitution of subjectivity, self-identification, and identification as something exclusively directed to subjects similar to oneself (one’s brothers). My hypothesis is that the manipulation/incorporation of the religious in the neoconservative narrative has led to its absorption by a large part of Brazil’s social segments. Perhaps for this reason, it has been successful for some (or many) of those who have incorporated the religious narrative into their and their “relatives” lives, moving away from the human rights narrative that refers to the plurality of “all”.

The technological possibilities of virtual social networks serve the interests of both the Evangelical and the Agricultural Caucuses. They allow exacerbated use of rhetoric detailing “enemies”, emphasizing a war between “good” and “evil”, and the robotic reproduction of these same messages, regardless of whether they are true or false (Cesarino, 2019). In the same way, the daily use of television and radio networks (whether or not connected to political campaigns) serves to produce a positive view of Evangelical agribusiness sector ideologies. The presence of rentier interests in seeking privileges in relation to State benefits is evident in the mobilization of both the Caucuses in the characterization of religious services as businesses and enterprises.

Each group had and has own neoconservative interests, but in the course of the political situation of the last year (2010) of the Lula da Silva government of the Workers Party (PT), the two fronts linked as a movement against the human rights narrative of PT government.

In 2013, the proximity and connections between the two fronts was consolidated and negotiated. On the one hand, the FPE or “Bancada Evangélica” as it is called, managed to “gather support from other Christian groups within the National Congress, when the subject is rights of the body, or issues involving the finances of Churches as a whole” (Silva, 2014: p.79). “Interviewees in the Agricultural Congressional Caucus believe that there is a pragmatic relationship of support with the Evangelical Congressional Caucus, in which both vote together on their main issues, reinforcing a performance that aims to impose their agenda.” (Silva, 2014: p.79). The two Caucuses also began to share members during this period.

In the critical political-party conjunctures that took place between 2015 and 2017, the links between the two fronts and their common efforts grew. The need for ever more supporters in the parliamentary political field demands and accelerates traditional “vote swapping”. It also allows for and speeds up the establishment of permanent support between different agendas that are perceived as compatible and confluent. It speeds up “conversion”, favoring points agendas that were not previously on agendas and encouraging the simultaneous participation of the same congressmen in both caucuses.

### **From the “time of rights” to the “time of intolerance”: the Evangelical Caucus and its links to anti-human rights policies**

Evangelical leaders came into the Constituent Assembly (1986-1988) aiming to defend religious freedom and to put the religious values of Evangelicals into the political scene. Although the “moral agenda” of Christian values was already present, including the defense of life from conception, their actions focused on preventing the mention to prejudice to sexual orientation as a discrimination forbidden by Constitution. (Duarte, 2011)

On September 18th 2003, at a Solemn Session in honor of the National Day of Religious Missions, the organization and formal establishment of a multiparty Congressional Caucus (FPE) took place in the National Congress. The executive board was mainly composed by congressmen affiliated with the Assembly of God. The President invoked “the mercy of God and the name of Jesus” and “pleaded for the lives of parliamentarians and for ‘unity’ among them”. (Duarte, 2011 and Duarte, 2020 : in press).

In my view, the impulse to formalize the Caucus and make a “moral agenda” prevail over the entire Brazilian nation was caused in large part by the fear of Lula da Silva’s new Workers’ Party (PT) government closer approach to identity-based social movements (Frazer and Honneth, 2003) fighting for human rights. In the year Lula began his presidency, he created three federal secretariats linked to human rights, all autonomous and given the status of Ministries.

On the first day of the new government (January 1<sup>st</sup> 2003), the Secretariat Women’s Policies (SPM) was created. This had greater expressiveness and autonomy than similar, previous institutions. It was directly linked to the President’s Office and had the status of a Ministry. The PT government recognized the need

to produce specific public policies. It aimed to coordinate and encourage actions in government agencies, with a view to promoting the transversality of engendered social issues and ensuring that the National Council for Women's Rights (created in 1985) had greater autonomy and effectiveness than in previous governments.

The Secretariat for Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SEPPIR) was created as a Ministry via a provisional measure on March 21st 2003. This was also the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, established by the United Nations (UN) in memory of the Sharperville Massacre, where 69 black people were murdered during a peaceful demonstration.

The Special Secretariat for Human Rights (SEDH), also with Ministry status, was created on May 28th, 2003, providing follow-up to National Human Rights Programs. It was highly relevant in the defense of sexual diversity rights.

The creation of the Evangelical Congressional Caucus aimed to strengthen its moral agenda against the legalization of abortion, against the union of homosexuals, and against the adoption of children by homosexuals.

However, it would only be in 2005 that actions to defend this moral agenda by the Evangelical Caucus became more effective and visible. The critical event (Das, Veena, 1995) that gave rise to the boiling over of the neoconservative movement, in terms of its moral agenda, was the delivery to Congress by the Executive Branch of a draft bill that “establishes the right to voluntary termination of pregnancy, ensures the procedure will be carried out within the scope of the public health system, determines its coverage by private health care plans, and takes other measures”.

The decision to draft a bill to legalize abortion was the result of feminist movement's deliberations during the First National Conference on Public Policies for Women in 2004. The draft bill was then drawn up by a Tripartite Commission appointed by the President of the Republic and delivered in 2005 by Minister Nilceia Freire (then the head of the SPM) to the Social Security and Family Commission of the Federal Chamber of Deputies.

The Caucus, on the verge of losing one of its most dear objectives, started moving, seeking connections in Congress in order to block the legalization of abortion. It created successive and concomitant “Parliamentary caucuses against abortion” and “Caucuses in favor of the family” that have been multiplying and diversifying<sup>5</sup> ever since. The Evangelical Caucus linked up and was present in all the new fronts that were formed. At the same time, it sought to trigger (that year and in the following years) a movement of social groups against abortion, mainly recruited among its followers and the members of its churches. (Machado, 2016)

In 2005, I followed the Public Hearing<sup>6</sup> called by the Social Security and Family Commission, to debate the issue of the abortion legalization raised by the delivery of the bill, which was associated with debates on successive and distinct projects for and against the legalization of abortion that had already been joined by special rapporteur Jandira Feghali.

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<sup>5</sup> The Evangelical Caucus was established in 2003 and has been active ever since, with about 70 to 90 effective participants in Congress. It holds meetings and “Wednesday services” in the Chamber of Deputies itself. Its is listed as an official Caucus by the Chamber of Deputies (Silva, 2014). The Caucus was formalized on 10/12/2015, when it reached the necessary number of signatures to officially operate as a Congressional Caucus (69/2005). The number of Congressmen who signed up to be a part of it is larger than its frequent members: there were 199 representatives and 4 senators who signed its enabling document. In fact, in September 2016 there were only 87 representatives and 3 senators who frequented the Caucuses' meetings. In 2020, has 198 parliamentary signatories in the Chamber of Deputies and 4 in the Senate. Among the new fronts created after 2005 (and continuously recreated) that are active in 2020 are the “Mixed Parliamentary Front against abortion and in defense of life” and the “Parliamentary Front in defense of Life and the Family”. Both are umbilically linked to FPE as part of the Caucuses' expansion. The recently formed Roman Catholic Mixed Parliamentary Front has 216 signatory members in the Chamber of Deputies and 5 in the Senate. However, the significant presence of Catholics in the Evangelical Parliamentary Front means that it is the Evangelical Caucus that is most active in the Congressional moral agenda, containing those Catholics (non-Evangelical Christians) who most identified with its moral agenda. (<https://www.camara.leg.br>)

<sup>6</sup> I followed watched Audience as a member of the Tripartite Commission (representative of the National Council for the Rights of Women (CNDM)) and as an participant-observer accompanied by my then-master's student mentee, Anna Lucia Cunha, who recorded the debates.

Below, I quote the speech of a Congressman who was against the legalization of abortion. He invokes the idea that Brazil's laws must conform to the religious values that he considers to be those of the majority of Brazilian society. His speech clearly shows that the objectives of the Evangelical Caucus were already established in 2005, in terms of instituting a moral agenda of national salvation in the name of a "Christian majority", as if all Christians were uniformly in favor of the criminalization of abortion<sup>7</sup>.

I agree when they say that the State is a secular state. And when they say that the State is secular, it is because that is in the law: it means that it is not Catholic, it is also not evangelical, but it is also not atheist. It is not? Atheism is the contradiction or denial that there is any divinity. So it is a counter position to those who have a religion. Therefore, the State's atheist situation does not contemplate any religion. I don't want an atheist dictatorship here. A dictatorship of the minority. In a country where a secular State is guaranteed, it is also guaranteed that the State should not legislate for those who profess religious beliefs, but also not only for atheists. (...) Now, if Brazil, through Evangelical Christians, through so many other sects and Catholicism, is 90% composed of people who express some sort religiosity, this is a fact that must be considered when drafting laws (Deputy Federal Durval Orlato, from PT-SP public hearing, November 2005).

The neo-conservative movement organized along these different fronts strongly contributed to the failure to legalize abortion during the debates in the Social Security and Family Commission and to the subsequent withdrawal of the abortion bill from the Congressional agenda. The loss the PT government's negotiating power due to the accusation that the Party was paying out "monthly payments" to politicians to vote in favor of executive branch projects also contributed to the bill's collapse (Machado, 2016 and 2017).

Despite this serious failure and the growing neoconservative movement, I believe that Brazil was still predominantly in the "time of rights" between 2003 and 2009.

Feminist movements have been organized in large networks in the country and, since 2004, have been seated on the National Council for the Rights of Women. Representatives of the most diverse groups and segments of women and feminists (further diversified by identification according to occupation, region, race or sexuality) also participated in the three subsequent National Conferences for Women's Policies (preceded by municipal and state conferences) alongside representatives of the various levels of government. The Public Policy Conferences for Women in 2004 and 2007 incorporated the plurality of women's identities and proposed policies to combat racism and lesbophobia. Within the remit of the SEPIR and SEDH, national conferences were also created and organized, to combat racism and defend the rights of LGBTTQI+<sup>8</sup> sexual diversity.

Meetings organized by civil society movements in favor of gender and racial equality and sexual diversity increased throughout the period from 2003 to 2015. As of 2010, however, antagonistic neo-conservative movements also grew.

On December 9th, 2009, President Lula signed into law the Third National Human Rights Program (PNDH-3). The following year was marked by strong and continuous conservative mobilization against human rights.

The FPE organized a successful movement in Congress to have Minister of Human Rights Paulo Vannuchi called by the Commission of Human Rights and Minorities to "render accounts" regarding PNDH3.

The day of his appearance before Congress on April 20th 2010 became a critical event (Das, Veena, 1995), making visible the political linkages between the Evangelical and Agribusiness Caucuses and the parliamentary representatives of the Brazilian Armed Forces.

<sup>7</sup> A National Survey on abortion, conducted in 2016, shows how married, single, Catholic, Evangelical, and non-religious women clandestinely abort (Diniz; Medeiros & Madeiro, 2017).

<sup>8</sup> Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, *Travestis*, Transsexuals, Intersex and Queer.

In April 2010, just a few months before the presidential elections, there was a public clash between the “human rights narrative” and the “religious moralities narrative” in the heart of the relationship between the Executive and the Legislative Branches.

PNDH3 received harsh criticism from the Evangelical Caucuses, as well as the Fronts in favor of the Family and against abortion, as well as the Agribusiness Caucus. The FPA was radically opposed to the proposal for “mediation” in judicial conflicts regarding the recognition of property rights based on traditional (purchased) occupation versus land rights based on occupation or invasion. If it had been introduced, mediation would not have favored Agribusiness.

Despite the fact that the three National Human Rights Programs (the first two in the Fernando Henrique Cardoso Government (Brazilian Social Democracy Party / PSDB in 1996 and 2002) maintained continuities with one another, Sergio Adorno (2010), points out the most controversial proposals that contradicted the interests of Neoconservative caucuses were presented in the third:

PNDH-3 introduced several innovations in response to the growing demands of civil society. Some of these provoked noisy controversy, such as the proposals to create the National Truth Commission, decriminalize abortion, ratify civil union between people of the same sex, consecrate the right of adoption for same-sex couples, banning the display of religious symbols in public government establishments, “media control”, and the adoption of judicial mediation mechanisms for urban and rural conflicts (...) (Adorno, 2010:13-14)

Quote an excerpt from the PNDH 3 that clarifies what conflict resolution (the proposal most rejected by the Agricultural Front) meant:

[...] prioritizing the holding of a collective hearing with those involved, with the presence of the Public Ministry, local government, specialized agencies, and the Military Police, as a preliminary measure to assessing granting of preliminary injunctions, without prejudice to other institutional means for conflict resolution (Axis IV, guideline 17, strategic objective VI - Access to justice in the countryside and in the city). In: Adorno, 2010:14.

The President of the National Agribusiness Confederation (CNA), linked to the Agribusiness Congressional Caucus strongly criticized these proposals.

Resistance from the Armed Forces was triggered by the creation of the National Truth Commission, composed in a plural and supra-party form, with defined mandates and deadlines,

[...]to examine human rights violations in the context of political repression in the period mentioned”. (...) and “to propose national legislation prohibiting that public places, acts and national and public buildings receive names of people who committed crimes against humanity, as well as determine changing such names as have already been given to these places” (Axis 6 - Right to Memory and Truth, Guideline 25, programmatic action c). In Adorno, 2010:17.

Based upon observations she made in master’s research (2011) that she undertook under my guidance, Duarte says that:

The meeting took place in a large hall of the Chamber of Deputies and an opposing and strong reaction came not only from Christian parliamentarians (Evangelicals, Catholics and Spiritists) but also from military and ruralist sectors and large media corporations. The meeting was already very heated and by the time the Memory and Truth Commission entered the discussion’s agenda, parliamentary representatives of the Armed Forces entered the hall, requesting the floor to dispute historical truth. Bolsonaro<sup>9</sup> was one of these representatives and he made a point of

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9 Jair Messias Bolsonaro is today the President of Brazil. At the time, he had been a federal representative for the State of Rio de Janeiro since 1991, having passed through five different political parties. From 2016 to 2018, he was a member of the Social Christian Party (Partido Social Cristão -- PSC). When he ran for President in 2018, he was a member of the Social Liberal Party (Partido Social Liberal -- PSL). Profession: retired captain of the Brazilian Army (<https://www.camara.leg.br/deputados/74847/biografia>)

stating that it was a “slander commission” that would establish revanchism against the military. He also claimed that the Workers Party had political ties to terrorist groups and that their then-candidate for the Presidency, Dilma Rousseff, was a terrorist (Duarte, personal communication, 2020, partially published in Duarte, 2020: in press presented in this dossier).

Sectors of the Armed Forces strongly resisted the establishment of a Commission for Memory and Truth. There was also strong criticism against the control and ranking of media sources that violated human rights.

Strong neoconservative caucuses with moral programs aligned themselves in opposition to the Third National Human Rights Program<sup>10</sup>. These Evangelical and associated caucuses, the Agricultural Caucus and parliamentarians representing the interests of the Armed Forces. In the face of this pressure, President Lula withdrew the most controversial proposals in May 2010.

My hypothesis is that this episode surrounding the PNDH3 human rights narrative made visible and promoted the political articulation of interests of the parliamentary fronts, triggering the formation a neoconservative movement that was more entrenched in Congress and rooted throughout electoral bases. Its agenda: combating and undermining human rights narratives and forming a more right-wing government, refractory to the expansion of fundamental rights.

In 2010, the conditions for the formation of an anti-human rights government were still not in place, in my opinion. The presidential electoral disputes of 2010 and 2014 took place between two parties – the PT and the PSDB – that historically did not oppose human rights narratives in their previous governments, even though these were contemplated with very different public policies. The parliamentary leaders of the Evangelical Caucus and their associated religious fronts and conservative social segments were divided between one campaign and another. However, they managed to keep the abortion agenda repressed in the two main candidates’ political platforms, in both the 2010 and 2014 elections. The objective of banning civil unions between homosexuals was no longer attainable in 2014, because in 2011 the Federal Supreme Court equated same-sex relationships to stable unions (secular marriage) between men and women.

The neoconservative movement sought to unite the pulpit and legislature by “converting” parliamentarians to their agendas and “converting” religious groups into electoral bases. An attack on gender theories and studies began, with the objective of “bringing women back to their traditional roles of helpmate wife and balancing family harmony” (Machado, 2016 and 2017).

Throughout the period from 2010 to 2015, there were permanent clashes between narratives founded on the social movements for identity rights (anti-racist, gender equality, and sexual diversity) and the “moralist” narrative (against abortion and against homosexuality), accompanied by the “anti-gender” narrative and the “school without a party” narrative<sup>11</sup>.

During 2015, the Evangelical Congressional Caucuses obtained not only the support of the Education Commission of the Chamber of Deputies, but also the subsequent approval by Congress of a ban on the word “gender” in the National Education Plan (PNE 2014-2024). In November 2015, the Education Commission summoned the Minister of Education in front of Congress through Motion<sup>12</sup>, accusing the “State of committing a crime by inducing the elaboration of state and municipal plans in line with the final document of the National Conference on Education (CONAE) and in dissonance with what Congress has decided”.

<sup>10</sup> The First National Human Rights Program was enacted in 1996 by the Fernando Henrique Cardoso government. The Second Program was enacted by the same government in 2002. “PNDH-2 is recognized for two approaches: the incorporation of economic, social, and cultural rights that had been overshadowed in PNDH-1 for political reasons and the rights of Afro-descendants” (Adorno, 2010:12).

<sup>11</sup> These questions are developed in Junqueira, 2017; Biroli, 2018; Carrara, França and Simões, 2018, Lima, Márcia, 2018, Machado, Motta and Facchini, 2018 e Machado and Motta, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/fichadetramitacao?idProposicao=1515623>. I participated in this public audience, invited by congressmen to testify as a specialist in the anthropological study of gender in opposition to the withdrawal of the word “gender” from PNE2014/2024.

In November 2015, the final document prepared by CONAE in 2014 (containing the word gender in the PNE proposal), had been published and disseminated by the National Education Forum as a subsidy for the preparation of State and Municipal Education Plans. There were instances where multiple public policies to combat discrimination and gender violence had originally been approved. In this clash, the neo-conservative positions clearly demonstrated their progress towards imposing their agenda in Congress, intensifying disputes with the Executive Branch and fighting against the CONAE and the National Education Forum as participative and deliberative institutions.

From 2015 to 2017, the Evangelical Caucus also prioritized the approval of the “Statute of the Family” and the “Statute of the Unborn Child”. These projects focused on defending the so-called “traditional family” and combating abortion, respectively. Of the 36 Evangelical Caucus proposals that went in front the Chamber of Deputies in 2016, five sought to transform the termination of pregnancy into a felony crime. These projects were supported by the other pro-life and pro-family fronts in Congress.

During 2015, the first year of the second Dilma presidency, neoconservative pressure and the two caucuses connections with other parliamentarians who opposed the PT government intensified. Eduardo Cunha, the President of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Evangelical Caucus was being accused of corruption, which threatened to impact upon his mandate. Failing to get the support he needed to stop the action against himself, he decided on December 2nd 2015 to accept and move an impeachment action request that was on his desk.

The pressures against the second Dilma government grew and the neoconservative forces were no longer content with what they could achieve through pressure alone. Financial, business, and Agribusiness sectors increasingly believed that their demands were not being met by the government<sup>13</sup>.

On April 17<sup>th</sup> 2016, the Chamber of Deputies moved to activate the impeachment process<sup>14</sup>. “Family and God” became the neoconservative slogan. These are the words that were repeatedly spoken by the almost absolute majority of deputies in favor of impeachment in their explanations for their vote. On May 12th, the Senate authorized the opening of the impeachment process and ordered the removal of Dilma Rousseff from the Presidency for a period of up to 180 days.

With Vice President Temer installed as an interim government, in June 2016, the President of the FPE explained and reiterated what he expected from the Evangelical religious presence in politics. Their objective would be to “confront the world”:

As the Lord’s church, we cannot accept the distorted concept of the secular State that they are trying to apply to Brazil. If we shut up, there will come days when we can only worship the Lord inside our homes. God called us to confront the world and not settle for it”, concluded João Campos. Pastor José Wellington thanked the presence of the President of the FPE, affirming that the church grew up with aversion to politics, but today, through well-prepared, honorable and capable people, it needs to have its legitimate representatives in all spheres of the nation. (President of the Evangelical Congressional Caucus speaks to AD workers in SP, Pastor João Campos (PRB-GO) (Tiago Bertulino 06/07/2016). <http://www.cleitonalbino.com/2016/06/presidente-da-frente-parlamentar.html>

The secular nature of the Brazilian State was clearly jeopardized. In “confronting the world” based on religious fundamentals, the hope-for result was clearly the democratic legitimization of said (religious) fundamentals as part of State power.

<sup>13</sup> The FPE (representing both the Evangelical Christian political leadership as well as the leadership of the Evangelical churches) and the FPA (representing the agribusiness sectors) constantly pressured and confronted the PT governments. Throughout 2015 and the beginning of 2016, they organized in favor of the impeachment of PT President Dilma. Elites of the financial and industrial sectors also organized against the PT’s economic policies in the “backrooms” and in the National Congress, taking their followers to the streets. Emplacing a huge yellow “rubber duckie” in the middle of Avenida Paulista in São Paulo, in front of the São Paulo State Industrial Federation (Federação das Indústrias do Estado de São Paulo, FIESP) on March 16th 2016, groups of businessmen and their supporters demonstrated in favor of the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff. Several demonstrations for and against impeachment followed in this same space. (Cruz and Moreira, 2016. Agência Brasil).

<sup>14</sup> 367 representatives voted in favor of impeachment against 137 out of a total of 513.

The State's secular character is initially related to the affirmation of democratic legitimacy of power and not on religious grounds (...). The determination of the institutional separation between State and Church makes up the context of Constitutional protection at the (secular) principle, but it, should not to be confused with it. (Zylbersztajn, 2016:207).

Passing Constitutional Amendment / PEC 99/2011 became one of the Caucuses' priority projects. If approved, this would allow a series of churches to be included in the list of entities that have the power to propose Direct Actions of Unconstitutionality and Declaratory Actions of Constitutionality to the Supreme Federal Court (STF). Currently, this is only the prerogative of political parties, heads of the Executive and Legislative Branches, and the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB), among others. PEC 99/2011 would significantly weaken the separation between Church and State in Brazil.

On August 31<sup>st</sup> 2016, the Senate voted in favor of impeachment. Dilma lost her mandate to an accusation of "fiscal maneuvering" that, in other cases, would (and did) not lead to impeachment.

2016 and 2017 saw the continued approximation of the Evangelical and Agribusiness Caucuses with the Temer government, which resulted not only in the end of the expansion of human rights in Brazil, but also in gains for the two Caucuses in terms of tax privileges.

In 2016, the Evangelical Caucus organized the approval of an increase in tax exemptions for churches and obtained amnesty from fines imposed by the Revenue Service against churches - a total of more than 300 million reais. The principle that the State does not subsidize religious institutions was thus breached. Likewise, the concession of proselytizing broadcasting and television channels weakened compliance with the principle that the State should not subsidize religious institutions. Religious proselytism expanded through the use of the media power obtained through concessions from public authorities. (Zylbersztajn, 2008)

In the 2018 presidential election campaigns, the polarization that was already growing between the PT and neo-conservative positions was increased. No center party reached the second round of elections. The traditional opposition between PT and PSDB in the second round was also not maintained. This second round of elections took place between the PT candidate, Haddad, and Jair Bolsonaro, then the candidate of the Social Liberal Party / PSL (today without a party).

It's impossible to know, with certainty, how many votes were cast in favor of Bolsonaro, the winning candidate, in the name of the "moral agenda", how many in favor of him opposing the "human rights" agenda, and how many against the continuation of the PT governments for being perceived as left-wing or as corrupt. What is known, according to Pesquisa DataFolha , is that in the second round of the elections (taking into consideration the religious self-declaration among those who voted and excluding those who abstained or voted null), two thirds of Evangelical electors (21,795, 232) voted for Bolsonaro<sup>15</sup> and only a third for the PT candidate, Haddad (10,042,504). Contrary to what Prandi and Santos (2017) foresaw, the evangelical bases mostly followed the positions of the political leaders of the Evangelical Congressional Caucus, in spite of said bases' heterogeneity.

Among Catholics, the distribution was more equitable: those who voted for the winning candidate were only slightly more than half (29,795,232 compared to 29,630,786). Among Spiritists, the largest proportion favored Bolsonaro, although without a big difference (1,721,363 to 1,457,783). Among those who claim to have other religions, Bolsonaro also won (709,410 to 345,549)

The proportions are reversed in favor of Haddad among those without religion (4,157,381 to 3,286,239), atheists (691,097 to 375,570), and among members of Afro-Brazilian religions (755,887 to 312,975) (Almeida, 2019)

<sup>15</sup> See the political parties that has been a part of Bolsonaro's at: [https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/politica/2018/01/06/interna\\_politica,651711/pulando-de-partidos-desde-1988-bolsonaro-fecha-com-o-nanico-psl.shtml](https://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/politica/2018/01/06/interna_politica,651711/pulando-de-partidos-desde-1988-bolsonaro-fecha-com-o-nanico-psl.shtml)

The authoritarian power of the Bolsonaro government is largely based on its manipulation of religion. This has been electorally successful through a very well-conducted strategy<sup>16</sup> of speaking on behalf of (Evangelical) Christians to all Christians (without restricting Christians to Evangelicals). In the “religious” vocabulary, it is also easier to demonize the PT, be it for corruption and “old politics”, or for its “anti-religious” and “anti-Evangelical” stances in favor of homosexuality and the legalization of abortion.

### **The Agribusiness Caucus pushes the “time of rights” into the past**

The beginnings of the Agricultural Congressional Caucus can be found in the groupings of parliamentarians linked to agriculture during the National Constituent Assembly from 1986 to 1988. These organized themselves in the self-titled Ruralist Broad Front (Frente Ampla Ruralista -- FRA).

The objective sought and achieved by the FRA in the Constituent Assembly (1986-1988) was the preservation of rural property rights in productive lands. At that historic moment, many landowners feared losing their right to rural property due to Agrarian Reform movements that sought to confiscate unproductive lands.

The objectives of the Front have expanded significantly over the following decades.

The ruralist caucus remained informal from 1990 to 1995, when it was officially registered as the Agricultural Congressional Caucus. In 2002, it changed its name to the Congressional Caucus in support of Agriculture and, six years later, it became the Congressional Caucus for Agriculture and Livestock (FPA)<sup>17</sup>, collecting signatures of at least one third of the federal legislative branch.

In the 55th legislature (2015/2018), 217 deputies and 24 senators were registered as part of the FPA. In the current legislature (2019/2022), it has 284 members: 245 deputies and 39 senators.

The 1988 Constitution introduced new rights for indigenous<sup>18</sup> and quilombola<sup>19</sup> peoples and previous environmental protection policies<sup>20</sup> were reinterpreted in accordance with environmental constitutional rights inducing governments to more precisely uphold environmental laws. In other words, the 1988 Constitution put some real teeth behind earlier environmental laws. Also important in this regard were the actions of the Public Ministry<sup>21</sup>, an innovative institution created by the 1988 Constitution.

The Brazilian agribusiness sectors mostly depend upon productive expansion, through the advancement of technology, but also through the intensification of exploitation of natural resources and land stocks. Because of this, these sectors have systematically confronted Brazil’s environmental legislation throughout the period following the 1988 Constitution, but especially from 2008 on.

16 For example, on election day, messages were sent out via whatsapp by pastors telling their “flock” how they should vote. (Of course, religious power only increased the appeal of this personalized virtual method of campaigning on electoral day).

17 Gustavo Silva conducted research in 2013 within the FPA (54<sup>th</sup> legislature) and describes the politics of the FPA as follows: “In its majority, it is made up of congressmen from center-right districts. It seeks to become an agribusiness lobby primarily directed towards maintaining agriculture as it is (and pushing away discussions with social movements within Congress), as large-scale production geared towards export to agribusiness multinationals. To this end, the FPA created the Agribusiness Thinktank Institute (Instituto Pensar Agropecuária)”. Silva, 2014: p.72

18 1988 Federal Constitution: Art.231. “Indians are recognized as having their own social organization, customs, languages, beliefs, traditions and rights as the original occupiers of the lands they traditionally occupy. It is the Union’s duty to demarcate, protect, and generate respect for all of their goods”. According to Carneiro: “Indigenous original rights should prevail over those of other sectors that later occupy their lands, according to the 1988 Constitution” (Carneiro da Cunha ,2018)

19 1988 Federal Constitution: Art. 68. “To the remnants of the quilombola communities that are occupying their lands, definitive ownership of these is recognized, it being the duty of the State to emit land titles to them”.

20 1988 Federal Constitution: Art. 225. “All have the right to an ecologically balanced environment, a good that is to be of common use by the people and which is essential to the healthy quality of life, it being incumbent upon the Public Power the collective duty of defending and preserving this environment for future generations”.

21 1988 Federal Constitution: Art.127: Caput: The Public Ministry is a permanent institution, essential to the jurisdictional function of the State, task with defending the legal order, the democratic order, and the social and individual interests that are unable to defend themselves.

Since the commodities boom of 2004, the agribusiness sector has expanded and its “concentrating, predatory, expropriating and excluding nature” has intensified (Fernandes, 2008). At the same time, it built up its public image of productivity, its adoption of new technologies in the countryside, and its generation of wealth for the country, all the while hiding its expanding concentration of power and wealth.

Sevá’s study (2016) on the progress made in Congress in the 2009-2011 period by the proposal for the new Forest Code sheds light on the political force and objectives of the FPA in changing environmental legislation, which the Caucus has developed since 1999.

In the Fernando Henrique government, changes in environmental laws reconfigured the Forest Code of 1965, introducing new restrictions and sanctions. One of these was the Environmental Crimes Law (9605/98), which imposes penalties and fines for noncompliance with environmental legislation and for lack of maintenance of legal reserves and permanent preservation areas.

In 1999, in reaction to the Environmental Crimes Law and other measures, Congressman Sérgio Carvalho (PSDB), a ruralist, aimed to make the Forest Code more flexible by presenting Bill (PL) n.1876 / 1999, providing for preservation areas, permanent reserve, legal reserves and forest exploitation. The Bill was discussed in committees and languished there for several years. The new requirements of the 2001 Provisional Measure to reforest cleared areas, which linked access to credit with compliance with environmental legislation, produced new tensions during this period (Sevá, 2016).

The decisions taken by the PT governments also increased tensions. Decree 6321/2007 prevented rural property certification (CAR) for those who practice irregular deforestation or caused environmental damage. Without a CAR, loans cannot be received for rural properties. Decree n.6514 / 2008 characterizes further violations of the Forest Code and produced even more discontent among Agribusiness sectors.

In the high-tension climate of 2008, the 1999 bill was untabled and taken up once again. Related projects were attached to it. In 2009, Valdir Colatto, a prominent FPA Congressman, presented Bill n.5367 / 2009 along with 46 co-authors on behalf of the Agribusiness Caucus. This aimed to institute a “Brazilian Environmental Code”. The FPA resists the idea that this project be “one more” rider attached to the 1999 Bill. It wanted an autonomous bill, but agreed to remove its proposal from the Congressional agenda in exchange for the creation of a Special Commission (installed on September 29th 2009) for the reform of the Forest Code. It argued that the formation of the Special Commission should take place with the ambience of the Permanent Commissions, allowing the FPA to have a large number of its members assigned to the Special Commission (Sevá, 2016)

The Commission had already been installed when, on May 5th 2010, long before its vote, *Revista Veja* published an extensive article entitled: “The Farce of Opportunistic Anthropology” (Coutinho, Paulin and Medeiros, 2010: p.54 -61) This was a direct attack by agribusiness on anthropologists, indigenous peoples, quilombolas and environmental rights. Its political objective seemed clear: it aimed to raise public opinion in favor of proposed changes in the Forest Code, producing an opinion contrary to the rights expressed in PNDH3. It was an attempt to gain special prominence for this debate during an election year for the Presidency of the Republic.

The interests of the agribusiness sector were made absolutely clear in this article, stating that Agribusiness needed territory to expand and situating it as an active subject in the “present and future prosperity of the country”. The article states:

Brazil’s continental dimensions are usually pointed to as one of the foundations for the present and future prosperity of the country. The fertile and unexplored expanses [of our hinterlands] could guarantee the expansion of Agribusiness and increase the nation’s weight in world trade. But these assessments never take into account the

part of the territory that is not and will not be exploited, because it has already been demarcated for environmental protection or for the use of specific population groups. Ecological preservation areas, indigenous reserves, and supposed old quilombolas today cover 77.6% of the extension of Brazil (Coutinho et al., 2010: p.54 in VEJA).

The falsely and unscrupulously claimed that ecological preservation areas, indigenous reserves, and “supposedly old quilombos” today cover 77.6% of Brazil’s territory. Official EMBRAPA<sup>22</sup> data shows that indigenous areas represent 13.8% of Brazil while permanent environmental preservation areas represent a further 10.4%. Quilombola communities take up 0.4% of the nation’s territory. This is a total of 24.6%: less than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of what *Veja* claimed. .

The article went on to falsely claim that “non-governmental organizations receive cash for the number of Indians or quilombolas they claim to defend” and that “anthropologists invent resurgent Indian groups, without investigating their historical ties”. (Coutinho et al., 2010: p.56 in VEJA)

This spurious story revealed that Agribusiness wants to expand at any cost in Brazil, be these costs environmental damage or the loss of rights of vulnerable indigenous and quilombola populations -- the same human groups that best follow national environmental protection directives<sup>23</sup>.

The final report on the Forest Code was presented by Aldo Rebelo and included the proposals of the Agricultural Parliamentary Front<sup>24</sup>. It was approved in a voting session of the Special Committee in the Chamber of Deputies<sup>25</sup> on May 24<sup>th</sup> 2011, and approved by the Senate in December of that year, being sanctioned by President Dilma in May 2012. It reduced the requirements for environmental protection measures and repealed the old Forest Code<sup>26</sup>.

The Caucus had been putting pressure on the Lula and Dilma Governments and succeeded in significantly reducing approvals indigenous quilombola land demarcation. This did not seem to be enough for the members of the Caucus, however.

The Caucus thus acted decisively to block the expansion of indigenous lands and quilombola territories. At the end of 2015 and throughout 2016 and 2017, it created and installed the first Parliamentary Inquiry Committee for the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) and the Colonization and Agrarian Reform Institute (INCRA) (CPI FUNAI / INCRA I)<sup>27</sup> and, subsequently, CPI FUNAI / INCRA II<sup>28</sup>. The congressmen requesting the two CPIs were leaders of the Agribusiness Congressional Caucus: their President was Congressman Alceu Moreira (PMDB / RS) and their Rapporteur was Congressman Nilson Leitão (PSDB / MT). I will return, below, to a description and analysis of these CPIs in a specific topic, because I want to emphasize their impact on Brazilian anthropology.

22 <https://www.embrapa.br/car/sintese>

23 The *Veja* article reveals that in 2010 maneuvers were already taking place that would result in a Parliamentary Inquiry Committee (CPI) attacking anthropologists, the institutions responsible for the demarcation of indigenous and quilombola lands, and even federal attorney generals.

24 Gustavo Silva corroborates the FPA’s role in this, saying: “The discussions that took place around the Forest Code were the greatest demonstration of how a Caucus operates. The FPA operated more effectively than the political parties or the Federal Government in directly negotiating the changes to the Forest Code with members of congress” (Silva, 2014: p.66).

25 Paulo Cunha researched campaign donation made by “agribusiness and associated companies” to congressmen on the Special Commission. He found that of the 13 congressmen who voted in favor of the report, 11 had received agribusiness donations for their 2006 electoral campaigns – among these Aldo Rebelo, who received the greatest amount of cash (Cunha, 2017).

26 “(...)The new law is considered to represent a significant environmental setback for all of Brazilian society. Comparing Federal Law 12.651 / 2012 with the revoked CFB / 1965, there is a reduction in environmental liability from approximately 50 to 21 million hectares across the country. (...) deforested Legal Reserves no longer need to be recovered (art. 68); rural properties with up to 4 fiscal modules that held Legal Reserves at a percentage lower than the established minimum on July 22nd 2008, do not need to recover this deficit (art. 67) (Cunha, 2017: p.5). See also Campanha SOS Florestas\_ Technical note, 2012 and Silva Junior et al., 2017.

27 CPI FUNAI-INCRA initiating act, April 6th, 2015. Creation Act, October 28th 2015. Constitutive Act, November 4th 2015. First meeting and elections, November 11th, 2015. Lifespan (with extensions): 11/11/2015 to 08/17/2016.

28 CPI FUNAI-INCRA II initiating act, August 24<sup>th</sup> 2016. Creation Act, August 30<sup>th</sup> 2016. Constitutive Act, October 13th 2016. First meeting and elections, October 25<sup>th</sup> 2016. Lifespan (with extensions): 10/18/2016 to 06/25/2017.

As an Agribusiness congressional caucus, the FPA's political leadership decided that it was not enough to simply obtain privileges or to delay land demarcations: it was necessary to overturn the laws that regulated access to land by indigenous and quilombolas populations. They also felt they needed to end Agrarian Reform.

At the end of 2015, together with the FPE and other politician groups unhappy with the PT government, the FPA mobilized in favor of opening the impeachment process and the subsequent decisions to continue and approve the impeachment of President Dilma Rouseff.

This discontent with the Dilma government the FPE, FPA and other political representatives of Brazil's economic elites in Congress and the resulting political instability of late 2015 have similarities to the conservative movement of the 1960s that supported and participated in '64 coup, as described by Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos in 1962. (Santos, 1962)

The FPA's closer relationship with the Temer government allowed it to increase its demands and pressures and achieve further positive government responses in terms of obtaining rentier privileges. But these gains still seemed to be far from satiating the FPA.

Under the Temer government in 2016 and 2017, following its declared goals of stimulating the expansion of public policies for the development of national agribusiness, the following objectives were listed on the FPA website<sup>29</sup>: 1) modernization of legislation regarding labor; 2) regarding land; 3) regarding taxes and 4) regarding rules for access to indigenous lands and to quilombola territories in order to guarantee the "legal certainty" necessary for the sector's competitiveness.

"Labor modernization" was translated into proposals eliminating inspections for slave labor. The Agribusiness did not accept the understanding of the International Labor Organization (ILO) regarding this issue, publicly proclaiming in 2017 that "small mistakes by some" had resulted in disproportionate impediments for producers in obtaining credit, as well as damaging their reputations. In 2017, the FPA also tried to change legislation on the inspection of slave labor through a new ordinance, but they had to back off from this goal (Rover, Tadeu, 2017).

"Land law modernization" was translated into the objective of increasing Agribusiness control of arable land from 45% to 90%. This resulted in pressures on disputed lands or those under judicial review, upon lands that could be demarcated for indigenous or quilombola groups, and on lands be understood as protected areas or limited in their use according to environmental legislation.

The "legal certainty" sought by Agribusiness required the restriction of indigenous rights. The introduction of adversary reports in studies of indigenous land rights recognition wasn't enough to satiate the interests of agribusiness. The number of judicialized land cases in Brazil was growing since the legislative requirement of the Fernando Henrique Cardoso government for the State to introduce the contradictory principle (presuming the expression of divergent interest) before the State giving its final decision. The agribusiness sectors began to call for "legal certainty".

One way to block indigenous demands that was soon proposed by the FPA and then instituted by Temer's Advocacy General's Office (AGU) was the generalization of "time frame" limitations: a decision that had been taken by the Supreme Federal Court (STF) in the case of the demarcation of the Raposa / Serra do Sol indigenous land and which had been declared to be specific to that case<sup>30</sup>. With the AGU's generalization of this measure, indigenous peoples who were not on their original lands up to 1988 would lose all right to those lands, causing

29 <https://fpagropecuaria.org.br/historia-da-fpa/> See "about FPA" : "history" and "goals". The objectives I mention were specified there during the years 2016 and 2017.

30 Cristhian Teófilo da Silva has analyzed the case of the vote on the Raposa Serra do Sol lands with regards to these time constraints. Silva, 2018.

previous jurisprudence to fall. Previously, the law presumed that indigenous people who had been displaced through coercion or had been expelled by the State did not lose the rights to claim and have their original lands recognized. This generalization of the “time frame” for indigenous land rights by the AGU is currently in front of the Superior Federal Court and has not yet been ruled upon (see Candido, Marcos, 2020).

“Tax law modernization” was translated into several measures, all of them conferring privileges on Agribusiness. One of these was the proposal that the Executive Order made by the Temer government for the benefit of rural producers be converted into a law “that would benefit the entire productive career” with a 40% reduction in contributions to the Rural Worker Assistance Fund (Funrural). This is a social security contribution tax levied on gross revenue from the sale of rural production and based on payrolls. Another measure was forgiving the rural sector’s 21 billion in social security debts as of in 2017. A third was the reduction from 60% to 40% the fine due to the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA), created in 1989, for the environmental recovery areas impacted by agricultural activities. The FPA obtained these measures with no visible delay and the Caucus decided that it was thus “one of the most powerful and successful lobbies in Congress”.

In 2016 and 2017, the FPA advocated for faster and less stringent environmental licensing (fast tracking) and defended these proposals in Congress. The Caucus feared environmental inspection because not meeting environmental responsibilities were meant companies could not acquire financing. When Congressman Nilson Leitão assumed the Presidency of the FPA in February 2017, he explicitly stated that his objective was “accelerating the processes of environmental licensing”. (Canal Rural, 2017). A government needed to be built that was more in line with the interests of the FPA, so the Caucus worked in favor of the Bolsonaro campaign in 2018.

The FPA’s “goals” appear on its official website, entitled *About the FPA*<sup>31</sup>. But if the record of the Caucuses’ history remains, the goals themselves change over time. When I returned to the site in 2020, I found that the stated objectives were not as clear as they had been before. They are currently formulated in a generic way as “following the official national agricultural policy” and “seeking the improvement of legislation”. They seem to consider that the objectives of 2016 and 2017 have been achieved. They demonstrate that the Caucus is attentive to its role as an active political force, but that it is also aware that Agribusiness interests have been included in Bolsonarist policies, with their “anti-environmental”, “anti-indigenous” and “anti-quilombola” rhetoric (2019/2022). The Caucus is also aware that the “anti-science” Bolsonarist beliefs contradict the scientific alert that “climate warming” results from human interventions. They know that contemporary neo-conservative negationist narratives are extremely favorable to the unlimited exploitation of natural resources, sans environmental protection. In the long or short term, the Caucus will have to face the negative results of environmental damage to their own future productive activities.

## **From the attack on anthropology to the challenges facing anthropology in times of intolerance**

Why and how did anthropologists and the Brazilian Association of Anthropology (ABA) become targets of Congressional Inquiry Committees (CPIs)?

Anthropologists are part of the working groups responsible for the identification and delimitation of indigenous lands and quilombola territories, within the limits of the administrative frameworks of the organs that have been delegated for this task: the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI - the official indigenist organ of the Brazilian State created in 1967) and the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA -- an organ created in 1970). These demarcations are, in turn, dependent on the final word of the Federal Executive

<sup>31</sup> <https://fpagropecuaria.org.br/historia-da-fpa/>

Branch in accordance with the rights registered in the 1988 Constitution. FUNAI is responsible for guaranteeing indigenous rights and the management of indigenous land identification processes. INCRA is responsible for the administration of public lands in the Union, for managing the allocation of land to Agrarian Reform, and for managing the recognition of rights to quilombola territories.

The attack on anthropologists was a strategic part of the confrontation over the performance of the Brazilian federal government. ABA (the Brazilian Anthropological Association) is often the organ that, at the request of the Public Ministry, indicates and certifies the qualification of the anthropologists who studies indigenous land requests and produce reports<sup>32</sup>. It therefore became a target in the eyes of the FPA.

Souza Lima (2005a) traces the term “identification”<sup>33</sup> and records that FUNAI Ordinance No. 255 of June 2nd 1975 was the first regulation that points out the need for the presence of a “surveying engineer or surveyor”, an “anthropologist”, and a “agronomical engineer” as members of a permanent Commission to define the limits of all proposals for the creation of indigenous reserves and parks. Soon, a law was promulgated following in these footsteps: Presidential Decree 76,999 of January 8th, 1976, wherein it is stipulated that the Working Group must be instituted with an “anthropologist” and a “surveying engineer”. (Souza Lima, 2005a).

The recognition of indigenous lands between the 1960s and ‘80s by the Union was followed by various lawsuits by the states against the federation, claiming compensation from the Federal Government for lands that were within state borders. In 1987, there were some 70 lawsuits of this type (56 in front of the Federal Supreme Court).

During these actions, expert reports were requested and made by engineers and other professionals, often without recognized qualifications. At that time, then Attorney Gilmar Mendes was also the Federal Defense Attorney (before the Federal Constitution of 1988) and defended the Union against the suit of the State of Mato Grosso, which asked for compensation regarding the Xingu’s indigenous lands. Mendes asked the Brazilian Anthropological Association to indicate a suitable professional to carry out a broad study on the subject. He considered that:

XXV. In view of the complexity of the matter and considering the possibility, quite plausible, that some expert reports are being distorted in order to end the indigenous presence in the vast Xingu territory, the Attorney General’s Office requested that the Brazilian Anthropological Association (ABA) designate a suitable professional to carry out a comprehensive study on the subject. Accepting the indication, Dr. Bruna Franchetto presented a detailed report on the indigenous occupation of the Xingu. (Mendes, 1988: p.146)

And he adds:

376. The Union is also asking that anthropological and archaeological surveys be carried out by professionals of recognized professional and moral integrity ...” (Mendes, 1988: p.152).

This is the origin of the subsequent protocols and agreements between the Federal Public Ministry (to which the Federal Constitution of 1988 attributed the defense of indigenous rights and interests) and the Brazilian Anthropological Association. These agreements that have come to be characterized by plaintiffs in the CPIs “collusion”. (Chamber of Deputies, Parallel Report, 2017a)

In 1996, then President of the Republic Fernando Henrique Cardoso signed Decree No. 1,775, consolidating the need for anthropological work. In its 2nd Article, the indicates that “The demarcation of lands traditionally occupied by the Indians will be based on works developed by an anthropologist of recognized qualification (...)”.

32 See Souza Lima, A. C. and Barretto Filho, Henyo (orgs.) 2005 for clear analyses regarding the identification processes from 1977 to 2002.

33 Souza Lima has tracked the historical use of the terms “identification” and “delimitation” of indigenous lands, which maintain some similarities to their current usages, such as in the constitution of working groups made up of professionals and whose objectives are similar to those who believe that indigenous lands reinforce the “cultural preservation” of indigenous groups (Souza Lima, 2005a e 2005b).

The same Decree modified the procedure for demarcating indigenous lands (TIs) in Brazil. According to Minister (Jobim), the amendments aimed to legally remedy this procedure, introducing the principle of adversarial reports (*audi alteram partem*), which means the opening of a deadline in the demarcation process for the contestation of the limits identified for indigenous lands by interested third parties, including miners, squatters and farmers invading indigenous lands (SANTILLI, 1997: 07)

Anthropologists are also required to work together with other professionals on identification reports for quilombola areas. (See Oliveira, Oswaldo M., 2016; O'Dwyer, 2018 and the Associação Brasileira de Antropologia, ABA, 2015).

Whether in the public notification for the selection of coordinators of working groups for the identification of indigenous lands, or in the appointment of experts by the Brazilian Anthropological Association<sup>34</sup> for the Federal Public Ministry (when so requested), the requirements for recognized qualification are the same. These are based having a graduate degree in anthropology, experience in indigenous ethnology, knowledge of the process of land regularization of indigenous lands in Brazil and, preferably, specific knowledge about the territory, ethnic group and /or indigenous community to be studied.

In the documents required for the constitution of the CPIs as well as in their summons of anthropologists as witnesses, accusations of “fraud” and “collusion” appear in different forms. There is the accusation in CPI Funai / Incra 2 Application No. 86/2016, addressed to the ABA (Câmara dos Deputados, 2016) that “anthropologists have no ethical, legal limit or even respect for the people illegally affected by their reckless, fraudulent and tyrannical behavior”. This accusation of anthropological “tyranny” was made in the name of the defense of colonists who had occupied indigenous lands still under study for official recognition or who had even occupied already demarcated lands. If the land were declared to be non-indigenous, its future was open so that it could be bought and sold on the market. This was a result that was directly in line with the interests of expanding Agribusiness. Even though “tyranny” and “ethics” are accusations that appear in these CPIs in the name of “colonists”, they cannot, by themselves, be the basis for a CPI.

The charge was “fraud” and “collusion”. By “fraud”, it was understood that anthropologists were always partial to indigenous and quilombola interests. “Collusion” meant the meetings of the Brazilian Anthropological Association with the Federal Public Ministry of the Sixth Chamber (legally responsible for monitoring indigenous constitutional rights) or with the Ford Foundation, which financed proposed, and approved human rights projects. Photos of these meetings became “evidence” of the internationalization of Brazilian resources in illicit and fraudulent activities. According to the CPI, these meetings were illegal because they favored indigenous interests before the reports were conducted. The function of anthropologists in making reports

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34 At the end of 2015, then President of the Brazilian Anthropological Association, Antonio Carlos de Souza Lima, was called before the CPI and the bank account and fiscal secrecy of ABA and its President were to be broken. President Souza Lima made every effort to prevent these breaches of banking and fiscal secrecy. He successfully filed an injunction on July 12th 2016 and he organized the defense of ABA. He was present for his summons on December 8<sup>th</sup> 2015, but due to the progress of the hearings, he was not called to testify. When I took over the presidency of ABA in January 2017, my efforts were to ensure that the second CPI, installed on October 25th 2016 and in force until June 2017, would not once again call for a breach of fiscal secrecy, nor summon the President of ABA. At the same time, we continue to prepare the defense of ABA and of anthropologists, if called upon. We participated, together with the non-governmental organizations cited and convened by the CPI, in the defense of anthropologists, indigenous, quilombola, and environmental interests. I appealed to congressmen outside and inside of the CPI, particularly those who were not aligned with the interests of the CPI and who recognized ABA as a scientific institution. I am grateful to these parliamentarians and I understand that the in-session invocation by one of the parliamentarians of anthropologist Ruth Cardoso, first lady in the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration, helped in this political space, creating for some for a more positive view of ABA. There were countless meetings that held between myself as ABA president, the ABA General Secretary (Cristhian Teófilo da Silva) and the ABA Indigenous Affairs Commission Coordinator (Henyó Trindade Barreto Filho) with various non-governmental organizations and with the parliamentarians of the CPI who were contrary to the majority position. We were present at public meetings of the CPI and in corridors and antechambers and we were thus able to observe the FPA congressmen who were in charge of the CPI. Henyó was instrumental in drafting the Report in defense of ABA, which appears as an annex to the Separate Vote of Deputies Nilto Tatto and the others (Câmara dos Deputados, 2017a) who opposed the Final Report Opinion. In the Final Report of the Commission, Nilson Leitão and others (Câmara dos Deputados, 2017b) propose the indictment of 25 anthropologists and several civil servants from FUNAI, INCRA, and non-governmental organizations.

and studies is not to favor indigenous interests, but rather to verify whether or not there is compatibility between the concrete conditions experienced by indigenous communities and peoples in their lands and the conditions put in place and instituted by the constitutional formulation that established indigenous rights to traditionally occupied lands. Likewise, the territorial rights of quilombolas depend on anthropological verification as to whether there is compatibility between the concrete conditions of traditional occupation by an organized community, originating from ex-slaves, and the constitutional requirements for the recognition of rights to quilombola territories.

CPI Application No. 16/2015 is definitive: “the Circumstantial Report that was produced by anthropologist Flávia Cristina de Mello is a fraud”; “In carrying out her work, it was proven that the anthropologist falsified information”; “Her performance as an anthropologist was totally unethical” (Câmara dos Deputados, 2015: 6-7).

On December 1, 2015, the first public hearing was held, with Flávia Cristina de Mello, responsible for the anthropological report that identified the Indigenous Lands of Mato Preto, in the State of Rio Grande do Sul, being summoned before Congress. (For a detailed analysis of the deposition of Flávia de Mello and the entire CPI FUNAI / INCRA, see Dalla Costa’s Master’s dissertation, 2019).

In the CPI session, one of the congressmen asked the anthropologist “Before you did the job, you already had ties to this community there, right?”

The anthropologist replied:

Yes, that was one of the prerequisites of the call for employment. (..) It required an undergraduate degree in social sciences and a graduate degree in anthropology. (...) experience in indigenous ethnology, knowledge about the process of land tenure regularization of indigenous lands in Brazil and, “preferably, specific knowledge about the territory, ethnic group and / or the indigenous community to be studied”. That is, these prerequisites are being used to accuse me of bias, when, in fact they were a request [by the government itself]. These were the requirements of the call. The anthropologist to be hired was expected to have knowledge of the ethnic group in question and -- here I quote literally -- “and / or the indigenous community to be studied”. And this announcement was a public announcement, published in the Official Gazette, and people who could meet these qualification requirements signed up. (...)

The anthropologist also listened to the non-indigenous occupants of the land in question and this made up the adversarial position that needed to be in the report. According to Mello :

The farmers were heard, there were meetings and interviews, and there was a public meeting (...) which was broadcast on the radio (...). This meeting was also attended by the Mayor of the city (...) and the Union of Farmers. Anyway, the technical group made a point of listening to all parties, (...) And the right of contradiction, it seems to me, was fully exercised. (...) The technical group made a point of listening to all parties and, in that meeting, I obviously informed [all] about the rights to a adversarial opinion, which start from the first day of the promulgation of the ordinance that instituted the WG, up to 90 days after the approval of the report. And that right of contradiction, it seems to me, has been fully exercised.

The CPI thus not only accused the technical studies of land and territory delimitation of producing “partial” reports and, therefore, of being “fraudulent”, but also ended up criticizing anthropological methodologies as such deep ethnographic study, which requires sustained contact with the population in question. Previous studies of medium or long duration, which are required for the indication or selection of an anthropologist to make a report, are required in the academic and scientific world for the production of dissertations, doctoral theses, and academic research.

For Deborah Duprat, the Deputy Attorney General of the Republic in 2006 and coordinator of the 6th Coordination and Review Chamber of the Federal Public Ministry responsible for guaranteeing indigenous rights, the establishment of a link between the anthropologist and the studied group is essential to be able to understand and translate the indigenous group's forms of lived existence. This is necessary to avoid reproducing an ethnocentric vision of the group:

It is important to point out that anthropologist does not and cannot have a neutral position in relation to his research, in the sense of objectifying and defining a certain domain based on norms or standards external to the group being studied, as this would deprive them of their normative strength. Thus, the anthropological study aimed at identifying a traditional territory presupposes understanding and translating the ways in which the group sees itself according to its existential trajectory; how it sees and knows the world, how it is organized in it. Duprat, 2006).

In making their reports, anthropologists also consult historical documents regarding the occupation of the disputed lands. They describe whether or not the indigenous peoples in question were expelled or forcibly removed and whether or not there was occupation of the land by colonists with or without State incentives. They also indicate whether or not expelled populations migrated to territories around their original area.

At the end of the session, opposition deputy Erika Kokay (PT / DF), who did not belong to the Agribusiness Caucus but was a member of the CPI, revealed her indignation as to how the application for a CPI was constructed without any concrete basis to justify the investigation:

An accusation by farmers who wanted to have the right to the land against the decision of the report was simply copied and became the demand for the constitution of a CPI!

A counter-narrative opposing indigenous, quilombola, and environmental rights was organized in the CPI, settled, and solidified and was solidified under the Temer and Bolsonaro governments (See Chiaretti and Souza, 2020). Since then, there have been changes in legislation, the dismantling and weakening of the state institutions responsible for indigenous rights (FUNAI), quilombola rights and access to Agrarian Reform (INCRA), and the weakening of the state institutions responsible for the inspection of environmental rights and obligations (IBAMA) and for the conservation of biodiversity in conservation areas (the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBIO) created in 2007).

In the same way, a counter-narrative of anthropological and anthropological practices was constituted, accusing anthropologists of unscientific partiality and ignoring the fact that anthropological research is based on scientific evidence and on deep ethnographic methods that are fully compatible with the perspective of anthropologists who ethically perceive indigenous otherness as fully human, with access to rights.

In 2019, already under the Bolsonaro government, anthropologist Ricardo Verdum, then Deputy Coordinator of the ABA Commission on Indigenous Affairs, pointed out the extreme difficulty of the conditions anthropologists face in relation to the demand for recognition of indigenous lands:

There are 400 demands for indigenous land identification currently backed up in FUNAI and the situation has worsened considerably due to the explicit orientation of [the current government] to not recognize indigenous territories. A series of indigenous lands are being invaded. The best known and most serious case is that of the Yanomami, in which there are thousands of prospectors occupying Native lands and the government stopped doing anything about it. One must recall that the President, when he was a federal deputy in 1993, presented a bill that asked for recognition of Yanomami territory to be nullified. Each time the deadline expired, he presented it again. In other words, he spent more than 25 years presenting bills to reverse the process of recognizing Yanomami land.

In the National Congress there are sectors that want to review indigenous lands. There is PEC (Constitutional Amendment Proposal) 215, which proposes that, after FUNAI's work is done, all demarcations of indigenous lands be forwarded to the National Congress for approval. It seems democratic, but the people behind it are the Agribusiness folks and the mining companies, because whatever ends up there in Congress will be stopped. [PEC 215] also opens up the possibility of revising indigenous lands that have already demarcated or ratified. If that happens, depending on the correlation of forces and interests, things will become very difficult (interview with Ricardo Verдум published in the online newspaper *apublica* by Oliveira, 2019).

Anthropologists were soon removed from their activities in preparing reports and technical studies. The current government not only blocks the progress of new land recognition processes but has also blocked those underway. Anthropologists in the working groups have been replaced with other professionals. On November 4<sup>th</sup> 2019, the Brazilian Anthropological Association (ABA) used its “abant, org.br” portal to release a note denouncing that “people without the minimum qualifications or legitimacy, and without any legal protection, are being nominated in the National Foundation of the Indian (FUNAI) to coordinate and carry out studies for the identification and delimitation of Indigenous Lands”.

“It's the indigenous people are going to bear the damage. (...) There is already a general orientation in this government to not to delimit, demarcate, or recognize any indigenous or quilombola territories. If these groups go to the field, what may happen is that they will consider that those people are not indigenous and thus have no right to land”, it explains. Recent changes at FUNAI corroborate what the ABA representative says. In the Tuxi Working Group, created on August 15<sup>th</sup>, anthropologists were replaced by agronomists in addition to (...) philosophy graduates. (interview by Ricardo Verдум published in the online newspaper *apublica* by Oliveira, 2019).

The impact of a government that is dehumanizing and averse to human rights, because it does not consider affected populations as subject to protection, has been devastating. This is particularly true for a large part of the field of Anthropology that works directly with the communities affected by the dismantling of the State organs responsible for the defense of their rights. Costa Filho (2020), for example, feels out of place even without having left the same work space he has always occupied in field research with quilombola communities and the university.

How can we reflect and think about our relationships with the communities we study?

The anthropology of indigenous groups in Brazil in the 20<sup>th</sup> century occurs in conditions in which indigenous groups were a minority in relation to the nation state. While in Africa there was -- and still is -- an often fragmented struggle between indigenous groups and other social segments concerning policies for the creation of “native states”, indigenous groups in Brazil are a distinct minority (Castro, Josué, 2008). In the period of democratization consolidated in the 1988 Constitution, anthropologists who studied indigenous and quilombola communities focused almost inexorably on the indigenous rights that needed to be recognized by the State (Barretto Filho, 2018; Barretto Filho and Ramos, 2019; and O 'Dwyer and Silva, 2020). They often became “cultural mediators”, in the words of Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (2006).

Castro's 2008 reflections regarding this situation remain current:

(...) [we must] reinforce all necessary care so that we are not caught by the methodological traps of the ethnographic process, or be deceived by the blurred images of the ethnographic experience. Both dangers can only be minimized by the ethnographic effort itself. It is in the field, in daily contact with our dilemmas, that we can improve the quality of such images and reflect on new methodological constructions (Castro, 2008: p.89-90)

Anthropological studies related to gender and the intersectionalities of gender, race, class, and sexual diversity begin with the existence of bonds with the groups studied, or produce them in the course of their research. Almost always, they end up expressing the demand for rights of the groups studied within a scenario of high politicization of these rights in Brazilian society (Carrara, S., 2016; Lima, Márcia, 2018 and Moutinho, Buarque and Simões, 2020).

For a large part of Brazilian anthropology, it is almost impossible to stop making links with the communities anthropologists study; impossible not to be inserted in their social relations. It is impossible to consider political neutrality or a positivist neutrality in these situations. Even Max Weber (1999 and 2003), who proposed an “axiological neutrality”, declared that insertion in the world of the senses and social relations is necessary to be able to build knowledge from a meaningful perspective.

There is no social science that looks on the world from “nowhere” or that observes reality from a higher (or divine) place (Haraway, 1995). The situated gaze of anthropology, however, is a gaze that obeys scientific methodologies shared among researchers. It is not a fiction. The postmodern debate in anthropology has strongly insisted on the need to reveal this situated view (Clifford, James, 1986). But in this refocusing of attention on the researcher who writes, a caricature has been created that anthropology is a fiction: it is not and never has been. In this moment of war between truths and lies, this point must deserve special attention from the anthropological community.

The revealing of a researcher’s positionality is of fundamental importance, not so that we may imagine that one is gazing out from nowhere (a presumptive neutral space) or that one is fixed in place or embedded, without any distance from the community being researched. Positionality is necessary to propose and show what occurs when the researcher’s analytical gaze meets the subjects taken as the object of research, and in what positions everyone occupies in the sea of the social relations in which they are immersed. Analytical research makes the researcher subject to new knowledge, but this may be full of the perception of the rights of the communities she studies.

Indigenous, black and quilombola anthropologists are increasingly essential for the continuity and renewal of Brazilian anthropology. In large part, they will be located in the tradition of the studies of rights in Brazilian society, which are increasingly being put at risk.

### **In the time of intolerance: towards the dehumanization of the Other**

The human rights framework<sup>35</sup> presented in the Brazilian Constitution since 1988 has increasingly lost space in the narratives and public policies of the Bolsonaro government. Intolerance of gender, race, and ethnicity increases in Brazil and things are moving towards increasing dehumanization. Based on State power exercised in the name of a neo-conservative government increased intolerance and dehumanization of segments of Brazilian society is invoked and provoked.

To better understand what is happening in Brazil, it is first of all necessary to reflect (albeit briefly) upon the concepts of intolerance and dehumanization.

It was the religious wars of the 16th century that made the terms “tolerance” and “intolerance” extremely relevant for the construction of co-existence between religions. With regards to the 19th century, Wismann reminds us of Goethe’s relativization of tolerance: “tolerating is injurious” (Goethe, Apud Wismann, 2000: 100). Tolerance should be the first step towards understanding otherness. The recognition of the Other and the recognition of otherness demands more: it demands that the Other be seen face-to-face (Levinas, 1997). It demands respect for the similarity of humanity and “differences” that, by themselves, do not have explanations.

<sup>35</sup> This was always present in governmental narratives that delineated public policies following the 1988 Constitution, although its effectiveness varied from government to government and always fell short of its goals.

This face-to-face encounter should not take place in a specular way, as if the Other were “less” than the “self”: a “fallen self”, or a “lower self”. Such a view of the Other is the basis of the concept of intolerance. Meetings need to take place between humans who face each other, not only within the same society or social segment but between different cultures and social segments.

The concept of intolerance can be philosophically linked (Fuks, 2007) to the Freudian psychoanalytic concept of the “narcissism of small differences”. (Freud, Sigmund {1918} (1976). This concept makes us think of the intolerance that appears in the face of the Other over a small difference. The Other’s small differences give us a mirror for our own fear of not being perfect. Freud leads us to think that imperfection is not only the intolerance (and superiority) of the male in relation to the female over what he sees as “lack of a penis”, but also the male fear of having an “imperfect penis”, or of “misusing one’s penis”, as the contemporary conservative homophobic language, so revered by the neo-conservative movement, describes it.

Freud goes further. His writings ({1939}, 1976, and 1982) point out how intolerance towards the Jewish people is based upon and seems to be justified by the symbol of the circumcised penis, seen as imperfect and frightening. In the era of Nazi racism, other fears arose from the specular image of the Jews: their supposed wandering character (without fixation on a soil) and tendency towards miscegenation (lack of blood uniqueness). This specular image was opposed to the belief that Nazism built of itself: a German race born from the same soil and with the same blood. Jews were first separated and confined by Nazi politics, then led into extreme pauperization before, in the end, being exterminated.

If its starting point was intolerance, Nazism eventually led to dehumanization in the sense described by Agamben (2013) and Bauman (1998). Agamben names “homo sacer” those human beings who, through language that disqualifies them and the treatment to which they are submitted, are understood to be as socially dead and whose death does not entail legal sanction against their murderers. Dehumanization takes place through discourses that attributes to an “Other” an essential lack of humanity, making them disposable, killable, and sacrificable (Rego, Patrique, 2014).

Bauman believes that “the negative impacts of dehumanization are much more common than the habit of almost entirely identifying through its genocidal effects would suggest”. It is present in the technical reification of the bureaucratic language of modernity, in which it is difficult to see the human through the regulations. (Bauman, 1998: 128-129). However, Bauman also understands that in order for moral inhibitions against violence to be lifted, one precondition is the dehumanization of a social segment, oppressed by ideological definitions and indoctrinations, must have already occurred and that a narrative of and treatment by violence is authorized by government practices (Bauman, 1998, p. 41).

The recognition of the dignity of all men and women must be independent of sex, race, religion, ethnicity, and lifestyle, as laid down in the Charter of Universal Rights of Men in 1948 and as confirmed by the Brazilian Constitution of 1988. Statements that aim to socially fix an agreement to confront intolerances and the hierarchization of human beings have been made and are present in international and national contemporary politics.

Two ministers<sup>36</sup> chosen at the beginning of the Bolsonaro government point out the importance of the two Parliamentary Caucuses<sup>37</sup> analyzed here being linked in the neoconservative movement. Damares Regina Alves became Minister of Women, Family and Human Rights, taking over the relative power of the former portfolios

36 Considered to be misogynistic by many of his opponents, Bolsonaro has been criticized for giving little space to women and blacks in his first echelon. This is a predominantly male, white and military government. Bolsonaro still joked about the topic: “For the first time in my life, the number of ministers is balanced in our government. We have 22 ministries, 20 men and two women. Just a small detail: each of these women here is equivalent to ten men,” he said. Published in EL PAÍS, March 8, by Benites, 2019.

37 The two Ministers have so far remained in the government, unlike the “revolving door” that has characterized various other ministries and presidencies of State institutions with nominees who sometimes do not last even a week. On the one hand, we have the Minister of Agriculture, Tereza Cristina, a member of the FPA and a sub-rapporteur of the Funai/Incrá CPI in 2015 and 2016. On the other hand, there’s Minister Damares Regina Alves, a lawyer and pastor, previously an adviser to Senator Magno Malta and the Evangelical Caucus since its inception.

of the SPM, SEPPPIR and SEDH and inverting their agenda of defending human rights, replacing this with the principle of “morality”. Tereza Cristina Corrêa da Costa Dias, a Congresswoman of the Agribusiness Caucus, was also named Minister of Agriculture.

The Minister of the Environment and the Presidents of FUNAI, INCRA, and of State environmental institutions (IBAMA and ICMBIO) were chosen from among those who publicly proposed to paralyze the demarcations of indigenous lands and quilombola territories and block environmental rights. These nominations weakened Brazil’s capacity to inspect forest fires and illegal logging, while reducing restrictions on environmental licensing resolutions.

FUNAI is now being dismantled. New hires are not being made. Current functionaries are not allowed to travel to regions where there is a conflict. They are ordered not to defend indigenous rights, not only in relation to land demarcation, but also to not to carry out removals of illegal miners from indigenous land. They have been given orders that compromise the health and food security of indigenous people during the pandemic.

In a live internet cast on September 24th 2020, President Jair Bolsonaro declared that a type of “evolved Indian” exists in Brazil who can have “more freedom over his land”. He continued hierarchizing indigenous people in these terms, describing those engaged in monocultural cultivation as those who “already plant” and who are “similar to us” -- that is, are (becoming human) like “whites”. He referred to other groups as “not evolved” and identified them as similar to “bandits” and thus dehumanized. Bolsonaro characterized the unlawful acts taking place in the large indigenous reservations as if they derive from the existence of indigenous reservations themselves, when, in fact, the repression of land invasions and other predatory activities in these territories is the responsibility of the Brazilian State. Indians on reservations have thus been dehumanized in Bolsonaro’s rhetoric. In his words (according to a journalist’s account):

“Look at the Indians in the north of the state of Mato Grosso, the Parecis. They are in a situation similar to ours. They plant and cultivate”, said Bolsonaro. Salles said [they have] “12 thousand hectares”. Then Bolsonaro passed on to a third topic, lamenting the so-called difficulties in policing “big indigenous reservations”, where “there inside rule [sic] lawless and illicit people, who steal biodiversity and predatorily exploit the natural means [sic] that exist there...” (Valente, Rubens, 2020)

On September 30th, an article was published in the *Folha de São Paulo*, signed by a prosecutor from the Federal Public Ministry and an anthropological advisor entitled “The unprotection of lands and the genocide of indigenous peoples”.

“The Middle Xingu region in Pará is one of the most affected. Ituna, Itatá, Apyterewa, Cachoeira Seca and Trincheira Bacajá recorded alarming rates of deforestation, with percentage increases of 754%, 437%, 113% and 271%, respectively, compared to 2018(...) Impunity and the expectation of regularization of illegal land has provided fuel for the intensification of illegal activities in the Amazon. (...) The overwhelming arrival of the pandemic among the indigenous peoples reveals their vulnerability (...) and the self-evident connections between the unprotection of these territories and the concrete risk of genocide. (Zollinger and Palmquist, 2020: p.A3)

Here, the lack of protection of the indigenous peoples is associated with the strongest form of dehumanization that leads to death. Are the Indians so disposable that they can be left “to their own devices”? In fact, this has not been a random event. The human actions of land grabbers have been encouraged by government rhetoric. Governmental inaction in the face of these invasions and the incidence of the pandemic among indigenous people has created a tragedy that could be easily foreseen and prevented – if there was a will to prevent it.

On September 28th 2020, the National Environment Council (CONAMA), responsible for establishing the criteria for environmental licensing and quality standards decided to overturn resolutions in the name of the short-term interests of the National Confederation of Agriculture and the Confederation of Industries and real

estate interests, after having removed all civil society members from its ranks (only four members without voting rights remained among the representatives of government agencies and companies).

CONAMA overturned the resolution that restricted deforestation and occupation in areas of environmental preservation such mangroves, bayous and near water reservoirs. It overturned the criteria for irrigation projects in agriculture, allowing for the burning of toxic waste in ovens used to manufacture cement, hitherto prevented because of the danger this practice represents to human health (Globo G1, 2020) These actions do not take into account how many people will be immediately placed in areas of health risk, with loss of access to water, if no responsibility is demanded of the large enterprises that use irrigation. Disposable people? Dehumanized...?

Intolerance towards women and girls who have abortions achieved great media visibility in August 2020 in the form of a ten-year-old girl, raped and impregnated by her grandfather and uncle, whom neo-conservative Evangelical groups call a “killer” while protesting in front of the Hospital, attempting to block her entry. The girl only managed to have a legal abortion, allowed since 1940s by the Brazilian Penal Code in cases of rape, by hiding in car trunks and being supported by health professionals. Her life was still at risk. Could this be due to insensitivity arising from religious beliefs in which religious principles makes it necessary to inflict suffering on the Other who does not accept these principles? Or is it a secular result (Asad, 2003) of the dehumanization of the Other, which seeks to make her suffer out of the need to maintain a certain social order, as mentioned by Talal Asad? Asad (2011) reminds us that in secular modernity, it is legitimate to inflict suffering up to a certain amount as long as this is justified by need. He claims that the Geneva Agreement had the effect of legitimizing the infliction of pain, as long as this is in the name of acquiring a given end. This is the secular form of dehumanization, which produces insensitivity to certain social segments in certain circumstances.

The Minister for Women, Family, and Human Rights is insensitive to the girl’s needs. She claims that preventing her from having an abortion means neither suffering nor risk of death for the ten-year-old. Secular or religious, or secular and religious, dehumanization occurs as a consequence of the neoconservative stance.

This intolerance of the rights of women and girls is based on the new policies that have been implemented by the Bolsonaro government. These have dismantled the legal abortion services created since the ‘90s to provide for abortions under the two conditions that have not been crimes in Brazil since 1940 (pregnancy resulting from rape and pregnancy with risk of maternal death) and to the new legal condition that has been in place since 2012 (fetal anencephaly). In August 2020, the previous resolutions that regulated legal abortion services in the Unified Health System since the 2000s were revoked. These now force women, girls, and health professionals to report rape to the police whether they want to or not, attacking women and girls’ rights of autonomy, dignity, and health of and assaulting the principle of professional secrecy of health professionals. (Adams, 2020)

Intolerance towards homosexual rights and racial equality has been manifested in the public scene in the speech of different Ministers of Education. The current Minister, Milton Ribeiro, affirmed in an interview that homosexuality comes from “maladjusted families” and pushed for the Evangelical proposal of a “cure for gayness”. A few days after he left the Ministry, former Minister of Education Abraham Weintraub signed a resolution blocking the policy of racial and indigenous affirmative action quotas in undergraduate and graduate level university entrance exams. These policies made a positive difference in the entry of black, brown, and indigenous people in public and private universities during PT governments. Although the resolution lost effect with Wientraub’s departure, it gave visibility to racial intolerance and the dehumanization of the black population that exists in segments of Brazilian society. This is due to the structural racism<sup>38</sup> that produces a continuous differential of power that is disadvantageous to the black and brown who make up just over half of the Brazilian population.

<sup>38</sup> In the face of the neo-conservative offensive, structural racism and sexism are being analyzed in the social sciences through intersectional methodologies such as those present in the work of Ana Paula Silva (Silva, 2018).

Against the neo-conservative movements supported and sustained by the Bolsonaro government, indigenous movements, quilombolas, feminists, movements in favor of the legalization of abortion, LGBTTIQ + movements, anti-racist movements, groups who oppose structural racism and sexism and environmental movements are multiplying. They open up possibilities, but the forces in play are unequal.

Within the Evangelical field, heterogeneity continues. A minority of churches favor rights to sexual diversity. Among the churches in Brazil's urban peripheries are found those that are most closely linked to the left. Political polarizations are occurring, involving pastors who do not adhere to the guidelines of FPE leaders or the leaders of the large churches of greater political strength. Again, this opens up possibilities, but the forces in play are unequal.

## **Final considerations**

The paths taken by the two parliamentary caucuses allow us to conclude that, based on specific stimuli and interests, the two fronts converged and organized themselves against the human rights agenda and in defense of their rentier interests and State benefits (although each caucus had and has different focuses). They have been gaining strength based upon their narratives in the public arena against the expansion of fundamental rights.

They activated crucial positions in the construction and growing consolidation of their political power in Congress, in the approval of the impeachment of Dilma Rouseff, and in the construction of a close relationship with the Executive Branch during the Temer government in 2016.

During the 2018 electoral campaign, the Evangelical Caucus achieved the political fidelity of two thirds of the evangelical bases, contradicting forecasts that the political heterogeneity of the evangelical bases would remain distinct from the interests of their political leaders in Congress. There is no way to underestimate the effects of the campaign to literally demonize the PT and the fact that the traditional second round election did not take place between the PT and the PSDB, making possible a candidacy that is not only opposed to the PT, but which was also openly against human rights.

The interests of the new "owners of economic power" -- agribusiness, rentiers, financiers, industrials and infrastructure and construction companies -- do not appear in neo-conservative slogans, but are clearly present in the bases of support of the Executive Branch. The dismantling of State institutions charged with protecting the environment and indigenous and quilombola rights clearly points to the privileged position of the Agribusiness sectors in the economic policies of the government and in its destruction of environmental policy.

The privileged place of the Evangelical sectors in their relations with the government is seen in the paralysis of policies favoring human rights, women's rights, rights to sexual diversity and racial equality. More: it is responsible for legitimizing the retreat of educational policies and the near paralysis and budgetary dismantling of organizations that promote postgraduate training and the production of science and research. It is also responsible for the current wave of criticisms against university education.

These two caucuses, through their movements and connections, have contributed to undermining the conception of the State as defined by respect for identitary and ethnic plurality and for taking positions against racism and sexism. In its place, they propose the conception of a State that believes in a unique "Truth" in the name of a "Christian majority".

"Family" and "God" were the flags of the neoconservative movement raised around the impeachment of President Dilma Rouseff.

"Brazil above all", "God above all" has been the slogan of the Bolsonaro government.

A government should view itself as representing the “State power” sustained by the Constitution. The current government wants to distance itself from this perception. Increasingly, the current government asserts that there is only the will of its government and that its government wants itself to be the only parameter to which State power should submit.

It is impossible not to fear a power that does not recognize constitutional State power, as if nothing could supersede “its truth”: a “unitary and single truth” is only true in the eyes of those who are already converted.

For the “Others”, this government holds out dehumanization, neglect, confrontation, and intolerance.

Inflicting pain on the Other; denying the presence of the Other; dehumanizing the Other... these are perennial possibilities for this government that institutes itself, focusing only on the imaginations of “its electorate”.

Dark times of intolerance surround us. Intolerances affect the scientific field. Disauthorization of anthropology and the sciences, but especially the humanities, is expressed in a lack of funding for research.

The challenges for anthropology lie in an active search for scientific evidence excavated through methods of deep ethnography capable of recognizing alterity, the Other, and diversity as fully human and with full access to rights. This is a perspective that starts from anthropologists’ positionality, because there is no social science that gazes out from “nowhere” or that looks on reality from a higher (or divine) place. The situated view of anthropology is a view that obeys the scientific methodology shared among researchers, however. It enables us to “see” and face the new knowledge arising from the relationships we forge with the subjects taken as objects of research; it is these relationships that are the very thing that make us able to see.

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Flows, Circulations and their Opposites:  
Ethnographic Perspectives and Theoretical-Methodological Challenges

# Ethnographing flows, (re)thinking categories

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## Abstract

In this article we explore universes of circulations, flows and mobilities along two interconnected axes. We propose a reflection on the dynamics of managing bodies and populations in transit through categories that regulate journeys and stays, and produce (mal)adaptations. In complementary form, we also question the classificatory processes that pervade the experiences of migrants when they enter distinct regimes of producing difference and are racialized, ethnicized and generified. Our hypothesis is that the connection between these two axes involves the production, at diverse levels, of 'out of place' bodies.

**Key words:** Mobilities; migrations; race; borders; anthropology.

# Etnografando fluxos, (re)pensando categorias

## Resumo

O objetivo do artigo é abordar universos de circulações, fluxos e mobilidades a partir de dois eixos interligados. Por um lado, propomos uma reflexão sobre as dinâmicas de gerenciamento dos corpos e populações em trânsito por meio de categorias que regulam passagens e estadias e produzem (in)adequações. Complementarmente, questionamos os processos classificatórios que perpassam as experiências dos migrantes quando adentram distintos regimes de produção da diferença e são racializados, etnicizados e generificados. Nossa hipótese é a de que a conexão entre os dois eixos abordados se dá pela produção, em diversos níveis, de corpos "fora de lugar".

**Palavras-chave:** Mobilidades; migrações; raça; fronteiras; antropologia.



# Ethnographing flows, (re)thinking categories

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Circulations, flows and mobilities constitute an important part of the debates in contemporary social sciences. The approaches taken to the connections between diverse social fields at global level have the potential to renew our conceptions about culture and society and, more recently, about bodies, places and their interactions. This *Vibrant* dossier discusses universes in which people circulate, exploring two essential and interconnected aspects: (1) the management of bodies and populations in transit through categories that regulate journeys and stays, and produce (mal)adaptations; (2) the classificatory processes that pervade the experiences of migrants when they enter distinct regimes of production of difference and are racialized, ethnicized and generified. What connects the two axes approached in the articles making up the dossier seems to be the production, at diverse levels, of 'out of place' bodies.

As Lobo, Motta and Trajano Filho (2014) argue, the notion of 'out of place' (or away from home) only makes sense in opposition to a place of origin, one that is mine, a place to which I belong. It thus contains the notion of movement that leads persons, images and places to shift place. But a place out of place also demands a new comprehension of the concept of place, an understanding that relates the spatial and geographic matrices of the term and adds to it something from the communicative fields (Trajano Filho 2010). Thinking about 'out of place' people, therefore, also forces us to think about the subtleties and complexities produced by the reciprocal and mutually constitutive interactions between identification and categorization and between self-image and the image constructed by others, themes explored by the articles constituting the dossier and that reveal the new approaches to flows and circulations.

There is also another dimension that complements the axes highlighted above. We refer to borders as producers of belongings and their distinct systems of meanings that end up producing subjects who 'are from here' in contrast to those 'outside.' It is productive to explore the conception of both places and borders as social fields – that is, imagined networks that shape belongings or distancings – and not as units circumscribed to spaces delimited or fixed in a geographic territory. Going beyond places and their points of transit as geographic spaces can help us to explain better ethnographic contexts marked by fluidity and mobility. Furthermore, this perspective allows us to reflect on the regimes of truth that end up reproducing technologies of managing the other that fix the latter in excluding categories and as vulnerabilized subjects.

## **Flows, borders and categorizations**

The way in which the social sciences have dealt with the relationship between movement and borders reveals the reproduction of a certain dichotomous thought, emphasizing either the fixing of boundaries or the circulation of people, things and symbols. A key factor is that who draws these borders and defines their porosity is the State. Likewise, it is the latter that structures the relations between its institutions and the subjects in mobility, defining how they will be received, their status, facilitating their passage or hindering their stay, as Drotbohm and Winters explore in this dossier. This structure widely defines the everyday life of these subjects, the rights that they can obtain, and their level of participation in economic and social life.

As Feldman-Bianco et al. (2020) emphasize, although mobility has always been a feature of societies, the circulation of people globally became part of the formation of capital during the era of the Great Navigations and subsequently with the formation of the nation state. Hence, it both fed and was fomented by colonialism and by the later capitalist expansion with its structures of domination, inequalities, alterities and racialization of the other, whether internal (indigenous or black populations) or external (migrants, refugees, foreigners) (2020: 03).

It was during this process that the State acquired a monopoly over the control and surveillance of people entering, circulating and leaving its borders. Yet not only this. Beyond the 'spectacle of borders' (De Genova 2020), there is an entire bureaucratic apparatus that encompasses legislation, politics and regimes of identification that recognize national citizens and exclude non-nationals, exerting different forms of management over the latter (see the article by Angela Facundo Navia in this dossier and Feldman-Bianco et al. 2020, Hamid 2012, De Genova 2020).

It is in this sense that the production of the illegality of determined categories of persons is not only performed by the surveillance undertaken on state borders, the legitimate locus of exclusion, it is also constantly reinforced by surveillance policies that strengthen and extend their control. As Sayad (1998) wrote, this apparatus acts as a constant reminder of the temporary, illegal and out of place condition of some people, but also of the versatility of those mobilities that are 'irregular' or 'unauthorized' and constitutive of the global system: after all, while the States possess their technologies for controlling mobilities, these policies generally produce contrary effects. As various of the following articles show, the border spectacle, which is presented as a scenario of exclusion, is revealed by extension as an initial point of a process of subordinate inclusion (De Genova 2013).

What this entire apparatus produces is continuity in time and space, a condition of disposability of the labour of migrants, refugees and others. But it also cruelly reveals the disposability of human life. As De Genova argues:

Entire categories of persons are simply treated as superfluous and, although their illegalizable (and thus 'cheap' and malleable) labour is evidently in high demand and is certainly desirable among many employers, their (racialized) bodies, their personas, their lives and the broader communities in which they participate are stigmatized as 'undesirable' and transformed into virtual 'garbage,' human 'garbage' to simply be discarded (De Genova 2020: 157).

There are two sets of questions that, in our view, follow on from this picture and that implicate us as social scientists. First, how do we challenge the apparent naturalness of categories that subalternize the other when we elaborate analyses about these realities? The care needed here is to avoid reproducing these schemas of oppression, but to elaborate alternatives to these. This takes us to the second aspect: can we construct other possible social worlds?

Thinking about vocabulary is fundamental. It was Hannerz (1997) who, at the end of the 1990s, questioning the place of globalization in the history of anthropological ideas, expressed concerns about the set of terms intended as concepts, in distinct degrees and intensities – that is, the categories that aim to become analytic tools to think about modernity with its intrinsic characteristics. Terms like flows, limits, a 'world in creolization,' and hybrids compose this vocabulary that spans the twentieth century and that connects continents. For the author, the end of the 1990s was the period when profound changes occurred in the anthropological discipline. Following on from the strong contrast made between stability and movement, studies have focused on the urgency of capturing action, relations and change. More recently we can observe the reconstruction of the place of the other and the need (justified by the 'transformations of the world') to account for flows, large-scale social phenomena, multiple actors, interconnections and diverse subjects (Lobo 2012).

In this process, social categories have become important tools for producing the place of the other and their transfer to the analytic field must be undertaken in a critical manner. The distinction between the administrative, discursive and analytic levels is an imponderable, given that we know that the States, in diverse ways, shape the forms through which people speak of migrations and mobilities. Taking, for example, the category of refugee in the Brazilian public debate today, we can observe that initially the term is approached pragmatically: in other words, it involves an administrative category, technically purified and limited to a semantic issue. But when we pass to the discursive level, taking the media as an example, we can observe the construction of narratives that label refugees as a danger and a threat, and, on the other hand, Brazil as a cordial country that nonetheless takes them in (Machado 2020).

Hence, the refugee condition is produced as an effect of the law, but is also maintained as an effect of discursive formation, just like the ‘illegality’ of migrant subjects, for instance. When we turn to the analytic level, we need to challenge the apparent naturalness of these categories and the forms through which the sociospatial premises and conceptions of nationalism significantly shape the conceptualization of the circulations themselves. It becomes necessary to expose how determined notions serve to conceal, discriminate, favour or hide an entire class of subjects and produce a place of ‘disposable humans.’

When we transfer such categories to the field of concepts, it is vitally important for us to be wary: we need to ensure that we are not complicit with the techniques of exclusion that produce illegal and ‘racialized’ migrants or refugees by giving them an aura of ‘naturalness,’ averting the reproduction of this condition in other areas of social life when other orders of classification of these others are at work. As the papers in the second part of this dossier reveal, circulation emerges in diverse ethnographic situations as a racialized issue centred on bodies. As a consequence, the classificatory systems offered by the state (illegal, undocumented, immigrant, refugee, and so on) and expanded on by the media show feed the production of racialized and ‘out of place’ bodies, as well as racialized and racializable places of exclusion (see the articles by Gonçalves and Luna Sales).

Nicholas De Genova proposes one possible path for anthropologists, which involves taking on the challenge of delineating the historical specificities of contemporary mobilities and the processes of circumscribing them in the legal and political economies of particular States. As the author argues, it is only by reflecting on the effects of the social, legal and historical contexts in our research that we can elaborate a critical anthropological prospectus that is not complicit with the naturalization of illegalities and the consequent racializations of subjects in mobility. “What at first seemed to be a merely terminological question, therefore, after more careful consideration, turns out to be a central epistemological and conceptual problem with significant methodological ramifications, ethical implications and political repercussions” (De Genova 2002: 423).

Other paths, complementary to De Genova’s approach, have included the analytic construction of another possible world, one not only critical of existing ordering processes but discerns new forms of relating in a world that is ultimately borderless, in which the opposition between place and out of place can become diluted. We provide two examples that, via distinct paths, challenge us to imagine.

Before the turn of the century, Clifford (1997) proposed exploring and extrapolating the different possibilities of people’s movements by leaving aside the perspective of migratory studies and working with other possibilities of flows, incorporating them into the analyses. Pursuing his endeavour to expand the field of vision, the author proposes a new conception of place as relation. When Clifford challenges us to think about place as an itinerary, he proposes more than just moving from studies on cultures as limited and self-contained to a new vision that incorporates flows and movements. He argues that we need to see cultures as phenomena constituted by flows, a new perception of the social world, seen less as a localized habitation and more as a series of encounters. Along these lines, he proposes the term ‘travel’ as an alternative and expansive concept that encompasses diverse experiences – diasporas, borders, migration, refugees, tourism, pilgrimages, exile.

By inverting the formula, the author inverts the question. If travel is the norm, then it is habitation that requires explanation. After all, in some societies, as in the diasporas, for instance, the question that makes sense is not why people leave but why other people stay at home. To be clear, this analytic perspective does not argue that localities do not exist or that everyone is travelling, is cosmopolitan or deterritorialized: it is not a nomadology (Clifford 1997). What can be retained here is the possibility he poses of a conceptual approach to everyday histories, tactics and practices of inhabiting and travelling that are not captured by social worldviews in which the local is the norm and the movement of some subjects is not just the exception but something that produces vulnerability and exclusion.

Recently, Achille Mbembe has reflected on these same questions but from other directions. In an article titled “The idea of a borderless world” (2018) the author reframes the question to show that the power of borders not only restricts movements and intensifies the vulnerability of stigmatized groups and those more racially marked, it also regulates the distribution of populations over the body of the earth. In other words, his argument goes beyond the control of bodies to include the control of movement itself.

He proposes to investigate the possibilities for recreating the utopia of a borderless world. Ultimately, it is this notion that lies at the base of western conceptualizations that attempt to explain the tensions between the local and the global since the end of the twentieth century, such as the concepts of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. However, he moves away from such perspectives (including Clifford’s) and their propositions of a cosmopolitanism under the sign of neoliberal individualism, anchored in four freedoms of movement: of capital, goods, services, and people. In relation to these, depending on the nationality of your passport, the world indeed belongs to you. But this is not the case of most human beings inhabiting the earth (Mbembe 2018).

It is, therefore, on people’s supposed freedom to come and go that Mbembe’s proposition focuses: it must be extended to the planet’s poor. Based on what he calls the African model (in contrast to the individualist model), the author recuperates the notion of the border in terms of its basic function – to be traversed – and advocates a world without visas.

One could just get on a plane, a train, a boat, on the road, or on a bike. Rights of non-discrimination would be extended to all. I will give you one little example. In Cameroon, until the beginning of the 1980s, it was possible to travel to France with one’s national identity card. Most people went to France and came back. They did not go because they wanted to settle there. Most people want to live where they ‘belong.’ But they want to be able to come and go. And they are more likely to come and go when the borders are not hermetically closed. So, a borderless world imagined by the fourth freedom of movement is premised, therefore, on this right of non-discrimination and on this circulatory and pendular set of migrations (Mbembe 2018).<sup>1</sup>

Mbembe makes clear that a borderless world is a utopian intention. Indeed, the very concept of utopia relates to the borderless, like the imagination, for example. And what problem is there in using the recourse of utopia to think about social realities? If it is a problem from the economic and political point of view, it can be a powerful resource for us to free ourselves from the “atrophy of an utopian imagination” fomented by perspectives that nourish narratives of separation rather than a politics of humanity (Mbembe 2018). Between the dystopia of the current world, in which the sacrifice of many lives improves the life of the few, we need utopias more than ever.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://africasacountry.com/2018/11/the-idea-of-a-borderless-world>, accessed 01/10/2020, no pages.

## The dossier in parts

The articles united here contain an interesting diversity of ethnographic setting and approaches that evince the usefulness of approaching circulations and mobilities less as a trait inherent to determined social contexts and more as aspects that intersect social relations transversally. The thematic focus of the pages that follow is on the diverse movements of people and on the processes of resignification that accompany this movement; on the transit of information, ideas, symbols and values; and on the dynamics of cultural mediation and the arising classificatory processes. These fluxes are observed at different scales through discussions capable of incorporating the historical depth of the experiences of circulation and of eliciting a new way of looking at the articulation between these movements and the sociocultural limits of various types.

Flows, circulation and movement have become commonplace terms in discussions of the contemporary world, revealing a relative saturation of the arguments and debates surrounding these categories. Nevertheless, there remains much for us to comprehend about the social, political, economic and cultural processes analysed through the prism of flows in contemporary life. In this sense, empirical research becomes ever more necessary to complexify the debate and avoid 'rushed responses.' As expressed in the following articles, ethnographic research is a key tool for attaining this aim.

### Categories, people and State

The text by Heike Drotbohm and Nanneke Winters advances a comparative proposal that takes the setting of intra-American movements as a parameter to think about the production of volatile categories involved in managing the migratory flow. The humanitarian visa in Brazil and the *permiso de ingreso y tránsito* (entry and transit permit) in Costa Rica are examples of categories mobilized in exceptional situations that momentarily facilitate the migratory flow for specific populations but do not produce long-term integration.

In Central America, these travel permits are explicitly categories of movement: they enable journeying, not staying. But the humanitarian visa can also take the guise of "categories of transit," as Machado (2020) points out. Drotbohm and Winters's text presents a proposal for analysing these emergences and their implication in the production of categories that end up generating more movement rather than integration. On the other hand, the scenario of large movements that cross the Americas heading towards the United States offers in itself a supranational framework for reflecting on categories of contemporary migratory movement and regulation, as well as the flows of Syrian refugees traversing Europe towards Germany (Holmes & Castañeda 2016).

We can think of the categories that structure the management of the flow of Venezuelans in Brazil from Drotbohm and Winters's perspective: according to the text presented by Angela Facundo Navia, the situation of Venezuelans 'interiorized' in Caicó (Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil) through the Acolhida Program is extremely fluid. Various categories were mobilized to manage the Venezuelans who arrived from across the border between Roraima (Brazil) and Venezuela: requests for refugee status, extension of the Mercosur agreement on migration, radical changes in the policy of granting refugee status, and so on. Here we find ourselves in the middle of new successive 'happenings.' The hosting operation itself, organized by military forces in Roraima, is a new form of policy tested since the Temer government (Machado & Vasconcelos 2018). Navia, though, presents us with an ethnography about another point of the Acolhida Program, no longer involving the military, since reception of these 'interiorized' people is outsourced to civil society organizations, primarily religious entities.

In this process, the author offers us a complex panorama that involves the inflexibility of the categories of 'family' on the part of the hosting organizations, which ends up limiting the possibility of families (in the configuration in which they are presented by the producers of these categories) to remain together.

Navia spotlights the question of the variability in the documented status of people within the same family group and how this entails different bureaucratic forms of relating to the public authorities. Finally, she contrasts the hosting operation with the process of voluntary resettlement for Colombian refugees that took place in Brazil at the start of the twenty-first century (Navia 2019).

This scenario can be understood as one of the contemporary characteristics in the management of immigration in Brazil, highlighting the political question as a pivotal factor in the choice of potential privileged beneficiaries. In the case of the Venezuelans, the collective concession of more than 38,000 refugee statuses as of 2020 allows us to perceive a radical and clearly preferential change. At the same time, the question of the humanitarian visa, which was inserted in the new Brazilian migration law, was demonstrably restricted by the regulation of the law itself (Machado 2020). Thus, momentary facilitations are produced while other obstacles are created: this scenario is thus a jigsaw puzzle whose outcome is the specific preference for some immigrants over others. And at the moment, this Brazilian constellation of regulations is clearly marked by a racialization of the approach to migration: Haitians and African immigrants/refugees are overlooked in the processes for facilitating legalization (Machado & Pardue 2020, Silva Jarochinski & Alves 2017).

## Bodies and (in) flows

Menara Guizardi's text is concerned with understanding the relations between the gender hierarchies established by care practices and crossborder movements in the region of the triple frontier (Brazil-Argentina-Paraguay). Here we have socioeconomic orderings established by distinct state regimes and women who seek for alternative ways for distributing care to family members, looking for support from public healthcare networks and also from religious and family networks. The author explores the dynamics of producing excess of work among women living on the border, contributing to our understanding of the relation between gender hierarchies and attribution of the carer role, which falls on women's shoulders in situations of work overload in their families.

The search for care to be received in specific situations – during pregnancy, medical care for a disabled child, medical treatment for undiagnosed diseases – produces a constant crossborder movement, attempting to assuage the excessive workload that gender inequalities instilled in their lives in one of the three countries of the triple frontier. The author develops the idea of a 'care-o-meter' as an intellectual mechanism for understanding this search to share the care workload with other family members.

The text by José Hildo de Oliveira Filho presents us with a little-known situation of mobility, linked to the professional practice of football (outdoor and indoor) in leagues in Central and Eastern Europe. While in Menara's text the discussion revolves around the idea of 'care' and its gentrification, here the author shows how care and fear of injury are decisive factors in the construction of careers in these peripheral leagues, since very often athletes are unable to receive care from their clubs. The author emphasizes what he calls the 'essential sadness' in the migratory experience, drawing support from the expression of Said (1995), given that these experiences are marked by isolation from their own family, fear of injury, conflictual relations with the clubs, and very different life circumstances.

Oliveira Filho's text, like Bernardo Fonseca Machado's, seeks to reflect on the migratory phenomenon through specific networks of migration supported by professional specificities (soccer players and actors). This makes evident a new approach to apprehending people's movements where a concern with the diversity of flows acquires greater analytic density: fewer texts on 'Brazilian migration' and more texts on 'Brazilian players,' 'Brazilian actors.'

A comparison of the texts by Oliveira Filho and Machado proves interesting. In both the focus on specialized migrations of football players and actors enables us to reflect on a contrast between the imaginations of the body and the construction of ideas about the 'nature' of being Brazilian. In Machado's text, we see how Brazilians (generally middle class) attempting to enter show business in the United States as actors in theatre, musicals, TV and cinema, end up feeling for themselves the effects of US constructions of difference: their body is read as a 'Latin' body, which for many of them is shocking. Between rejecting and accepting the stereotype, immigrants attempt to dialogue with these US constructs. But there is little escape beyond coping with the US representations of a Latin body. For their part, they construct images of themselves as 'emotionally' Brazilian, appealing to the supposedly innate emotion of the Brazilian as an advantage when acting.

There is, therefore, a naturalization of Brazilian emotion, which functions as a counterpoint to the construction of the Latin body by their employers. Some discover the elasticity of this 'Latin' body since they may perform roles playing everything from Italians to Middle Eastern people in general. But these US stereotypes construct separate meanings for the sexes: women more quickly gain roles playing 'fatal' and sensual characters (matching the imaginary surrounding Latinos in the United States) while men have many more problems in finding roles. In the case of football, the opposite occurs, since the body of the Brazilian man is conventionally accepted as appropriate for the sport and encounters diverse markets for work (although more and more women players are also finding a place in foreign markets).

Machado's work allows us to think about symbolic orders of representation of the other and, at the same time, the forms in which these 'others' deal with these processes: crises, acceptance, 'tactical' adaptation, refusal. We can see a series of possibilities, including a movement of reaffirmation of certain cultural specificities not fully recognized by employers, but fundamental to Brazilians being able to confront this machine of representation that, in many ways, they feel to be oppressive. Meanwhile, the Brazilian soccer players abroad use Brazil's fame as a footballing nation as a form of accessing markets around the world, opened up precisely by a similar kind of imaginary of the other. It is worth highlighting the inversion that the images produce in the United States: women can more readily access certain roles, which results in another relation between gender and migration, different to the kind analysed by Guizardi in her paper.

Camila Daniel develops research in which she inverts the contexts explored by Machado and Oliveira Filho, since the migration involved is not Brazilians abroad but Peruvians in Brazil, specifically in Rio de Janeiro. However, the question of stereotypes and representations of the body are fundamental here too, examined from the viewpoint of what the author calls 'racialization.' These Peruvian bodies can destabilize racial conventions in middle class spaces in Rio de Janeiro, the author argues. She provides a highly productive discussion on the relationship between bodies that display more characteristics of *cholas* (a term that Brazilians translate as *índios*, Amerindians) and those that can pass as white bodies in Brazil.

Like the Brazilians in the United States discussed in Machado's article, nationality in itself can produce a racialization, and even a 'white' body, if Peruvian, can be read as indigenous. The author emphasizes that in these cases it is still possible to 'hide nationality' and, therefore, occupy spaces as a white person. But this is no longer possible when the Peruvian woman or man carries bodily features that Brazilians associate with *índios*, in a generic and stereotyped reading. It is not for nothing that one of her female interlocutors says that she discovered she was *índia* only in Brazil. Daniel, attentive to the racial hierarchies both among Peruvians and between Brazilians and Peruvians (as well as among Peruvian immigrants in the United States and she herself), produces an important discussion on processes of racialization and migration, which point in many directions, two of which she highlights: the discriminatory processes experienced during migration, and the effects of this lived experience on the forms of racial/cultural definition of themselves, which become transformed after this migratory experience.

Camila Daniel also skilfully explores her theme in the way that she deals auto-ethnographically with the effects caused by her own black body, leading to situations that emphasize both experiences of racism (among Peruvians in Baltimore, USA) and the stimulation of a discussion on Peruvian racism against Afro-Peruvians (when she is asked to read a poem on the topic at Peruvian cultural events in Rio de Janeiro). As 'bodies on the margin,' in a perspective influenced by the work of Grosfoguel (2016), both Daniel and the Peruvians develop processes of critical reflection on the racialized experience of living in Brazil, contributing powerful viewpoints to the debate on migratory studies.

Vinícius Ferreira proposes a discussion on the category of 'diaspora,' but in a completely different context: Indian academics in institutional places of 'global' academia in the United Kingdom, the United States and other English-speaking countries (or in institutions of these countries in other places of the world). The question that calls our attention is the journey that leads to the author to perceive the term diaspora as one to be avoided by these academics, precisely because it is linked to 'unglamorous' types of migration – that is, migration for definitive settlement in these countries by people from less wealthy classes or castes. The self-definition of these academics as 'global citizens' involves two aspects: a privileged caste and class situation, which enables access to the main educational institutions of India and later abroad, and the idea of 'circulation.' In contrast to immigrants, they can move away at any moment in search of new academic horizons, other invitations, and so on.

Thus, circulation is a privilege constituted in opposition to the lower mobility of 'normal' immigrants. The global Indian citizen does not identify with the migrant communities from his or her country, nor apparently construct sociabilities among them. This process narrates a cosmopolitanism typical of Hannerz (1997), detached from the proximity of very pronounced local cultures. But in analysing this perspective, we should consider its status as a self-narration marked by cosmopolitan values and, to some extent, as a narrative that valorizes the trajectory itself. It is interesting to compare this process with those described by Daniel and Machado, where there is a centrality of the body in the migratory experience of Peruvians and Brazilians: the body is the place where prejudice and stereotypes are sedimented. In the narratives collected by Ferreira, it is precisely the body that vanishes. We do not know whether this was just an outcome of the different themes focused on by the authors concerned, or whether it is effectively a subject rendered invisible in the narratives of global Indian academics. In any event, it is interesting that in a text that deals with their identifications as subjects, the body does not appear as a focal point of reflection.

In fact, the body appears at two moments: when the author writes about the belief common in India that darker skin tones are related to lower castes or the Dalits, while the most privileged populations tend to have lighter skin; and also when a cosmopolitan woman from a lower caste describes leaving India as a flight from gender oppression (a place to which she has no wish to return). Thus, the body is present in the discussion in India, just not in the experience of the intellectuals themselves: the question we can ask is whether they suffer discrimination and are placed in racially hierarchized places that do not correspond to their cosmopolitan imaginations. Just like the middle-class Peruvians with 'whiter' features, do these Indians feel a prejudice in response to their nationality or even their bodies (like the Peruvians with more indigenous features)? The question to which we seek a response in other texts by Ferreira is whether the cosmopolitan Indian body is a body without materiality: that is, when they walk in the street in England, is this cosmopolitanism maintained? Or does cosmopolitanism only exist in the narrative that disembodies intellectuals from the lived world?

Whatever the case, in the context of the discussion that we can propose among the dossier's texts, the absence of the body and the emergence of a category of 'global citizenship' are perhaps enough for us to think about the processes of producing categories relating to migratory phenomena: from those mutable statuses emphasized by Heike Drotbohm and Nanneke Winters, as well as Facundo Navia, to those produced by migrant subjects. In this latter universe, the body and racial hierarchies acquire prominence even if through their

absence, as in the case of these Indian academics interviewed by Ferreira. The constitution of migrant realities is permeated by a complex confluence of categories, which counterpose those produced by the immigrants (their own hierarchies, prejudices, and differences) which they encounter in the places of migration and which are put into action by their own presence.

## Places and circulations

Contemporary works on migration tend to be highly varied and Ana Paula Sales's text is a prime example: the object of her study is less migration and more a beach, a locality that has undergone many transformations, some of them informed by the movements of diverse agents. Thus, migration is one of the components of the body-locality that forms the beach of Iracema, in Fortaleza. Telling a history spanning more than a century, the author shows us how the beach was gradually feminized, constituted as a space of bourgeois leisure, later a space of leisure for US military personnel during the Second World War (and their relations with local young women), a decadent place when the Port of Mucuripe was built, which silted up the beach, the space of international tourism that produced relation between *gringos* and lower class women, a place where 'sexual tourism' was combatted, a place where tourism practically ceased due to the fights against sexual tourism, although a population of *gringos* still remains.

All these transformations are modulated by a careful form of establishing class distances, expressed in avoiding the production and flow of non-white bodies in the context of Fortaleza's elite. Thus, the evident mixture produced by *gringo* tourism in search of love or sex was combatted as a form of mixing the colours of bodies, as a destabilizing factor in the racial hierarchies constituted since the past century. Thinking about the beach, therefore, inevitably means thinking about the bodies that occupy it, about the hierarchies that traverse them, and about the mobilities that shape it. The profusion of classifications produced over this lengthy period of time analysed by the author (more than 100 years) always revolve around bodies, racializations and hierarchies of alterity. As in the various texts on flows discussed above, circulation is also a racialized question, centred on bodies, producing localities.

The circulation of persons and the production of places and memory is also the theme of the text by Renata Sá Gonçalves, who seeks to understand the meanings in dispute behind the organization of historical tours through the region known as 'Little Africa' in Rio de Janeiro's port zone. Centred on the discovery of Valongo Wharf – the largest slave port in the Americas – groups of activists and academics try to produce a critical memory of slavery and its effects on Rio de Janeiro. One of the strategies is the elaboration of tours through the area that contains, 'under the feet,' something of this memory. These tours are intersected by memories, public entities and also cultural practices linked to black music in Rio de Janeiro.

The text makes evident the historical configuration of a central place in the vast network of the slave trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To think about the effects of these brutal journeys on Brazilian history, groups today attempt to appropriate spaces of the city through these guided tours. At the same time, the 'global' processes of gentrification that were set in motion with the major sports events of the World Cup and the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro generate tensions between the population living in the port area and the land development and political intentions of these processes. In the middle of this situation, the discovery of the Valongo Wharf forced public recognition of the memory of slavery, generating the opportunity for these claims to take form in Rio de Janeiro's urban tourism.

Between the old port zone and its urban effects, in some ways seen too in the construction of the Port of Mucuripe in Fortaleza described by Sales, we find a scenario of constituting places full of meaning. But these places are also filled by people who circulate, who walk about, who occupy and who live.

These bodies are also part of these places and Little Africa tells us about the tensions that involve the black body, or the imagining of the black body by the critical memory of slavery. Walking through the city on these routes of negritude also means constructing a black body, a process that tensions gentrifying interests (which, in general, tend to expel 'non-hegemonic' bodies from places traditionally occupied by them).

## Final considerations

This dossier centres its attentions, at diverse levels, on the question of racialization and the production of 'out of place' bodies: either out of place because they have migrated and find themselves subject to classifications in the places of arrival, or because the local hierarchies already place them, historically, outside of what is presumed as normality (in this case, the circulation of these 'out of place bodies' through places in the city also produces 'racialized/racializable places' of exclusion). In the case of Sales, non-white female bodies challenge a bourgeois order and set processes of exclusion in motion. These movements may even be associated with entire urban areas that are 'removed' from the space of circulation of the elite, as in the case of Iracema beach (or that are, on the other hand, taken back from undesirable bodies through processes of gentrification [Lees 2016]). On the other hand, the urban circulations described by Gonçalves allude to the construction of a memory of slavery (and the black body) that imposes some resistance to the processes of gentrification that overall signify the 'whitening' of these regions and the expulsion of non-white bodies.

Another fundamental dimension is the question of the categories mobilized, created or deleted in migratory processes. As Drotbohm and Winters emphasize, the incessant production of categories for managing migration may have an excluding effect, even when they are created to, supposedly, facilitate the life of immigrants. Navia also shows us another facet of the same process, when the management of migrant collectives (in this case, of Venezuelans), is traversed by so many migratory categories that people in the same family may face distinct legal situations, hindering the construction of processes of 'integration.'

Categories, on the other hand, are also instruments of social classification that pervade the experience of immigrants in any place: how they are classified, how they are racialized, how they are read in their places of migration are all effects of classificatory systems that operate categories created in other racial and social contexts. Brazilians are Latinos in the United States. Peruvians are *índios* in Brazil. Residents of the triple frontier are classified differently in institutions in the three countries according to distinct classificatory systems of differences. Hierarchies of difference are organized around the migratory experience, even for those who aim to escape them as 'global citizens.'

Connecting these aspects is the objective of the articles that follow. What connects the different approaches is the perception that while places, cities and towns are everywhere, networks, intersections, roads and crossings distribute the movement between places, connecting some with others and, in doing so (re)produce subjects and localities. Thus, it is the contemporary world, the circulation of persons between borders being a fact of reality. The question that we leave here is, what do we do about this? Either we continue to produce illegal migrants and imprisonments, especially of those from racialized/racializable populations, or we challenge ourselves to think (and to work towards building) a world in which one can circulate freely and in which everyone has the right to come, go and live. What is your option?

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# The Event in Migrant Categorization: Exploring Eventfulness Across the Americas

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## Abstract

The categories that define people on the move must be understood as unstable, contingent, and provisional processes. This paper contributes to a growing body of scholarship that explores the lived complexities of migrant categorization and their social implications. Based on fieldwork in Brazil and Central America, the paper investigates the processual character of categorization by intertwining temporal and spatial dimensions, focusing on specific events to understand the occasions, circumstances, and intentions that bring about adapted or entirely new categories. An eventful notion of categorization demonstrates not only how categories come into being but also how categories remain connected to particular events that are recognized or produced in response to movement. These categories stick to the identity of a subject in transit, confirming and solidifying it; however, they can also challenge the subject's legal stability, generating new insecurities and (im-)mobilities.

**Key words:** Event; crisis; migrant categories; trans-American trajectories; Brazil; Central America.

# O evento na categorização de migrantes: Explorando questões de “eventfulness” nas Américas

## Resumo

As categorias que definem as pessoas em movimento devem ser entendidas como processos instáveis, contingentes e provisórios. Este artigo contribui para um crescente corpo de estudos que explora as complexidades vividas da categorização de migrantes e suas implicações sociais. Baseado em trabalho de campo no Brasil e na América Central, o artigo investiga o caráter processual da categorização por meio do entrelaçamento das dimensões temporais e espaciais, focalizando eventos específicos para compreender as ocasiões, circunstâncias e intenções que geram categorias adaptadas ou inteiramente novas. Uma noção de categorização que inclui o significado de eventos particulares demonstra não apenas como as categorias surgem, mas também como as categorias permanecem conectadas a eventos particulares que são reconhecidos ou produzidos em resposta ao movimento. Essas categorias aderem à identidade de um sujeito em trânsito, confirmando-a e solidificando-a. No entanto, também podem abalar a estabilidade jurídica do sujeito, gerando novas inseguranças e (im) mobilidades.

**Palavras-chave:** Evento; crise; categorias de migrantes; trajetórias transamericanas; Brasil; América Central.

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## Introduction

“*Nos perdonan porque venimos caminando*” — “They forgive us because we come walking.” (Middle-aged Haitian man awaiting permission to move through Honduras despite his irregular entry into the country, January 2020).

“I never imagined myself ‘a refugee.’ Refugees — that was those people living on the hills; in large camps consisting of blue tents. When I came to Brazil, I learned that being a refugee can be something important, something to achieve. Here, I am a *solicitante* [asylum seeker]. And a *solicitante* from the Congo is different from one coming from Syria. Or Benin. And being a single mother with children also changes the situation, when you meet a lawyer or someone at the Conare [The National Committee for Refugees].” (Congolesse woman, interviewed at the Centro de Referência para Refugiados, Caritas Arquidiocesana de São Paulo, March 2016).

The categories that define people on the move and shape their lives cannot be seen as neutral policy instruments. Categorization is an ongoing discursive and material process that hinges on both ongoing developments at the global level and the particularities and priorities of the localities of category interpretation and enactment. Across different settings, the cultural connotations and practical implications of categories such as migrant, refugee, and citizen change. Although such categories are characterized by a time- and place-based specificity, they are not isolated from broader circumstances but are instead intertwined with the political and moral framings shaped by various contexts. This double contingency destabilizes categories and the experience of categorization.

The Haitian man and the Congolesse woman quoted here shared stories of displacement, traveling, and establishing oneself that describe these contingencies and the instability of categories. The ways they provoke, experience, and evaluate categories derive from the sense of exceptionality and urgency engendered by their presence. They are part of a larger collective of mobilized and immobilized Caribbean, African, and Asian nationals that have recently received substantial attention across Latin America. Not only migration scholars, but also humanitarian and faith-based organizations, tend to consider the phenomenon unprecedented and assume those lived experiences to have been irregular, dangerous, and full of suffering. Furthermore, governments, as well as policymakers and state agents, have responded to these emerging trans-American trajectories by creating and adapting categories for controlling and managing these traveling subjects.

Based on fieldwork in Brazil and Central America<sup>1</sup>, this paper investigates the processual character of categorization by intertwining temporal and spatial dimensions. It focuses on specific *events* in order to understand the occasions, circumstances, and intentions that produce new or adapted categories. By exploring how categories shift and change through events, we build on and extend the migration scholarship that has

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questioned the neutrality, stability, and encapsulating power of categorization (Crawley and Skleparis 2017; Mountz 2011; Robertson 2019). Through this process, we interrogate how events might provide a useful lens for pinpointing the temporal and spatial processes that trigger, displace, and alter categorization.

In what follows, we introduce an event-focused perspective on categorization by linking scholarship on events with recent thinking on migration-related categories. Then, we survey the increasingly diverse migratory context of our research and introduce our case studies. We examine the emergence and experience of the *visto humanitario* in Brazil, the *flujo controlado* in Panama and Costa Rica, and the *permiso de ingreso y tránsito* in Costa Rica by exploring the eventfulness of these categorizations and their social implications. We problematize the exceptional foundations of these categorizations, which offer temporary respite that might be negated by specific limitations and vulnerabilities. We conclude by highlighting the value of an event-focused perspective for understanding the contingent and changing yet sticky nature of the categories which continue to shape the lives of people trying to move on.

### **Theoretical Framework: An Event-Focused Perspective on Categorization**

Social categories are ubiquitous and inevitable but also a conflictive element in modern societies (Hirschauer 2017), defining but also dividing social entities and providing as well as rejecting an individual's access to membership, belonging, and care. Migration scholars have explored the inclusive and exclusive dimensions of migration-related categories not only to interrogate the classic citizen–migrant dichotomy but also to understand the various immigration-status configurations — or “figures of membership” (Gonzales and Sigona 2017) — which intersect with other markers of social difference (Robertson 2019) and define the prerequisites for political, economic, and social inclusion (Bosniak 2006; Scheel and Squire 2014; Zetter 2007). Moreover, they have identified incompatibilities between pre-defined migration categories and the lived experiences of people displaced or otherwise on the move (Bakewell 2008; Crawley and Skleparis 2017). For example, scholars increasingly question an oversimplified binary conventionally drawn between migrants and refugees by demonstrating that motivations, strategies, brokers, routes, and travel communities vary and change over time, resulting in “mixed migration” (Van Hear 2009). A person's assigned migration category can change during both biographical and spatial processes.

Additionally, scholars have observed that migration categories are unstable because their legal frameworks are constantly changing at national and international levels (Squire 2011; Long 2013). This can have life-changing consequences for migrants; living transnationally, they might watch their border-crossing become problematic, or their residence status becomes threatened by new conditions. The work of Susan Coutin (1998; 2000) on Salvadoran migrants' decades-long battle for permanent legal residency in the US serves as an example. By focusing on the changing political conditions in the country of origin as well as the relations between El Salvador and the US, she illuminates the plight of civil war refugees, who entered the country as “immigrants” in the early 1980s and then, beginning in 1986, became undocumented or “illegal workers,” according to new restrictions imposed by the Immigration Reform and Control Act. Later, civil society actors intervened to direct the Salvadorans to apply for asylum. Coutin's ethnographic approach elaborates the set of practices that constitutes individuals as legal subjects within migration categories, given that immigration law has been made pertinent to an increasing number of contexts outside of formal legal settings, including seeking medical care, opening a bank account, soliciting employment, and applying for college (Coutin 2000).

Beyond the instability of migration categories, the numerous variants of “temporary protection status” present their own challenge; these labels have been standardized within the contemporary global migration regime, especially in the context of access to asylum or permanent residency (Squire 2011). Against this background, Thomaz (2018) interprets the proliferation of temporary protection statuses as a new boundary

practice that restricts access to asylum and hollows out regular forms of entry, migrant rights, and government responsibilities. Building on Zetter (2007), who has problematized the increasing fragmentation of the refugee label, Thomaz draws attention to “the creation of new limits, novel legal categories that allow for entrance and permanence but under provisional terms.” (2018: 207) Although such restrictive categories are considered undesirable and destabilizing, they are often based on humanitarian grounds; signifying compassion but not rights, they are a means of avoiding addressing the political contexts in which inequalities and disasters thrive. Thus, the new categories become a way of depoliticizing migrants’ claims.

This paper furthers the notion that migration-related categories do not exist in a vacuum. Instead, they have all been specifically created at critical junctures to articulate and institutionalize distinctions perceived as opportune or necessary in given social or political contexts. Categories are dynamic and changing: when old ones no longer fit evolving needs, new ones are crafted to sort new realities appropriately. Furthermore, such categories can change according to the immediate context, coming into being under certain conditions in a specific locality, region, or institutional setting. Even categories with the same name can mean different things in different places, while simultaneously traveling and connecting areas across distances.

To manage this complexity, we investigate the processual character of categorization by intertwining temporal and spatial dimensions. We suggest focusing on events to understand the occasions, circumstances, and intentions for which existing categories are adapted and new ones created. The social sciences have renewed attention on events as a useful solution to the limitations of a field of study often conceived spatially or through social ties (Kapferer 2015). Different from ceremonial and ritual events, i.e. planned occasions that are often examined in the so-called Manchester tradition (Geertz 1973; Turner 1969), we concentrate on “critical events” (Das 1995) or “diagnostic events” (Moore 1987; Borneman and Ghassem-Fachandi 2017), understood as ruptures that bring something new into the world.

To understand the dynamic between mobile subjects, governing bodies, mechanisms of control, and the moral discourses attached to them, we approach the role of events in two interrelated ways. First, we focus on activities that produce or require movement and result in (the adaptation or creation of) categories; for example, a classic humanitarian crisis, such as a political conflict urging people to flee, which provokes a reconsideration of the il/legitimacy of migration. If events are framed as politically and ethically challenging — through specific media coverage, for instance — governments are required to demonstrate responsiveness and adapt their migration categories and policies. For example, certain critical events accompanying 2015’s long summer of migration prompted temporary and selective openings of some European borders and resulted in temporary residence being granted to some (Borneman and Ghassem-Fachandi 2017; Holmes and Castañeda 2016). Other events with a particular function in the making of humanitarian or pro-migrant categories are disasters like earthquakes or pandemics (Rytter 2015; Fassin 2012).

Second, independent of environmental, political, or other “crises” that induce migration, the specific characteristics of people on the move can also produce an event frame and shifting of categories. When arrivals and gatherings of gendered and racialized subjects-in-transit in border zones receive public attention for being unusual, irregular, or even conspicuous, they may acquire the dimension of an event and become the object of particular modes of migration governance. For example, “boat people,” first from Vietnam and later from Haiti and other countries, made specific migrations appear to be a state of emergency, prompting governments to readjust their immigration procedures. Furthermore, when mobile subjects make claims to certain rights, and for access to protection, their presence can be understood as a particular event, initiating a readjustment of categorization. Irrespective of their actual numbers, or the strength of their collective appearance, they become a target for divisive classification and other measures of control (Tazzioli 2020).

Moreover, mobile subjects become an event triggering intervention precisely because they gather in certain places (ibid: 5, 15), and not in others. Thus, a processual view of categorization through events should focus not only on a particular moment in time but also on the specific place. Furthermore, we argue that the emergence and experience of categories are not confined to a specific place; instead, this process exemplifies spatial connectivity. Following Veena Das (2007), we contend that the eventfulness of events is not limited by space and time, but extends in a processual manner, connecting places, people, and ways of thinking about the contemporary moment. In “Discourses of Displacement and Deservingness,” Yarris and Castañeda (2015) demonstrate the significance of intersecting geopolitical interests and locally specific discourses about merit and agency, which complicate common migrant–refugee binaries yet still reinforce exclusionary categorizations. The ways governing bodies create and respond to migration events through categorization is thus closely related to both locally emplaced experiences with migration as well as with developments elsewhere. For example, in 2019, transit permits for African migrants in Mexico were revoked, a move closely related to the fraught history of Mexican and Central American migration to the US and the pressure from the US to change the terms of these migrations. Acknowledging the simultaneous importance of place and spatial connectivity further grounds our understanding of events and their role in the dynamic and interconnected processes of categorization.

Until now, scholarship has questioned migration-related categories (e.g., legal/illegal; migrant/refugee; temporary/permanent) by recognizing their often paradoxical nature (e.g., Mountz 2011), their changing discursive foundations (e.g., Yarris and Castañeda 2015) and the ways people on the move might move between these categories throughout non-linear journeys (e.g., Crawley and Skleparis 2017). We build on and extend this scholarship by exploring how eventfulness shifts and modulates categories based on fieldwork in Brazil and Central America, where categorizations beyond the migrant–refugee dichotomy have gained traction in the context of recent Caribbean, African, and Asian arrivals.

This work coincides with Robertson’s (2019) description of status-making: “how migrant bodies are increasingly classified, quantified, coded and subsequently placed into hierarchies of categorization that are politically and socially determined and have embodied and material effects.” (ibid.: 220) However, our focus on eventfulness further interrogates the dynamic and relational process of categorization that Robertson recognizes. Drawing on emerging migrant categorization in Australia, Robertson convincingly demonstrates the production of statuses beyond static legal categories. She draws attention to the temporal and spatial underpinnings of categorization (that inform status), as in, for example, the case of “irregular maritime arrivals” (ibid.: 226). She also identifies specific events that are important for understanding categorization, such as migrant arrivals by boat and other moments framed as “scandals” (ibid.: 229). In this paper, we further interrogate the ways such events might provide a useful lens for identifying the temporal and spatial processes that trigger, displace, and alter categorization.

## **Migration and Migrant Categorization Across the Americas**

Since the continent’s early colonization, the Americas have been characterized by displacement, expulsion, and diverse dynamics of regional and cross-border migration. Although Latin America is far from a unified entity, for many of its countries, close social, economic, and political-legal entanglements require an approach that at once addresses individual political regimes and international migration politics and the volatility of human movement. In focusing on trans-American migration routes, we recognize that each locality and each individual state has its own shifting discourses, legal and bureaucratic regulations, and informal practices for dealing with diverse migrations (Cantor et al. 2015; Winters and Reiffen 2019). Thus, to understand how different

migrant categories come into being, how distinct localities shape categorization along the way, and the kinds of experiences these categories generate, we suggest combining a transitory-subject-centered perspective that examines those (geo)political dynamics that impact the ways mobile populations are perceived, received, and categorized in moments of temporary presence.

In the last two decades, Latin America has become the scene of increased and increasingly diversified migration, both from within the region itself and from “extra-continental” African and Asian and “extra-regional” Caribbean countries. Given much of this migration is partially irregular and transitory — thus challenging existing migration policy systems — countries in the region have tried to collaborate to manage the diversity of migrants and migrant statuses. Calls for collaboration often follow events framed as crises, which are faced by multiple countries and border communities simultaneously and generated by the geopolitical volatility that further illuminates the region’s entanglements. For example, in 2015, opening up Ecuador’s borders coincided with an imminent change in US–Cuba relations that spurred Cuban migration across the region and motivated Nicaragua to close its border, leaving migrants stuck in Costa Rica and Panama. To address these issues, various forums, conferences, and working groups have been organized in Central and South America by bodies such as the Regional Conference on Migration (also known as the Puebla Process), the Brazilian *Conferência Nacional Sobre Migrações e Refúgio* (Comigrar), and the Organization of American States (OAS). In addition, the Latin American branches of international migrant and refugee organizations have published various topical reports (e.g., OAS/IOM 2016). These different meetings and reports mainly emphasize the regional exchange of information about migration flows, regional responses to these flows, and the importance of security and sovereignty as well as human rights. In turn, these discourses have influenced the local responses and emerging categories this paper analyzes.

As mentioned, we combine a temporal and spatial approach to understanding events that trigger, displace, and alter categorization processes. From a comparative perspective, we focus on governments reacting to events that are framed as “emergency,” “security threat,” and “special need,” considering the impact of framing certain migrants as temporary, the intersection of national and regional borders and migration regimes, the characteristics of transit zones and the characterization of migrants as “out of place” and “moving through space.” We follow the emergence of categories in specific premises and timeframes and examine the problems requiring intentional solutions for these new categories. Additionally, we examine the social implications of the newly emerged categories from the perspective of individuals. Although the empirical observations derive from two different research projects, it becomes clear that categorization dynamics in both Brazil and Central America are part of a trans-American migration constellation engendering cross-border control, containment, and movement.

We contrast two case studies from different research projects and field phases, both of which are characterized by a trajectory approach that follows people over time and through place. First, Heike Drotbohm has been working in São Paulo, Brazil since 2014, accompanying recent arrivals to the city on their trajectories through various forms of institutionalized care, such as those offered by humanitarian or faith-based organizations. The case of Haitian migrants, the focus here, was one of several that particularly illuminated the social consequences of categorization processes. Second, Nanneke Winters and Heike Drotbohm have been working together on a project examining trans-Atlantic and trans-American migrant trajectories in Central America since 2018. For this project, Nanneke conducted fieldwork in Costa Rica (August 2017 and April–May 2019), in Panama (February–March 2019), and in Honduras (January 2020). The fieldwork principally focused on Central American border zones and critical scenes of (in)formal reception and considered African, Cuban, and Haitian migrants, as well as local residents. In both Brazil and Central America, we worked with a flexible, situationally adapted methodology by visiting the spaces of encounter where migrants work, socialize,

receive support, are controlled, and cross borders. As much as possible, we integrated ourselves into the everyday routines of these spaces, where we worked, observed, participated, and conducted interviews. Both authors use digital communication to maintain contact with a number of migrants.

### **Adapting Categories to Emergencies: The *visto humanitario* in Brazil**

Disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and extreme droughts are typical crisis events that suddenly and unexpectedly set large groups of people in motion. Searching for protection, those forced to leave usually turn first to less affected places within their region; however, sometimes they look to other parts of the world, which may be considered promising due to existing personal contacts or international relations. This was the case after a major earthquake shook the island nation of Haiti in January 2010. Nearly 200,000 people were killed and 250,000 displaced within the country, with 1,130,000 remaining in makeshift camps indefinitely. As is often the case, the affected population's situation worsened after the actual catastrophe because the reconstruction work was poorly coordinated, and the population was exposed to new dangers, including depleted food security, malnutrition, and diseases.

Charles<sup>2</sup>, an approximately 50-year-old Haitian sugarcane cutter who had been living in the Dominican Republic since 2006, heard on the radio that Brazil had promised to provide special assistance to the Haitian people. We met for a coffee in São Paulo's city center in 2015, and I (Heike) asked him to explain his trajectory. He said, "*Tranblemanntè souke nou tout*" — the earthquake shook us all — referring to the mutual shock at the moment of the catastrophe. He recalled the Brazilian president Lula da Silva coming to Haiti a few days after the earthquake, where he promised solidarity to his friend, Haitian President René Préval.

As an "emerging power", Brazil had established a strong presence in Haiti before the earthquake, mainly through the engagement of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), which had been under Brazilian leadership since 2004 (IOM 2014). As part of a "diplomacy of solidarity" (Aguilar 2012), this served to consolidate greater regional and international stability. Additionally, the government of Lula da Silva used humanitarian discourse to demonstrate a politics of "non-indifference" within South-South alliances. In Haiti, a country with widespread skepticism, bordering on cynicism, towards international interventions, Brazil intended to contradict top-down approaches by portraying itself as a reliable partner, or "the friendly hand connected to the strong arm" (Müller 2016).

Charles explained that he could have stayed in the Dominican Republic. But these were "*tan boulvèse*" — troubled times — and many Haitians used the momentum to exchange conditions of exploitative labor and lived racism in Haiti's neighboring country for the hope of a "*lavi miyò*" — a better life. Brazil appeared to Charles to be a promising and realistic alternative to the US, which many Haitians no longer consider a dream destination due to its restrictive border policies and the racism Haitians often face. In January 2012, his idea to leave the country consolidated when he heard on the radio that Haitians were eligible to receive a special visa in Brazil.

This exemplifies how an event, even the apparently clearly defined crisis of an earthquake, can be eventful: the disaster extends not only in time, prompting many Haitians to leave their country even years after the earthquake itself, but also across space. While the central catastrophe occurred mainly in the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince and the southern part of the island, it affected numerous individuals who would not perceive themselves as victims in the narrowly legalistic and spatially confined senses.

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<sup>2</sup> All personal names are pseudonyms.

This special visa, which prompted thousands of Haitians to make their way to Brazil in 2012 and 2013, can only be understood by considering another event, which was also framed as a crisis. In the months immediately following the earthquake, numerous Haitians migrated to Brazil, where the Haitian presence was still small. In these months, a relatively liberal immigration policy made entry possible, but acquiring an official visa in Port-au-Prince's overcrowded Brazilian embassy was almost futile.<sup>3</sup> For most Haitians, the path to Brazil was long: a plane to Colombia or Ecuador and then buses overland, often accompanied by costly and sometimes exploitative coyotes. The crucial moment occurred at Brazil's "green border," where travelers were obliged to contact federal police to document their border crossing. Due to the growing numbers overburdening this administrative procedure, transit nearly came to a halt. Thousands of Haitians waiting days and sometimes weeks in the small town of *Brasiléia*, in the state of Acre, created a camp-like situation; the related social and hygienic precariousness attracted substantial media attention. So many (primarily) Haitian migrants in this transit zone turned the Haitian condition, once more, into a crisis (Thomaz 2018).

The Brazilian authorities decided to facilitate the applications by treating Haitians as refugees and providing them with humanitarian aid. However, the category "environmental refugees" did not exist and, furthermore, it was agreed that it should not be created in order to avoid a precedent (Feldman-Bianco 2018). The provision of support to people who have been displaced by climate disruption poses a growing problem for governments and the UN (Merone and Tait 2018). In the case of *Brasiléia*, the decision process was transferred from the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE) to the National Immigration Council (CNIg), a body linked to the ministry of labor. At a meeting in January 2012, this council decided to establish the *visto humanitario* (i.e. a humanitarian visa), which would be valid for 5 years and facilitate Haitian immigrants' social and economic integration into Brazilian society. An article published by the Migration Policy Institute describes Brazil's granting this type of visa as a successful move for the smooth administration of the approximately 98,000 Haitians that had arrived since the earthquake in 2010 (Weysa and Lesser 2018; Feldman-Bianco 2018).

## Experiencing Exceptionality and Permanent Transit in Brazil

Charles reached São Paulo in 2012 when the country's construction industry was stimulated by an economic boom driven in part by preparations for the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics (Gato and Salazar 2018). At this time, the formal conditions for Haitian immigration had been resolved, as we have explained. Charles crossed the border on the grounds of the *visto humanitario* and, after being transported to São Paulo, managed to obtain permanent residence status within a few months. He recalled how surprisingly uncomplicated the "paperwork" was, noting that Haitians were in a much better situation than both other migrants and asylum claimants, whose residence status remained protracted even after several months, or even years of maintaining constant contact with state or humanitarian organizations.

At the organizational level, the introduction of the pragmatic humanitarian approach can be called a success. However, the particularity of this temporary residence status and the resulting category of "humanitarian immigrant" has been criticized for distinguishing Haitians from other refugees who are eligible to claim asylum and, hence, the right to remain. Besides fractioning the refugee label, which depoliticizes Haitian migrants' claims to protection, Moulin and Thomaz argue that the Brazilian government had incorporated a form of control: the newly created status allowed Brazilian companies to employ Haitians in the unattractive, exploitative jobs that are usually rejected by Brazilian workers (Moulin and Thomaz 2016: 597):

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<sup>3</sup> We appreciate the comment of one of our reviewers, who clarified that the overcrowded situation at the Brazilian embassy in Port-au-Prince and reports of human rights violations on the land route made the National Immigration Council (CNIg) reconsider their entry regulations. The modification of the *Resolução Normativa (RN) 102 26/04/2013* gave this visa a special character and permitted application at any Brazilian embassy, no longer limiting the application process to Haitians.

[...] by naming Haitians as ‘humanitarian immigrants’, a specific regime of legality and (im)mobility was established — one that modulated Haitians in relation to the archetypical figure of refugees and migrant workers and that enabled a dual process of authorized permanence and precarious reception (Moulin and Thomaz 2016: 606).

Nonetheless, individual workers could see this regime not as increasing precarity but as increasing opportunities. After working on several construction sites for a few months and earning relatively well, Charles reactivated contact with relatives still living in Haiti by sending small remittances, thereby expressing commitment to his family. The Haiti–Brazil trajectory was established during this time, with several hundred Haitian migrants reaching São Paulo every week expecting hospitality, work, and a stable lifestyle. Rose, Charles’ 22-year-old niece, was one of them. Before she received her visa at the Brazilian embassy in Port-au-Prince and took the plane to Brazil, she and Charles hardly knew each other. The eldest daughter of one of Charles’ sisters, Rose had grown up in Croix-des-Bouquets, close to Haiti’s capital. Approximately one year after the earthquake, she managed to graduate from high school. Then, she started studying social work and working for an NGO in the field of technical reconstruction; later, on her mother’s advice, she accepted her uncle’s invitation to travel to Brazil. Rose and I met in March 2016 during job recruitment, which was regularly organized by a Catholic mission in the city center and which I was attending as a researcher. Job recruitment constituted meetings between employers looking for potential employees and migrants who had been invited to introduce themselves in brief job interviews, and Rose participated at least once a week.

During her first few months in São Paulo, Rose had to learn to accept failures. Given that she had enjoyed a relatively good education in Haiti, she had arrived in Brazil with high expectations: she was sure that she would be able to finish her studies and that her skills would be needed in Brazil. In the meantime, however, the Olympics and the World Cup were over, and Brazil had been hit by a deep political and economic crisis. The only job regularly offered to a young Haitian woman was work as a “*faxineira*” or “*assistente de cozinha*” — cleaning or cooking. Rose told me in frustration about the clichés she had to confront during interviews with potential employers.

Men find work as bricklayers or installers. When I describe my skills and say that I would like to work in administration, maybe as a secretary, I get a friendly smile. They are really friendly — I am not criticizing. But the problem is that they always want to help. They are looking for a “*menina haitiana*” — a girl from Haiti. They want to help me because I am a “*pobrecito*.” An unfortunate creature. I can get a little work and a lot of pity, but not real employment. It’s desperate. I sit here week after week and get into debt. I didn’t study for that.

Although Rose reached Brazil a long time after the actual event, she remained tied to the category of suffering, which considerably limited her chances and choices. Although, like her uncle, she recognized the benefits provided by secure residence status, that status did not correspond to the general perception of Haitian migrants in Brazil. The unbearable and cumbersome categorization as victim stuck to Rose and, although she tried to move beyond this demarcated mode of existence and broaden her “imaginative horizon” (Crapanzano 2005), she had to recognize the improbability of realizing the original notions that had brought her to Brazil.

We met by chance, on the street, a few days later and she was in a hurry: finally, she had decided to leave Brazil for Argentina. She heard that there was a lot of employment, especially for those with better qualifications, and was sure that anything was better than the misery of life in Brazil. “*Tu sais: je ne suis pas um refugiado*” — I am not a refugee — she told me before we parted ways. This explicit rejection of the refugee category, which many asylum seekers consider to be so valuable and promising, recalled the Congolese woman quoted at the beginning of this article. It was striking to witness how much the value and relevance of a category had changed over time and space.

Rose's story resonates the work of several authors who problematize the persistence of victimhood, which often prevails years and decades after an actual event or catastrophe, asking questions about when a crisis event ends and when ordinary life is possible, unencumbered by the category of victim. In the work of Martha Kumsa (2006), one interlocutor, a young Ethiopian refugee living in Canada, cried out, "No! I'm not a refugee!" She disidentified with the violence and pain that remained part of the category, which evoked the image of devastated individuals who were "fresh off the boat" (ibid.: 240). Some people, like Rose, decide to travel to another, more promising place; in her case, Argentina. Others continue further north, often with the idea of crossing Central America to eventually reach the US.

## **New Approaches to Transit Migration in Costa Rica and Panama**

Haitians that decide to move further north join others currently traveling across Central America, including Cubans and Africans.<sup>4</sup> Although these migrants are not new to the region, since 2015, their presence and visibility have increased due to geopolitical developments that have culminated in thousands of migrants getting stuck at different border crossing points for days, weeks, or even months. As mentioned previously, Cuban migrants who benefited from Ecuador's open migration policy before trying to travel to the United States via Colombia, Central America, and Mexico encountered a closed Nicaraguan border on their way north (Winters and Mora Izaguirre 2019). They were soon joined by Haitians who had left insecurity and political instability in Brazil (and, later, Chile and Venezuela) and by migrants from various African countries who had either traveled from Brazil or Argentina or recently arrived in the Americas via, mainly, Ecuador (Winters and Reiffen 2019). The growing presence of Africans in Latin America has been attributed, at least in part, to the increased difficulty of reaching Europe (Marcelino and Cerrutti 2011), a sentiment that is both tangible, due to new visa and asylum restrictions, and projected, a result of increasingly frequent and mediatized human catastrophes at sea and onshore (Sylla and Schultz 2020). In the Americas, Nicaragua closing the border to Haitians, Cubans, and Africans caused a chain reaction, increasing the visibility of those groups in countries further south. It prompted the Costa Rican government to temporarily close its border with Panama in early 2016, which, in turn, pushed the Panamanian government to temporarily block migrants who attempted to enter its territory from Colombia via the so-called Darién Gap. Along the three borders, migrants got stuck, which, as well as creating informal camps and sparking voluntary reception initiatives, generated social unrest.

The "sudden" appearance of what Tazzioli (2020) calls "migrant multiplicities" — temporary groupings of migrants that become a target for control and a source for claims-making — was framed as a "crisis" requiring a response. The problem was not that people on the move had not used this particular and mostly irregular route before; instead, it was that their presence had become more visible and increasingly marked them as a governmental concern due to a convergence of preceding and ongoing events. The eventfulness of this particular moment, at these particular borders, included a variety of elements: an earthquake, increasing insecurities and geopolitical changes in the Americas; changing asylum and migration procedures on the other side of the Atlantic; regional animosities and alliances. The moment also incorporated local developments in migration securitization, such as the breaking of a smuggling ring in northern Costa Rica (Winters and Mora Izaguirre 2019). Together, these elements shaped migrant perception and the use of this route, as well as instances of accumulation and blockage along certain borders.

The social identity of specific groups of migrants, in turn, further framed these accumulations and blockages as events. To indicate the situation's exceptionality, non-Latin-American migrants with black skin were commonly referred to as "extra-continental" migrants. The term was correct insofar as they had traveled to

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<sup>4</sup> Other migrants present but outside the scope of our research include South Americans and Asians.

Central America from another continent; however, it accentuated the foreignness of these migrants. The term “extra-continental” refers not only to geographical location but also to a perceived social distance in terms of skin color, cultural background, and religious affiliation. Part of the visibilization and problematization of this interrupted migration was based on the perceptions of these migrants as different from the local population and the attendant assumptions, including those regarding standards of hygiene and health, food preparation and consumption, levels of poverty, and even terrorism (see Rivera 2018).

Central American governments were apparently overwhelmed by migrants they could not — despite their irregular entry — submit to the common tactic of deportation due not only to the extraordinary costs involved but also to the lack of diplomatic ties with many of the countries of origin. In recent years, several governments have moved from erratic to more coordinated responses to manage the situation. Some confronted the issue together and established new categories, informal policies, and humanitarian shelters as a result of factors such as the increased awareness of the limited possibility of stopping this type of migration, the exhaustion of local resources due to elevated numbers of asylum applications, the anxiety of local residents, and the limited alternatives for (temporary) regulation offered by existing migration policies. Temporary spaces of reception were set up along a “vertical” or “arterial border” (Vogt 2017) through the region.

In Costa Rica, a new migration document, the *permiso de ingreso y tránsito* (PIT — permit of entry and transit), was established for Cubans and then, beginning in 2016, for Haitians, Africans, and Asians.<sup>5</sup> As documented by Winters and Mora Izaguirre (2019), the PIT guarantees access to police assistance, health care, and the country’s two newly established migrant shelters, each individually known as a *Centro de Atención Temporal a Migrantes* (CATEM) — Center for Temporary Assistance to Migrants. The renewable permit provides both migrants and the state a relatively simple alternative to irregularity and mass asylum applications.

Additionally, in 2019 Costa Rica and Panama formally agreed to reinforce their *flujo controlado* policy. This *flujo controlado* — literally translated, “controlled flow” — is an institutionalized response designed to manage and secure what many border agents in the region consider to be an unstoppable migration from south to north. The response is based on the idea that virtually all migrants traveling this route wish to continue to North America and, thus, are closely monitored by the US. This fits in a long tradition of border externalization efforts, in which the US has attempted to control and deter certain types of immigration through agreements with Mexico and some Central American countries through force, diplomacy, and investment (Dominguez and Iñiguez Ramos 2016; Galemba 2013; Vogt 2017). Although Costa Rica, to the best of our knowledge, does not participate in any formal border externalization agreement with the US, it is entangled in regional migration management in myriad ways (see Winters and Mora Izaguirre 2019) and, just like Panama, shares information about migrants intending to cross its territory with the US. Notably, the *flujo controlado* appears to dissolve beyond Panama and Costa Rica, effectively leaving migrants to fend for themselves (and become irregular) for parts of their journey.<sup>6</sup>

The *flujo controlado* starts in Panama with the reception, evaluation, and containment of migrants emerging from the Darién Gap, or the “selva” (jungle). At the time of fieldwork, evaluation was mainly conducted in the newly installed *Estación Temporal de Ayuda Humanitaria* (ETAH — Temporary Station for Humanitarian Assistance), located in an indigenous community called La Peñita. It included registration of essential information such as age, sex, and nationality, sharing of biometric data with agencies such as Interpol, and a health check featuring several obligatory vaccinations.<sup>7</sup> Migrants not appearing on any wanted list and deemed

5 As Cuban migrants generally travel with documents, the PIT takes the form of a sticker pasted at the back of their passports. For the others, the PIT is a one-page sheet with their basic information and a photo.

6 Although Honduras does not partake in the *flujo controlado* policy, the country shares registrations and biometrics of crossing migrants with the US.

7 In the case of minors, this evaluation also entails verifying relation to accompanying adults and, if necessary, the involvement of the Senniaf, the Panamanian department for families and children (or the PANI, its Costa Rican counterpart in one of the CATEMs).

extra-regional or extra-continental as well as un-deportable, were classified according to nationality and order of entry before taking bus transport to another shelter in Panama's interior or to the western border-crossing point of Paso Canoas. Besides a vaccination card, they did not receive any documents that would prove they are part of this *flujo controlado*. In Paso Canoas, based on lists of names exchanged via the WhatsApp accounts of border and migration authorities on either side of the border, these migrants were transferred to Costa Rica, which would receive a fixed number of migrants on pre-established days of the week. Following a repeat of the biometric process, migrants could await the "*visto bueno*" (green light) at the CATEM near this border. Upon positive evaluation, they would be issued a PIT permitting travel across Costa Rica and, if desired, support, at the CATEM in La Cruz, before reaching the Nicaraguan border (see Drotbohm and Winters 2018; Winters and Reichl 2020).

The *flujo controlado* and the PIT serve to make these migrants legible, to register, evaluate and control them, to enable humanitarian support, and to ensure their swift move through these countries. Although they are not (yet) considered refugees, they are also not a "normal" group of migrants, who would be subject to, for example, detention or deportation because of their irregular entry and stay; that is, they have an exceptional status. Hence, the quasi-simultaneous rupture of migration orders, both regular and irregular, around the world, converged along specific border crossing points that became entangled in new categorizations.

### **A Categorical Underpinning of Exceptional Uni-Directionality**

"No man enters the camp from town," said Harrison, from Cameroon, expressing frustration at his inability to access "the camp," the temporary humanitarian shelter in La Peñita that functions as the semi-formal starting point of the *flujo controlado*. He was denied entry because he had not emerged from the Darién Gap. His text and voice messages became increasingly desperate as he traveled up and down Panama attempting to become part of the movement towards Costa Rica.

In his early thirties, Harrison grew up on a farm in the English-speaking part of Cameroon. After earning an Agronomy degree, he started studying in Estonia; however, when he was ready for the next step in his career, he could not return to Cameroon due to re-intensified political turmoil and outbursts of violence (Pommerolle and De Marie Heungoup 2017). He decided to try his luck in the United States, getting on a flight to Ecuador. Although a Quito-based Cameroonian agent almost convinced him to pay for a welcome letter and additional documents to fly into Panama, Harrison discovered he could enter Panama with just his Schengen visa, which he did.

In mid-March 2019, we met at Panama City's central bus station, waiting for the bus to the western border, where I (Nanneke) noticed him because he was wearing a knitted hat more appropriate for a winter climate than the city's typical tropical humidity. When he asked the driver's assistant about the "frontier," I was convinced he was a migrant traveling north. Harrison sat next to me, and we spent most of the seven-hour bus ride talking about his background, migrations, and plans for the future. Although he seemed somewhat nervous about turning himself in to migration authorities upon reaching the border, he was also optimistic that they would allow him to cross with other migrants like him, and that he would meet up with other Cameroonians and accompany them north.

However, Harrison learned the hard way that migrants do not enter the *flujo controlado* from anywhere other than the Darién Gap. Stretching from the Pacific Ocean to the Caribbean Sea, the jungle area represents a crucial part of many migrants' journey north — not only because of the dangers it poses but also because of the shifting migration politics focused there. Despite the lack of a widespread state presence, the area has become pivotal in the enactment of territorial borders, national sovereignty, and international security interests. Although often depicted as *tierra de nadie* — no-man's land — the Darién Gap is inhabited by not only Panamanian border agents

and indigenous communities but also paramilitary groups, guerrilla forces, drug smugglers, and wild animals, all of which have a role in this stretch of the migrants' journey overland from Colombia to Central America. In the past, while patrolling Darién, the military-equipped Panamanian border police Senafront would stop migrants and either send them back or let them pass. This decision typically depended on the geopolitical and national concerns and capacities of the particular moment, as well as the distance migrants were able to travel into Panamanian territory before being identified. Rather than disappearing, these considerations appear to have been streamlined by the *flujo controlado* policy. Migrants report that border agents generally allow them to continue to Puerto Obaldía, on the Caribbean side of the Darién Gap, or send them via various indigenous communities towards La Peñita, which is located on the interior close to the Pan-American highway. Migrants reportedly spend an average of two weeks traveling the Darién Gap.

The fact that Harrison did not travel across Darién (did not come through “the bush,” in his words) eventually excluded him from the *flujo controlado*. At the border in Paso Canoas, migration officials told him he could not join the migrants that would be transferred to Costa Rica. Instead, he was directed to a migration office in David, a nearby city, where he was refused again, and advised to go back to Panama City to present his case to a refugee agency. Given that Harrison did not intend to ask for asylum, he instead traveled even further to present himself to agents at the border of the Darién province, hoping to get sent to La Peñita to go through the necessary process and take the bus like the other migrants. However, the border agents would not let him enter Darién. Finally, Harrison traveled back to the Costa Rican border again, crossed it illegally, and made it to the Costa Rican CATEM by himself.

The execution of the *flujo controlado* depends on the assumption, or even the requirement, of exceptional uni-directionality. If migrant journeys do not fit this mold, and the (imposed) suffering it implies, they are required to keep moving until they do. The Haitian man quoted at the beginning of this paper — “they forgive us because we come walking” — captures the sentiment that suffering the journey (in this case, walking through the jungle of Darién and other difficult stretches of Central America) appears to be an essential marker for control and eventual acceptance into a category allowing forward movement in spite of irregularity. Those who travel the Darién Gap and arrive on the Caribbean side are often sent back into the jungle to get to La Peñita. Migrants who make it to one of Senafront's bases in Darién are generally not taken to shelters elsewhere in Panama, nor returned to Colombia, but instead sent back into the jungle to find their way to La Peñita. They use information from migrants who have gone before them, paid assistance from local guides, and even directions from border agents, who know the dangers ahead, which include getting lost, assaulted, sick, or worse.

A migrant who illuminated this channeling aspect of the *flujo controlado* was Kwasi, a Ghanaian man in his early thirties who I met in the CATEM in La Cruz, northern Costa Rica. Kwasi was raised in the eastern region of Ghana and in Kumasi, Ghana's second city, where he also obtained his teacher's degree. A keen observer of his surroundings, Kwasi recounted his experience of traveling through Darién in detail. His accounts confirmed the practice of sending migrants through the jungle and reflected the formal and informal collaborations of border agents with the Darién residents that guide migrants through certain parts of their journey. Consider the following field notes from one of our first conversations:

*They [Kwasi and his co-travelers] spent three weeks in Puerto Obaldía [Panama]. Then they started walking. The military drew them a map. On the first try, they got lost. They returned and the military told them they were crazy: “You need a guide: in the village, you can find one.” You have to beg the military to recommend this. So, they go into town to look for a guide — the military knows about this. A big man took them at 11.30 for about two hours to Armila [another Senafront base]; they pitched their tent there, close to the mountains... The next morning the guides came back, and they walked for four hours... This time they found the entrance to the three mountains that the military had indicated. From here, they went by themselves. There were Panamanian flags on the trees indicating the route. You could see biscuits, cigarette bugs, soup.*

*It was a rocky surface; your feet will be swollen... After the mountains, they arrived at the riverside, where they would find a man [according to Senafront]. They found four young guys sleeping and smoking under a roof of palm leaves. They charged them \$20 each for Canaan Membrillo [an indigenous community]; [it was supposedly] about 6 hours walking... But they were walking with strong men now, so, to [reach] Canaan, it only took them 4 hours. (Field notes from La Cruz, April 25, 2019).*

In Canaan Membrillo, “the military” (the border agents) gave Kwasi and other members of his small group food; local residents rented them places to sleep. After a few days, Kwasi continued his journey to La Peñita, where he stayed for three weeks. The total journey from Panama’s Colombian border to its Costa Rican border would take him more than a month.

Besides local strategies for directing migrants, the details of Kwasi’s account demonstrate how this harrowing journey — which migrants wishing to travel north *have to* undertake — is differentiated. Old jungle paths are reinforced by passing migrants, but not all migrants pass in the same way. For example, Kwasi waiting weeks in the Puerto Obaldía community before deciding to walk through the jungle again resulted from an experience that he and his co-travelers perceived as racial discrimination by local authorities: apparently, certain groups of (non-African) migrants managed to get out of Puerto Obaldía around the same time via state-organized river or air transport. Meanwhile, Kwasi’s comment that “they were walking with strong men now” referred to instances in which his group of young male co-travelers was slowed down by other migrants — in particular, families with children and pregnant women. Although these migrants may circle through the jungle in similar ways, they need more time, more food, and more guidance to become part of the *flujo controlado*.

The functioning of the *flujo controlado* resembles the attempted containment and channeling of migrants through forced movement described by Tazzioli (2020). The event-based categorization that underpins the *flujo controlado* (through a specific convergence of ruptured migration orders, foreign groups, and hostile terrain) assumes exceptional movement that must be controlled through exceptional uni-directionality. Nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, and other social markers differentiate this experience. The effects of this type of event-based categorization include illegalization, as in the case of Harrison, and risks to health and life itself, as Kwasi experienced. At the same time, the *flujo controlado* presents migrants with an additional opportunity to move through the Americas that they would not have had otherwise if it were not for certain events. This interplay of the push and pull of categorization makes an eventfulness perspective illuminating. New categories and altered migration policies are triggered by the interconnected temporal and spatial processes of change in the Americas and across the Atlantic that culminate in “critical events” at specific border crossing points, while, at the same time, events are ongoing. Whereas in Brazil, the event-based categorization of Haitians as humanitarian immigrants complicates daily life and limits security, in Central America, new events may alter the experience of the *flujo controlado*.

## Concluding Discussion

From a state perspective, categorization entails and enhances the capacity to count, monitor, and steer people on the move. For migrants, too, certain aspects of categorization can be beneficial: recognition, protection, and the organization of a continuing mobility, at least momentarily. The long history of categorization in the context of migration has made clear that temporary passports or visas often concern the continuity of travel rather than the integration into a given “host” society (Long 2013). The *visto humanitario* enables Haitians to remain in Brazil and to stabilize their lives — temporarily. Access to the *flujo controlado* in Panama and Costa Rica enables migrants to move further north, and access to the PIT in Costa Rica recognizes migrants’ position

and respects their fundamental rights. Migrants generally seem to benefit from this permit because it offers a certain level of protection on Costa Rican soil without blocking them from moving forward when they wish to do so.

However, neither the *visto humanitario* nor the *flujo controlado* or PIT offer sustainable legal avenues for claiming rights and lasting protection. Despite the sense of order that these newly created categories convey, they are based on responses to crises that may no longer correspond to the lives of migrants carving out a place for themselves or that may be too unstable for those still on the move. Haitians, who initially understood this newly emerging category as a welcome promise and an invitation to travel, found themselves, and their residence in Brazil, tied to the event. Although they developed new needs, demands, and identities over time, their stay in Brazil remained circumscribed by the original catastrophe. The moral framework that accompanied their original categorization as victims stuck to their evolving forms of belonging and determined their experiences long after the actual event. Both the apparent inescapability of events, especially in the moment of catastrophe, and the subsequent loosening of those ties must be problematized. When a certain category is eliminated or substituted, new dynamics of im/mobility can be initiated; a new category can not only confirm and solidify, but also complicate, legal stability.

This leads to more deeply probing the volatility of eventful categorization. The changing landscape of categorization implies a discretionary, insecure situation: migrants must always anticipate the possibility of future changes impacting their current condition and possibilities. They have to contemplate what is going to happen when new events occur, geopolitical interests and national concerns shift, and moral connotations change. They have to consider what happens if new migrant groups articulate other types of needs, which might be considered more urgent, and what happens if a new government is elected, signifying a new and possibly more restrictive regime of entry, presence, and transit. In Brazil, migrants, especially those with insecure residence status, are closely watching trends emerging from recent political tensions, which have culminated in the election of the ultra-right president Jair Bolsonaro. If the earlier promises of a liberal, pro-humanitarian government are not kept, and support programs are gradually dismantled, once-promising categories may lose their validity. Rose, meanwhile, has already been living in Argentina for a while, where she had hoped to eventually stay.

It is also worth considering what happens if migrants traveling across the Americas find themselves blocked, illegalized, and without protection again. In February 2019, Panama's border with Colombia was suddenly closed; hundreds of migrants that had crossed part of the Darién Gap were halted in the jungle without any facilities. This closure followed multiple possible game changers, including a shipwreck the previous month, in which a group of migrants lost their lives in the waters between Colombia and Panama, the detection of malaria cases among migrants, and increased US vigilance given the turbulent situation in Venezuela. Such new events challenge previous event-based categorizations and access to protective categories and policies that have never been formally inscribed or regionally recognized, exemplifying the precarious nature of such categorizations.

The *visto humanitario*, the *flujo controlado*, and the PIT are delicately balanced between human movement and response to this movement, a balance that may shift, spurring migrants to find alternative routes. In this sense, an eventful notion of categorization shows how categories both move and morph. Categories may come into being due to particular events that are recognized or produced in response to movement. Categories also travel, to a certain extent, with migrants making their way through cities and across borders, revealing their opportunities and limitations along the way. Categories morph as they travel, from useful to relatively useless or powerless. Moreover, they morph as conditions around them develop; as times and contexts change, categories become either more pertinent or obsolete. The event-based character of these categories thus demonstrates how temporal and spatial processes trigger, displace, and alter categorization.

A focus on the eventfulness of categories illuminates both the opportunities and limitations that ad-hoc categorization entails. Moreover, exploring the eventfulness of categorization productively demonstrates how new categories and policies are not just legal instruments but intersect other social markers, together producing a social meaning that “sticks” along the entirety of migrant trajectories. This paper has focused on the ways migrants experience and perceive the complex eventfulness of the categories that shape their lives. In reality, events bind together multiple actors. Future research on categorization would benefit from a simultaneous consideration of the perspectives of migrants, politicians, border agents, and humanitarian actors, among others; observing the ways they complement and contradict each other might thereby co-produce a more complex representation of the intricacies of lived categories.

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# Una experiencia de interiorización: transformaciones y continuidades de las acciones humanitarias

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## Resumen

Este artículo analiza algunos aspectos del programa brasileño de Interiorización de personas procedentes de Venezuela, a partir de la experiencia de algunos “núcleos familiares” que fueron trasladados de Roraima a Rio Grande do Norte en 2018. El texto propone una comparación del programa de interiorización, en sus contornos locales en Caicó, con el programa de reasentamiento solidario previamente investigado en otras regiones del país, sugiriendo que existe una continuidad de algunas tradiciones administrativas de personas en éxodo y, al mismo tiempo, indicando transformaciones significativas en la administración de los asuntos migratorios en los últimos años. El artículo concluye con la reflexión de algunos desafíos políticos y éticos que aparecieron durante los períodos de observación participante que dieron origen a esta contribución.

**Palabras clave:** interiorización; reasentamiento; acciones humanitarias; Caicó; Rio Grande do Norte.

# Uma experiência de interiorização: transformações e continuidades das ações humanitárias

## Resumo

Esse artigo analisa alguns aspectos do programa brasileiro de interiorização de pessoas procedentes da Venezuela a partir da experiência de alguns “núcleos familiares” que foram transferidos de Roraima para Rio Grande do Norte no ano de 2018. O texto propõe uma comparação do programa de interiorização –nos seus contornos locais em Caicó– com o programa de reassentamento solidário previamente pesquisado em outras regiões do país, sugerindo que existe uma continuidade de algumas tradições administrativas de pessoas em êxodo e, ao mesmo tempo, apontando transformações significativas na administração dos assuntos migratórios nos últimos anos. O artigo conclui com a reflexão de alguns desafios políticos e éticos que surgiram durante os períodos de observação participante que deram origem a essa contribuição.

**Palavras-chave:** interiorização; reassentamento; ações humanitárias; Caicó; Rio Grande do Norte.

# An experience of *interiorización*: transformations and continuities of the humanitarian actions

## Abstract

This article analyses some aspects of the Brazilian program of Interiorization of people from Venezuela based on the experience of some “family nuclei” that were transferred from Roraima to Rio Grande do Norte in 2018. The text proposes a comparison of the internalization program, in its local outlines in Caicó, with the solidarity resettlement program previously researched in other regions of the country, suggesting that there is a continuity of some administrative traditions of people in exodus and, at the same time, pointing out significant transformations in the administration of migratory affairs in recent years. The article concludes with the reflection of some political and ethical challenges that arouse during the periods of participant observation that gave rise to this contribution.

**Key words:** interiorization; resettlement; humanitarian actions; Caicó; Rio Grande do Norte.

# Una experiencia de interiorización: transformaciones y continuidades de las acciones humanitarias

Angela Facundo Navia

## Introducción

En septiembre de 2018, los periódicos locales anunciaron la llegada a Rio Grande do Norte de las primeras familias venezolanas que vendrían como refugiadas para instalarse en Caicó, una ciudad de aproximadamente 68 mil habitantes localizada en la región del Seridó. Su llegada fue entendida, coordinada y ejecutada como un proceso de “interiorización de refugiados”; uno de los ejes de la llamada *Operação Acolhida*.<sup>1</sup> Dicha operación es promovida por el gobierno brasileño con el apoyo técnico y financiero del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Refugiados (ACNUR); la Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM); el Fondo de Población de las Naciones Unidas (UNFPA); y el Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD), con el fin de “ofrecer asistencia de emergencia a los inmigrantes venezolanos que entran a Brasil por la frontera con Roraima”<sup>2</sup>. Además de esas agencias, también participan diversas ONGs que se ocupan, entre otras cosas, de la recepción y de la llamada “integración local” (Hamid, 2019) de las familias en varios estados brasileños.

En términos regionales, la interiorización significó un cambio en las tendencias de ubicación de sujetos refugiados, transferidos por programas gubernamentales que incluyen la decisión sobre sus lugares de destino. En el caso de los programas de reasentamiento, por ejemplo, regularmente fueron escogidas ciudades de las regiones *Sul* y *Sudeste*, y en menor medida, de la región *Centro-Oeste*. De este modo, con el actual programa de interiorización, se involucraron por primera vez comunidades locales del *Nordeste*, que no se habían relacionado con refugiados. Aunque no todas las personas que llegaron a Caicó eran reconocidas jurídicamente como refugiadas –pues algunas habían optado por la residencia temporal– esa categoría fue usada para referirlas en todas las noticias vehiculadas sobre su llegada: más que la idea de un simple migrante o de un extranjero (que ya era llamativa para algunos locales), fue la categoría refugiado la que pareció causar mucha curiosidad y un cierto encantamiento.

En el estado de Rio Grande do Norte ésta fue una experiencia singular, debido no tanto a la inexistencia de refugiados en el estado, cuanto al hecho de ser la única reciente con presencia colectiva y numéricamente significativa. Más de una década antes, algunos “núcleos familiares” colombianos habían llegado por medio del Programa de Reasentamiento Solidario, pero éste fue desactivado y el episodio, que incluyó sólo algunas ciudades, no dejó grandes marcas en la memoria colectiva. La decisión de transferir las familias venezolanas desde Roraima hasta Caicó –y no llevarlas, por ejemplo, a la ciudad capital– tuvo que ver, según me explicó su director local, con la presencia de la ONG *Aldeias Infantis* y con su infraestructura.

1 Según las informaciones de la página web oficial del gobierno brasileño, *A Operação Acolhida es* (la traducción me pertenece) “una gran fuerza de tarea humanitaria ejecutada y coordinada por el gobierno federal con el apoyo de agencias de la ONU y más de 100 entidades de la sociedad civil; la operación ofrece asistencia de emergencia a los inmigrantes venezolanos que entran a Brasil por la frontera con Roraima. Desde el inicio de la crisis migratoria, se estima que más de 264 mil venezolanos entraron y permanecieron en Brasil”. Además de esa descripción general, son presentados también los tres ejes que organizan la operación: “1) Ordenamiento de la frontera – documentación, vacunación y operación de control del Ejército Brasileño; 2) Acogida – oferta de abrigo, alimentación y atención en salud; y 3) Interiorización – desplazamiento voluntario de venezolanos de RR hacia otras unidades de la Federación, con el objetivo de su inclusión socioeconómica”. (Disponible en: <https://www.gov.br/acolhida/historico/> Última consulta: 10 de febrero de 2020).

2 Tomado de la información disponible en la página web <https://www.gov.br/acolhida/historico/>. La traducción me pertenece.

El director del programa también me explicó que el ACNUR habría evaluado que, con una inversión menor que la que significaría pagar el arriendo de cada familia en un inmueble alquilado, las casas de las *Aldeias* podrían ser remodeladas para recibir varias familias en cada una, como de hecho sucedió. Con las casas de la ONG como destino para los primeros meses de vida en la ciudad, llegaron los primeros 16 “núcleos familiares” (65 personas): parejas heterosexuales con los hijos e hijas de esa unión. Excepto por algunas pocas personas más viejas, el grupo estaba conformado por niñas y niños pequeños, y por jóvenes entre los 20 y los 40 años.

Desde octubre de 2018 hasta comienzos del 2019 realicé algunas visitas al lugar, en compañía de Saionara de Jesús Dantas, estudiante de ciencias sociales de la UFRN y quien aceptó ser mi asistente de investigación. Nos interesaba conocer más detalles del proceso de interiorización y de su puesta en marcha en la ciudad, así como establecer los contactos para que posteriormente algunas estudiantes de pregrado pudieran realizar investigaciones en el lugar. Mi interés, mucho más que por la diferencia cultural o las especificidades del grupo de personas reasentadas – que, de hecho, era bastante heterogéneo en términos de procedencia regional – estaba orientado a conocer los meandros de la administración de sujetos en éxodo, que incluyen, entre otras cosas, la toma de decisiones sobre los lugares, los actores y los mecanismos para su gobierno, así como la evaluación de las características de los grupos, que suelen ser referidos en términos de nacionalidad, y de los territorios en donde éstos serán localizados.

Con ese propósito, realicé entrevistas más formales con algunos miembros del equipo directivo de la ONG, específicamente, con las personas que fueron designadas para trabajar en el programa de interiorización. Pues, además de su reciente papel en la integración local de refugiados, la ONG continúa ejecutando sus tradicionales programas de acogida de niños y niñas cuyos padres han perdido su custodia, como también el programa de “fortalecimiento familiar y comunitario”.<sup>3</sup> Después de las primeras entrevistas con los administradores, que fueron registradas en notas durante su desarrollo y posteriormente descritas en mi diario de campo, dediqué mucho más tiempo, generalmente en compañía de Saionara, a conversar con las personas reasentadas. No grabé ninguna de las conversaciones. Aunque a todas las personas les hice las mismas preguntas (cuánto tiempo llevaban en Brasil; cómo habían sido sus migraciones previas, sus entradas y salidas del país; su relación y conexión con amigos y parientes; el tiempo de relación con sus parejas actuales; cómo había sido la experiencia de interiorización, la ruta y los interlocutores del proceso; la selección en Roraima de candidatos y la decisión de ir para Caicó) dejé que ellas hablaran libremente, de modo que cada conversación tuvo detalles y tomó caminos que no siguieron las otras; a veces anotaba algunas informaciones en una agenda durante la conversación y siempre registraba la memoria de cada jornada en un diario de campo.

Intenté también visitar y conversar con todas las familias o, al menos, ir a todas las casas. En cada casa fueron alojadas tres familias, cada una de las cuales ocupaba un cuarto y compartía los espacios comunes con las otras. El equipo de la ONG estableció normas de convivencia, que incluían la prohibición de consumo de bebidas alcohólicas o de cigarrillos; la interdicción – para los hombres – de permanecer sin camisa en los espacios comunes de las viviendas; y la distribución de las tareas de aseo de las áreas compartidas, entre otras. En la entrada de cada una de las casas fueron pegadas listas con los nombres de cada “núcleo familiar”, precedidas por el número de la casa, diseñado en cartulina colorida y un buhito, también hecho en papel de manualidades, que sostenía un letrero en español en el que se leía: “Bienvenidos hermanos y amigos. Nos agrada su presencia en este lugar”.

En mi primera visita sólo pude hablar con las familias de la casa más próxima a la casa-sede de la administración. Su llegada reciente todavía conservaba la sorpresa de la experiencia y del camino. La mayoría de las personas tenía algún detalle que ofrecer para complementar la versión de quien estuviera hablando. Eso, sin contar el tiempo invertido en digresiones sobre la personalidad de los niños, anécdotas u otros temas que se

3 Para más informaciones sobre el trabajo de la ONG puede ser consultada su página web: <https://www.aldeiasinfantis.org.br>

iban derivando de la charla. Al final de la conversación – y de los juegos con las niñas y los niños que estuvieron todo el tiempo interactuando con nosotros – era ya muy tarde para presentarme a otras personas. Supe, en la siguiente visita, que circuló entre ellos la información de que habría una “profesora colombiana” estudiando su situación. Supe además, por las personas con las que ya había hablado, que otras familias también querían que yo las escuchara. Hubo algunas excepciones, personas que no mostraron interés de hablar conmigo y que, cuando fui a presentarme, no manifestaron ningún entusiasmo: por el contrario, se mostraron recelosas, por lo que no insistí en la charla y tampoco mantuvimos contacto en visitas posteriores. Con el correr de los meses, algunas personas fueron desvinculadas del programa y nuevos “núcleos familiares” fueron llegando. También tuve contacto con algunas personas llegadas en ese segundo grupo.

La mayoría de las visitas o de las salidas con personas interiorizadas las realicé en compañía de Saionara. Fue gracias a ella y al hecho de ser una antigua y querida conocida de algunas funcionarias de la ONG que se facilitó enormemente no sólo mi primer contacto para pedir las autorizaciones debidas, sino también el tránsito desburocratizado por el lugar. Además de la presencia de Saionara, de los permisos que obtuve para el trabajo y de mi presentación ante las personas, que realizara el funcionario coordinador del programa, considero que hubo otros elementos que también facilitaron la relación con ellas. En trabajos previos reflexioné con más detalle cómo las marcas de nacionalidad, idioma, género y clase social fueron elementos decisivos en el establecimiento de vínculos con refugiados colombianos (Facundo Navia, 2017).

No hay tiempo aquí para detenerme en aquel análisis, pero es importante anotar que el hecho de hablar en español hizo que rápidamente estuviéramos bromeando sobre los malentendidos lingüísticos, o las diferencias regionales en la forma de nombrar las cosas; y que el tema de la interiorización –y sus detalles– pudiera ser narrado sin los límites y el cansancio de quien tiene que buscar, en un repertorio limitado de palabras, alguna que le ayude a explicar sus emociones y experiencias. Así como yo tenía curiosidad por sus tránsitos y su decisión de ir para Caicó, ellos también querían saber sobre mi historia de migración, y no ahorran preguntas sobre de mis experiencias de movilidad, documentación, elección de lugares y opinión de las ciudades en donde había vivido en Brasil. Todo ello hacía de las charlas un momento mucho más animado y menos parecido al formato de una entrevista.

Otro elemento, que no había previsto pero que me impactó desde las primeras charlas, fue el hecho de que sus historias de migración previas se parecían mucho a las hechas por algunos parientes y amigos. Las relaciones históricas entre habitantes de Colombia y de Venezuela, y los parecidos culturales de algunas regiones de frontera, surgieron rápidamente en nuestras conversaciones. No sólo discutimos las mejores y peores opciones para hacer arepas y hallacas, y los peores, y mejores, artistas musicales del momento (en lo que hubo casi tanta divergencia como en términos de política), si no que empecé a saber sobre las temporadas que algunos de ellos, o sus familiares, pasaron en territorio colombiano. Muchas veces me entusiasmé además contando las historias de parientes que también fueron y volvieron de Colombia a Venezuela. De los sobrinos políticos venezolanos y de cómo fueron bien recibidos los que migraron pequeños, en las épocas de bonanza en Venezuela, mientras el Caribe colombiano, tal como ahora, se desangraba a manos de los paramilitares y sufría con falta de comida, médicos, escuelas y empleo.

Por otra parte, la competencia lingüística de Saionara, su conocimiento de la ciudad y de la región, marcado por su experiencia de clase, fueron también elementos importantes en el establecimiento de relaciones. Ella ayudó a activar chips telefónicos con una llamada, que las personas no habían podido hacer por limitaciones lingüísticas; sabía dónde conseguir cosas baratas en la ciudad, o daba consejos sobre dónde se podría colocar un lugar de venta de comidas populares que fuera rentable. Además, respondía las otras muchas dudas que las personas tenían sobre la ciudad: si de verdad llovía, si había períodos de fiesta, si el turismo era como les habían dicho, cuáles ciudades quedaban cerca y eran mejores para vivir, cuánto costaba un arriendo de una casa, cuál era la diferencia en precios con los barrios más baratos en Natal, etc. En esos encuentros se deshicieron

algunas fronteras de clase y de nacionalidad, y sin la ingenuidad de creer que desaparecieron la alteridad o las relaciones de poder que constituyen el ejercicio antropológico, sentí muchas veces más proximidad con esas personas, objeto de tantas investigaciones, que con algunas de las personas administradoras y su lógica de gestión que, en cambio, parece ser menos atractiva como objeto de estudio.

A pesar de la novedad que representó la transferencia colectiva de personas y que el destino fuera la región Nordeste de Brasil, aparecieron rápidamente y de forma muy evidente algunas continuidades con las formas de administración de refugiados que había investigado en otros momentos (Facundo Navia, 2017). Mi propósito con este texto es, entonces, identificar algunas de las diferencias, así como las continuidades, entre los programas de reasentamiento de las dos primeras décadas del siglo XXI y el de interiorización de venezolanos, que comenzó en el 2018. Pretendo insistir en que los formatos político-administrativos, desplegados para vincular personas y territorios, son legatarios de tradiciones administrativas de vieja data, incluso coloniales, como señalan algunos autores (Oliveira, 2014; Souza Lima, 1995) y no responden solamente al diseño del gobierno de turno. Pero, al mismo tiempo, considero importante subrayar algunas diferencias que nos pueden alertar sobre cambios, paulatinos pero significativos, en el carácter humanitario que fue la base de las acciones para la administración de poblaciones refugiadas en el mundo desde finales del siglo pasado (Fassin, 2010).

Finalmente, destaco que las consideraciones que presento corresponden al análisis de algunos aspectos de la interiorización en sus contornos locales en Caicó. O sea, adhiriendo a la propuesta de las etnografías de lo particular (Abu-Lughod et al., 2018:206-208) pretendo reflexionar sobre una experiencia local y específica, que no agota la complejidad de experiencias del mismo programa en otras regiones, ni explora en profundidad todos los meandros administrativos o las consecuencias sociales y políticas que éste pueda traer, para las personas que en él participan o para la vida política y diplomática de Brasil, y sus relaciones con otros países de América Latina.

## **Recepción y la esperanza de otros lugares**

Un primer contraste con el que quisiera comenzar, en parte debido a su esperanza potencial, tan esquivada en estos días, tiene que ver con la recepción que tuvieron las primeras familias que llegaron a la ciudad. No establezco dicha oposición con respecto a otros programas o formatos de administración de poblaciones en éxodo, sino respecto de la experiencia por la que pasaron, en el estado de Roraima, la mayoría de las personas del primer grupo de familias interiorizadas, antes de aceptar su traslado a Caicó. Durante los meses previos, diversas manifestaciones xenófobas marcaron la dinámica de Pacaraima y de Boa Vista, incluyendo un linchamiento, la destrucción con fuego de campamentos improvisados, golpizas y amenazas de muerte a los recién llegados. Además de los episodios violentos más evidentes, que fueron difundidos y criticados en los periódicos y noticieros nacionales, la tensión cotidiana, según las narraciones de las personas con las que hablé, iba en aumento, y la situación empeoraba con la llegada constante y masiva de más gente procedente de Venezuela. Sin embargo, después de un largo viaje, fueron sorprendidas por la recepción afectuosa preparada por algunas personas en Caicó, que se formaron a lado y lado de la vía por la que pasaría el bus y, en medio de aplausos y gritos de bienvenida, conmovieron a los viajeros y a quienes, como yo, vimos los videos por las redes sociales, compartidos por habitantes de la ciudad.

En un mundo en el que el complejo industrial fronterizo gana cada vez más fuerza y se alimenta de la xenofobia, no es un dato menor que haya ciudades en las que el impulso colectivo sea la solidaridad y el mensaje de que existe lugar para los otros. Sin la más mínima intención de hacer de ese episodio un elemento para la evaluación del éxito o fracaso del programa en Caicó, o de proponer soluciones a los graves problemas asociados a los desplazamientos en el país, sugiriendo nuevos destinos más amables, vale la pena resaltar las diferencias entre “las lógicas y sensibilidades de la acción colectiva ancladas” en lugares específicos

(Florez, 2015:10), que se materializan en respuestas sociales diferenciadas ante los desafíos. Se trata, me parece, de la posibilidad de incluir las emociones, los deseos y los afectos colectivos como parte constituyente de las culturas políticas locales, en este caso, especialmente asociadas a las respuestas ante los desplazamientos forzados y las migraciones.

Repito, no se trata de romantizar el episodio de la recepción, y mucho menos de homogeneizar las diferencias sociales de la ciudad de acogida; o de crear la idea de una ciudadanía siempre receptiva que esconda las tensiones históricas derivadas de las complicadas relaciones socio- raciales de la región del Seridó, que han sido descritas por algunos autores (Cavignac, 2007; Goulart, 2016:50-64). Sin embargo, tampoco sería justo negarle su fuerza afectivo-política como una región potencialmente más dispuesta a la recepción y más solidaria con los migrantes pobres que las grandes ciudades capitales. De hecho, la *desromantización* del episodio fue realizada por algunos funcionarios que también se conmovieron con la buena recepción dada a las familias venezolanas, pero señalaron algunos de los límites de ese encantamiento inicial. Algunos de ellos se disgustaron, por ejemplo, con la cantidad de curiosos espiando por los huecos entre los barrotes de la reja que cerca el terreno que ocupa la sede de la ONG en donde fueron instalados.

La extrema curiosidad de los vecinos y su deseo de conocer a los refugiados, inquietaron a los administradores, quienes aumentaron las precauciones para no permitir que la dinámica de entrega de donaciones se convirtiera en un intercambio de objetos por la posibilidad de “ver de cerca un refugiado”, como si se tratara de un “espectáculo de circo”, según la expresión utilizada por uno de ellos. Con el paso de los meses, la relación con las primeras personas que llegaron se fue *cotidianizando*. Algunas amistades entabladas con las personas de los barrios vecinos, de las iglesias y con los compañeros de escuela o de trabajo, fueron generando otros vínculos, que perdieron los componentes de exotización inicial y también ganaron independencia de la administración de la ONG. Como era de esperarse en cualquier interacción social, algunas de esas relaciones fueron de solidaridad y concordia, y otras de conflicto.

Por otro lado, el asunto de las donaciones también permite identificar la permanencia y persistencia de algunas lógicas de administración de personas en situaciones precarias, que me gustaría señalar como elemento de continuidad, para los efectos comparativos de este artículo. La bienvenida, además de la calurosa recepción, se materializó en ingentes donaciones de ropa, juguetes, comida y otros artículos. La abundancia de cosas donadas, el estado de algunas de ellas y la decisión de que su selección y distribución quedara a cargo de los funcionarios del programa, hizo que los objetos permanecieran, por algún tiempo, amontonados en uno de los corredores donde funcionan las oficinas de la ONG, mientras el equipo lograba, clasificarlos, organizarlos y distribuirlos. La casa de la administración está localizada a la entrada del gran terreno que ocupa la ONG, y en la época estaba siempre frecuentada por personas interiorizadas, en busca de apoyo institucional para resolver algún asunto. De ese modo, la circulación constante de las personas administradas por los espacios de la administración les permitía ver la pila de donaciones que ellos mismos no tenían permiso de distribuir. No fue siquiera considerada una organización de las personas refugiadas, que se hiciera cargo, con criterios propios, de los objetos que les eran destinados, que sin duda incluiría la necesidad de mediar los conflictos.

Como en otros programas de atención a refugiados o de reasentamiento, estos episodios nos recuerdan que hay un gobierno de los sujetos que pasa por el gobierno de los objetos, y que la administración de la vida cotidiana de las personas asistidas también es una forma de control de sus comportamientos, de economía moral del gasto, de fortalecimiento del principio del merecimiento y de la idea de estar siendo cuidados y protegidos por funcionarios con experiencia en la gestión de vidas tuteladas. La aparición de una nueva ONG en el universo institucional brasileño del refugio, administrada por personas que nunca antes participaron de la gestión de refugiados, podría hacernos suponer que serían desarrolladas otras prácticas o formas específicas de administración y de relacionamiento con sujetos en éxodo. Pero, al contrario, lo que llamó la atención fue el parecido, en los formatos de acción y gestión cotidiana, con otros programas para refugiados

previamente estudiados, así como con el establecimiento de relaciones de autoridad entre grupos familiares y la administración, que se corresponden con las dinámicas descritas por Vianna (2002) en su análisis sobre la custodia de menores.

De hecho, llama también la atención que la larga experiencia de la ONG haya sido con menores cuyos padres perdieron la custodia, es decir, con menores tutelados; y que esa capacidad administrativa se haya adaptado fácilmente a las necesidades de gestión de sujetos migrantes. Parte de la explicación para el despliegue de técnicas y tecnologías de gestión puede estar relacionada con la búsqueda de unificación de criterios técnicos para el tratamiento de refugiados que realiza el ACNUR, y para lo cual ofrece formaciones y entrenamientos a nivel global. Sin embargo, es posible resaltar también que hay rutinas de administración que corresponden a tradiciones históricas del Estado brasileño, y a su relación con actores clave en los programas asistenciales como la Iglesia católica o el ejército (Souza Lima, 1995) que no son destinadas con exclusividad a los extranjeros sino que, al contrario, pueden ser identificadas en diversos programas sociales de administración de poblaciones, especialmente poblaciones pobres (Swaan, 1992) y para las cuales el formato familiar es indispensable. El estudio de esas tradiciones administrativas puede ser una vía privilegiada para pensar sobre producción de ciudadanías diferenciadas, de fronteras de la nación construidas con criterios de raza, etnia, clase, género y sexualidad y para escapar del criterio nacional como diferenciador analítico per sé de los estudios migratorios, aunque sea fundamental considerar y tomarse en serio la forma en que esa categoría opera en la vida cotidiana.

Como en otros escenarios sociales de distribución de recursos escasos en un formato de control de la vida cotidiana, algunas manifestaciones de descontento empezaron a aparecer en los meses posteriores de la llegada de las familias a Caicó. En una de las visitas, dos familias de casas diferentes plantearon el tema de la comida. En tono irónico, haciendo bromas sobre el sabor desagradable de algunos de los productos recibidos, se quejaron de no poder escoger ellos mismos el tipo de alimentos que querían consumir. También hubo quejas sobre la poca cantidad de algunos productos que se acababan antes de que el equipo les llevara el siguiente mercado, y fricciones internas entre ellos, con acusaciones de que algunas personas estarían almacenando parte de la comida recibida, sin distribuirla con las otras familias de la casa. El descontento paulatino que las personas van sintiendo, a medida que el entusiasmo y el impacto de las primeras etapas del viaje y de la instalación pasan, o a medida que las expectativas no cumplidas se van convirtiendo en hechos concretos, también es un viejo conocido de los programas de administración de refugiados.

## **Seducción y desencanto**

Vale la pena mencionar que, según las personas con las que hablé, el agravamiento de la situación en Roraima, no sólo por el horror de la violencia xenófoba, sino por las condiciones de penuria impuestas por la vida en los albergues, también tuvo mucho peso a la hora de tomar la decisión de aceptar la interiorización y de optar por los lugares ofrecidos, en este caso Caicó, así ésta no fuera la opción más deseada. La vida, que para muchos se volvió insostenible en la frontera, contribuyó una vez más a que la solución ofrecida tuviera un carácter de salvación, como bien lo señaló Vianna en relación con otros escenarios sociales (2002) y como lo sugerí a respecto del refugio de colombianos (Facundo Navia, 2017). La oferta de un futuro mejor en Caicó, según el relato de los interlocutores, estuvo acompañada de descripciones de la ciudad que señalaban su supuesta proximidad con el litoral; la existencia de un polo agroindustrial en la región, y un intenso movimiento turístico que ofrecería empleos a los hispanohablantes. A pesar de las potencialidades de la ciudad, esas informaciones no son del todo exactas y la fotografía que ayudaron a crear en la imaginación de las personas que las recibieron, contribuyó a su posterior desilusión.

Al mismo tiempo que les describieron positivamente el lugar ofrecido para la interiorización, las personas también estuvieron presionadas por la idea de perder la última oportunidad de salir de Roraima. Según contaron algunas de ellas, la información de que era posible que no salieran más buses, o de que tuvieran que pasar muchos meses más en los albergues, antes de la reactivación de la interiorización en el 2019, fue frecuente. Una pareja, cuya hija tenía seis años, relató que la decisión de aceptar ir a Caicó estuvo, en gran parte, motivada por el llanto de la niña cuando notó que muchos de sus amigos ya usaban el brazalete que identificaba a los que estaban en las listas de embarque. La salud y el ánimo de la niña estaban deteriorados y cuando se percató de que los papás no habían aceptado los brazaletes, rompió en llanto, pidiendo que salieran del lugar. La situación hizo que cambiaran de opinión y, en lugar de esperar un próximo bus con destino a São Paulo o Rio de Janeiro, como lo deseaban, aceptaron venir a Rio Grande do Norte. Supe hace pocas semanas, por un mensaje de WhatsApp enviado por una amiga que permanece en la ciudad, que la niña y sus papás viajaron con ayuda financiera de familiares hacia Río de Janeiro, junto con su hermana, de pocos meses de nacida.

Al mismo tiempo que se insistió en el carácter temporal, provisional y limitado de los recursos, así como en las condiciones socioeconómicas difíciles de los lugares de destino, se ofrecieron también descripciones idealizadas de los lugares a los que serían llevados. Se trató de una exageración – o a veces, una distorsión – de aspectos juzgados como positivos, que buscaba, según la interpretación de las propias personas interiorizadas con las que hablé, estimular el deseo del viaje y, a veces, subirlas el ánimo para que aceptaran embarcarse.

Esta práctica, aunque no sea la intención de las personas que la materializan, termina por fortalecer la idea, tan valiosa para el neoliberalismo, de una decisión libre e informada de sujetos racionales y autónomos. Esa supuesta libertad, alimentada por un deseo individual (Giddens, 1995; Rose, 1996) cumple también el papel de fortalecer la idea de formas de acción democráticas y respetuosas de las decisiones de movilidad de las personas, que contrastarían con las prácticas de detención o expulsión forzadas de otros países. A pesar de las presiones que sufrieron a la hora de tomar la decisión de aceptar la interiorización, todas las personas con las que hablé al respecto estaban de acuerdo con que había sido una decisión voluntaria, tal como se presenta en los documentos y páginas oficiales de la *Operação Acolhida*.

Hoy en día, algunas de las personas que llegaron con el primer grupo interiorizado están empleadas y permanecieron en la ciudad, a pesar de haberse terminado el tiempo de vinculación con el programa. Otras permanecen en la región, aunque salieron de la ciudad; y otras tantas salieron de la ciudad y de la región, en diversas circunstancias, la mayoría de las veces, autofinanciadas o con ayuda de parientes. A pesar de esas trayectorias diferentes, cuando aún era reciente la llegada del primer grupo, la mayoría manifestó que hubiera querido ir a ciudades más grandes, más conocidas, con mejores ofertas de empleo o con la presencia de otros parientes y amigos. Algunas ciudades también fueron mencionadas por ofrecer rutas mejores (más rápidas y más baratas) para eventuales viajes a otros países de Latinoamérica, donde también tenían seres queridos.

La comunicación permanente por redes sociales – especialmente WhatsApp y Facebook – con otros coterráneos alimentaba, a su vez, la idea de que otras ciudades o países eran más promisorios, y que los demás estaban logrando conseguir dinero y una vida con mayores comodidades, mientras que ellos no lograban hacerlo en la misma medida. En varias oportunidades me mostraron fotos de las casas adonde estaban viviendo esos parientes o amigos, y las comparaban con las que ellos habitaban. Especialmente con el hecho de que los otros pudieran vivir solos, y que a ellos les tocara compartir la vivienda con otras dos familias, con las que en, algunas ocasiones, además hubo desentendimientos y peleas. El otro elemento frecuentemente comparado fue la rapidez y relativa facilidad de sus conocidos para conseguir trabajo. En pocos meses, según lo que contaban los mensajes de WhatsApp que me mostraron, ya habían sido empleados con garantías contractuales, mientras que en la época de llegada del primer grupo reasentado a Caicó, solamente unos pocos hombres habían conseguido trabajos temporales y sin las garantías de ley.

Desconozco si la información que recibían de sus conocidos se ajustaba a la realidad, o si estaba exagerada, o moderada por algún motivo. Tampoco tendría cómo saber si realmente alguna ciudad ofrece mejores condiciones de vida para todos los migrantes venezolanos con las características de estos “núcleos familiares”. Es difícil suponer que un lugar pueda colmar todas las expectativas de todos los sujetos; cada ciudad o pueblo va quedando grande o pequeño para los sueños, y va volviéndose suficiente o insuficiente para las personas, no sólo por las condiciones del lugar, sino también por las características de las personas y de la situación específica de su curso vital. O sea, los arreglos en un mundo provisional, además de que son globalmente injustos, siempre son existencialmente contingentes, en especial para las experiencias de transformación profunda motivadas por el éxodo, que obligan a realizar una evaluación permanente del lugar que se habita y de aquellos que se podrían habitar.

En los primeros meses después de su llegada, por ejemplo, Roraima apareció en el relato de algunos de los interlocutores como un lugar mejor que Caicó. Incluso aquel espacio, de peligro y sufrimiento, ofrecía algunos beneficios importantes, como la abundante circulación diaria de personas y de dinero en efectivo que les permitía, inclusive sin un contrato formal de trabajo (cuidando carros o vendiendo café, según sus palabras), ganar en pocas horas sumas mucho mayores a las que habían logrado conseguir con semanas de trabajo en Caicó. Para varios de ellos la cercanía con la frontera también era un aspecto importante, pues ampliaba las opciones de idas y vueltas a Venezuela para llevar alimentos (Vasconcelos, 2018), dinero y otros productos; y a veces, para traer parientes, vender propiedades o rescatar pertenencias que no lograron cargar en los otros viajes. Esos movimientos se volvieron más difíciles cuando llegaron a Rio Grande do Norte y percibieron, en términos de costos y tiempo, qué tan lejos estaban.

Dos parejas, que llegaron con un segundo grupo a Caicó, acusaban a algunas de las personas del primero de no haber hecho lo suficiente para buscar empleo y de ser muy exigentes con las condiciones laborales que pretendían, rechazando empleos sin *carteira assinada* o con salarios menores que el de los brasileños. La acusación se dirigía especialmente a quienes, según ellos, no tenían parientes en Venezuela dependiendo de su fuerza de trabajo, sino por el contrario, estaban esperando que les mandaran dinero. Esa era la explicación que encontraron al porqué estaban conformes con la ciudad y con la escasa asistencia monetaria que recibían del programa, y no hacían “lo que fuera” para ganarse la vida. Tener a alguien en Venezuela que dependiera de las remesas o de los viajes para llevar productos, o tener redes, de familiares o amigos, en otras ciudades o países, fue un elemento central en las evaluaciones que las personas hicieron de los lugares considerados adecuados para conseguir sus objetivos de vida, y también de la posibilidad o no de exigir el cumplimiento de derechos laborales y condiciones de trabajo. Como bien lo ha mostrado Feldman-Bianco, los desplazamientos forzados y las expulsiones en la era del capitalismo corporativo están ampliando las desigualdades sociales y contribuyendo, en un ritmo acelerado, a la deshumanización de la pobreza (2015:20). Aquí, me gustaría detenerme, no obstante, en otro aspecto de esa relación con los parientes que se quedaron en Venezuela o que fueron a otros lugares.

### **Los núcleos familiares, la frontera y la sexualidad de la nación**

Algunas autoras, que han enfocado en las particularidades de los procesos migratorios de personas con sexualidades no hegemónicas o personas trans, han rescatado, en textos recientes, la discusión sobre la tendencia de los estudios migratorios clásicos a concebir privilegiadamente al sujeto migrante como un hombre cisgénero, heterosexual y blanco (Andrade, 2019; França, 2017; Fonseca, 2020). Esos trabajos han enfatizado, asimismo, la necesidad de incluir las categorías sexualidad y género como ejes fundamentales en el análisis de las experiencias y procesos de movilidad.

Evidentemente, la incorporación de los estudios de género en los estudios migratorios desestabilizó la idea de una migración mayoritariamente masculina, e incluyó las experiencias de mujeres, gays, personas trans, grupos familiares, niñas y niños desacompañados, etc., como realidades fundamentales de las dinámicas planetarias de circulación o diáspora, complejizando así el entendimiento de las migraciones contemporáneas. Sin embargo, el foco en las sexualidades no hegemónicas, a veces, deja de lado la pregunta por la construcción permanente y el refuerzo de la heterosexualidad como norma de la nación, tal como ha sido sugerido por Ochy Curiel (2013) y como una sexualidad igualmente producida – y reproducida – en las prácticas de Estado y de definición de la nación.

En los programas de refugio y, especialmente, en el de reasentamiento de nacionales colombianos durante las primeras décadas del siglo veintiuno y el actual programa de interiorización de nacionales venezolanos, el sujeto privilegiado de la migración no es, necesariamente, un individuo sino un “núcleo familiar” cis-heterosexual, y mayoritariamente – aunque no exclusivamente –, blanco-mestizo. Evidentemente, otras facetas de la interiorización han enfocado en el sujeto trabajador, cuyos movimientos están vinculados a ofertas de empleo preestablecidas. Sin embargo, es la configuración del llamado “núcleo familiar” – y la presunción de su heterosexualidad– la que orienta la mayoría de los programas.

El formato familiar bajo el cual se organiza buena parte de la interiorización, no sobra recordarlo entonces, está lejos de ser una traducción literal de las múltiples realidades y configuraciones familiares diseñadas, a lo largo de la vida, por las personas a las que se destinan los programas. No solamente en términos de sexualidad sino de componentes, límites, relaciones intergeneracionales e inter-clase al interior de grupos extensos, pertenencias regionales y nacionales, etc. Podríamos decir que el modelo familiar de esos programas es, al contrario, un esfuerzo por domesticar la multiplicidad y plasticidad de la noción de familia, y de ajustarla a una forma administrable que, a su vez, responde a un modelo hegemónico de organización social, económica, cultural y moral. Además de la elección de familias heterosexuales, que ya es elocuente sobre la concepción de la sociedad y sus normas sociales, el hecho de que sean familias nucleares (el núcleo entendido como la pareja con su descendencia) también impone escogencias, separaciones y reformulaciones estratégicas de los vínculos con aquellos que son considerados parte de la familia y que resultan fundamentales para la continuación de los procesos vitales.

Por supuesto, la capacidad de las personas para recrear sus vínculos con aquellos que les son intrínsecos, con los cuales se constituyen mutuamente como personas (Sahlins, 2013), de agregar nuevos sujetos a los enmarañados de relaciones, o de reformularlos, escapa y trasciende a los propósitos administrativos de los programas y a los esfuerzos normativos más amplios. Como bien lo mostró Machado (2013) en su análisis sobre las relaciones de parentesco en otro contexto migratorio, éstas pueden actualizarse incluso en la distancia. El envío y circulación, de bienes y remesas, es uno de los elementos señalados por el autor como fundamentales en el mantenimiento de antiguas relaciones, en la creación de nuevos lazos y en las transformaciones de funciones, status y autoridades familiares, como también lo han descrito Teixeira (2008:296) y Assis (2003), quienes analizan diversas formas en las que, en contextos de tránsitos geográficos y de género, no sólo se definen nuevas familias y parientes, sino que se renegocian los lugares ocupados en las configuraciones familiares de origen.

A pesar de la creatividad de la que son capaces los sujetos, que les permite driblar las camisas de fuerza impuestas por formatos de gestión restrictivos y normativos, es imposible desconocer la influencia que los mismos ejercen en sus vidas. En algunos casos, de hecho, el momento de la interiorización también fue el periodo de separación de las familias. En las palabras de una de las interlocutoras: “a ellos les salió viaje para un lado y a nosotros para otro, entonces no pudimos seguir juntos”. En otro caso, Dayana sólo logró juntar el dinero para traer a su hijo desde Venezuela, más de un año después de su llegada a Caicó y gracias a un préstamo que la empleadora de su esposo (padre de su segunda hija) aceptó realizarles para contribuir con

ese proyecto. Para lograr que su hijo se fuera a vivir con ella, primero fue necesario salir de la sede de la ONG *Aldeias*, pues no se les permitía llevar más personas a las casas en las que el programa los instaló durante el tiempo de asistencia.

Así, si bien algunos vínculos con otros parientes del grupo familiar extenso pueden ser, por ley, considerados para la unificación familiar (especialmente en términos de permisos de entrada al país y de documentación), es casi imposible que sean considerados para las transferencias realizadas en el marco de la interiorización. Eso significa que los costos de los traslados de esos otros que se quedaron en Venezuela o que están en otros países (tíos, hermanas, padres, abuelas, primos, comadres, amigos, hijos de otros matrimonios, etc.) tienen que ser asumidos sin apoyo económico y/o social de los programas. Situación que contribuye a que las personas hagan “lo que sea” para poder juntar de nuevo a la familia o garantizar su bienestar a distancia.

De otro lado, reforzando los esfuerzos comparativos de este artículo, en el caso de interiorización estudiado, además de tales exigencias de restringir el número y el tipo de parientes que viajan juntos o que serán beneficiarios de la asistencia del programa, también llaman la atención las diferencias en materia de documentación y situación migratoria presentes en un mismo “núcleo familiar”. Esto constituye una notable diferencia con el programa de Reasentamiento Solidario, en el que los esfuerzos se centraban en que todas las personas fueran reconocidas oficialmente como refugiadas. De hecho, no se podía proceder a la transferencia geográfica de las personas hacia Brasil sin antes garantizar su reconocimiento en el primer país de asilo. En ese sentido, las respuestas legales para la migración venezolana han sido más parecidas a las formas en que se administró la circulación de haitianos y haitianas, según ha sido señalado por Vieira (2019). Tal como lo describe la autora, negociaciones, encuadramientos, adaptaciones y ajustes fueron desplegándose a medida que las condiciones de las personas y las características de sus tránsitos cambiaban; a medida que nuevos actores aparecían en el escenario de las negociaciones; y a medida que las relaciones políticas entre los países de origen y de destino se modificaban.

En el primer grupo de “núcleos familiares” que llegó a Caicó, la mayoría de las personas tenía un protocolo de solicitud de refugio. Para entonces, en 2018, parecía que la respuesta que el gobierno había encontrado para lidiar con la presencia, en territorio brasileño, de personas oriundas de Venezuela era muy parecida con la que fue utilizada para aquellas procedentes de Haití, en los primeros años de esta década. La posibilidad de activar una solicitud de refugio fue la forma encontrada para dar opciones de documentación, ya que el protocolo de solicitud era la vía de acceso a otros documentos, como CPF (*Cadastro de Pessoa Física*), *carteira de trabalho* y carné de salud. Pero, tal como entonces, se presumía que el reconocimiento final no iba a suceder (Vieira 2019: 34-37), por lo que tampoco se iban a realizar las otras etapas del proceso, como las entrevistas con funcionarios del Comité Nacional para los Refugiados (Conare), o la deliberación del caso en el Comité.

La suposición de que las personas no serían reconocidas como refugiadas aumentó con la publicación de la Resolución Normativa N° 126 del Consejo Nacional de Inmigración (CNIg),<sup>4</sup> que preveía la regularización migratoria de venezolanos y venezolanas, otorgando un permiso de residencia temporal de hasta dos años. Dicha resolución, no obstante, exigía la renuncia expresa a la solicitud de refugio por parte de las personas que quisieran acogerse a esa nueva posibilidad de regularización. También esa opción había sido activada por algunas de las personas interiorizadas en Caicó, de modo que en un mismo “núcleo familiar” había diferentes estatus migratorios, que exigían procedimientos también diferenciados para la renovación de documentos y acceso a algunos beneficios.

El panorama, en términos de estatus migratorios, y la interpretación por parte de algunas organizaciones de la sociedad civil sobre lo que iba a suceder con los procesos de documentación de los solicitantes de refugio venezolanos, cambió radicalmente el 5 de diciembre de 2019. El gobierno decidió hacer un reconocimiento

4 Esta resolución fue editada con algunos cambios en la forma de la Ordenanza Interministerial N° 9, del 14 de marzo de 2018.

colectivo de la condición de refugiados de 21.432 solicitantes venezolanos; una cifra que representa el doble del número total de concesiones de refugio en Brasil desde 1997. Esa decisión fue recibida con beneplácito por las organizaciones de la sociedad civil y por algunos agentes locales de la OIM y del ACNUR, a quienes escuché celebrar la medida. Los elogios se basaban, en primer lugar, en el hecho de que el gobierno hubiera utilizado el criterio de “grave y generalizada violación de los derechos humanos” para el reconocimiento de los solicitantes. Esa fórmula, incorporada en la ley de refugio brasileña (Ley nº 9.474/97) es muy valorada por los actores que integran dicho universo institucional, entre quienes circula su evaluación como una de las herramientas más avanzadas en materia de protección, siendo también una de las menos utilizadas por los gobiernos nacionales. En segundo lugar, la medida fue aplaudida por descongestionar la fila de procesos estancados, que aguardan una resolución en el Conare y, de esa forma, acortar los plazos de espera, tan onerosos para los solicitantes.<sup>5</sup>

Aliviar la incertidumbre sobre el futuro y traer beneficios en términos de documentación – y el acceso a servicios públicos que de ella se deriva – no es poca cosa. La inseguridad sobre el futuro, y el tiempo que las personas pasan esperando una respuesta definitiva, son fuentes de ansiedad, tristeza y profundización de las desigualdades sociales (Vianna & Facundo Navia, 2015). Sin embargo, mirándola con más calma, la medida no parece ser una garantía de solución para todas las personas que supuestamente se beneficiarían con la decisión. Una serie de requisitos, que ella misma contiene, se transforma en obstáculos para el reconocimiento. La medida, por ejemplo, exige que las personas presenten documentos que certifiquen la nacionalidad, lo que no siempre es fácil en el caso de la migración venezolana contemporánea. Además de eso, no pueden beneficiarse las personas que hayan solicitado la residencia temporal (pues, como lo he mencionado, esa opción exigía la renuncia a la solicitud de refugio) y tampoco las personas con antecedentes penales o menores de 18 años.

Es aún temprano para poder evaluar los impactos concretos que la decisión traerá a la vida cotidiana de las personas interiorizadas, inclusive de aquellas que realmente puedan y quieran beneficiarse con la medida; o para analizar los formatos burocráticos que están siendo puestos en marcha para atenderlos. Sin embargo, cabe preguntarse desde ahora cuáles serán los efectos, por ejemplo, sobre la movilidad de las personas reconocidas que, según la ley de refugio, no pueden salir del país sin el permiso del Conare, ni pueden solicitar la protección de otro país. No es difícil suponer que nuevos arreglos familiares, incluyendo a quien puede ir a Venezuela y volver a Brasil, o a quien puede ir a otros países y probar suerte, serán necesarios en esos “núcleos familiares” con estatus migratorios diferentes, y también en sus familias extensas.

Por otra parte, también me parece que debe tomarse en serio el llamado de atención de algunos estudiosos de las migraciones sobre las implicaciones políticas de la decisión gubernamental de aplicar la cláusula de “grave y generalizada violación de los derechos humanos” para juzgar la condición de refugio de las personas procedentes de Venezuela (Branco Pereira, 2020). Además, para los propósitos de este artículo, esa alerta nos ayuda a presentar algunas de las rupturas recientes más evidentes con respecto a la administración de los asuntos migratorios en Brasil, desde la época de la redemocratización hasta la segunda década del siglo XXI.

La celebración de esa medida por parte de ONGs y organismos internacionales puede contribuir a la idea de que el gobierno brasileño estaría alineado con los mecanismos e instrumentos más refinados en materia de protección de los derechos migratorios. En realidad, lo que hemos visto desde octubre de 2018 hasta ahora, ha sido el alineamiento con los principios más aterradores de la doctrina de la seguridad nacional y de la criminalización selectiva de grupos migrantes. Branco Pereira (2020), además de recordarnos la rápida salida del nuevo gobierno del Pacto Global de las Migraciones, también nos refresca la memoria sobre graves episodios de violación de principios legales, como el de no devolución de refugiados o el de obligatoriedad de protección de sus propios nacionales, cuya deportación de los Estados Unidos está contando con apoyo gubernamental y

<sup>5</sup> No he analizado aún los impactos concretos de esa medida, en términos de documentación y acuerdos familiares, en el caso de los “núcleos familiares” que fueron reasentados en la ciudad y que aún permanecen en la ciudad. En julio de 2020, cuando este artículo ya se encontraba en la fase de revisión, el programa de interiorización en Caicó fue clausurado.

que ha llevado al pronunciamiento crítico de diversas ONGs, asociaciones profesionales, entre las que se cuenta la Asociación Brasileña de Antropología (ABA) y otros actores vinculados a asuntos migratorios.

Sobre los desafíos de la situación política actual, que involucran la circulación de personas oriundas de Venezuela, me detendré al final del artículo. Por ahora, me gustaría volver al asunto de la situación migratoria diversa de esos “núcleos familiares”: me parece que, además de los parecidos identificados con la forma de administración destinada a otros grupos migrantes en el pasado, también hay algunas diferencias que merecen, por lo menos, mencionarse. En primer lugar, el hecho de permitir la transferencia de grupos con situaciones migratorias diversas desde Roraima hacia otros estados, está anclada en una lectura orientada por el orden nacional de las cosas, utilizando la expresión de Malkki (1995). Es decir, en el caso del reasentamiento de colombianos, la obligatoriedad del reconocimiento previo como refugiados en Ecuador respondía a la necesidad de respetar y, simultáneamente, reforzar la idea de soberanía nacional. La frontera internacional solamente podría ser cruzada por las personas que serían reasentadas, después de que el primer país de asilo garantizara su condición de sujetos bajo protección y autorizara su salida; y también, después de que los documentos de entrada a Brasil estuvieran autorizados (Facundo Navia, 2017). La inviolabilidad de la frontera pasaba por una especie de construcción de homogeneidad en la condición migratoria de todos los integrantes del grupo, que permitiera reforzar, asimismo, la propia frontera del refugio, peligrosamente lindante con la migración económica.

A pesar de que la *Operação Acolhida* incluyó el despliegue de puestos de documentación en Pacaraima – que privilegiaron la activación de una solicitud de refugio para la mayoría de las personas – el programa de interiorización no siempre exigió la homogeneidad de la condición migratoria para realizar la transferencia. En Caicó encontré, por ejemplo, algunas parejas que se formaron en Brasil y cuyos miembros habían cruzado la frontera con meses – y a veces años – de diferencia. Así, cada uno había vivido momentos también distintos en términos de respuestas administrativas; y sus documentos eran un reflejo de esos encuentros diferenciados con autoridades y agentes con capacidades de regularización migratoria, informados asimismo por sus tránsitos en territorio brasileño.

Finalmente, considero que el hecho de que las personas estén siendo trasladadas dentro de las fronteras nacionales, y no desde un país a otro, también permite ver una transformación en los ritmos de la transferencia, cuando se les compara con la velocidad con la que se realizaban los reasentamientos. Evidentemente, un viaje internacional, que requiere de la participación de funcionarios de otros gobiernos y de agencias internacionales, lleva más tiempo de preparación, pero esa explicación no agota todos los elementos que están en juego. Cuando en Ecuador se decretó la crisis humanitaria, derivada de las condiciones de vida de casi 60 mil refugiados colombianos (sin considerar a los solicitantes o sujetos en otras situaciones migratorias), la respuesta brasileña del reasentamiento solidario trasladó a su territorio aproximadamente 700 personas,<sup>6</sup> desde el comienzo del programa, en 2003, hasta el año 2017. Con el programa de interiorización, desde 2018 hasta marzo de 2020, según datos de la página oficial,<sup>7</sup> han sido trasladadas más de 27 mil personas hacia diferentes estados de Brasil, de un total de 264 mil regularizadas, no sólo en Roraima, sino en todo el país.

Al llamar la atención sobre tal contraste, no quiero decir que los ritmos de la interiorización sean adecuados a las necesidades de las personas que se acogen al programa. La idea de un buen ritmo cuando se está esperando algo – de que suceda lo que tiene que suceder en el tiempo oportuno – incluye, en sí misma, una evaluación de ajuste temporal que sólo puede ser realizada por quienes la experimentan. Sin embargo, la cantidad de personas

6 Datos obtenidos de la página oficial del CONARE <<https://www.justica.gov.br/seus-direitos/refugio/refugio-em-numeros>>

7 <<https://www.gov.br/acolhida/>>

interiorizadas en un tiempo relativamente corto tensiona las explicaciones que dieron los agentes, que hasta hace algunos años integraban el universo institucional brasileño del refugio, para justificar los ritmos más lentos y los números escasos del reasentamiento.

Los argumentos, recuperados *grosso modo*, eran la necesidad de no impactar las comunidades locales con la llegada masiva de personas culturalmente diferentes y con necesidades socioeconómicas supuestamente superiores a la capacidad de acogida de los municipios. También se argumentaba la necesidad de integración de los extranjeros, estimulando su interacción con brasileños, el aprendizaje del portugués, y evitando la formación de “guetos”. Asimismo, los ritmos lentos eran positivados con explicaciones sobre la necesidad de saber escoger, tanto los lugares como el perfil de las personas, de modo que se filtraran los elementos de la guerra colombiana que, según la evaluación de los actores implicados, podrían traer el conflicto consigo. La imagen de una guerra contenida dentro de los límites geopolíticos del vecino país, pero con potencial de pasar la frontera a través de sujetos mal seleccionados, alimentaba la idea de que el proceso de filtrado era indispensable para la seguridad del territorio nacional brasileño (Facundo, 2019b).

Actualmente, sin embargo, ninguno de esos argumentos está siendo evocado para poner en duda la eficacia técnica del proceso de interiorización, o para cuestionar las posibilidades de integración de las personas y de respuesta de las comunidades locales a donde están siendo transferidas. De hecho, la *Missão de Interiorização*, como también es llamada en su página web oficial, señala esa velocidad como muestra de la capacidad técnica de las Fuerzas Armadas, que realizan la coordinación operacional de la *Força-Tarefa Logística Humanitária, Operação Acolhida*. En la página del Ministerio de Defensa, a su vez, se recuerda la vasta experiencia de las Fuerzas Armadas brasileñas en misiones humanitarias en el mundo (destacando la coordinación de la Misión de las Naciones Unidas para la estabilización de Haití - MINUSTAH) y se presenta la *Operação Acolhida* como la primera misión de naturaleza humanitaria dentro del territorio nacional.<sup>8</sup> Es una forma de control político empleada para la intervención en países extranjeros, puesta en marcha para restaurar el control estatal de un territorio de frontera, cuyas autoridades locales, según las mismas páginas web, se vieron sobrepasadas en sus capacidades de respuesta.

El territorio defendido en este caso no es el de los pequeños municipios o ciudades, que reciben los llamados “núcleos familiares”, amenazados por posibles guetos de extranjeros mal *abrasileirados*, para utilizar el concepto de Seyferth (2000). En esta ocasión, es el de la frontera con Roraima o de las ciudades cercanas, en donde se instaló parte de la “crisis venezolana”, con la presencia masiva de extranjeros altamente precarizados, que desafiaron el carácter ilusoriamente brasileño de la región y la capacidad de respuesta, y control, del Estado sobre sus territorios.

Esas discrepancias en el tratamiento dado a las poblaciones extranjeras, en diferentes momentos y por diferentes configuraciones gubernamentales y estatales, tienen, sin duda, diversas causas. Sin embargo, quisiera señalar que, además de que actualmente no hay interés gubernamental en disimular el uso político que implica la figura del refugio (Branco Pereira, 2020), la arbitrariedad en la decisión de los formatos, las velocidades, los lugares y la cantidad de las transferencias en la interiorización puede estar relacionada con el hecho de que se trata de poblaciones con las cuales el Estado históricamente ha establecido relaciones de tutela. Como nos lo recuerda João Pacheco de Oliveira, a propósito de las características de esas relaciones: “Las normas nunca serán suficientes para definir una forma de acción prescrita, ya que siempre se preserva la libertad del agente para decidir de acuerdo con las circunstancias específicas y los interlocutores que en ese momento se privilegien”<sup>9</sup> (Oliveira, 2014:144).

8 <<https://www.defesa.gov.br/noticias/57698-operacao-acolhida-o-trabalho-de-militares-brasileiros-na-primeira-missao-humanitaria-em-territorio-nacional>>

9 En el original: “No exercício da tutela as normas jamais serão suficientes para definir uma forma prescrita de ação, de vez que está sempre preservada a liberdade do agente para decidir de acordo com a especificidade das conjunturas e dos interlocutores que naquele momento vier a privilegiar” (Oliveira, 2014:144. La traducción me pertenece).

## Ejército e iglesias como agentes de integración y algunas reflexiones político-metodológicas

La primera visita que realicé a Caicó con Saionara coincidió con el periodo preelectoral en Brasil. Registré en mi diario de campo algunos detalles de la primera entrevista que tuvimos con los directivos locales de la ONG *Aldeias*, en la que yo pregunté si en las reuniones de planeación realizadas con el ACNUR, antes de poner en marcha el programa en la ciudad, habían considerado un posible escenario político de cierre de fronteras que pusiera en riesgo su continuidad. La respuesta negativa del director se basó en su confianza de que la Constitución Federal funcionaría como una talanquera contra los abusos que cualquier gobernante quisiera cometer. Con ellos, la conversación al respecto, llena de precauciones mutuas en relación a los términos y los nombres que se emplearon, se cerró sin más consideraciones. Con las personas que acababan de llegar de Roraima, al contrario, el tema aparecía con mucha frecuencia, con nombres propios y posturas enfáticas.

No recuerdo ni una sola vez – en las que el tema apareció – que las personas no se exhibieran en críticas contra el gobierno venezolano, que terminaban extendiéndose en críticas contra el socialismo. Durante mis visitas a la ONG, o en las ocasiones en que salimos juntos de la sede, los jóvenes interiorizados me mostraban memes que ridiculizaban al presidente venezolano, imágenes de conciertos promovidos por cantantes colombianos en la frontera colombo-venezolana y muchísimos mensajes que circulaban por WhatsApp con noticias falsas sobre nuevas leyes o medidas implementadas, eventos políticos, manifestaciones y comportamientos moralmente reprochables de gobernantes venezolanos, que ellos defendían como verdades.

Al mismo tiempo, nos dejaban en claro, a Saionara y a mí, su predilección por el candidato del PSL (Partido Social Liberal) que, según ellos, debía ganar las elecciones para que su seguridad y la de sus familias estuviera garantizada en Brasil. Los contra-argumentos que Saionara y yo intentábamos poner en discusión fueron desestimados, sin agresividad, pero nunca sin emotividad. Todo el tiempo, a pesar de la amabilidad de las personas, tuve la sensación de que el par que conformábamos, con marcas muy particulares de estéticas, acentos, nacionalidades, raza, edad y profesiones, no hacía de nosotras interlocutoras con legitimidad para proponer lecturas políticas sobre el país. Al final, ¿cuál es el área de competencia de una profesora colombiana, blanca y capitalina, que no conocía Caicó (con una profesión que nunca es completamente entendida, como la antropología) y que llega al lugar acompañada de una joven estudiante negra, que se comunica en portugués y que no se alinea con los modelos de comportamiento de otras profesiones que suelen hacer parte de los equipos de atención psicosocial, como abogadas, psicólogas o médicas? De alguna manera, la proximidad que construimos, en algunos aspectos, era también un motivo para considerar nuestras lecturas como una opinión política cualquiera, sin más veracidad o legitimidad que la suya.

Uno de los argumentos más frecuentes para refutar nuestras lecturas políticas fue el hecho de que los militares les hubieran, en sus palabras: “explicado la realidad del país”; y que esa explicación contradijera nuestros argumentos. Además del contacto con los soldados encargados de la seguridad y otras tareas cotidianas en los albergues, el primer grupo interiorizado tuvo tiempo, durante el largo viaje desde Roraima hasta Pernambuco en avión, y después en bus, hasta Caicó, de escuchar las explicaciones sobre el devastador futuro que le esperaba a Brasil en caso de que el candidato del PT (Partido de los Trabajadores) – que fue presentado como comunista – ganara las elecciones. La amenaza era muy clara y fácil de entender para las personas que la escucharon y que nos la transmitieron a Saionara y a mí: si él gana, Brasil se transformará en una Venezuela.

Para las personas con las que hablamos sobre la situación política de ambos países, los militares, al contrario de nosotras, eran figuras legítimas para leer la dinámica política y para prever los posibles futuros de la nación. Su profesión, completamente inteligible para los refugiados, su poder de acción materializado en aviones, alimentación, armamento y campamentos, y la autoridad moral de su lectura del mundo – como defensores de los mismos ideales compartidos de familia y de valores sociales – eran imbatibles, contra nuestros argumentos a favor de pensar otras formas de organizar la vida familiar y política, y nuestra inconstante, y precaria presencia. Espero que la gran cantidad de investigadores sociales en Roraima nos traiga, muy pronto,

informaciones etnográficas sobre lo que significa la presencia del ejército en la vida cotidiana en los albergues y las ciudades que son objeto de esa misión humanitaria. Me parece que su papel puede ser considerado, entre otras cosas, como el de nuevos agentes de integración de refugiados, con la fuerza simbólica de representar a un Estado que los recibe en su territorio, con el despliegue material y logístico capaz de coordinar su proceso de recepción, abrigo e interiorización. Esos agentes les ofrecen, además, las cartas de navegación para interpretar las nuevas realidades locales a las que se exponen.

Si refutar los argumentos reforzados por militares resultaba complicado, más difícil resultó buscar una forma de cuestionar algunos de los argumentos de las iglesias que comenzaron a frecuentar a las familias; a veces como continuación de sus vínculos previos con ellas, en otros lugares; y a veces como vínculos nuevos derivados de esas visitas que los evangelizadores realizaban a la sede de la ONG. Si discutir los argumentos de los militares era un asunto de “opinión política”, siempre susceptible de interpretaciones, el debate de los argumentos religiosos no tenía cabida. No se discute la creencia de los otros; no sólo las personas zanjaban la discusión con un argumento de fe, sino que yo misma me sentía éticamente impedida de contradecir, con el mismo énfasis que lo haría con un argumento inscrito en el dominio de la política.

Actualmente, hay algunos proyectos de investigación, de educación y de servicios, vinculados a la Universidad Federal de Rio Grande do Norte, que buscan apoyar los procesos de recepción e integración de los refugiados. Incluso fue creado recientemente el Comité Estadual Intersectorial de Atención a Refugiados, Apátridas y Migrantes (CERAM-RN) que rápidamente se ha convertido en una referencia para el debate sobre el asunto en término de políticas públicas en Rio Grande do Norte –y del cual hace parte Cáritas Arquidiocesana–. No obstante, en la época de la llegada de los primeros grupos de reasentados venezolanos a Caicó, en medio de la novedad, no hubo una respuesta –laica, popular o gubernamental – rápida que permitiera disputar los contornos y los contenidos de la ciudadanía de esos recién llegados, o de incluirlos en debates sociales amplios y proyectos de formación, social o política, no vinculados a proyectos religiosos, que posibilitaran repensar los objetivos de la integración social, tan anhelada por los programas de refugio.

Por supuesto, no estoy diciendo que las iglesias no puedan participar de esos proyectos, ni desconociendo que su trabajo de base es, muchas veces, más organizado y persistente que el de organizaciones sociales o proyectos institucionales de los gobiernos locales. De hecho, los programas de refugio, como fue discutido en otros momentos (Facundo Navia, 2019a) son históricamente implementados en Brasil por ONGs vinculadas a la Iglesia Católica. Por otra parte, gracias al vínculo con iglesias, generalmente neo-pentecostales, algunas personas reasentadas en Caicó consiguieron empleos y apoyos materiales. Estoy queriendo solamente llamar la atención de que algunas iglesias, a través de sus evangelizadores y de sus cultos, reafirmaban también el carácter de normalidad y ejemplaridad de la heterosexualidad; defendían la necesidad de que los refugiados se vincularan en una cruzada contra los intentos homosexualizadores de la izquierda continental y se alinearan con un proyecto político defendido por el entonces candidato del PSL. Así, para mí la preocupación sobre la suerte de las poblaciones refugiadas en Caicó se inscribió también en el debate, ya realizado por varios autores, sobre el carácter de las comunidades políticas que, al mismo tiempo, están en una situación de dominación y se expresan como una fuerza política potencialmente reproductora de esa misma situación (Butler & Spivak, 2007).

Cada vez que dejaba la ciudad, durante las cuatro horas del camino de vuelta hasta Natal, me asaltaba la misma duda que me había atormentado en otras investigaciones. ¿Será que es éticamente necesario discutir los asuntos políticos con las personas con las que nos involucramos en nuestras investigaciones? ¿Sería esa una garantía de que ellas tomen la decisión libre e informada de querer o no contribuir con la investigación? ¿O no sería esa otra de las trampas de nuestra fe, liberal y moderna, en el individuo libre y consciente? Durante el trabajo de campo de otras investigaciones, ya había tomado la decisión de no siempre discutir los pormenores de la política nacional colombiana e, inclusive, de quedarme callada ante opiniones que consideraba racistas o misóginas, por ejemplo. Aun con la ganancia de no tensionar las relaciones con personas que me estaban

ayudando a realizar mi investigación – y por algunas de las cuales sentía afecto – nunca dejé de preguntarme si esa renuncia al debate político no era una especie de engaño; o si, al contrario, era una preocupación sólo de mi parte, que obedece a la importancia que le otorgo al asunto, mientras que para otras personas hay jerarquías diferentes de los elementos que deben existir, en las relaciones sociales en general y en la relación con una investigadora social específicamente.

La única especie de certidumbre etnográfica que puedo registrar aquí es que, silenciar los argumentos de la política internacional en las conversaciones con las personas, no sólo a veces es un alivio, sino que abre la posibilidad de crear otro tipo de comunicación y entendimiento de la realidad. Recuerdo que en los momentos en que aparecía el tema de los gobiernos de Venezuela y Brasil, el discurso del hambre también surgía en su formato de narrativa congelada (Das, 1991); es decir, no para describir la desgracia concreta que es no tener qué comer, sino como argumento generalizante, universalizado y vacío, que resumía la situación de Venezuela y que se erguía como límite moral irrefutable –y como muestra de la maldad del gobierno–. Al contrario, hay experiencias que no se inscriben en el mismo registro narrativo y que pueden ser mejores vías, para entender las posiciones políticas y las decisiones vitales de las personas, entre las que se encuentra la decisión de migrar.

Un día, en la puerta de un hospital de Caicó, sentada con Dayana y su hijita, esperando nuestro turno para entrar a conocer la bebé recién nacida de Gladys, empezamos a hablar de los nacimientos, como lo ameritaba el momento. Cada una recordó las narraciones que nuestras mamás hacían de nuestro propio nacimiento, y también el de primas y hermanos, hasta que ella llegó al de sus hijos. El primero de ellos, hace 14 años, es una historia de tranquilidad, buena atención y cuidados. El de su hija de dos años, en cambio, es el recuerdo reciente de humillación, hambre y maltrato. Su hija tuvo que permanecer en el hospital y ella, en cambio, fue obligada a firmar el alta, pues no disponían de camas. Sin dinero para ir y volver del barrio donde vivía hasta el hospital, tuvo que instalarse por varios días en la puerta del hospital, durmiendo en cartones, para poder amamantar a su hija mientras estaba internada. No pude dejar de pensar que el primer nacimiento coincidió con el periodo de bonanza económica y despliegue de la política social en Venezuela; mientras el segundo coincide con el desplome de la legitimidad del proyecto chavista, con la crisis económica del país y con el bloqueo impuesto por el gobierno de los Estados Unidos, secundado por otros países. Sin embargo, en ese momento emocionalmente tan duro, esa información no tenía sentido para Dayana y, con seguridad, hubiera estorbado y ofendido ese instante de memoria. Entendí que el actual gobierno, para ella, va a llevar siempre la marca de esos días en la calle y del difícil proceso de sobrevivir que se desencadenó desde entonces.

Tratar de entender el dolor subjetivamente vivido y la forma en que las experiencias crean subjetividades, y vínculos políticos, no significa, sin embargo, que la experiencia individual pueda elevarse al estatus de argumento de fe, que no admite discusión. Si bien es cierto que hay desabastecimiento y miseria en Venezuela, también es cierto que la responsabilidad no es solamente de su gobierno; así como también es cierto que el hambre no es sólo descripción sino también producción. Creo que debemos preguntarnos no solamente por lo que el hambre produjo en la vida de las personas, sino también por los múltiples efectos que están siendo producidos con ella en los países de la región.

A pesar de esa única convicción, creo que las investigaciones con personas precarizadas, que no se encuadran en nuestros esquemas de valores, anticapitalistas y antipatriarcales, nos dejan más preguntas que respuestas ¿Cómo entender que la desinformación que nosotras, como investigadoras, percibimos, es uno de los efectos de la desigualdad y la dominación, sin que eso nos lleve a colocar a las personas en el lugar de incapaces e idiotas útiles que se dejan engañar? ¿Y cómo entender cuándo nosotros también estamos haciendo el papel de idiotas útiles, en nombre del respeto a la diversidad de ideas que tanto defendemos? ¿Qué hacer cuando las personas nos convencen de que sus valores y su fe contradicen nuestros principios éticos, como antropólogos, en defensa de la diversidad y búsqueda de equidad social?

Cada situación etnográfica encontrará respuestas diferenciadas a los desafíos concretos que vayan apareciendo. Pero aunque no sean directamente con las personas con las que entablamos nuestras discusiones políticas en campo, éstas aparecerán inevitablemente en nuestros textos, encuentros académicos y otros tipos de eventos (muchas veces organizados para tratar de sensibilizar a las autoridades y comunidades locales sobre las necesidades de esas poblaciones). Ahí, inevitablemente, tendremos que asumir la responsabilidad política de nuestra producción y el riesgo de fortalecer lecturas del mundo que fomenten, en nuestro caso de estudio, la militarización de la vida política en la región. Evidentemente, no tengo respuestas a las preguntas que estoy escribiendo, y que muchas otras y otros colegas ya se hicieron; sólo quisiera reforzar la necesidad de hacer pública esa reflexión, de discutir estos asuntos con las y los estudiantes que, en parte por culpa nuestra, tienen una visión romantizada de las poblaciones subordinadas y de la propia práctica antropológica, en sus encuentros cotidianos con quienes sufren los rigores del capitalismo, cada vez más asustados con el socialismo.

### **Consideraciones finales**

Este artículo buscó identificar algunas transformaciones y continuidades de las acciones humanitarias de atención y recepción de refugiados en Brasil, a través de la comparación entre el programa de Reasentamiento Solidario de colombianos y una experiencia contemporánea, en Caicó, del Programa de Interiorización de venezolanos. Para ello, se discutieron los parecidos y continuidades en los formatos de administración, marcados por el establecimiento de relaciones de autoridad y tutela, la persistencia en el modelo familiar nuclear y heterosexual como sujeto privilegiado de los programas y sus desdoblamientos en el refuerzo de un ideal de nación.

En términos de diferencias y transformaciones, fue destacado el hecho de involucrar, por primera vez en la historia reciente del país, comunidades del interior de los estados de la región *Nordeste* del Brasil como comunidades receptoras de refugiados, discutiendo las potencialidades de Caicó como lugar de destino. Como ruptura drástica, en términos de orientación política de los llamados programas humanitarios, fueron mencionados: la salida reciente de Brasil del Pacto Global de las Migraciones; los episodios de violación de principios legales, como el de no devolución de refugiados; y la colaboración del gobierno en procesos de expulsión de brasileños indocumentados de los Estados Unidos. Asimismo, como punto de contraste, fueron señaladas las diferencias en las velocidades de transferencia de personas cuando la crisis que se pretende remediar está dentro del territorio nacional (Roraima), y no del otro lado de la frontera, o en otros países, como sucedió en el caso de los colombianos.

Finalmente, fue discutido el papel de integración de las Fuerzas Armadas, y de las relaciones de algunas de las personas interiorizadas con las iglesias pentecostales en los procesos de integración, que incluyen modelos de ciudadanía, posicionamientos políticos y visiones de mundo. Al mismo tiempo, fue propuesta una reflexión de cómo la situación descrita impone desafíos ético-metodológicos para la antropología, en su relación con poblaciones precarizadas que, al mismo tiempo, defienden formatos conservadores y jerarquizados de sociedad.

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# El cuidadómetro fronterizo: Sobrecarga femenina y estrategias de movilidad en la Triple Frontera del Paraná

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## Resumen

El artículo aborda la relación entre las sobrecargas de los cuidados y las estrategias de movilidad transfronteriza femeninas en la Triple Frontera del Paraná. Se muestra cómo las asimetrías estatales entre los tres países colindantes (Argentina, Brasil y Paraguay) generan diferencias de acceso a derechos básicos, particularmente, a la atención sanitaria. Partiré contextualizando la Triple Frontera, ofreciendo una síntesis de las experiencias/ problemáticas femeninas en estos territorios. Luego, revisaré los debates teóricos sobre cuidados, fronteras y género en territorios transfronterizos. Los apartados cuatro, cinco y seis recuperan mis diálogos con tres mujeres, conduciendo a reflexiones sobre cómo ellas elaboran un “cuidadómetro”: basando sus estrategias de movilidad transfronterizas en las mediciones de las potencialidades del cuidado recibido y entregado en cada lado de las fronteras.

**Palabras-clave:** cuidados; movilidades fronterizas; género; etnografía; Triple Frontera del Paraná.

# O Cuidadômetro fronteiriço: Sobrecarga feminina e estratégias de mobilidade na Tríplice Fronteira do Paraná

## Resumo

O artigo aborda a relação entre as sobrecargas dos cuidados e as estratégias de mobilidade transfronteiriças femininas na Tríplice-fronteira do Paraná. Mostrarei como as assimetrias estatais entre os três países contíguos (Argentina, Brasil, Paraguai) geram diferenças substantivas de acesso a direitos básicos como a atenção sanitária. Iniciarei contextualizando a tríplice-fronteira, oferecendo uma síntese das experiências/problemas femininas nestes territórios. Logo, revisarei os debates teóricos sobre cuidados, fronteiras e gênero nos territórios fronteiriços. As seções quatro, cinco e seis recuperam meus diálogos com três mulheres, conduzindo a reflexões sobre como elas elaboram um “cudadômetro”: amparam suas estratégias de mobilidade transfronteiriças nas medições das potencialidades de cuidado recebido e entregue em cada lado das fronteiras.

**Palavras-chave:** cuidados, mobilidades fronteiriças, gênero, etnografia, Tríplice-fronteira do Paraná.

# El cuidadómetro fronterizo: Sobrecarga femenina y estrategias de movilidad en la Triple Frontera del Paraná

*Menara Guizardi*

## **Introducción: las mujeres y el cuidadómetro fronterizo<sup>1</sup>**

Desde los 1990s, los estudios socio-antropológicos vienen demostrando que las responsabilidades de los cuidados familiares y comunitarios influyen centralmente las decisiones de muchas mujeres latinoamericanas sobre cómo organizar y sostener experiencias migratorias (Aranda, 2003; Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002; Herrera, 2012). Este debate ha visibilizado la relación entre migraciones, asimetrías de género y cuidados, estableciendo que el cruce de fronteras está vinculado con la sobrecarga (re)productiva femenina (González, 2016).

Desde los escritos fundacionales de Anzaldúa (1987), se vienen observando estas problemáticas en ciudades fronterizas entre México y Estados Unidos (EEUU) (Lugo, 1990; Molina, 1985; Monárrez, 2013; Woo, 2004). Pero esta preocupación es aún incipiente en los estudios sobre las localidades transfronterizas sudamericanas. Subsanaando esta falta, Viteri et al. (2017:124) comparan diversas fronteras de este continente. Observan que la sobrecarga y los mandatos de género vinculados a la obligación de cuidar exponen las mujeres a diversas formas de violencia fronterizas. Por otra parte, estudios sobre las movilidades en las fronteras entre Chile, Perú y Bolivia muestran que los cuidados constituyen, simultáneamente, el impulso a formas específicas de agencia femenina (Guizardi et al., 2019). Dicha agencia estaría organizada a partir de estrategias de desplazamiento con las cuales las mujeres buscan obtener beneficios, controlando los ritmos y lógicas del cruce fronterizo (Renoldi, 2013; 2014).

Con la atención puesta en esta dialéctica – y considerando que el cuidado oscila contradictoriamente entre la producción y la ruptura de desigualdades y violencias de género – abordaré la relación entre las responsabilidades reproductivas y las estrategias de movilidad transfronteriza de mujeres que habitan en la Triple Frontera del río Paraná (entre Argentina, Brasil y Paraguay). A través de sus experiencias, mostraré cómo las asimetrías de configuración urbana entre los tres países colindantes generan diferencias sustantivas de acceso a derechos básicos (particularmente, la atención sanitaria). La sobrecarga femenina en los cuidados impulsa a las mujeres a comparar y computar estas diferencias para trazar sus trayectorias de movilidad. Las contribuciones del presente trabajo apuntan a tres objetivos específicos, que buscan complementar y expandir los debates sobre migración y movilidad transfronteriza.

En primer lugar, abordan un tema poco discutido en los estudios precedentes en la Triple Frontera del Paraná: busca visibilizar y comprender, a partir de una perspectiva de género, el papel de las sobrecargas femeninas del cuidado familiar, y su importancia como factor que impulsa a las mujeres a moverse a través de las fronteras en esta región. Los trabajos desarrollados en los territorios del triffinio han investigado diversos elementos cruciales para comprender las dinámicas poblacionales transfronterizas. Por un lado, han averiguado los déficits de acceso al Sistema de Protección Social (asistencia sanitaria, médica, educacional y de acceso a derechos sociales básicos) por parte de la población transfronteriza entre Paraguay y Brasil

<sup>1</sup> Agradezco los financiamientos de la Agencia Nacional de Investigación y Desarrollo de Chile, a través del proyecto Fondecyt 1190056 y del Fondo para Investigación Científica y Tecnológica de Argentina, a través del proyecto PICT 201-01022016.

(Albuquerque, 2012). Por otro, han indagado sobre las asimétricas disputas de poder que estas poblaciones protagonizan (y en ocasiones, sufren) en sus dinámicas de desplazamiento (Albuquerque, 2008) y en el asentamiento en territorios productivos agrícolas (Fogel, 2008).

Además, han introducido una perspectiva de género, al tratar de estas movilidades transfronterizas. Profit (2015), por ejemplo, estudió la desigualdad social, discriminación y abusos laborales sufridos por mujeres paraguayas empleadas en el lado brasileño de la frontera, en su inserción como trabajadoras domésticas y del comercio. Cardin (2012) observó la especificidad del trabajo femenino en el contrabando y las representaciones sociales de las mujeres en la zona fronteriza (Lima & Cardin, 2019). A su vez, Renoldi (2013) se ocupó de la inserción femenina en el comercio, turismo y servicios domésticos del lado argentino; mientras, los estudios de Barvinsk (2014), de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo (OIT, 2002) y de Zsögön (2013) abordaron la trata de mujeres y menores para la prostitución.

Las contribuciones de estos estudios constituyen un punto de partida de la presente investigación, dado que permiten tejer un panorama de las realidades femeninas en la zona. Pero mi apuesta aquí es la de abordar más centralmente el papel crucial que el cuidado tiene en la definición de las estrategias femeninas de movilidad. En este sentido, se expanden las investigaciones previas, tematizando específicamente el cuidado que las mujeres están compelidas a desarrollar en su propio hogar, en su propia familia (y no en el mercado laboral transfronterizo), como elementos cruciales de la experiencia femenina de desplazamiento.

En segundo lugar, el presente trabajo busca expandir también los debates sobre la relación entre los cuidados y las migraciones. En diferentes regiones del mundo, los estudios migratorios y de género vienen planteando interrogantes fundamentales sobre el cuidado (González, 2016; Herrera, 2012; Hochschild, 2001; Mattingly, 2001; Pisani & Yoskowitz, 2002). Este es un concepto polisémico, que responde a las diversas expresiones cotidianas en que esta práctica puede manifestarse; discusión que retomaré con más detalle en el segundo apartado del texto. No obstante, cabe adelantar que la categoría cuidado, tal como la utilizo en este trabajo, refiere a actividades asignadas cultural e históricamente a las mujeres, que hacen posibles la reproducción de la vida (González, 2016).

Los estudios de la migración transnacional de larga distancia – desarrollados con mujeres migrantes desde localidades del sur global hacia las grandes metrópolis del norte global – han demostrado que muchos de los acuerdos y arreglos de cuidado que sostienen los hogares desde la globalización se reproducen en un contexto transnacional/transfronterizo, a través del trabajo coordinado de diversas mujeres, desencadenando lo que Hochschild (2001) denominó *cadena global de cuidado*. Dichas investigaciones apuntan a que la configuración de una desigualdad de género en la distribución de los trabajos del cuidado y de reproducción social de las familias, en los distintos lados de las fronteras nacionales, articula formas específicas de inserción y subordinación femeninas (Sassen, 2003:43). Estas formas, simultáneamente, conectan a las mujeres que migran o que se desplazan a través de las fronteras en una cadena de transferencia de las sobrecargas del cuidado (Mattingly, 2001:371; Pisani & Yoskowitz, 2002:578). Estos estudios dejan al descubierto, entonces, que la desigualdad – entre la obligación de cuidar y la falta de apoyos a los que derivar estas responsabilidades – empuja a las mujeres a complejas cadenas de precarización laboral y constituye, asimismo, una desprotección, dado que la mayoría de ellas no acceden a recibir cuidados (Woo, 2004:54).

El presente trabajo expande estas reflexiones, indagando sobre las cadenas de cuidado que se entretejen en circuitos de desplazamiento – o migratorios – de corta distancia, es decir, de carácter transfronterizo. Se trata, entonces, de una búsqueda por entender cómo estas cadenas globales de cuidado operan en estos espacios donde el desplazamiento femenino es tanto más intenso, debido no solamente a la cercanía espacial entre el país de origen y el país hacia el cual se dirigen (a veces diariamente) las mujeres fronterizas, sino por la propia lógica de interconexión económica, social, cultural y política de los espacios transfronterizos. Como bien ha definido Stephen (2012:456-463), dichos espacios presentan una intensidad circulatoria elevada, particular,

que excede las formas de conexión entre territorios migratorios transnacionales de larga distancia. Por lo mismo, las cadenas de cuidado feminizadas en las zonas fronterizas constituyen dinámicas *sui generis*, que difieren de aquellas desarrolladas por mujeres que migran internacionalmente hacia localidades distantes de sus localidades de origen. Si bien en la Triple Frontera del Paraná se ha estudiado la dimensión laboral de estas cadenas – es decir, la inserción laboral de las mujeres como cuidadoras y trabajadoras domésticas (Profit, 2015; Renoldi, 2013) –, aún no se ha indagado la dimensión “doméstica” de los cuidados como elemento estructurado desde la vida familiar femenina (o, al menos, no en su vinculación con las movilidades espaciales).

En tercer lugar, el presente estudio también contribuye a expandir algunas de las definiciones más clásicas de los estudios migratorios internacionales. Particularmente una afirmación, repetida por diversos autores, según la cual se asume que los sectores sociales más pobres de cada sociedad no migran, puesto que la migración “es una empresa y requiere generalmente de ciertos ahorros y redes sociales” (Grimson, 2011:36). Según estos argumentos, dichos sectores más empobrecidos “muchas veces están condenados a no poder ni siquiera migrar” (Grimson, 2011:36). A través de los datos etnográficos recopilados, se mostrará cómo esta asunción, si bien puede ser aplicada a las migraciones transnacionales de larga distancia, no se verifica en las movilidades transfronterizas femeninas. Mostraré, asimismo, que la movilidad femenina transfronteriza es, precisamente, una salida para aquellas mujeres que, atravesando situaciones de vulnerabilidad, utilizan el cruce de fronteras como una estrategia económica para sobrellevar las sobrecargas del cuidado y proyectar, en algunos casos, una acumulación de capital para una migración de mediana o larga distancia.

Los tres ejes referidos están articulados por un hallazgo etnográfico: para las mujeres que entrevisté en la Triple Frontera del Paraná, las decisiones sobre en qué momento y hacia dónde desplazarse dependen, centralmente, de sus cálculos sobre la cantidad y calidad de cuidados que podrán ofrecer a su núcleo familiar y a sí mismas. Los cálculos sobre el cuidado atraviesan todas las esferas de preocupación de estas mujeres y moldean, como veremos en los apartados etnográficos, sus posicionamientos políticos, sus vínculos laborales, sus relaciones interpersonales, sus lógicas de ahorro, sus estrategias económicas. Conversando sobre estos hallazgos, Alejandro Grimson<sup>2</sup> me sugirió el término “cuidadómetro” para explicitar este sistema dinámico de medición del cuidado que las mujeres establecen a la hora de decidir cómo, hacia dónde y con quién moverse a través de las fronteras.

Todos y cada uno de los apartados etnográficos de este artículo apuntan a mostrar las múltiples manifestaciones de este “cuidadómetro” en las vidas de las mujeres entrevistadas. Esto permite retratar, además, cómo las políticas del cuidado en la Triple Frontera (particularmente, en lo que concierne al sistema sanitario) están atravesadas por cuestiones regionales e interregionales, no sólo entre los países, sino también entre las diversas provincias, estados o departamentos de cada país<sup>3</sup>. Estas asimetrías y desigualdades (inter o intra) territoriales impactan los criterios de cuidado de las mujeres, conformando, por lo mismo, uno de los elementos centrales en los cómputos del “cuidadómetro”.

Las informaciones cualitativas que analizaré a lo largo del texto derivan de una etnografía que vengo realizando desde 2017.<sup>4</sup> Las narraciones recuperadas describen los tres primeros encuentros con mujeres fronterizas, mantenidos en el viaje que realicé junto de Eleonora López<sup>5</sup> entre el 14 de julio y el 2 de agosto de 2019. El primero de ellos, ocurrido un domingo, fue con María, una mujer paraguaya a quien conocí en el

2 Es investigador del Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas de Argentina (CONICET), fue mi director postdoctoral y el interlocutor con quien dialogué sobre mis experiencias etnográficas en las fronteras sudamericanas.

3 Cada país que confluye en el trifinio denomina de manera particular las unidades administrativas de sus repúblicas. Brasil está dividido en “estados”; Argentina en “provincias”; y Paraguay, en “departamentos”.

4 Comprendo la etnografía como la observación sistemática de los contextos sociales con la finalidad de participar de ellos, registrarlos, analizarlos y construir relatos. La perspectiva etnográfica busca la interacción crítica entre sujetos de estudio e investigadores: es un enfoque, un método y un ejercicio de relato intersubjetivo (Guber 2001:12).

5 Eleonora López es doctoranda en sociología y es asistente de investigación en el equipo del proyecto Fondecyt 1190056 (ver nota de pie de página n° 1).

bus, viajando desde Buenos Aires (Argentina) a la Triple Frontera. El segundo, el lunes, con Amarena, una joven argentina que trabaja en la terminal de buses de Puerto Iguazú (Argentina). El tercero, el martes, con Bernadette: una brasileña que vivió tres décadas en Paraguay, a quien conocí en Foz de Iguazú (Brasil).<sup>6</sup> A través de sus narraciones, veremos cómo el cuidado impacta en la experiencia femenina del espacio, influenciando las estrategias de movilidad que estas mujeres desarrollan.

En el segundo apartado, contextualizaré el territorio de la Triple Frontera, ofreciendo una síntesis de experiencias/problemáticas femeninas que estudios previos han observado en las ciudades fronterizas. El tercer apartado discute el marco teórico que fundamenta el artículo: los debates sobre cuidados, fronteras y género en las movilidades transnacionales/transfronterizas. Los apartados cuatro, cinco y seis recuperan mis diálogos con María, Amarena y Bernadette. Finalizo con reflexiones sobre la relación entre cuidados y estrategias de movilidad fronteriza y su configuración, a partir del “cuidómetro”.

## El contexto

La Triple Frontera está situada entre los ríos Paraná e Iguazú, territorio ancestral de los grupos guaraníes. Desde el término de la Guerra del Paraguay (1864-1870)<sup>7</sup>, esta área estuvo semi-poblada y sólo empezó a transformarse en una zona estratégica para Sudamérica entre los 1960s y 1980s (Albuquerque, 2012). Entonces, se pactó y se dio inicio a la construcción de las centrales hidroeléctricas de Itaipú (1971-1985), entre Brasil y Paraguay, y de Yacyretá (1983-2011), entre Paraguay y Argentina (Renoldi, 2013:125). Ambas fueron impulsadas por gobiernos militares de los tres países, a partir de proyectos desarrollistas con impactos sociales sustantivos (Lins Ribeiro, 1999),<sup>8</sup> para los cuales los gobiernos no se prepararon suficientemente (Renoldi, 2013). La dinamización económica impulsada por las hidroeléctricas provocó un sostenido crecimiento demográfico en la Triple Frontera (Lynn, 2008); pese a ello, el lado argentino permanecería menos poblado por una decisión de los militares en la dictadura de Videla (1976-1981) de no disputar las fronteras con Brasil (Grimson, 2002). Fue a partir de allí que las tres ciudades que colindan en esta Triple Frontera empezaron a ganar alguna notoriedad.

Foz de Iguazú, del lado brasileño, es la más antigua de las tres. Fue fundada en el siglo XIX como un asentamiento militar de pequeñas dimensiones (Renoldi, 2013). Su crecimiento poblacional y económico empezó a acelerarse en 1965, con la construcción del “Puente de la Amistad”, que la conecta con la paraguaya Ciudad del Este (Lynn, 2008). En el último censo brasileño (en 2010), Foz contabilizaba 256.081 habitantes (Albuquerque, 2012:191).

Ciudad del Este, del lado paraguayo, fue fundada en 1957 a partir de un decreto presidencial (Lynn, 2008), y con la finalidad de servir de enganche territorial con Foz, a través del puente (inaugurado 6 años después de la fundación de la ciudad). En los 1980s, se convirtió en Zona Franca, transformándose en un gran centro de comercio (i)lícito internacional de diversos productos. Esto activó una economía de grandes dimensiones con Foz y con Puerto Iguazú. La zona franca consolidó un importante nicho laboral femenino:

6 Siguiendo a los protocolos éticos de la investigación, las personas mencionadas tuvieron sus identidades protegidas por seudónimos.

7 El conflicto enfrentó la Triple Alianza (Brasil, Argentina y Uruguay, con apoyo británico) al ejército paraguayo, y se desencadenó por contiendas económicas y de determinación de los territorios, soberanías y fronteras (Reber, 1988). La victoria de la Alianza alimentó, con simbolismos militares y raciales, las nociones de diferencias étnico-identitarias entre Brasil y Argentina, en contraposición a Paraguay. Brasileños y argentinos, cada uno a su modo, proyectaron su victoria como prueba de una supuesta superioridad racial, moral y civilizatoria. Estos imaginarios siguen vigentes, tanto en Brasil (Souchaud, 2011) como en Argentina (Grimson, 2012).

8 Por ejemplo, dotaron el área de una infraestructura de transporte fluvial y terrestre de las más articuladas del Cono Sur americano (Lynn 2008).

el comercio legal y el contrabando “hormiga” (a pequeña escala) (Cardin, 2012).<sup>9</sup> Es la ciudad con el mayor crecimiento demográfico en la Triple Frontera. En el último censo paraguayo (en 2012), tenía 312.652 habitantes, muchos de origen brasileño (Souchaud, 2011).

Puerto Iguazú, del lado argentino, fue fundada en 1902 y es parte de la provincia de Misiones (Renoldi, 2013). La ciudad contaba con una población total de 42.849 personas según el censo de 2010 (Dachary & Arnaiz, 2012). Su principal actividad es el turismo (dirigido a las Cataratas del Iguazú) y está vinculada a Foz a través del “Puente de la Fraternidad”, inaugurado en 1985 (Giménez, 2011:8). En Puerto Iguazú, los principales nichos de inserción laboral femenina son la venta de productos artesanales turísticos y el comercio transfronterizo. Las mujeres que trabajan en esta última actividad se están reorientando hacia los trabajos de cuidados y servicios domésticos, debido a la crisis del circuito comercial (Renoldi, 2013:131).

Pese al crecimiento de la zona, entre los 1970s y 1980s, es recién en los 1990s que pasa a ser efectivamente entendida como una Triple Frontera (Giménez, 2011; Rabossi, 2004), transformación potenciada por la firma del Tratado del Mercado Común del Sur (Mercosur), en 1991. Actualmente, las tres ciudades configuran la zona transfronteriza con mayor flujo humano (Albuquerque, 2008), de mercancías (Sausi & Oddone, 2010), de turismo (Cury & Fraga, 2013) y de actividades ilícitas de Sudamérica (Cardin, 2012:208), especialmente, tráfico de drogas y mercancías (Cardin, 2012), crimen organizado (Costa & Schulmeister, 2007) y trata –de mujeres y menores– con fines sexuales (OIT, 2002; Zsögön, 2013).

Según Cardin (2012) y Renoldi (2013), el peculiar dinamismo de esta Triple Frontera se caracteriza por unos circuitos de movilidad y de relaciones (económicas, sociales y culturales) en las que legalidad e ilegalidad, pertenencia y desarraigo, no se constituyen como pares antagónicos. Por ello, resulta difícil pensar estas tres ciudades por separado. Ellas se interpelan fuertemente en términos económicos, políticos y culturales. Conforman, entonces, una conurbación tri-fronteriza con más de 600.000 personas (Renoldi, 2014:2). La vida cotidiana de quienes allí habitan conlleva el constante cruce entre fronteras, entre ciudades. Pero esta movilidad se encuentra mucho más distendida entre el lado brasileño y el paraguayo: los habitantes refieren al límite entre estos países como una “frontera abierta”, dada la laxitud fiscalizadora de las autoridades. Esto no implica que los cruces entre Brasil y Argentina, y entre esta y Paraguay, no sean intensos. Son – esto sí – mucho más controlados por las autoridades argentinas, mereciendo de parte de los habitantes la denominación de “frontera cerrada”.

Todas estas configuraciones hacen de la Triple Frontera un espacio particular para las mujeres. Primero, porque se trata de uno de los principales territorios de acción de las redes transnacionales de trata de mujeres con fines sexuales de Sudamérica (Barvinsk, 2014; OIT, 2002; Zsögön, 2013). Los diagnósticos apuntan a que el fenómeno está profundamente articulado con los circuitos turísticos y comerciales fronterizos (OIT 2002:16)<sup>10</sup>. En segundo lugar, las mujeres están expuestas a la interseccionalidad de diferentes formas de discriminación y marginación social (de clase, nacional, étnica/racial). Estas interseccionalidades tienen consecuencias profundas en la organización económica y política del territorio. Por ejemplo, las poblaciones indígenas, afro y mestizas tienden a sufrir procesos más violentos de expropiación de áreas agrícolas en los tres países (Fogel, 2008). La ruptura de la unidad productiva familiar y la ausencia de salidas laborales masculinas empujan a las mujeres a responsabilizarse, productiva y reproductivamente, de las familias. Así, ellas, especialmente si son negras, indígenas o mestizas, acarrean más vulneraciones en los tres lados de la frontera. Por último, las movi­lidades transfronterizas están interrelacionadas con las transformaciones de los lazos familiares, roles de género, y sobrecarga (re)productiva femenina (Ribeiro & Geusina, 2008; Profit, 2015). Es sobre este último punto que detendremos nuestra atención.

9 Este comercio vive, actualmente, un ciclo de desaceleración que detonó procesos de reordenamiento de la economía comercial a pequeña escala en Ciudad del Este (Giménez 2011), afectando especialmente a los nichos de actividad femeninos (Renoldi 2013).

10 Según Seaman (2012:31) la trata humana sería parte del contexto polifacético de institucionalidad del contrabando y del tráfico transfronterizo. Estas interacciones liminales exponen a las mujeres a redes de trata, aunque generalmente sean cooptadas por un familiar cercano (Barvinsk, 2014:75).

## Debates teóricos

Desde los 1990s, las perspectivas antropológicas sobre la movilidad transnacional/transfronteriza vienen considerando que las relaciones de género – sus asimetrías y jerarquías – constituyen un elemento central de las experiencias femeninas: al desplazarse, las mujeres (re)producen y rompen (contradictoriamente) las experiencias de subalternidad y dominación. Lo anterior se observaría en las migraciones transnacionales (de larga o corta distancia) y en las movilidades transfronterizas (Guizardi, González & Stefoni, 2018:40-44). Este artículo dialoga con esos debates, y propone observar su operacionalización en las trayectorias femeninas que atraviesan la Triple Frontera del Paraná. Se busca mostrar cómo los cuidados son centrales para las mujeres en sus estrategias de desplazamiento fronterizo. Pero, ¿a qué me refiero cuando hablo de cuidados?

El concepto alude a toda una diversidad de prácticas que pueden o no ser remuneradas; estar o no reguladas por un contrato laboral; desarrollarse en el espacio doméstico o en el público y que, además, pueden cruzar fronteras nacionales y establecerse entre países distintos (González, 2016:45). Según Glenn (2010:5), involucran el *cuidado directo* de las personas (bañarlas, alimentarlas, limpiarlas, vestir las); el *cuidado emocional* (conversar, consolar, dialogar, atender); los *servicios* indispensables para las dos anteriores (comprar alimentos, ropas, pagar cuentas, comprar remedios) y el *mantenimiento de los espacios* donde se vive (limpieza, arreglos) (González, 2016). Otro cuidado consiste, además, en fomentar los vínculos relacionales, familiares y comunitarios, lo que la antropología feminista denomina “trabajo de parentesco” (González et al., 2019). Todas estas actividades son centrales para la *reproducción social*.

El concepto de reproducción social deviene de los debates marxistas que fueron reinterpretados por el feminismo, a partir de la crítica al concepto que Simone de Beauvoir ofrece en el tercer capítulo de su libro “El segundo Sexo” (Beauvoir, 2018 [1949]). Si bien esta crítica se hace presente en los discursos y argumentos de los movimientos sociales feministas desde fines del siglo XIX (Beauvoir, 2018:24-25), es solamente en los 1970s que ella adentrará los debates de las feministas en las ciencias sociales y, en particular, en la antropología (Lamas, 1986:174).<sup>11</sup> Esto provoca un redimensionamiento del debate sobre reproducción social (Ferguson, 2008:43).

En el argumento marxista, el modo capitalista de producción, para existir, debe no solamente producir sus condiciones de existencia, sino también su continuidad histórica (Laslett & Brenner, 1989). Así, la producción del capitalismo implicaría la reproducción de los mecanismos que fomentan la mantención de las divisiones, inequidades y asimetrías entre clases, y entre los bloques internos de estas clases (Bourdieu, 2011). Extrapolando el debate de Althusser (1988 [1970]) – para quien ciertas instituciones sociales como la familia, el Estado, la Iglesia y la escuela constituirían elementos centrales para el mantenimiento de estas estrategias de reproducción de la desigualdad – el argumento feminista en las ciencias sociales cuestionará la subalternización de género que subyace a estas mismas estrategias (Ferguson, 2008). Denunciará, así que la continuidad del modo productivo descansa sobre los hombros de las mujeres, quienes se encargan de la mayor parte del esfuerzo de “reproducir” nuevas generaciones. Esto desencadena desventajas cruciales para ellas, que son magnificadas en el curso de sus vidas (González et al., 2019).

Considerando estos aspectos, los estudios sociales sobre los cuidados se vienen articulando a partir de una perspectiva transversal de género. Esta perspectiva asume un claro posicionamiento político. Se plantea el imperativo de desnaturalizar la sobrecarga femenina del cuidado, estableciendo que las democracias contemporáneas deben garantizar los cuidados por medio de arreglos institucionales y presupuestarios; que este debe ser normado y obtener apoyo estatal (Daly & Lewis, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> En la antropología anglófona, son considerados textos fundacionales de este debate sobre reproducción social los volúmenes editados por Rosaldo y Lamphere (1974), y por Rapp (1975).

La relación de estas reflexiones con las movidades transfronterizas comenzó a ganar centralidad analítica en los 1980s, cuando la frontera México/EEUU emergió como espacio privilegiado para investigar la condensación de las relaciones de género. A partir de estos estudios, las regiones fronterizas empezaron a ser definidas como espacios de negociación simbólica, de procesos políticos e identidades culturales (Garduño, 2003:15); la de género, entre ellas (Álvarez, 1995:450). Es en este momento que surgen estudios preocupados por la experiencia transfronteriza de las mujeres.

La obra de Anzaldúa (1987) es considerada fundacional en este campo crítico. Sus escritos interpelan la historia social y política del espacio, que es atravesada con las historias personales y familiares de la autora. Esta intersubjetividad crítica le facilita “abrir” la frontera, a partir de su presencia en ella, situando su cuerpo, su experiencia del género y de la violencia como facilitadores de una historiografía donde el sujeto subalterno se convierte en el centro de una comprensión del espacio. Desde entonces, las aportaciones de investigadoras latinoamericanas en esta frontera constituyen una contribución central a la superación de la invisibilización de discriminaciones étnicas/raciales, en el marco de las reflexiones sobre los territorios fronterizos (Lugo, 1990; Monárrez, 2013; Woo, 2004).

Entre las varias conclusiones de estos estudios, tres son fundamentales. La primera alude a que la vulnerabilidad laboral de las mujeres fronterizas se extiende (y frecuentemente se origina) en el ámbito doméstico: en sus relaciones con sus progenitores, parejas y miembros masculinos de sus familias (Molina, 1985:33). A partir de la instauración de las economías globalizadas y flexibilizadoras del trabajo en la frontera México/EEUU – que emplean a más mujeres, por considerarlas más explotables – el desempleo masculino provocó que los hombres se sintieran desplazados de su rol de proveedores económicos. Esto derivó en brotes de violencia de género (Molina, 1985:35-36). La segunda: las mujeres transfronterizas indocumentadas enfrentan una mayor cantidad de violaciones de sus derechos humanos en el cruce de fronteras (Woo, 2004:74). Así, la condición de género contribuye a la configuración de un encadenamiento de violencias, que se magnifican a lo largo de todo el itinerario hasta la frontera. La tercera: a inicios del siglo XXI, centenas de mujeres que trabajaban en las maquilas de Ciudad Juárez (México) fueron asesinadas brutalmente. Entre 1994 y 2004, alrededor 400 mujeres perdieron la vida en estos *feminicidios* (Arriola, 2006:603). Pese a la repercusión pública que alcanzaron estos casos, los asesinos siguieron impunes por muchos años (Monárrez, 2013). Los trabajos desarrollados sobre este fenómeno argumentan que las mujeres poseen un rol dialéctico en los espacios fronterizos: encarnan, histórica y culturalmente, la sumisión específica de sus contextos cotidianos y, simultáneamente, son agentes activos de resistencia (personal y comunitaria) (Morales & Bejarano, 2009).

Estos estudios permiten establecer una interrelación nefasta entre la aplicación de reformas neoliberalizantes en los mercados laborales fronterizos, la explotación productiva femenina, la sobrecarga reproductiva de las mujeres, y el ciclo de intensificación de las violencias de género en la frontera México/EEUU. En adelante, siguiendo estas interrelaciones en la vida de tres mujeres en la Triple Frontera del Paraná, me propongo comprender el lugar de los cuidados en la producción de las localidades fronterizas y de las movidades femeninas.

## María

Eleonora y yo saldríamos de Buenos Aires el domingo 14 de julio de 2019 a las 13:30 hs. Llegamos a la estación de buses de Retiro con antelación, pero nuestro bus venía con 30 minutos de atraso. Apenas lo estacionó el chofer, entregamos nuestras valijas y ocupamos nuestros asientos en el piso inferior (el bus tiene dos pisos). El piso inferior estaba conformado por un conjunto de pares de asientos (posicionado sobre el lado derecho del vehículo, si miramos desde la entrada hacia la parte trasera), y un conjunto de asientos unitarios del lado izquierdo. Un pasillo separa, a lo largo del bus, ambos conjuntos. En los dos primeros asientos de a par, viajaban

una señora y su hijo –María y Ulises, descubriríamos después–. Un señor viajaba en la silla unitaria, separado de ellos por el pasillo. Detrás de María y su hijo, iba una pareja de jóvenes (de unos 25 años). Eleonora y yo estábamos inmediatamente detrás de ellos. En el último asiento unitario, del lado izquierdo, una fila detrás nuestro, se encontraba un hombre que leía novelas todo el tiempo.

En su trayecto hacia Puerto Iguazú, el bus va parando en diversas ciudades argentinas que bordean el río Uruguay: atraviesa una parte de la provincia de Buenos Aires hasta la provincia de Entre Ríos. Tras cruzar a esta última, avanza sobre la provincia de Corrientes y, luego, sobre la de Misiones, bordeando y/o cruzando los afluentes del río Paraná. Es un viaje lento, de más de 20 horas. La lentitud no se debe a la distancia: los 1257 km que separan la capital argentina de Puerto Iguazú podrían realizarse en 16 horas en un automóvil particular. Pero el bus va parando en diversos puntos del trayecto, en aquellos pueblos coloniales que conformaron, en algún momento de su historia, territorios guaraníes. En la ciudad de Gualaguaychú, Entre Ríos, a orillas del río Uruguay, paramos por unos minutos más, para que los/las pasajeros/as pudiéramos usar los baños y comprar comida. Con Eleonora, aprovechábamos cada parada para conversar con los/las demás pasajeros/as, y observar los flujos de cada estación. En esta quinta parada, observamos que María aún no había bajado del bus ni una vez. Casi todos los pasajeros desocupábamos el bus; pero ella permaneció sentada, cuidando a su hijo, que tenía problemas de movilidad. Nos apresuramos a comprar nuestro café y usar el baño. Volvimos al colectivo para preguntarle si necesitaba que le compráramos comida o que la ayudáramos a llevar a su hijo al baño.

Al escuchar nuestro ofrecimiento, María hizo una expresión de sorpresa y nos agradeció sonriendo: no era necesario, su marido ya había bajado a comprar. Miré, entonces, al asiento unitario a su lado, y vi que estaba vacío. Fue así como nos enteramos de que el señor de la primera fila era su marido y el padre del niño. La revelación nos causó sorpresa. Desde Buenos Aires a Gualaguaychú estuvimos dos horas en el bus; y el hombre no había proferido palabra, ni a María ni al pequeño. María, por otro lado, pasó todo ese tiempo atendiendo al niño, que requería asistencia constante. Conversaba con él, le secaba la saliva, le daba de beber, jugaba con él; todo con mucha paciencia y cariño. La ausencia de la participación del hombre en estos cuidados – y en el diálogo con madre e hijo – nos hizo suponer inicialmente que María no conocía al hombre.

La escena descrita constituye una condensación de las desigualdades que se verifican en la responsabilidad de los cuidados, entre las figuras progenitoras femenina y masculina. Y la expresión de dicha desigualdad, en un acto rutinario – como ocupar un lugar en un medio de transporte público – era explícita al punto de establecer, para observadoras externas (Eleonora y yo), la apreciación de que no había entre aquella figura masculina y la femenina con el hijo un lazo parental o forma de vínculo alguna. No por casualidad la madre viajaba en el asiento doble, acompañando de cerca a su hijo, mientras el padre del niño ocupaba un asiento individual. Esta localización equivalía a la disposición espacial de una desigualdad en la responsabilidad de cuidado. Era, asimismo, la condensación gráfica de la sobrecarga femenina: ellos nunca se turnaron en sus asientos. El hombre durmió cómodamente todo el viaje, mientras María cuidaba al niño.

De pie, con mi café en las manos, me puse a charlar con María. Eleonora me acompañó. Empezamos una animada conversación. Le comenté que el billete del bus decía que llegaríamos a las 7:00 hs. del día siguiente a Puerto Iguazú e indagué si era posible que esto sucediera. Me dijo que no: llegaríamos después de las 10:00 hs. Nos reímos con la constatación: nos venden un pasaje que indica un horario de llegada que no se cumple. María dijo que hacía siempre este viaje y que raras veces se llegaba a destino antes de las 11:00 hs. El tránsito entre Buenos Aires y la Triple Frontera del Paraná era parte de su vida: lo había *hecho muchas veces y lo hacía siempre*.

Mientras nos reíamos, entró al ómnibus su marido, que logró escuchar parte de la conversación y coincidió que los horarios consignados en los pasajes no eran creíbles. María nos presentó a su marido, quien nos saludó cordialmente mientras regresaba a su asiento. Mientras el bus no se movía, seguimos conversando. María nos contó, entonces, que era paraguaya, y que desde hacía diez años vivía en Buenos Aires. Provenía de un pequeño

pueblo rural, al norte de Ciudad del Este, cerca del límite entre los departamentos paraguayos de Alto Paraná (cuya capital es Ciudad del Este) y de Canindeyú. La principal actividad económica de su localidad de origen es el cultivo de algodón, maíz y, en los últimos años, soja.

Tenía cinco hermanos/as en total. Pero ninguno/a permaneció en la localidad de origen: todos/as emigraron a Ciudad del Este para trabajar.<sup>12</sup> Desde que la soja tomara los campos, contó, migrar a las ciudades era la única forma de conseguir trabajo. Desde Ciudad del Este, los migrantes rurales como ella establecen lazos y ahorran plata para migrar a Buenos Aires. No suelen ir a la ciudad argentina en la Triple Frontera – Puerto Iguazú – a trabajar, decía, porque es “muy chica, con pocas oportunidades”.

María, su marido y el hijo de ambos viajaban para pasar las vacaciones de invierno en la casa de una de las hermanas de ella. Se tomarían unos días para ir al campo a visitar la casa de sus padres, que se negaban a migrar a la ciudad: seguían en su pequeña chacra, ayudados por las remesas de los/las hijos/as. Nos contó que, cuando llegaran a Puerto Iguazú, los recibiría otra de sus hermanas, que venía a buscarla para asistirle en los cuidados del niño mientras viajaban. Así, con la asistencia familiar, tomarían la balsa que lleva desde Puerto Iguazú a Puerto Franco (en Paraguay) y, de allí viajarían en el auto del marido de la hermana los 13 km. hasta Ciudad del Este.

La decisión de migrar a la capital argentina la habían tomado María y el marido. Buenos Aires era un destino migratorio con mejores ofertas de sueldo: tanto en comparación con las ciudades paraguayas más cercanas a su pueblo de origen (Ciudad del Este, por ejemplo), como con la ciudad brasileña (Foz) y la argentina (Puerto Iguazú). Pero la decisión no había estado orientada sólo por criterios económicos: María y su esposo contaban con una densa red de familiares y amigos emigrados a Buenos Aires, y esto facilitaba el proceso. Tenían la casa de unos tíos y primos donde hospedarse hasta acumular recursos para alquilar una vivienda. Así, fueron a vivir al municipio de Florencio Varela (conocido enclave de migrantes paraguayos, en la zona sur del Gran Buenos Aires): todos en su calle eran paraguayos y le encantaba vivir allí. Se sentía en Paraguay.

Empero, sus planes migratorios en Buenos Aires sufrieron una transformación. Su idea inicial era estar un par de años, ahorrarse dinero y volverse a Paraguay para poner un negocio. Justo cuando se preparaban para emprender el viaje de vuelta, se descubrió embarazada. Fue entonces cuando los cálculos del cuidado atravesaron los planes migratorios. Según María, los servicios médicos en Paraguay son muy caros: tener el hijo en Buenos Aires garantizaría una atención médica de calidad en el acompañamiento del embarazo, en los exámenes necesarios, en el parto y en los meses inmediatamente posteriores. Además, contaban con la cobertura de salud (“la obra social”) vinculada al sindicato del rubro de la seguridad, en que el marido trabajaba.<sup>13</sup> Así, en el cómputo de la relación entre los cuidados y los servicios de salud que podrían recibir en Argentina y en Paraguay, decidieron aplazar el regreso, para después del período postparto de María.

Pero tras tener al bebé – Ulises, el niño al que cuidaba en el viaje –, María escuchó de los médicos que él tenía discapacidades severas. No nos especificó cuál fue el diagnóstico exacto, pero el niño, ya con casi nueve años, parecía tener unos seis: era más pequeño de lo que se espera para su edad. Además, no caminaba solo,

12 Entre sus hermanas y hermanos, algunos trabajan con comercio, otros con construcción. Todos viven de manera “transfronteriza”, entre Foz de Iguazú y Ciudad del Este.

13 Las “Obras Sociales” en Argentina son entidades que organizan la prestación de la atención médica ambulatoria, preventiva y de emergencia (en casos de enfermedad, accidente, discapacidad, licencia, embarazo, etc.) de los/las trabajadores/as asociados/as. Tanto el/la trabajador/a como su pareja (si estuviera desempleada) e hijos (hasta los 21 años, extensible a los 25 años) quedan cubiertos. Una ley nacional reglamenta que todas las personas con empleo deben gozar de obra social, estableciendo que el pago de estos servicios se hace con una contribución mixta del empleador y del/de la trabajador/a (descontada mensualmente en su hoja de pagos). La mayor parte de las obras sociales argentinas están administradas por los sindicatos: cada nicho laboral/profesional cuenta con una específica. Asimismo, el sistema nacional provee de la red de hospitales públicos (gratuitos) y las Obras Sociales Nacionales, Provinciales (para desempleados, trabajadores informales sin contrato, población vulnerable, indigentes) y el Programa de Atención Médica Integral-PAMI, que brinda atención sanitaria a jubilados y pensionados (Maceira, 2006:2).

tenía dificultades motoras para sostener sus juguetes, y estaba mucho rato mirando en silencio al vacío. Hablaba con pocas palabras, que repetía constantemente. La más frecuente – “mamá” – nos hizo suponer que María era su principal referencia afectiva adulta.

El diagnóstico de la discapacidad de Ulises fue una dura noticia, dijo María. Todos los planes de futuro sufrieron una inflexión. Los médicos afirmaban que el niño iba a necesitar de atención especializada vitalicia. La única manera de garantizarle un mínimo de bienestar era una atención permanente de kinesiólogos, psicoterapeutas, psicopedagogos y neurólogos especializados. Aquí, la medición comparativa de las posibilidades de cuidado apareció, una vez más, como ejercicio central en la orientación de la decisión migratoria. Contrastando los costes y la calidad de la atención que podrían brindar a Ulises en Argentina y Paraguay, decidieron quedarse en Buenos Aires.

María confesó que ella y su marido jamás se plantearon la posibilidad de criar un hijo en Argentina: preferían que sus hijos crecieran en Paraguay. Pero las necesidades de cuidado de Ulises reconfiguraron estas preferencias. Los servicios de salud en Paraguay eran tan malos – decía – que llevar el niño a ese país sería “someterlo a la tortura”, a pésimas condiciones de vida. “En Paraguay, el que tiene dinero, vive; y el que no tiene dinero, muere”. Nos contó que, sin recursos para pagar la cobertura de salud, difícilmente podrían tener buena atención médica en Paraguay, donde incluso la salud pública es paga. Además, decía, faltaban especialistas, equipos, insumos y medicinas adecuados.

En contrapartida, María evaluaba que los servicios de salud pública en Argentina eran “de primera calidad” y “gratis” (es decir, pagados con los impuestos, pero sin requerir de los contribuyentes nuevos desembolsos al momento de recibir dichos servicios). Así, además de contar con la asistencia de salud de la “Obra Social” a la que tenían acceso por las contribuciones laborales de su marido, María contaba con una amplia red de profesionales de la salud en los servicios públicos de la capital argentina. Su hijo tuvo el acompañamiento de una neuróloga experta, que atiende en un hospital público considerado una referencia internacional en discapacidades. Esta misma doctora cuidó continuamente a Ulises desde que nació. Quedarse en Buenos Aires fue, entonces, una decisión tomada para permitir que Ulises tuviera “todas las atenciones médicas que necesitaba”.

Como nació en Argentina, Ulises es ciudadano argentino, además de ser también paraguayo (por la nacionalidad de sus papás). Desde que nació, cobra la pensión social por invalidez, un derecho garantizado por ley en Argentina y que, decía María, no existe en Paraguay. Nos explicó, además, que había diversas leyes argentinas pensadas para “cuidar a la gente”. Por ejemplo, debido a su discapacidad, Ulises tenía derecho a viajar de ómnibus por todo el país sin pagar el pasaje: las empresas le dan gratis el boleto, y deben concederle dos más (para los acompañantes). Así, podían tomar el ómnibus los tres – ella, Ulises y el padre – para estar con la familia en Paraguay en las vacaciones de invierno. Esto les facilitaba poder ir más veces a estar con la familia durante el año (y María podía contar con la ayuda de sus hermanas en el cuidado del pequeño).

No obstante, ella opinaba que con la presidencia de Mauricio Macri (2015-2019) todo había empeorado: se había vuelto muy difícil pagar la cuenta de la electricidad, del gas; no había empleo y ella esperaba, “sinceramente”, que Argentina cambiara “de rumbo político con las próximas elecciones”. Nos aseveró que esta crisis había afectado a la salud pública, que empeoró flagrantemente. Empero, incluso así, seguía mucho mejor que la paraguaya. Observamos, entonces, que los cómputos comparativos de acceso al cuidado en los servicios de salud que realizaba María orientaban sus posicionamientos sobre los contextos políticos nacionales.

Aproveché estos comentarios para decirle que, desde mi perspectiva, las mujeres sufrían más en estos momentos de crisis, pues, cuando el Estado deja de prestar servicios públicos, son ellas quienes generalmente deben resolver su ausencia, buscar atenciones/soluciones alternativas. Apenas terminé de hablar, María me hizo señas con los ojos – sin girar la cabeza, sin moverse apenas –, apuntando con este sutil movimiento a su marido al lado. Y, después de este movimiento contenido, esos mismos ojos sutiles se llenaron de lágrimas. María me hizo que sí con la cabeza, pero no profirió palabra. Entendí que concordaba, pero no podía decirlo en voz alta.

Parecía que el intenso cuidado que la vimos entregar al hijo en las dos horas de viaje estaban vinculados con estas lágrimas y con estas palabras contenidas. Ella no podía enunciar a voz firme, al lado del marido, que las mujeres están sobrecargadas de trabajo. Su propia sobrecarga no podía ser puesta en la mesa de diálogo. Esta apreciación sobre su obligación moral de aceptar la sobrecarga silenciosamente nos acompañó las 20 horas del viaje. Sólo vimos al padre interactuar brevemente con el niño una única vez, cuando este dijo “papá”.

Lo que María sí pudo contar es que, desde que había tenido a Ulises, ya no podía trabajar fuera de su hogar. Antes del embarazo lo hacía, y tenía un buen sueldo, pero Ulises demandaba cuidados presenciales intensivos todo el tiempo: no era viable pagar a alguien para realizarlos. Ese servicio saldría muy caro, superando incluso el sueldo que ella recibía. Frente a la imposibilidad de tercerizar los cuidados de Ulises a otra mujer – y sin que se planteara la posibilidad de que padre y madre los compartieran – María se había visto obligada a encargarse de este “caro servicio” (aunque sin un sueldo que reconociera su labor). La solución reproduce la *ideología familista* – y patriarcal – según la cual el mejor cuidado es el que entregan las mujeres de la familia (Glenn, 2010; González et al., 2019). Reproduce, además, la división de los cuidados por género, amarrando a la mujer a la responsabilidad de suplir trabajos esenciales para la reproducción social que el Estado, el mercado y los demás miembros de la familia no cubren.

Mientras hablaba de su destino como “cuidadora universal” de Ulises, me preguntó si yo tenía hijos. Respondí que no; que era muy difícil porque trabajaba muchas horas, no tenía a mi familia cerca (para contar con una red de apoyos). Eleonora, que también es migrante y vive lejos de su red familiar, dijo que tenía el mismo inconveniente y temía, además, no ser buena mamá. Asertiva, María nos contestó: “pero no tienen que saber ser madres. Una no nace madre, una aprende a ser madre”. La frase reproducía uno de los principales argumentos de Simone de Beauvoir en “El segundo sexo”, obra fundacional del feminismo:

No se nace mujer: se llega a serlo. Ningún destino biológico, psíquico o económico define la figura que reviste en el seno de la sociedad la hembra humana; es el conjunto de la civilización el que elabora ese producto intermedio entre el macho y el castrado al que se califica de femenino (Beauvoir, 2018:207).

Beauvoir estipula, con este argumento, que los mandatos, saberes y adscripciones de lo femenino no son, en absoluto, naturales. Son fruto de construcciones históricas que se aprenden, que se inculcan y que van dotando a las mujeres de una *situacionalidad singular* (singularmente oprimida, ironiza) (Beauvoir, 2018:16). María particularizaba esta apreciación, desafiando el sentido naturalizado de la maternidad en las mujeres. Y, liberándonos del miedo de no ser capaces de cumplir con los requerimientos “naturales” maternos, nos aseguraba que convertirse en una figura materna era un proceso y una decisión. Nos explicaba que estábamos a la altura de la maternidad; que no había nada que temer. Había que decidir si lo queríamos o no. María, la mujer a la que intuíamos sobrecargada por los cuidados, restringida a su desempeño en el ámbito doméstico; la misma mujer que momentos antes había llenado sus ojos de lágrimas al pensar en la sobrecarga femenina en un contexto de crisis social y económica; la mujer que silenciaba su opinión para no ofender la posición productiva del marido (que la escuchaba sin proferir palabra) nos informaba, minutos después, que había elegido su maternidad. En un contexto adverso a cualquier manifestación de la voluntad propia, ella nos situó su nicho de agencia. Decidió ser madre y se hizo madre.

Su reflexión no se detuvo ahí. Cuando la escuché proferir la frase, repetí en voz alta la de Simone, “una no nace mujer: llega a serlo”. Inmediatamente, mirándome a los ojos, y aprovechando que el marido había ido al baño, María completó: “sí, a los golpes. Una se hace mujer a golpes; la vida de las mujeres es muy difícil”. Seguimos conversando hasta que el bus se puso en movimiento. Entonces, Eleonora y yo nos apresuramos, le dimos un beso a María y fuimos a sentarnos. Cuando llegamos a Puerto Iguazú, le di un abrazo y le dije al oído: “Ojalá puedas descansar en estas vacaciones”.

## Amarena

Eran casi las 11:00 hs del lunes 15 de agosto de 2019 cuando llegamos a Puerto Iguazú. Al bajar del ómnibus, luego de 20 horas de viaje y sin haber desayunado,<sup>14</sup> Eleonora y yo decidimos comer algo en la terminal de buses, antes de proseguir nuestro viaje hacia Foz de Iguazú, donde nos hospedaríamos. Entramos, entonces, a una de las cafeterías de la estación. Nos atendió Amarena: simpática joven argentina que – nos enteraríamos más tarde – acababa de cumplir 26 años. Con cordialidad, nos habló de las opciones de merienda y esperó atenta nuestra decisión.

Mientras comíamos, hicimos algunas preguntas sobre la terminal. Amarena se puso curiosa por conocer el motivo de nuestro viaje. Le explicamos que estábamos desarrollando un estudio sobre mujeres en las fronteras; le preguntamos si no le gustaría concedernos una entrevista. Consintió que lo hiciéramos mientras ella trabajaba (pausaríamos la grabación para que atendiera a los clientes). Estuvimos con ella por casi tres horas en las que, con enorme generosidad, nos contó su vida.

Amarena nació y creció en Puerto Iguazú. Sus padres, no obstante, eran migrantes internos en Argentina. La madre era de Mar del Plata (en la provincia de Buenos Aires), hija de un trabajador de una cadena de casinos, ocupación que le obligaba a migrar desplazándose a las ciudades argentinas donde sus servicios eran requeridos. Su familia materna había experimentado años de intensa movilidad nacional, residiendo en lugares tan distantes como el Chaco argentino y la patagónica provincia de Chubut. Pero en los 1980s, trasladaron a su abuelo a Puerto Iguazú y la vida allí les encantó: decidieron fijar residencia. Desde jovencita, su mamá había conseguido empleo en una farmacia de la ciudad, donde aún trabajaba. Su papá, por su parte, era de la ciudad de Santa Fe (capital de la provincia homónima). Migró a Puerto Iguazú para trabajar en servicios turísticos y fue precisamente empleado en el rubro compartido con su ahora suegro que conoció a la madre de Amarena. Se enamoraron, se casaron, tuvieron su única hija y llevaban juntos casi tres décadas.

Según Amarena, desde el matrimonio hubo, entre sus progenitores, un acuerdo de división del trabajo hogareño. Su madre jamás se planteó dejar su empleo para hacerse cargo sola del cuidado de la casa y de la hija. Así, organizó con el marido un sistema de tareas compartidas y ambos pudieron mantener sus empleos y conciliarlos con tales tareas. Amarena tuvo una infancia tranquila, terminó la educación secundaria en Puerto Iguazú. Después, eligió cursar diseño gráfico, para lo que debió trasladarse a la ciudad de Oberá (provincia de Misiones, a 268 km. de Puerto Iguazú). Estudió allí un año en una escuela técnica terciaria, hasta decidirse por intentar la universidad, en la ciudad de Resistencia (capital de la provincia de Chaco). Allí cursó por cuatro años más.

No obstante, su padre se enfermó y estuvo muchos meses de reposo, sin poder trabajar. La situación económica de la familia empeoró y Amarena, entonces con 21 años, interrumpió sus estudios en el último año de la carrera: regresó a Puerto Iguazú para ayudar a su mamá en el cuidado de su padre, y para trabajar, contribuyendo económicamente con su familia. Su carrera se quedó truncada. Consiguió un empleo como vendedora del *Duty Free Shopping* de Puerto Iguazú, donde trabajaba 12 horas diarias, aunque por un salario relativamente elevado (particularmente en las temporadas turísticas, debido a la afluencia masiva de compradores brasileños). Fue allí donde Amarena aprendió mejor el portugués – que habla de manera fluida y casi sin acento –. Desde pequeña, entendía e incluso hablaba portugués porque, según decía, en Puerto Iguazú “todos ven la televisión brasileña y escuchan música brasileña”. Pero en el *Duty* tuvo que pulir muchísimo su acento: los/las brasileños/as no entienden el castellano, ni quieren ser atendidos en un idioma que no sea el suyo. Como son la mayoría absoluta entre los clientes, los gerentes presionaban las vendedoras a que aprendieran “un portugués ejemplar”.

<sup>14</sup> Nuestras provisiones se terminaron y no quisimos bajar en las rápidas pausas del colectivo en la Provincia de Misiones.

Según Amarena, los/las brasileños/as vienen a Puerto Iguazú a comprar perfumes y diversos productos importados. Pero, dada la crisis económica de Argentina, las mujeres cruzaban al lado brasileño para abastecer a sus hogares: los alimentos estaban mucho más baratos allá. Computando la rentabilidad de sus recursos y las necesidades de su hogar, Amarena iba a Foz al menos una vez por semana a comprar arroz, leche y harina de trigo. Ella consideraba que los productos brasileños eran de menor calidad, pero sus precios eran convenientes. En un cómputo entre necesidades, posibilidades y calidad, resultaba conveniente comprar en Brasil. Pero este no era el único cómputo que la llevaba al lado brasileño:

Lo que es la salud, el hospital, conviene más allá. Todo lo que es clínica, odontología. El oculista también, voy allá [...]. Pero por el hecho de acá, en Puerto Iguazú, no es tan bueno. No sé por qué, nadie [ningún doctor] se quiere venir acá. Pero, realmente, yo he ido a [la Provincia de] Entre Ríos y es bien buena lo que es la salud argentina. Todo el mundo habla sobre eso. La salud pública en Buenos Aires es muy buena, la verdad que sí. A mí me pasó de ir a otros lados y, la verdad que, si te pasa algo, normalmente te vas a Posadas [capital de la provincia de Misiones]. Pero es muy lejos. Realmente es muy lejos; por eso, siempre te vas a Brasil [...]. Y el oculista también. Fui a Posadas y fui a Entre Ríos y era muy bueno. Acá [en Puerto Iguazú] es el problema [...]. La verdad es que en Brasil [los médicos] te tratan de la misma forma [que tratan a los brasileños] [...]. La gente [en Brasil], es re-buena. La verdad es que, a mí, la doctora y los doctores que yo tengo te tratan por igual. No te tratan diferente.

Las demandas de Amarena por la salud brasileña se vieron incrementadas por una situación particular. Después de dos años en el *Duty*, ella fue a trabajar en una conocida heladería de Puerto Iguazú, donde su padre era gerente (para entonces ya estaba recuperado). El trabajo en la heladería era más tranquilo: buen sueldo, menos horas, contrato regular, con derecho a una obra social de calidad. La pusieron en un local en la terminal de buses y Amarena pudo aprender sobre la demanda de servicios en este espacio: sus potencialidades y ciclos. Trabajó allí dos años más, ahorrando dinero con la idea de ponerse una cafetería. Pero la decisión de iniciar su propio negocio vino por casualidad: ella se embarazó.

Venía recién iniciando una relación amorosa. Con una pareja anterior, había intentado embarazarse, aunque sin éxito. Tras varios intentos fallidos, los médicos de Puerto Iguazú le aseguraron que tenía problemas que le impedirían terminantemente tener hijos/as. Esta imposibilidad separó a la pareja y, tiempo después, Amarena conoció a su actual compañero. Tomaba píldoras contraceptivas cuando empezó a notar problemas con el volumen de su menstruación. Fue al médico, que le indicó, dado que no podía tener bebés, que dejara de tomar los contraceptivos, para observar cómo su cuerpo respondía. Un mes después, estaba embarazada.

Tuve [el test] como tres días. Viste que comprás y vos esperás: “capaz que hoy sí, capaz que hoy no”. Y, bueno: levanté un día en la mañana y fui: lo hice y estaba [embarazada] [...]. La verdad es que estaba re-contenta y recuerdo que lo primero que pensé, y lo primero que me pasó por la cabeza, fue el parto.

La negligencia del médico de Puerto Iguazú – con su recomendación de interrumpir el contraceptivo – era grave, dijo. Pero no pudo enojarse: embarazarse era algo que había deseado muchísimo. Pero no quería confiar el acompañamiento de su embarazo y el parto a los médicos de su ciudad. Su madre trabajaba en una farmacia al lado del centro clínico donde se atienden a las mujeres embarazadas. Allí, había sido testigo de incontables casos de negligencia:

Ahí ves un montón de cosas. Ahí ves mala praxis. Y ves gente que no se sabe cuidar: mujeres que no se saben cuidar; mujeres que perdieron bebés de forma tan fea y tan tonta. A veces, por el doctor, a veces por las personas. Entonces, me dio mucho miedo. Tuve mucho miedo, miedo del parto; porque no sabía si quería cesárea o normal. ¿Viste? No quería que me duela y tampoco quería que sufriera el bebé. ¡Ah! Estaba con miedo.

La conocida negligencia de los médicos de la ciudad, el hecho de conocer tantas mujeres que habían perdido a sus bebés en el parto, o durante el embarazo, provocó que, tras la emoción de saberse embarazada, Amarena fuera tomada por el pánico. El miedo es, entonces, la respuesta emocional (personal, incorporada) a la violencia del sistema público de salud hacia las mujeres. El miedo es también una respuesta auto-protectiva: Amarena decidió no entregar su salud y la de su bebé a los médicos de su ciudad. Una violencia (la negligencia médica), un sentimiento (el miedo) y una acción (cruzar la frontera para parir):

Hablando un poco con otras personas, y bueno, “este médico aquí me hizo así” [...]. Hay médicos que tienen un montón de historias, malísimas. Allí agarré... me dio más miedo [...]. Hay un doctor, por ejemplo, que le pasó... que se le cayó el bebé de los brazos ¿Viste? La mujer estaba teniendo y el bebé lo sacó y se le cayó. Y se murió. Hay otro bebé que escuché que lo dejaron mucho tiempo en la panza y la mujer estaba pujando, estaba pujando y nadie la ayudó, y el bebé nació con un problema en el cerebro por falta de oxígeno. Entonces, cosas así que te dan miedo: doctores que le pusieron mal la epidural [anestesia] a algunas mujeres y el bebé le agarró la anestesia y cosas así que te dan miedo. Entonces, siempre me atendí en Brasil.

Hubo, además, dos historias muy cercanas que la impresionaron mucho. La primera, de una compañera de trabajo de su madre, que le insistía que fuera a atenderse en el hospital “Costa”, en Foz de Iguazú, del lado brasileño. El “Hospital Ministro Costa Cavalcanti” (HMCC) – popularmente, “el Costa” – es reconocido en Brasil como uno de los mejores del país. Fue creado en un momento de despliegue del Estado nacional, con la expansión de complejos públicos brasileños en la Triple Frontera, vinculados a la construcción de las infraestructuras energéticas.<sup>15</sup> Así, el hospital era parte de un plan de hegemonía estatal brasileña, y sigue constituyendo una supervivencia de un despliegue de la presencia del Estado – estrategia que dejó de constituir un vector político nacional en los años 1990s, con las reformas neoliberales –<sup>16</sup>. Atendiendo tanto a la red pública de salud, como a la privada (a través de los “planes de salud” brasileños, los seguros de salud paraguayos y a las obras sociales argentinas), “el Costa” es la principal referencia de atención sanitaria en la conurbación transfronteriza del Paraná. Amarena nos contó que su obra social le permitía atenderse allí.

La amiga de la madre de Amarena le confesó que había hecho todo el acompañamiento del embarazo en Puerto Iguazú y que, al momento de tener el bebé, los médicos no lo encontraron en el útero y decidieron enviarla al Costa en una ambulancia. Allí, atendida en emergencias, fue informada de que tenía un embarazo ectópico – el bebé se había formado en la cavidad abdominal, y no en el útero –. No lo habían detectado en Puerto Iguazú en los meses de prenatal. Ella terminó perdiendo su hijo: había llegado tarde al hospital brasileño y ya no era posible salvarlo.

El segundo caso drástico fue el de su prima, que se embarazó al mismo tiempo que Amarena y fue maltratada en la atención pública argentina. Ella había desarrollado diabetes gestacional y los médicos la pedían que bajara más de 10 kilos, cosa que le resultaba imposible (toda la vida había tenido sobrepeso y, al momento de embarazarse, pesaba 220 kilos). Como no lograba adelgazar, se negaban a atenderla.

15 El hospital fue inaugurado en 1979, propulsado por la empresa Itaipú Binacional (que construyó y gerencia actualmente la Hidroeléctrica de Itaipú). Inicialmente, el hospital atendía a los trabajadores empleados en la construcción de la planta eléctrica. Sin embargo, “fue mucho más allá de su misión original y se convirtió en una referencia de salud para una gran región. En 1994, se creó la Fundación de Salud Itaipu para administrar el Hospital. A partir de este año, éste se ha sometido a una serie de reformas estructurales para proporcionar el más alto nivel de atención hospitalaria en la región. En 1996, el HMCC comenzó a atender a pacientes del Sistema Único de Salud (SUS) [sistema público brasileño] y actualmente, más del 60% de la atención es para usuarios del SUS”. (Hospital Ministro Costa Cavalcanti 2019: s/p. La traducción me pertenece).

16 A diferencia de Argentina y Paraguay, la dictadura militar brasileña (1964-1986) no institucionalizó las reformas neoliberales de reducción del Estado. El militarismo brasileño adoptó una perspectiva estatizadora de la economía, promoviendo una industrialización primaria, invirtiendo sendos recursos en la infraestructura portuaria, de transportes e industrial general. Todos estos aspectos integraban un plan de control social y territorial dictatorial. Foz de Iguazú constituyó uno de los principales enclaves condensadores de esa política militar.

Amarena la convenció de que se atendiera en Brasil; la llevó y acompañó personalmente a cada consulta. Allá, dice, los doctores no la castigaban por su sobrepeso, sino que adoptaron una estrategia de reducción de daños que resultó respetuosa de las circunstancias psicológicas de su prima.

Desde ahí fue que yo le llevé a mi prima, totalmente. ¡Porque yo me sentía tan bien cuando iba [a Brasil]! Sentía que también... A ver: vos te vas acá y hay tanta gente que va al médico. Y los médicos no dan abasto, porque realmente no dan abasto. ¿Cómo te digo? Realmente, son muy pocos, estás horas y horas y horas esperando. Y para una mujer embarazada, es un problema. Allá ¡no! Allá, vos estás embarazada, tenés una persona que te atiende aparte, para sacar número o para lo que sea. ¡Es un montón de todo! Cosas distintas, que no hay acá. Entonces, si vas, estás casi cuarenta minutos viajando hacia el Costa, porque ir de acá hasta allá es lejos. Pero sabés que vos vas a llegar y te tienen que atender a las 15:20 y estás a las 15:10 y ya te están atendiendo. Es distinto. Es distinto a que vos llegues acá [en Puerto Iguazú] a las 15:10 y te tenían que atender a las 15:20 y son las 17:00 y todavía no te atienden. Y tenés que volver a trabajar... Entonces, en esos casos, sí o sí, tenés que atenderte allá. Yo me atendí allá y, por suerte, no tuve ningún problema.

Pese a haber elegido atenderse en Brasil, minimizando así los problemas con su empleador, Amarena percibió que sería imposible conciliar la maternidad con su trabajo. Los tiempos no eran flexibles en la heladería: difícilmente podría contar con la comprensión necesaria para salir a amamantar a su bebé, por ejemplo. Consecuentemente, puso en práctica la idea de poner una cafetería en la terminal de buses y compartir con su pareja el trabajo. Pidió la opinión de su padre, quien tenía mucha experiencia con negocios en Puerto Iguazú y él, convencido de que era una buena inversión, la ayudó económicamente. Así, el local donde comimos ricas empanadas era la microempresa de Amarena.

La hija de Amarena nació un viernes, de parto natural. Apenas sintió las contracciones, se trasladó al lado brasileño, donde la esperaba su doctora. Fue un parto tranquilo, dijo. Con mucho menos dolor de lo que había imaginado. La atención fue “genial”, aseveró. La gente “la cuidaba con mucho cariño allá”, en Brasil. Le pregunté, entonces, por la parte burocrática de este nacimiento transfronterizo: al nacer en territorio brasileño, su hija tenía derecho a la nacionalidad del país vecino. Amarena aseguró que eso no había entrado en sus cálculos durante el embarazo. Pero con su pareja hicieron igualmente el trámite de nacionalidad de la nena, pues facilitaría la continuidad de la atención sanitaria en Brasil.

Tras el nacimiento, tuvieron que esperar hasta el lunes (las reparticiones públicas brasileñas ya no atendían). Amarena seguía internada en el hospital, por lo que su pareja hizo el registro de la pequeña, habilitando todos los papeles para cruzar la frontera con la niña y para registrarla en Argentina. Según ella, antes estos trámites eran mucho más sencillos. Pero, ahora, el cruce de un bebé por la frontera se había complejizado:

Esto de tenerle [a los/as hijos/as] en el Costa empezó desde hace mucho. O sea, yo tengo amigas que nacieron en el Costa. Desde esa época, hace 20 años atrás. Y no era tan difícil pasar el bebé [hacia Argentina]. Ahora está muy difícil. No era tan difícil. Aparte, porque había mucha más plata en Iguazú. Antes había muchísima plata en Iguazú: el que trabajaba con cuero tenía mucha plata y podía ir a gastar en Brasil y traer el bebé no salía tan caro. Ahora no hay tanta plata en Iguazú: tenés que tener una muy buena obra social, como yo, que tengo mi obra social, y, aparte, la plata para traerle al bebé [para pagar las tasas de los trámites]. Por suerte, ahora no tenés que ir a ningún lado para hacer el registro de nacimiento [...]. Todo eso lo podés hacer, por suerte, en el hospital [en Brasil]. Antes, no. Antes, tenías que ir al notario. Ahora, no. Entonces, ella nació un viernes. Así que era viernes. Sábado y domingo no había servicio [...]. Cuando salí de esos tres días, salimos e hicimos el trámite. Sí, ahí fue que fuimos al registro y me dieron los papeles [...]. De ahí nos fuimos a la aduana [argentina] yo pase y él [su pareja] se quedó haciendo los trámites de pagar, de mostrar que el bebé está. Pero también conozco gente que lo pasó tipo así, medio por abajo. O sea, no pasás caminando, pasás en el auto. Entonces, pasás en el auto y, ponéle, que no le bajás el vidrio. Entonces, [el oficial fronterizo] no ve que está el bebé ahí. Pero no te sirve, porque vos después tenés que venir

acá y tenés que tener algo para ir a presentar... La partida de nacimiento de tu bebé para que te hagan... No podés estar así. Como pasaste el bebé, te pueden hasta meter preso por sacar el bebé. Pero hay mucha gente que lo hace y anda sin documento el bebé años. Entonces dije: “voy a hacer las cosas bien”. Porque yo también pensaba seguir atendiéndome allá, atendiéndola a ella. Entonces necesitaba, sí o sí.

Trabajando entre 12 y 14 horas diarias en su local, Amarena sigue cuidando a su pequeña y haciéndola atender en el sistema de salud brasileño. Lo único que hace en Argentina es ponerle las vacunas, porque “las argentinas son muy buenas”. Todos los días por la mañana venía con la nena de cuatro meses en su auto y la dejaba en la casa de su abuela materna, a dos calles de la terminal. La amamantaba y salía a abrir la cafetería. A cada tres horas, salía de su negocio para amamantar. En estos momentos, su padre o su pareja venían a sustituirla. Amarena estaba muy tranquila con estas soluciones, porque su abuela la había criado a ella también. Su mamá siempre había trabajado, y cuando tuvo a su única hija, contó con el apoyo de su progenitora, para seguir desempeñando una función productiva. Así, el ejemplo de su madre enmarcaba la actual configuración del equilibrio cuidados/actividad productiva para Amarena. El trabajo de su abuela permitía – como lo hiciera una generación antes – que este equilibrio fuera posible. Tenemos, así, tres generaciones de mujeres implicadas en un sistema de prestación total del cuidado (Comas, 2017) – un sistema de dones, en términos antropológicos – que permitía la reproducción de la familia, el cuidado de las menores (siempre mujeres) y la vida productiva de la red familiar.

## Bernadette

Mañana del martes 16 de julio de 2019. Amanecemos – Eleonora y yo – en Foz: habíamos cruzado al lado brasileño desde Puerto Iguazú en la tarde anterior. Eran las ocho cuando salimos del hotel hacia la Avenida Juscelino Kubitschek.<sup>17</sup> Habíamos avanzado dos cuadras cuando avistamos un templo de la Iglesia Universal del Reino de Dios (IURD). La “Universal”, como es conocida en Brasil, es una congregación religiosa evangélica, neo-pentecostal, fundada en 1977, en Río de Janeiro, por el entonces pastor (hoy obispo) Edir Macedo. Con una rápida expansión, la congregación prontamente llegó a todos los estados brasileños. En el censo del 2010, apareció con alrededor de 6.000 templos, 12.000 pastores y aproximadamente un millón de devotos (IBGE, 2010). Casi una década después, es posible suponer que estos números son significativamente mayores, dado el despliegue de la IURD en tres campos centrales.

El primer campo es el comunicacional: la congregación generó lo que en Brasil se considera un imperio multimedia de comunicación y difusiones.<sup>18</sup> El segundo es el político. La IURD construyó una ingente plataforma de representación política por todo Brasil: sus pastores y obispos ocupan cargos en los poderes legislativos de varios municipios y estados, y están plenamente representados a nivel federal. En este último constituyen actualmente una influyente fuerza política, compartida con representantes religiosos de otras congregaciones y conocida popularmente como “la bancada evangélica” (formalmente denominada “Frente Parlamentario Evangélico”), que detenta alrededor del 12% de las bancas de diputados en el Congreso Nacional (Machado & Burity, 2014:601). Su presencia política también es muy representativa en los cargos ejecutivos municipales (pastores y obispos vienen aspirando incluso a cargos ejecutivos estatales y federales) (Machado & Burity, 2014). Actualmente, la IURD tiene un papel político central: está entre las fuerzas evangélicas con mayor

<sup>17</sup> El hotel donde nos hospedamos está localizado en la esquina de las avenidas Argentina y Juscelino Kubitschek. Este cruce marca el final del centro de Foz e inicio de una zona urbana de transición, que se extiende hasta el barrio Vila Portes, donde se encuentra el Puente de la Amistad, que conecta con Paraguay.

<sup>18</sup> Posee más de 70 estaciones de radio, una sintonía de televisión (la “TV Universal”) cuyos programas son retransmitidos por 20 emisoras en todo el territorio nacional; un portal de Internet (el “Universal.org”); un diario impreso y tres revistas. Tiene, además, una editorial propia, que publica las obras de los pastores con una amplia distribución nacional. Asimismo, Edir Macedo, juntamente con otros obispos de la IURD, son propietarios de la segunda cadena de televisión abierta con más rating en Brasil: la *TV Record*. Las emisoras de radio y televisión que difunden su señal constituyen la cadena difusora más extensa del país, superando a la *Rede Globo* que, desde la dictadura, fuera la más importante en el territorio brasileño.

influencia junto al Presidente de la República, Jair Bolsonaro. Está promoviendo, en alianza con otras fuerzas evangélicas, un giro a la extrema derecha en los posicionamientos morales, jurídicos y económicos del Congreso Nacional, particularmente con relación a la planificación de las políticas familiares y de seguridad. El tercer campo es el transnacional. Desde los años 1980s, la IURD viene realizando un proceso de transnacionalización (Oro 2004). Actualmente, tiene una presencia relevante en Estados Unidos; en Argentina y en Portugal; en Sudáfrica, Uruguay, México y Francia (Oro, 2004). Según el obispo Domingos Siquiera (2015), la congregación contaría con 8 millones de seguidores en el mundo, y más de quince mil pastores diseminados por 105 países.

Decidí acercarme al templo de la IURD que vimos en nuestro trayecto cuando observé que dos mujeres afrobrasileñas conversaban animadamente en la puerta. Estaban vestidas según el código de la congregación: faldas hasta los pies, camisas de manga larga, pelos rigurosamente estirados y tomados en un estricto moño. Ambas tenían biblias bajo los brazos.

Ingresé al predio de la congregación, cruzando junto de Eleonora el amplio estacionamiento del patio delantero, y me acerqué a la mayor de las mujeres. Le expliqué que éramos investigadoras, que hacíamos un estudio científico para comprender cómo viven las mujeres en la Triple Frontera. La señora se mostró instantáneamente entusiasmada: se llamaba Bernadette, nos contó, y agregó que su compañera era Alicia. Al ver su entusiasmo, les expliqué que queríamos entrevistarlas para saber cómo habían vivido y cómo vivían actualmente. Antes de que pudiera completar la idea, Bernadette se apresuró: “¡yo puedo contarte mi historia ahora mismo! Yo nací...”. Preocupada de que nuestra intervención sin pedir autorización al pastor pudiera resultar una falta de respeto a los códigos y ordenamientos de la congregación, la interrumpí: “calma, señora Bernadette. Primero tenemos que explicarle algunos datos más de nuestra investigación y pedir la autorización del Pastor para realizar entrevistas aquí”.

Ajena a mis reparos, Bernadette siguió su narración. Había nacido en el estado de Minas Gerais (en el interior brasileño, a unos 1.400 kilómetros de la Triple Frontera). Se trasladó muy pequeña a Foz, acompañando a sus padres, agricultores sin tierra, *jornaleros* (trabajaban y cobraban por día, sin contrato laboral) para terceros (es decir, integraban el sector más pobre entre los trabajadores rurales del país). Pues bien: sus progenitores migraron a Foz para trabajar en el campo, en la agricultura de pequeña y mediana escala que se practicaba en los municipios cercanos. Pero la inundación de los campos para la puesta en marcha de la Hidroeléctrica Itaipú desintegró las propiedades agrícolas del entorno, expulsando a sus propietarios hacia el lado paraguayo. Allí, el valor de las indemnizaciones entregadas por el Estado brasileño por la pérdida de las tierras rendía más, permitiendo que adquirieran propiedades más amplias. Los padres de Bernadette no estaban entre estos propietarios: ellos integraban la masa de trabajadores precarizados que prestarían servicio a estas nuevas chacras y haciendas brasileñas en tierras paraguayas. Como muchos otros trabajadores sin tierra, se desplazaron desde Foz a los pueblos rurales aledaños al río Paraná, en el departamento paraguayo de Alto Paraná, donde las colonias brasileñas crecieron, implementando campos de cultivo agrícola donde antes había solamente selva.

Bernadette había pasado la mayor parte de su vida – más de treinta años – del lado paraguayo, trabajando en el campo con sus padres y hermanos/as. Vivía allí desde que tenía memoria, pero hacía diez años ella y toda su familia habían migrado de vuelta al lado brasileño, a Foz de Iguazú. (Bernadette aparentaba más que los 45 años que relataba tener). Me contó, asimismo, que sufría de muchos problemas de salud (complicaciones de la epilepsia que padecía desde niña) que fueron centrales para su decisión de regresar a Brasil.<sup>19</sup> La atención médica en Paraguay, decía, era inexistente.

<sup>19</sup> La narración de Bernadette coincide con los estudios de Giovanella et al. (2007:256), que indican que los consultorios y hospitales públicos brasileños (del S. U. S.), en las ciudades fronterizas con Paraguay, reciben una demanda mayoritaria de ciudadanos/as brasileños/as, que residen del lado paraguayo de la frontera y se emplean, de manera informal e indocumentada, en la agricultura en territorios paraguayos.

Así, en los últimos diez años, venía buscando atenderse en la red pública brasileña de salud: había visitado numerosos médicos, que no lograban dar con un diagnóstico ni con un tratamiento adecuado a su problema. Las crisis de epilepsia se fueron agravando, provocándole secuelas motoras, de coordinación, dificultades de movilidad e incluso períodos de parálisis (tras un fuerte ataque epiléptico, perdió durante meses los movimientos de su cuerpo).

Su aseveración sobre el sistema público de salud en Foz era contundente: “no les importan los pobres”. Pero no se trataba solamente de esto, sino de algo fundamental: “los doctores, los médicos, no saben cómo cuidar”. Cada vez que ella iba al médico del sistema público, eran horas de espera, con hambre, sin tener dónde sentarse ni un baño disponible. Cuando finalmente la atendían, apenas la miraban a la cara; no le preguntaban siquiera cómo estaba, qué sentía. Tanta “desatención”, decía, “tanta falta de interés”, tenía como consecuencia que nunca lograban subsanar sus problemas ni medicarla correctamente. Así, sus crisis iban aumentando, en la misma proporción en que los médicos la iban sometiendo a más y más exámenes, que implicaban incontables horas de espera, en filas interminables. Diez años de esto agotaron a Bernadette: “yo me cansé de ir al médico. Descubrí que lo que necesito es amor de verdad”.

Había encontrado este tipo de cuidado, este amor verdadero, en la Iglesia Universal del Reino de Dios. Había acudido a varias congregaciones religiosas de todos los tipos – evangélicas, católicas, espíritas –. Pero sólo en aquella sede de la IURD, donde estábamos, encontró un pastor que la cuidaba como ella quería:

Mi pastor, cuando ve que estoy mal, él percibe que estoy mal. Él percibe que no me siento bien, se da cuenta. Me pregunta cómo estoy. Sabe mi nombre y, cuando sabe que no estoy bien, me hace la oración para espantar de mí los malos espíritus. Para que ellos no me vuelvan a enfermar.

El pastor siempre se apresuraba a exorcizar los malos espíritus que eran “responsables de su epilepsia”. Además, cuando su salud empeoraba, él se encargaba de hablar con las demás hermanas de la congregación para que la cuidaran: para que la atendieran, la ayudaran a sentarse para las oraciones, la acompañaran desde y hacia su casa. El pastor organizaba, entonces, un turno de atenciones entre las hermanas y hermanos que se hacían cargo de Bernadette, de preguntarle diariamente cómo estaba y si necesitaba “algo más”. De ser así, estos hermanos/as la atendían. Bernadette nos contó que encontraba en este pastor, y en esta congregación, el lugar de cuidado y de “amor de verdad” que no estaban disponibles ni en el servicio público de salud, ni en su familia.

Su madre no aprobaba que ella fuera a la IURD: como los demás miembros de su núcleo familiar, decía que estos pastores le estaban sacando el dinero. Su familia no terminaba de entender que ella “recibía cuidados” en el templo. Sentía que no la apoyaban: que ella había cuidado a todos – hermanas, hermanos, madre, padre – y que no recibía de ellos nada a cambio. No entendían sus necesidades de cuidado.

Bernadette vivía en un barrio pobre de la periferia de Foz a una distancia considerable del lugar en que estábamos. Allí, como en casi todos los barrios de la ciudad, también había templos de la Universal. No obstante, el pastor responsable por el templo de su barrio “no era tan bueno cuidando” como el que lideraba el templo de la Avenida Juscelino Kubitschek. En su barrio, el pastor no la atendía, no la miraba a los ojos, no hacía las oraciones cuando ella se sentía mal. Consecuentemente, ella decidió que él no era digno de recibir su *diezmo* – valor de entre 10% y 20% del sueldo o renta mensual que los fieles deben entregar a los pastores de la IURD –. Tampoco lo consideraba digno de recibir su voto. Ella le dijo esto personalmente al pastor de su barrio: dado que él no sabía cuidarla, no le iba a entregar ni su dinero ni su voto; que lo haría en otro templo de la IURD, donde el “pastor cuida como se debe”.

Durante toda esta conversación, mientras Bernadette me hablaba, la señora Alicia nos escuchaba atentamente y tomaba notas.<sup>20</sup> Eleonora, que no habla portugués, se esforzaba por entendernos. Volví entonces a interpelar Bernadette para decirle que sería genial entrevistarla con calma, que nos contara con todo detalle su vida, sus historias migratorias. Pero que queríamos pedir la autorización del pastor. Ella, entonces, nos condujo a la parte interna del templo. ¡Era enorme! Tenía las paredes amarillo claro, recién pintadas. Ingresamos al espacio principal, la sala donde se realizan las celebraciones: era muy luminosa, con asientos para unas 300 personas (en largos bancos de madera) que miraban hacia un gran altar cubierto por un mantel blanco delicadamente bordado. Unos segundos después, vino en nuestra dirección un hombre muy joven, saliendo de una puerta donde – según Bernadette – estaba la oficina de los pastores. Al verlo, me indicó que era el pastor, que podía hablarle del estudio.

El pastor se llamaba Felipe: no parecía tener más de 26 años. Me miró con desconfianza. Me presenté, le expliqué sobre el proyecto, que queríamos entrevistar a las hermanas de la congregación y también a los pastores. Su expresión de duda se profundizó: “no termino de entender qué quieres preguntar”. Expliqué que nos interesaba entender los problemas que afectaban particularmente la vida de las hermanas de la congregación: las dolencias personales, espirituales, si había problemas de consumo de alcohol, de drogas. Si enfrentaban situaciones de violencia debido a los problemas de la criminalidad en Foz.

Entusiasmado con mi aclaración, me dijo que llegaba mucha gente “para ser libertada de las drogas y del alcohol”. Llegaban, además, “enfermos de cáncer y nosotros acá les curamos con la fuerza de Dios. Curamos cáncer, tumores y otras enfermedades”. Reiteré, tras escucharle, lo importante que sería entrevistar a los pastores y contar con sus testimonios. Él me explicó que pediría autorización al líder regional de la congregación, que se encontraba en la radio, donde tenía un programa diario. Intercambiamos contactos y Felipe me aseguró que, apenas tuviera una respuesta, me llamaría. Eleonora y yo nos despedimos de Bernadette y Alicia con un abrazo, explicando que esperaríamos la noticia del pastor para volver.

## Cuidadómetro

Los diálogos con María, Amarena y Bernadette conducen a diversas constataciones sobre la relación entre las trayectorias de movilidad de las mujeres, su sobrecarga como cuidadoras y las configuraciones de las ciudades de la Triple Frontera del Paraná.

La primera constatación deviene del relato de María y permite establecer una interesante conclusión, sobre el lugar de las ciudades de la Triple Frontera como ejes articuladores de la migración transnacional (de media o larga distancia) de los/las paraguayos/as desplazados/as del campo. A luz de la historia de María, la apreciación realizada por diversos autores de estudios migratorios de que los más pobres de cada país no migran (Grimson, 2011:36), puede redimensionarse. Es cierto que las migraciones internacionales de larga distancia – desde la capital de un país a la de otro; o desde la periferia de un país a las zonas céntricas de otro – implican la acumulación de diversos tipos de capitales (económicos, culturales o sociales) por parte de los/as migrantes. Pero esto no implica que la gente que no logra acumular estos capitales esté condenada a no migrar.

Como vimos en la trayectoria familiar de María, la migración desde el campo hacia Ciudad del Este configuró una alternativa para que sus hermanos/as pudiesen reunir los recursos necesarios para emprender otros tipos de migración. Si bien toda la familia estuvo involucrada en este éxodo campo-ciudad, sólo parte de esta emprendió una migración de larga distancia, hacia la capital argentina. Los capitales acumulados por la familia extensa son fundamentales para la consecución de este plan migratorio, actuando como una red de amparo en origen. Sin pretender suponer que todos los espacios fronterizos permiten este tipo de acumulaciones,

<sup>20</sup> Me pareció curioso que ella registrara nuestra interacción, pero no le pregunté al respecto.

es posible establecer que la Triple Frontera del Paraná sí lo hace – dadas las sus particularidades comerciales, territoriales, jurídicas y sociales –. El relato de María ejemplifica cómo las personas y las familias organizan este proceso de traslado, esta migración interna en Paraguay, y cómo esta territorialización en la frontera opera doblemente como trampolín a la migración hacia Buenos Aires y como un “puerto seguro” al que volver.

En segundo lugar, para nuestra protagonista, las decisiones sobre en qué momento y hacia dónde desplazarse dependen, centralmente, de sus cálculos sobre la cantidad y calidad de los cuidados que podrá dar a su núcleo familiar. María computa la posibilidad de acceder a servicios públicos de salud y las posibilidades de su pareja – y la propia – de trabajar con una remuneración suficiente para mantener las demandas de reproducción y cuidados de la familia. Entonces, los parámetros sobre el movimiento y sus temporalidades están dados por cómputos contextuales de los cuidados.

Tercero, la centralidad del cuidado como cosmovisión, para María, enmarca su perspectiva de la política. A partir de una demanda específica de cuidado (que su hijo tuviera buena atención de salud), ella desarrolló un posicionamiento sobre el gobierno nacional argentino. Así, su situacionalidad con relación al campo político estaba elaborada a partir de las necesidades micro-escalares cotidianas de cuidado de los seres de su familia, cuyas vidas estaban a su cargo.

El término “cuidadómetro” es la categoría que sugiero, entonces, para explicitar este sistema dinámico de medidas de cuidado que María establece a la hora de decidir cómo, hacia dónde y con quién moverse a través de las fronteras. El término me parece sugerente y es pertinente también para el caso de Amarena, quien aplica el “cuidadómetro” para estructurar un circuito de movilidad transfronterizo de corta distancia.

Tres aspectos fundamentales devienen de sus narraciones. Primero, su constatación de que la salud pública argentina, en otras regiones del país, es mejor que en Puerto Iguazú. Ella explicita que la fama nacional de la medicina argentina debe ser relativizada: en su ciudad de origen, los servicios brindados por el Estado distan mucho de ser comparables con los de Buenos Aires, o con las provincias de Santa Fé o Entre Ríos, e incluso, con la ciudad de Posadas (capital de la provincia de Misiones). La mención a esta última permite plantear que no se trata solamente de que Puerto Iguazú esté en una periferia del país, en una zona fronteriza. Posadas, ciudad capital de provincia, también es una ciudad fronteriza (con Paraguay) y – decía – tiene mejores servicios de salud. Así, la insuficiencia de los cuidados sanitarios en Puerto Iguazú respondería a cálculos macro-políticos que alguna vez hiciera el Estado argentino, evitando disputar abiertamente las pretensiones de hegemonía estatal brasileñas en la región (Grimson, 2002).

Segundo: hay también una apreciación diferencial de la especificidad de cuidados brindados en Brasil, en ciertos nichos sanitarios, como es el caso de la atención de gestantes. Amarena indica que, en esta última, hay “un montón de todo”, refiriéndose a prácticas de cuidado puestas sobre diversos detalles del proceso de acompañamiento: desde evitar que las mujeres tengan que esperar las consultas, hasta contar con sectores específicos de recepción para embarazadas – protocolo que reduce el contagio por bacterias hospitalarias –. El carácter indefinido de la expresión “un montón de todo” denota que, para ella, estas cosas son excepcionales: no las tenía contempladas como un derecho.

En este segundo relato, el movimiento de cruzar fronteras está orientado por reflexiones sobre el mejor cuidado, y sólo muy secundariamente, por cálculos de rentabilidad económica (sobre el precio de estos servicios). Esta aseveración desafía un postulado central de la teoría neoclásica de las migraciones, que imputa la decisión de los sujetos sobre sus movibilidades como anclada a cómputos racionales, sobre beneficios estrictamente económicos entre espacios nacionales (Kearney, 1986). Finalmente, Amarena interpreta que la atención prenatal en Puerto Iguazú constituía un “descuido” hacia las mujeres, pues dada la sobrecarga de los médicos y el incumplimiento de los horarios de consulta, ellas tenían que esperar varias horas para ser atendidas, lo que les dificultaba mantener sus empleos. Así, además de medir constantemente los cuidados,

de un lado y otro de la frontera, el “cuidadómetro” se mueve tomando en cuenta la conciliación de actividades productivas y reproductivas.

En tercer lugar, Amarena explica que su manejo del portugués – debido al trabajo en el *Duty Free* –, le permitió comunicarse mejor con los/las médicos/as en Brasil. Y que no habría discriminación ni malos tratos a los/las argentinos/as, en la atención y servicios brasileños. Aquí, la posibilidad de cruzar la frontera para atenderse está conectada con un capital cultural que responde a su inserción laboral específica. Fueron los conocimientos lingüísticos exigidos para su inserción laboral los que le permitieron concebir estrategias transfronterizas de atención sanitaria.

Dicha posibilidad está, asimismo, potenciada por el hecho de que la disputa identitaria entre brasileños y argentinos parecía no estar vigente en la atención sanitaria o en el aspecto comercial. Amarena, como vendedora, se especializaba para “atender ejemplarmente” a los brasileños; a su vez, los brasileños atendían a las argentinas – como ella – “sin marcar diferencias”. Cuando el asunto son los mercados y los servicios, prima una visión de las relaciones que pone un “paréntesis” a los conflictos entre las identidades nacionales.

El relato de Bernadette nos conduce a otra dimensión del “cuidadómetro” y de las ausencias de los Estados en sus responsabilidades del cuidado. Ella nos contaba que se había agotado tras diez años de estar sometida a un sinfín de exámenes, que implicaban horas y horas de espera, en filas interminables: “yo me cansé de ir al médico. Descubrí que lo que necesito es amor de verdad”.

En sus declaraciones, destaco tres elementos centrales. Primero, su constatación de que su exposición a prácticas reiteradas de *desatención* en la salud pública estaba relacionada con su condición de clase. Los pobres eran quienes estaban sometidos a las filas y esperas interminables por servicios que, cuando finalmente llegaban, no satisfacían ni sus expectativas mínimas, ni sus necesidades inmediatas. Segundo, esta marginación de los pobres estaría profundamente vinculada a su sometimiento a una *temporalidad de la espera*, que magnificaba el impacto de la precariedad de la atención sanitaria. Ya fuera porque el sostenimiento en el tiempo de la desatención de sus problemas de salud los agravaba; o porque la obligación de ir y esperar, una y otra vez, de hacer varios trámites e insistir por tratamientos y atenciones sin respuestas también enferma (“de los nervios”, decía). En tercer lugar, Bernadette constataba que la baja eficiencia de los médicos en la diagnosis y tratamiento de los enfermos se debía a su *poca preparación como cuidadores*: “ellos no saben cuidar”. Según nos aseveró, ellos no sabían escuchar al enfermo, atenderlo en sus necesidades, computarlas y responder desde la empatía. Siguiendo con su explicación, concluyó que los médicos no sabían cuidar porque el tipo de cuidado que ella necesitaba – el “amor verdadero” – implica un tipo una empatía profunda, que supone una atención integral al destinatario del cuidado.

Esto remite a Wacquant (2010) y sus reflexiones sobre cómo el neoliberalismo genera modelos institucionalizados de castigo que reproducen la pobreza, a través de torturar procedimentalmente a quienes se encuentran en esta situación social, generando una ritualización de la exclusión. Como observaron Jelin y Vila (2018 [1987]) en otros contextos, esta ritualización está dada por el sometimiento a las filas, a las esperas para acceder a un derecho tan básico como la atención sanitaria.<sup>21</sup>

Pero Bernadette no solamente analizaba con total lucidez sus límites y posibilidades en este contexto, sino que, además, había producido una solución alternativa a sus demandas de “amor de verdad”. Paseándose por las diferentes sedes de la IURD, observó que los pastores ofrecían medidas diferentes de este “amor” a sus fieles. Tras analizarlos, eligió el templo donde se sentía mejor cuidada. Esto implicaba desplazarse cruzando toda la ciudad desde su barrio al templo elegido; pero ella estaba dispuesta a hacerlo.

21 El estudio de Jelin y Vila (2018 [1987]) versa sobre las periferias urbanas pobres de Buenos Aires en los 1980s. Los autores constataron, entre otras cosas, que la vida en los barrios del conurbano empujaba las personas a hacerse con horas y más horas de espera para acceder a servicios básicos. Así, la mediación entre los sujetos y el goce de sus derechos estaría dada por el castigo de esperar. Filas interminables eran, entonces, el paisaje cotidiano de la experiencia de la pobreza, de los periplos que se extendían entre diversas oficinas y reparticiones gubernamentales (de servicios de salud, de escuelas públicas, etc.).

El pastor del templo elegido, a su vez, se daba cuenta de esta demanda, necesidad y deseo de cuidados por parte de sus fieles (Bernadette y Alicia nos contaron que las mujeres son mayoría en las congregaciones de la IURD). Muchas de ellas pertenecen, precisamente, a sectores sociales vulnerables y, por lo general, están sobrecargadas con los cuidados de sus propias familias. A la vez, su inserción productiva gira en torno a los servicios domésticos en casas de terceros. Son mujeres que cuidan sin ser cuidadas. Atento a estos detalles, el pastor se disponía a recibirlas y a entregar formas multidimensionales de cuidado: *espiritual* (rezar para exorcizar los espíritus que provocan la enfermedad), *emocional* (mirar a los ojos, llamar por el nombre, indagar sobre el estado de salud), y *comunitario* (organizar a los fieles del templo, formando una red de cuidados, para que entre todos acompañaran los que necesitan, estando pendientes de ayudarlos en sus requerimientos).

En este último sentido del cuidado, el pastor usa su autoridad espiritual para organizar un intercambio de atenciones que se hacen entre las hermanas bajo su coordinación. Bernadette relató que las mujeres se sienten protegidas y cuidadas por la “comunidad”. Con mucha habilidad, el pastor había creado un sistema comunitario de cuidados para un grupo social específico – las mujeres pobres – que carece de cuidados en otros ámbitos sociales. No obstante, Bernadette sabía claramente que esta cadena del cuidado – este “amor de verdad” – tenía una dimensión instrumental: los pastores esperan que ellas les otorguen su diezmo y su voto a cambio. El cuidado aparece, entonces, como un sistema de prestaciones totales, como una reciprocidad (Comas, 2017). Pero una reciprocidad instrumentalizada.

Entendiendo su situacionalidad en esta cadena, Bernadette estableció su propia agencia, eligiendo, entre los pastores disponibles, aquél que la cuidaba según sus necesidades. Ella es agente de esta elección: podría no frecuentar la IURD, o concurrir al templo de la congregación más cerca de su casa. Es suya la decisión de entregar su recurso económico – y su recurso político, el voto – al pastor que mejor la cuida. En esta decisión vemos operar, una vez más, el cuidadómetro. Las medidas del cuidado aparecen como un instrumento definidor del uso de los recursos económicos y políticos de que dispone Bernadette.

En conjunto, estas historias permiten establecer que las mujeres trazan circuitos de movilidad que están pensados como estrategias para responder a la sobrecarga de cuidados. Así, ellas establecen su relación con el territorio transfronterizo, calculando cuánto cuidado pueden recibir de un lado u otro de la frontera, y cómo pueden maximizar sus esfuerzos para cuidar, también, a terceros. Este cálculo las impulsa a establecer vinculaciones particulares con las tres ciudades que componen la Triple Frontera del Paraná, a la vez que configura un circuito transfronterizo del cuidado.

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# “When I discovered I was *índia*”: racialization processes in the migratory experiences of peruvians in Rio Janeiro

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## Abstract

In this article, I reflect upon the ways in which Peruvians in Rio de Janeiro negotiate their process of racialization, based on the category *Indian* and their interaction with me, a Black Brazilian woman. Despite the fact that *Indian* is part of both the Brazilian and Peruvian racial classification system, this category has particular meanings in each context. When they “discover” they are *Indians*”, Peruvians face the specificities of anti-Indigenous racism in the urban context of Rio de Janeiro. They also deal with discrimination within the Peruvian community. This article analyzes the case of Peruvians who create self-definitions (Hill-Collins, 2016), both individually and collectively, that challenge stereotypes of *peruanidad*. Racialization also opens up possibilities for anti-racist solidarity between Peruvians and Black Brazilians. My research is based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in Brazil and the United States from 2011 to 2016.

**Key words:** anti-Indigenous racism, inter-ethnic relations, South-South migration, decoloniality.

# “Quando me descobri *índia*”: processos de racialização na experiência migratória de peruanos no Rio de Janeiro

## Resumo

Neste trabalho, reflito como os peruanos no Rio de Janeiro negociam os processos de racialização a partir da categoria “í/índio” e sua interação comigo, uma mulher negra brasileira. Apesar de integrar o sistema de classificação racial brasileiro (índio) e peruano (indio), a categoria remete a significados particulares em cada contexto. Ao “se descobrir í/índio”, os peruanos se deparam com as especificidades do racismo anti-indígena no contexto urbano do Rio de Janeiro e com as discriminações dentro da comunidade peruana. Neste artigo, analiso o caso de peruanos que elaboram autodefinições (Hill-Collins, 2016) individuais e coletivas que desafiam estereótipos sobre a *peruanidad*. Por outro lado, o processo de racialização também abre possibilidades de solidariedade anti-racista entre peruanos e negros brasileiros. Este artigo se baseia no trabalho de campo etnográfico realizado no Rio de Janeiro de 2011 a 2016.

**Palavras-chave:** racismo anti-indígena, relações inter-étnicas, migração sul-sul, decolonialidade.

# “Cuando me descubrí “índia””: procesos de racialización en la experiencia migratoria de los peruanos en Río de Janeiro

## Resumen

En este trabajo, reflexiono sobre las formas en que los peruanos en Río de Janeiro negocian los procesos de racialización, basado en la categoría “í/índio” y su interacción conmigo, una mujer negra brasileña. A pesar de presente en el sistema de clasificación racial brasileño (índio) y peruano (indio), la categoría tiene significados particulares en cada contexto. Al “descubrirse “índio””, los peruanos enfrenta las especificidades del racismo anti-indígena en el contexto urbano de Río de Janeiro. También tienen que lidiar con la discriminación dentro de la comunidad peruana. Este artículo analiza el caso de los peruanos que elaboran autodecisiones (Hill-Collins 2016) individual y colectivamente que desafían los estereotipos de *peruanidad*. Además, la racialización también abre posibilidades para la solidaridad antirracista entre peruanos y negros brasileños. Este artículo se basa en el trabajo de campo etnográfico realizado en Brasil y en los Estados Unidos del 2011 al 2016.

**Palabras clave:** racismo anti-indígena, relaciones interétnicas, migración Sur-Sur, decolonialidad.

# “When I discovered I was *índia*”: racialization processes in the migratory experiences of peruvians in Rio Janeiro

Camila Daniel

## Introduction

It was a Saturday afternoon Méier, Rio de Janeiro in 2017. Diana was at my house along with several other Peruvian friends and we were having one of our collective lunches. Ever since we had met each other in Sayari Grupo de Danzas Peruanas, our Peruvian folk dance group, we would often get together to eat and socialize. As the hostess, I had consulted with my friends about what they would like to eat. Following their suggestions, I opted to make *chaufa* rice, a popular Chinese-influenced dish in Peruvian cuisine. Looking at my bookcase, Beatriz, a Peruvian from Lima, became interested in one of the books: “When I Discovered I Was Black”, by Bianca Santana (2015). Intrigued, she took the book down, and leafed through it, totally absorbed. Seeing this, Diana wanted to know what was in that book that Beatriz was perusing with such total concentration. I explained that the book featured reports of Black people who faced racism and thus started to build Black identities. I said to my Peruvian friends that those stories were important because, many times, Black people like me and those in the book were targets of racism, but couldn’t find tools to express what we felt. For this reason, recognizing oneself as Black was not a given, but a process, a becoming (Souza 1983). With a bitter and mocking tone, Diana said: “I’m going to write a book like that, too! Mine will be called: *When I discovered I was an Indian*”.

In the article below, I present initial reflections on how Peruvians in Rio de Janeiro negotiate the signs and meanings of race in their migratory experiences and in their interactions with me, a Black Brazilian woman. The article will analyze the actions and relationships built between Peruvians and me in the face of our racialization as *Black* (in my case) and *Indian* (in their case). Directed at our bodies, both categories transnationally subordinate us in the colonial hierarchy (Quijano 2000; Segato 2005). Despite this, they do not destroy our ability to act: either individually and collectively. Focusing on Peruvians who arrive in Rio de Janeiro as students, I will examine how these actions are collectively developed in the performance of and construction of identities: both based on *Peruanidad* and individual. This article is based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out during the preparation of my doctoral thesis (defended in 2013) and the post-doctoral research I carried out in 2016 in Brazil and the United States.

Aligned with a decolonial perspective, this work understands borders as an epistemic place of knowledge production, based on the experiences of subordinate subjects (Bernardino-Costa and Grosfoguel 2016). This has the potential to denaturalize race, identifying the (counter)miscegenationist political potential (Goldman 2015; 2014) of the encounter between Peruvians and myself. This work contributes to comparative racial studies in the Americas, which have historically focused compared and contrasted Brazil and the United States. It also allows us to reflect on how mobile subjects such as Peruvian students reveal Brazilian and Peruvian power structures silenced by both countries’ national projects. I am grateful for the valuable comments of those who carefully read the first version of this text, allowing me to radically deepen my ethnographic and theoretical analyses. I am especially grateful to Ketty Laureano Aire, who, with her double identity as a Quechua Wanka and researcher, accepted to be my interlocutor in this work, offering generous analytical suggestions and the emotional support to make it possible.

## What the eyes see: Racialization processes of *Indians* in Rio de Janeiro

Grupo Negro Mendes plays an important role in marking the Peruvian presence in Rio's cultural scene. Created in 2002, it presents a repertoire of musical styles from the Peruvian coast. Attending Negro Mendes shows has become an important part of my social life. During one show in downtown Rio, I was accompanied by a couple of Black Brazilian friends and I mentioned that a Peruvian friend would also come. Talking to the same Black couple some weeks later, they commented that "your friend doesn't look like a Peruvian; he doesn't look like an Indian". Since the beginning of my research, I have been asked multiple times why I have become so close to Peru. During my doctorate, this question marked my relationship with my mentor, a white Brazilian. She tried to persuade me to quit my work with "Peruvians" in order to study "Latinos". Her efforts were in vain, however. In one of our last meetings before my defense, she finally surrendered, exclaiming: "Since I started mentoring you, I have become able to recognize a Peruvian at a glance!" – referring, of course, to Peruvians who have an Indigenous phenotype. The Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio), where I completed my doctorate, receives a large number of graduate students from different Latin American countries, including Peru. At this mostly white university, Peruvians and other students who had an Indigenous phenotype attracted attention.

Diana is one of these Peruvians. She came from Arequipa to Rio de Janeiro in 2009 to do her master's degree at PUC-Rio. We met in 2012, when she joined the Sayari Danzas Peruanas Group. Diana's trajectory parallels migratory dynamics in Peru. In the last decades of the 20th century, the country suffered an intense economic and political crisis, which increased emigration (Altamirano 2000; Paerregaad 2008; Berg 2016). From 1990 to 2011, it was estimated that more than 2 million Peruvians left the country: some 8% of the population (INEI 2012). Diana married a Brazilian and recently gave birth to her first daughter. Diana's phenotypical characteristics - long straight black hair, almond-colored skin, small, dark eyes with epicanthal folds, pronounced cheekbones - attract the attention of carioca eyes. In several of our conversations, Diana remarked to me that she felt irritated when she was called an "Indian". Sometimes, this term was accompanied by other questions: "Where are you from?"; "How long have you lived in Brazil?"; "When will you return to Peru?" Diana's discomfort is at its greatest when her husband's relatives (who are white) call her "Indian". Her husband complacently explains that his relatives don't intend to offend. His conciliatory tactics have minimized the feelings that the word evokes in Diana. She is thus denied the possibility of having her feelings validated and acknowledged (Hooks 2010).

During my research, I was often asked by my Brazilian interlocutors if I liked ceviche, an internationally known Peruvian dish and a mandatory presence at Peruvian events in Rio de Janeiro. They'd also ask if I have been to Machu Picchu or even if the Peruvians I studied were those who "played the flute" or who worked as "street vendors" in the city's commercial areas. In the early 2000s, the Peruvian presence became visible in Rio de Janeiro through popular musicians playing Andean instruments and through informal merchants working on the streets of the city. During my doctorate, there were Peruvians who worked as artists and street traders, but the Ecuadorian presence also increased significantly in these economic niches.

Many of my Brazilian interlocutors were unaware of the significant presence of Peruvian university students in Rio, imagining that every Peruvian would necessarily be in the same class as the musicians and street traders they were familiar with. As university students (most of them from prestigious universities), the Peruvians I collaborated with live with Brazilians and individuals of other nationalities who have access to higher education, many of them members of the middle classes of Brazil or their countries of origin. Students assume a central role in the construction of the spaces for sociability where the meanings of *peruanidad* in Rio de Janeiro are negotiated (Daniel 2017), such as the Sayari Grupo de Danzas Peruanas. Over the years that this group met, all of its members were students, with the exception of two, who worked as street vendors. In their interactions with Rio, Peruvian students discover that they are also subject to different forms of discrimination.

I almost always surprised my Brazilian interlocutors when I told them that, since the 1960s, many Peruvians have come to Brazil as university students. Sharing information about Peru and the Peruvian community in Rio de Janeiro that I imagined Brazilians do not know, increased my feeling – and that of the Peruvians who knew me – that I am “not a Brazilian like the others”. A co-worker of mine once commented that there were many Peruvian university students in Rio de Janeiro. This time, I was the one who was surprised! This was a white man, resident of Tijuca, who had many times proudly told me stories about his annual vacation in France. When I or other colleagues commented on our travels in Latin America, he used to react with disdain. A descendant of Portuguese and Italian immigrants, he is applying for citizenship in both countries, and intends to migrate to Europe when he retires. He explained that he did his doctorate in Statistics at PUC-Rio in the late 2000s, where he lived with Latin American students, including Peruvians. “Yeah!” he exclaimed. “At PUC there were a lot of cucarachas!”. Cucarachas? Cockroaches? My wide eyes and contorted face betrayed my shock. Seeing my reaction, my coworker continued: “That’s what we called the Latino students who studied with us.” How would Diana and the other Peruvians who studied at PUC feel if they knew that they are called insects, I wondered?

Although Peruvian immigration to Brazil has never reached high enough numbers to receive as much visibility as Bolivian or Haitian immigration (Daniel 2013), it does presents important elements with which to reflect upon processes of racialization. Immigration played an important role in the construction of Brazil as a national project, especially up until the 1930s. During this period, immigration policy was also conceived as a means of “whitening” the Brazilian population, encouraging the use of Europeans replace Black Brazilians in the post-abolition workforce, as well as subordinating Afro-Brazilians in the Brazilian national project. Foreigners were considered to be important for the country’s development and eugenic “cleansing”, but they were also seen as a potential threat to national unity. For this reason, the foreign presence in Brazil was understood as something that needed to be diluted through processes of miscegenation and acculturation (Seyferth 1997; 1996). Under this ideological view of the Brazilian nation, unassimilated foreigners should behave like guests, whose presence depended on national interests (Sayad 1998; 1999). In his ethnographic work with English-speaking foreigners in Rio de Janeiro, Blanchette (2001) discusses how “gringos” often encounter a less cordial face of Brazilian society. This is manifested, for example, in the belief that foreigners should not have access the same rights as Brazilians, nor criticize Brazil.

The condition of foreigner, as pointed out by Sayad and Blanchette, can worsen when the person in question is not socially read as white. Analyzing cases from the United States, Grosfoguel and Maldonado-Torres (2008) explain that the Native Americans, Chicanos and Blacks have historically been located outside the American national project. Even when formally recognized as citizens, they face daily processes of exclusion. This exclusion is frequently characterized as racialization, with individuals positioned in racial hierarchies below “the line of being”. Individuals located in the “zone of being” are recognized as humans with the rights, material resources, subjectivities, identities, epistemologies and spiritualities that this classification entails. Those located in the “zone of non-being” have their humanity (as subjects of law or of production of knowledge and identities) questioned or denied (Grosfoguel 2016: 10). Latin American immigrants are incorporated into American society in this “zone of non-being”, as are Blacks, Native Americans, and Chicanos, but their condition is aggravated further by the status as foreigners. They live an experience of intersectional oppression (Hill-Collins, 2016).

Since I began my fieldwork, I have met Peruvians with different physical appearances, of different classes, and from different parts of the country. The more I lived with Peruvians, the more I confirmed that I could never recognize a Peruvian “just by looking”, as my former mentor believed she could. I also observed that all the Peruvian consuls I met – in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Washington DC – were men and women who were socially read as white. I say “socially read”, because their bodily signs – skin color, body shape, face features,

hair type, and color – are closer to the European white ideal than any other. The marks of colonial domination (Segato 2010) are not as clear on their bodies. By contrast, none of the Peruvian street vendors I have met, to date, have been as “white” as that nation’s consuls.

It is important to note that these bodily signs are being read by me, a Black Brazilian. Brazil, the country where I was born and in which I have spent most of my life is, like Peru, situated in the southern hemisphere of the Americas. In both Brazil and Peru, miscegenation played a central role in attempts to dominate Black and Indigenous populations. I clearly carry the marks of coloniality on my body: my African ancestry is apparent in the darker color of my skin, in my curly hair, in my curvy physical form. In spite of their human potential, Africans and their descendants (a category in which I include myself) were incorporated into the history of Brazil as a commodity to be exploited in the capitalist system. This story is reproduced in the present day by the modern nation state, which systematically denies me and other Blacks the right to be recognized as human. In the United States, a country based on hypodescendence and open racism (Gonzalez 1988) as a way to protect whiteness (Harrison 1995), it is likely that the consuls of Peru, although phenotypically white in my eyes, are socially read as not-white because they are Peruvian, a country represented as “non-white”. As both my country and I are transnationally imagined as non-white, I occupy a place of double coloniality and this, of course, defines the lens through which I read racial realities. This lens was polished by the ways I am read racially and how I am treated by those who interact with me, including Peruvians in Rio de Janeiro. In the encounter of my experiences with those of Peruvians in Rio de Janeiro, we built a dialogue that allows us to rethink our places in transnational processes of racialization.

### **Transnational negotiations: *i/indio* and *peruanidad***

In 2016, I conducted my postdoctoral research on how Peruvian immigrants in Brazil and the United States negotiate their identities through race. It was difficult to get my interlocutors to respond to the topic. Their answers were almost always evasive, accompanied by the statement that race does not matter in Peru, since “we are all mixed race”. I decided to resort to the Brazilian census and the United States Social Security application archives to see what they turned up. Peruvians were often listed as “undecided”, seeing that the Brazilian and American categories did not make sense to them. This “lack of meaning” was even more observable among those interlocutors who recognized their own Indigenous ancestry. Both “Indigenous” in Brazil and “American Indian” in the United States sounded strange to the ears that learned that “*índio*” (Spanish for “Indian”) is an offensive term. One of my interviewees in Rio de Janeiro even commented that he thought it was inappropriate to ask a question about race. According to him, we are all human and talking about race was a way to divide humanity and thus reproduce racism.

Despite the difficulties of talking about it, race has been a central issue in my interaction with Peruvians in Brazil, the United States, and Peru. In my very first experiences with Peruvian events in Rio de Janeiro, some Peruvians confided to me (when they heard about my research) that there was a lot of racism within the community. On the other hand, Peruvians were much more reluctant to call the discriminations they suffered in their relationships with Brazilians “racism”, probably because I am Brazilian myself. I also dealt with the racialized place that Peruvians attributed to me as a Black woman, when they identified similarities between Afro-Peruvians and me. This identification earned me the invitation to recite the poem “*Me gritaron negra*” (by Afro-Peruvian artist Victoria Santa Cruz) at the 2012 *Fiestas Patrias*<sup>1</sup> (Daniel 2019).

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<sup>1</sup> The celebration of the independence of Peru, decreed on July 28th 1821, one of the most important events for the Peruvian community in Rio de Janeiro.

I also experienced racial classification in folk dances, where the idea that Black dance is vibrant because Blacks are naturally happy is quite common. In the case of Peruvians in Rio de Janeiro, the main racial category which they need to negotiate was that of “indio”.

When Diana is called “india” in Rio, she is put into a racial category that also exists in Peruvian racial hierarchies (*indio* - without an accent). In both countries, this category refers to the colonial domination to which the Indigenous populations were subjected. The person classified as *índia* is associated with tradition, backwardness, and an inability to fit into modernity, capitalism, and the nation-state. The meanings of the category have peculiar trajectories, however, being negotiated in different ways in each national context, as well as in the process of immigration. In Peru, “indio” combines several elements such as physical appearance, place of origin, education, ethnicity, class position, and residence within the rural world. In the community of Chitapampa<sup>2</sup>, in Cusco, De la Cadena (1992) observed that the category is negotiated in the relationship between the countryside and the city, in insertion in the world of labor, in access to property, and in marriage. Women, for example, are considered to be more “indio” than men because, among other reasons, the work they do in urban areas is not valued by men in Chitapampa. While women remain “india”, occupying a place of inferiority in the community, men “*amestizan*”<sup>3</sup>. One way of doing this is by marrying a “*misti*”: a member of the *mestizo* landowning class.

The formation of the Peruvian nation state set Indigenous peoples as “Others” within the nation. They were considered to be retarding the march towards progress (Degregori 1986). They were understood as having a primitive culture that should be either abolished in favor of modernity or protected to prevent its disappearance through acculturation (Golte 1995; Degregori 2012). De la Cadena (2006) demonstrates how this ideology inspired Peru’s public educational policy, implemented since the beginning of the 20th century. This policy concealed a project of education that sought to incorporate Peruvian rural and Indigenous populations into modern life and national culture. This implied not only teaching the members of such populations to read and write, but also pushing them to abandon their “backward” cultural elements. De la Cadena reveals this State ideology in operation in *Pedro*, a book published by the Peruvian Ministry of Education in 1950 to teach adults to read and write. Pedro is a man who dresses Indigenous Andean clothes – *chullo*<sup>4</sup>, poncho and *ojotas*<sup>5</sup> – and who lives in the rural and mountainous Andes. He is married to a lady with long braids and the couple has two children. Throughout the book, Pedro’s children are transformed: the daughter stops wearing braids and the son the *chullo*. The two children go to school. The transformation of the children represents formal education as a passage from the backwardness of Indigenous cultural references to the progress represented by modern culture and national identity. Education is thus understood to transform the children of Indians into *mestizos*, constructing a “myth of schooling as progress” (Degregori 1986).

In 1969, to better confront the exploitation of Indigenous labor on large rural estates, President Juan Velasco Alvarado implemented land reform in Peru. Alvarado also decreed the elimination of “indio” from the Peruvian vocabulary. With the destruction of latifundium and the subsequent redivision of land in rural areas, “indios” became “peasants” (Eguren 2015). This replacement of an ethnic-racial category (*indio*) with a class category (*peasant*), formal education, and agrarian reform did not eliminate anti-Indigenous racism from Peruvian society, however, either institutionally or interpersonally. Alvarado’s measures neglected the cultural dimensions of systems of domination. At the same time, debates about whether or not one should use

2 A community in the Department of Cusco, in the southern Peruvian Sierra (De la Cadena 1992).

3 Mix themselves.

4 A wool hat with earflaps.

5 Traditional Andean sandals.

the term “indio” often make the Indigenous populations of the Peruvian Amazon invisible or considered as less developed than Andean Indians (Greene 2010). Interestingly, the search for higher and more prestigious levels of education is precisely the context which brings Peruvian students to Rio de Janeiro, where they encounter the classification “indio” as being applied to themselves.

In Brazilian common sense, “indio” is associated with poverty, ignorance, and the past. It is a category bound by village life and ruralness. In research into racism directed against Indigenous students at the Federal University of Amapá, Peixoto (2017) observed that non-Indigenous people believed that índios should not have access to universities or use electronic devices or western clothes unless they gave up their indigeneity. Native students suffer different forms of discrimination: classmates who refuse to work with them and teachers who refuse to mentor them. Additionally, those Natives who have Portuguese as their second language and who attended school in their villages faced barriers in both language and the Western model of teaching. These students experienced racism in both the intersubjective dimension in relationships with teachers and colleagues, and structurally, reproduced in teaching methodologies.

Analyzing the experience of Indigenous people in urban Rio de Janeiro, Bevilaqua (2017) narrates a series of events in which she witnessed the tensions generated when Cariocas questioned the identity of Natives in the city. She tells of cases involving white and Black Cariocas who demonstrate a stereotypical view of Natives. For example, Niara – one of Bevilaqua’s interlocutors – was angered when a Black Brazilian told her that “Indians are all the same”. Outraged, Niara argued that Blacks are not all the same either, but that most Black Brazilians do not know this as they do not research their own roots. For this reason, Black Brazilians do not know themselves and they project their ignorance upon Native people. Niara also believes the idea that “Indians are all the same” is propagated by television, which reproduces stereotypes about what it means to be Indigenous, denying Native people’s diversity. Índios in Rio are thus pushed out of representations of Brazilianness or are reduced to images that represent Natives in the city or at the university as beings who are out of place.

Diana was born in one of the biggest cities in Peru. She has a high level of formal education and is not ethnically identified with any Native population. Since we first met in 2012, Diana has complained about being called “india” in Rio de Janeiro and about the discrimination she faces. At her suggestion, Grupo Sayari staged a “Arequipeño Carnival”: a manifestation of music and dance in the Arequipa<sup>6</sup> *Huayno*<sup>7</sup> style at the 2013 Hispanidade Festival<sup>8</sup>. Before this, the Grupo generally performed the *Valicha*<sup>9</sup>, a dance of *Huayno* Indigenous origin from Cuzco. In addition to being well known by Peruvians, *Valicha* is from the region where the parents of the founder of the Grupo, Karina, were born. Before the Arequipeño Carnival, the Grupo had already envisioned the possibility of presenting a choreography set to *Huaylarsh*, an Indigenous rhythm from the central mountains of Peru. Difficulties in learning the dance and preparing the costumes for it made this plan unfeasible, however. Diana’s suggestion to replace the *Valicha* with the Arequipeño Carnival was welcomed by all members of the group, including Karina and the three members from Cuzco. The same thing did not happen, however, when we talked about the need to include dances from Selva (the jungle region of Peru) in our repertoire to properly fulfill the Grupo’s declared mission of “representing Peru” (Daniel 2015). This demand was severely criticized by the group’s founder, who explained that she had unresolved emotional issues with people from that region.

6 This description of the *carnaval arequipeño* was created by the Grupo Sayari, referencing the music and dance traditions of Arequipa Carnival. For debate regarding the festival and the cultural expressions it encompasses, see Condori Huamani e Nina Escalante (2016).

7 A characteristic pentatonic musical style of the Peruvian Sierra, which has encountered in different forms in different regions.

8 This festival, organized by the Casa de Espanha, references the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Americas. The Grupo’s participation in this event generated great expectations, given that it was an opportunity for the Grupo to “represent Peru” in front of a multi-national public.

9 The classification of “Valicha” as *huayno* is according to Grupo Sayari de Danzas Peruanas. Conversing with a Peruvian sociologist who was researching Peruvian immigrants in São Paulo, I learned that this classification is debateable. A greater discussion of Peruvian musical styles is beyond the scope of the present article, however.

At the same time that Diana was developing professionally as a production engineer, she was also participating in the expansion of the representation of the Peruvian Sierra through folk dances. She took the lead in researching the Arequipeño Carnival in order to teach us and inspire our choreography. By that time, the Grupo's rehearsals had migrated from Karina's house to Diana's house, both of which were located in the Vila Isabel neighborhood. The song we danced to was "Mambo de Machaguay". All Peruvian members of the Grupo - who at that time were from Lima and Cuzco - knew the song and liked the idea of choreographing it. Composed by Luis Abanto Morales, "Mambo de Machaguay" tells the story of a migrant who returns from Lima to Machaguay, his district of origin, in the Department of Arequipa. The young man brings with him mambo, a Cuban musical style, which he encountered during his migration to Lima. In the first two verses, the migrant says that he is returning from Lima to Machaguay, in the Sierra de Peru, to dance the mambo, a Cuban rhythm, with his "cholitary"<sup>10</sup> (a way of referring to a woman with whom he has a loving relationship - the word is derived from *chola*). The song also features elements of the Quechua language, such as the "y" ending in "cholitary". The last two verses of "Mambo de Machaguay" are entirely in Quechua.

We put together the costume for this presentation, always one of the great challenges inherent in including new styles in our repertoire. We used the *pollera*<sup>11</sup> from the *Valicha*, and the men wore black pants, a white blouse, black shoes and a straw hat. To complete the production, the women combed their hair into two braids (much like those that Pedro's daughter, the character in the Peruvian literacy primer, undid when she started school). Of the four women who danced in the first Arequipeño Carnival performance, Diana was the only one who had hair long enough to braid. At one of the Grupo's collective lunches, her husband commented that Diana's long, straight, dark hair earned her the nickname of "Pocahontas" in Arequipa: the Powhatan woman who has been recently transformed into a Disney princess. All three other female members of the Grupo who danced in the Arequipeño Carnival - including myself - had to wear fake braids. In my case, wearing these led to an internal conflict: my hair has a deeply political meaning. On the one hand, I didn't want to feel that I was adhering to a stereotype of *peruanidad*. On the other hand, wearing fake hair hurt the political relationship I have with my hair, which at that time was in transition.<sup>12</sup> Minutes before the presentation, I agreed to wear the fake braids.

In thinking about the Arequipeño Carnival performance as part of *peruanidad*, a relevant question is what is the place that Arequipa occupies in the imagination of Peruvians in Rio de Janeiro? The Arequipa department occupies an ambiguous geographical location, with part of its territory on the coast and another part in the mountains. Diana was born in the city of Arequipa, capital of the department, which is in the Sierra. The department is also known for its claim as independent from the rest of the country. During Peruvian events, this was often a reason for jokes between Peruvians from other regions and the Arequipeños. As an active member of the Grupo Sayari Danzas Peruanas, Diana found a place to feel welcomed in Rio and, at the same time, participate in the construction and performance of *peruanidad* as an Arequipeña.

By including the Arequipeño Carnival in the repertoire of Grupo Sayari, Diana gives recognition to the Indigenous presence in her Arequipe identity, despite not identifying as Indigenous herself. This expands the notion of *peruanidad*, challenging the centrality that the capital of Lima has in the Peruvian imagination. It also expands the representation of Peruvian Indigeneity in Rio de Janeiro, previously limited to *Valicha* and *Cuzco*. At the same time, Diana opened up to learning more about her own country through dance. Among the dances she learned was the *Tondero*. Originating in the region of Piura and Lambayeque in northern Peru, the *Tondero* is a dance containing Black, Indigenous and European influences representing the playful courtship

<sup>10</sup> "Cholitary" is derived from *chola*, a word referring to women of Indigenous origin from the Peruvian Sierra. The word can be employed both as a compliment or insult, depending on its context. *Cholitary* is composed of the diminutive form of this word - *cholita* - with the addition of a Quechua ending - *y*. *Cholitary* is thus a diminutive form combining Spanish and Quechua in the creation of an endearing term.

<sup>11</sup> A traditional skirt used by Indigenous women throughout the Andes, not only in Peru, but also countries such as Bolivia and Ecuador.

<sup>12</sup> Abandoning the use of chemical hair treatments for naturally curly hair.

of a couple. Diana saw *Tondero* for the first time in Rio de Janeiro and became interested in learning it. In 2015, Diana, myself, and another member of the Grupo danced *Tondero* at Fiestas Patrias. In 2016, Diana danced *Tondero* with her husband at their wedding party in São Paulo. I had ordered her all white *tondero* costume with her mother when I traveled to Arequipa in 2015. In her dancing, Diana thus demonstrates the alternatives she developed when she “discovered” she was “índia”.

### **Beyond “choleando”: Performing race**

As a member of the Grupo Sayari Danzas Peruanas, Diana worked constructing *peruanidad* as an ethnic identity that recognizes regional particularities. The performance of the Arequipeño Carnival, brought the recognition of Arequipa as part of Peruvian culture to the stage. It also contributed to expanding the representations of the indigeneity that are parts of that culture. By presenting a *Huayno* from Arequipa, Diana and Grupo Sayari made public the notion that Peruvian Indigenous culture is not only Cuzco and Machu Picchu. This limited idea of Peru, which many Peruvians claim that Brazilians have, is also often reproduced by Peruvians in Rio de Janeiro. Da Cunha (2009) points out that ethnicity is constructed as a “culture of contrast” (p. 237), where a group selects elements of its culture to define its boundaries in relation to other groups. Ethnicity thus becomes a diacritical mark of identity, which does not encompass the completeness of a group’s culture, but assume a central role in mediating the group’s relations with outsiders (Barth 2000). The image of Machu Picchu and certain aspects of Quechua culture have become diacritical elements that mediate the relationship between Peruvians and Brazilians. This mediation often reinforces exotic stereotypes of the cultures and people of the Sierra Peruana.

An example of this is the appearance of “El Cholito” at Peruvian events in Rio de Janeiro. “El Cholito” is a costume that represents a “cholo”, one of the terms applied to people of Indigenous descent from the Peruvian Sierra. “El Cholito” consists of the giant foam and fabric head of an Andean man. The costume gives physical form to stereotypical characteristics representing the physical and cultural dimensions of indigeneity: the *chullo*, with his fringe of black hair that slides over the his forehead and the eyes that are slanted up and to the sides. The person wearing the costume takes on the task of livening up the party, dancing and greeting everyone. When “El Cholito” arrives at parties, many people take pictures of it. On some occasions, “El Cholito” arrives accompanied by “Llamita”, a costume of a giant llama head. These costumes threaten to solidify representations of Andean people and cultures by reinforcing stereotypes inside and outside the Peruvian community – stereotypes that can contribute to anti-Indigenous discrimination and racism.

Luis Fernando<sup>13</sup> was shocked when he arrived in Rio de Janeiro in the late ‘90s and realized that he was seen as an “índio”. Originally from Tacna on the southern coast of Peru, he has white skin, wavy dark hair and is around six feet tall. He is not recognized as an “índio” in Peru. Thus, at the same moment that he began his trajectory of international student mobility – a way of validating his social ascension in Peru – he stopped being “mestizo”, a position of racial power in Peru. Instead, he dropped in status, becoming an “índio” in Brazil. In Luis Fernando’s case, his inclusion in this category was more associated with his nationality than strictly with his bodily characteristics. Luis Fernando discovered that, in practice, people are racially classified not only according to their physical type, but also according to their countries of origin. As a Peruvian who does not carry the bodily markers of colonial domination (at least as read through Brazilian lenses), Luis Fernando can escape racial demotion by keeping his nationality a secret. This is something that Peruvians like Diana cannot do. Even if she were to hide the fact that she is Peruvian, her phenotypic features would reveal her as non-white.

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<sup>13</sup> Luis Fernando arrived in Rio de Janeiro in 1996 as an undergraduate student.

Performances of *peruanidad* in public spaces in Rio de Janeiro take on different forms. The Peruvian community in the city contains significant numbers of artists and professional cultural producers who build dialogues between different cultural expressions from Peru and other countries. In their work, these people employ the aesthetic, semantic, and symbolic resources of art. Some examples are actress Rosana Reategui, actor and musician Edison Mego, cultural producer Rocío Salazar, and musician Sergio Valdeos. Edison, for example, in addition to being an actor, is also part of the Grupo Negro Mendes, mentioned at the beginning of this article. The group plays a very important role inside and outside the Peruvian community in recognizing the Black presence as part of Peru, something many Brazilians are unaware of. On the other hand, the group also encounters stereotypes about what Black musical productions are supposed to be. Many Brazilians and Peruvians expect the group to have a “dance” repertoire. During parties and celebrations where the group plays, an Afro-Peruvian “style” – a festive, vibrant rhythm, with vigorous percussive elements that resonate in the body – tend to be more appreciated by a public that believes that Black music of any nationality has an obligation to entertain. Resisting this stereotype, the group maintains a diversified repertoire of traditional rhythms from the Peruvian coast, such as *landó*, *vals*, *tondero* and *marinera*. On its most recent album, released in 2016, the group explored the possibilities of mixing rhythms, employing what is in Peru classified as a *fusión* style.

Luis Fernando admits that his rejection of the term “índio” in Brazil is associated with the prejudice that he himself had against “indio” in Peru. He explains that social relations in Peru are organized through the “cholometer” or “indiometer”, an informal “thermometer” that supposedly measures what degree of indigeneity a given person has. The “cholometer” considers such criteria as phenotype, clothing, place of origin, class, and education in making its determinations. The “cholometer” establishes social and racial hierarchies, defining how much recognition and respect each person is due, according to how far they are from the base of the hierarchy (where the *indios* are). Luis Fernando comments that Peruvians – both in Peru and Rio de Janeiro – are able to differentiate each other according to all these criteria, but that Brazilians are not.

Many Peruvian students in Rio de Janeiro with whom I lived and interacted with commented that Peruvians face discrimination from the Federal Police, banks, and other Brazilian institutions. Some explained that this was because of certain Peruvians’ excessively courteous and even subservient posture – speaking softly, avoiding eye contact. Some of my interlocutors went even further in their analysis, associating this “subservient posture” with “Indigenous culture”, which is understood to be naturally sadder, more melancholy, downcast, and submissive. This representation of “Indigenous culture” contradicts the festive and irreverent spirit of the Arequipeño Carnival. By blaming other Peruvians for the discrimination they suffer, my interlocutors seem to be unaware that bodies that are farthest from whiteness are more subject to racism.

Discrimination within and from outside the community is not completely excluded from the debate in the public spaces built by Peruvian, however. The presentation of the poem “Me gritaron” at events such as the 2012 Fiestas Patrias and the shows by the Grupo Negro Mendes help Peruvians and people of other nationalities to get to know the work of Afro-Peruvian artists and to learn about anti-Black racism in Peru. The fact that I recited the poem also opened up the possibility of denouncing racism in Brazil. At the end of each presentation, I could hear people in the audience commenting on racism. Some of them came up to me afterwards in order to congratulate me on the performance and also to ask me questions. The Peruvian friend who accompanied me to the Negro Mendes show and my Brazilian friends said he “didn’t look Peruvian, because he didn’t look like an Indian” was the one who invited me to recite the poem. He always liked the poem, but there had never been a Black member in the dance group. He did not think it appropriate that the poem to be recited by someone who was not Black. Due to his phenotypic traits, my friend escapes the negative racialization faced by those who are socially read as “í/indios”. Even so, he was moved by a poem that denounces anti-Black racism. By bringing this Afro-Peruvian poem to the Carioca stages, my friend, myself, Grupo Sayari and Grupo Negro Mendes

opened up space for reflection on racism. This reflection made me want to learn more about Afro-Peruvian cultures and to participate more actively in the construction of a counterhegemonic vision of Peru in Rio de Janeiro. My interest culminated in the creation of the Encontro-Brasil in 2012 and its subsequent editions in 2014 and 2019. My participation in the Peruvian community as a Black woman also played an important role in my process of constructing my identity as a Latin American Black woman.

In 2013, the *Consejo de Consulta*<sup>14</sup> and *GEASUR*<sup>15</sup> organized the “Dialogues from El Sur - Discussing racism in Latin America” conference. The event took place at UNIRIO on a Saturday. In the morning, the film *Choleando* was shown, a documentary discussing racism in Peru and the different forms it takes. The name of the film is the gerund of the verb “*cholear*”, which means the act of classifying a person as a *cholo* with the intention of oppressing him, as explained by Luis Fernando. The gerund indicates that the act of discrimination is dynamic and relational. In each interaction, individuals classify those who have more “Indigenous” traits – phenotypical, class, etc. – bringing them closer to subalternized subjects in Peru: cholos and black people. *Cholear* thus names the action of negatively racializing individuals in urban Peruvian contexts. This activity spread with the migration of rural populations from the Sierra to the capital Lima. It became a way of transforming the previously physical distance between the Lima elites and the populations of the Sierra (Sierra x Costa) into racial distance. *Cholear* thus does not necessarily refer to a racial or ethnic identity, but to the dynamics of power relations that rank individuals in accordance with the intersections of their physical, cultural and class characteristics.

The event was followed by a lunch break. In the outer courtyard of the auditorium, stalls were installed selling Peruvian food. Different Peruvian cooks presented dishes for the public to taste. After lunch, a round table was held with 3 participants: Dr. Claudia Miranda (a Black Brazilian), Dr. Pedro Mireles (Peruvian), and myself. The debate was mediated by Nollan Montalvo, a member of the Consejo de Consulta. It ended with a presentation by Grupo Negro Mendes and Grupo Kuntur, which played songs with Andean cultural influences. The public actively participated in the entire event. Many members of the public regretted that they had little time to discuss things further with members of the table. The musical performances were received with applause and smiles and many members of the audience, excited, even ended up dancing. The friends who danced with me in the Grupo Sayari, Prof. Celso Sanchez, and I all got up to dance as well. Celso invited one of his friends to dance to the *Valicha* played by Grupo Kuntur while my friends and I danced during Grupo Negro Mendes’ presentation. At the request of my friends who were members of the Consejo de Consulta, I recited the poem “Me gritaron negra”.

Peruvian public events in Rio de Janeiro are usually organized using three elements as a reference: Peruvian food, music, and dance. These are the central three elements in the social construction of *peruanidad* in Rio de Janeiro and the negotiations around it (Daniel 2017). One of the effects of the large presence of students and artists in the Peruvian community in Rio de Janeiro is their role in organizing these sorts of public events. Many of these events take place at universities, research institutes, and theaters located in the Center and South Zone of Rio. These spaces are accessed through their organizers’ contact networks, typically among middle class Cariocas. These spaces are not often frequented by those Peruvians engaged in more precarious jobs – particularly those which required a long workday –, who live in more distant neighborhoods, who do not have access to these networks, or who do not feel welcomed in spaces where middle classes predominate, Peruvian or Brazilian.

14 “The Consejo de Consulta was created in 2002 by the Peruvian Foreign Affairs Ministry to function as an associative and participatory organization for Peruvians living abroad, permitting the establishment of a dialogue between the Peruvian community abroad and the nation’s consulates” (Daniel 2013:66).

15 Grupo de Estudos em Educação Ambiental *desde el Sur*, coordinated by Prof. Celso Sanchez, of the Escola de Educação of the Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO).

It is interesting to observe the guests at the debate panel organized for above mentioned event: two Black Brazilian women and two Peruvian men with Indigenous phenotypes. This may indicate both the recognition of the contribution of non-white researchers to the anti-racist debate, but it also shows that racism is a topic that those people closest to whiteness will generally not talk about. On the other hand, Prof. Celso Sanchez, who is a white man, participated in the event performing production tasks such as assisting with the image and sound equipment. He thus contributed to the event without assuming any visibility roles. “Dialogues from El Sur” created an interactive environment, bringing Peruvians from the middle and lower classes into the university space. Of all the Peruvian events that I had attended, participated in as a dancer, or even organized, this was the first time that I saw such a diverse Peruvian audience in a university. The event also had a Brazilian audience, which was mostly linked to GEASUR and its partners from other universities. The event attracted Brazilians and Peruvians with food and dance, but it also managed to create a space where everyday racism was named, discussed, and criticized.

### **Becoming *Quechua Wanka*: The (re)construction of racial identity in the Peruvian migratory experience**

In my doctoral thesis, I developed the notion of “migratory experience”, understood as “a set of experiences that, provided by the simultaneous displacement through different symbolic and geographical spaces, allow individuals to cast a critical eye on themselves, their practices, their country of origin, and their destination” (Daniel 2013). The notion helped me analyze how Peruvian students understood their shift from Peru to Rio de Janeiro in the context of migration. It also recognizes the specificities of student mobility compared to other forms of mobility, such as immigration or seeking refuge. For many Peruvian students, coming to Rio de Janeiro also meant rethinking their relationship with race. Born in Junín in central Peru and having migrated to Lima as a child, Ketty Aire Laureano came to Rio de Janeiro to study. In 2015, she entered into the master’s degree program in Communication and Culture at UFRJ, defending her dissertation in 2017.

Ketty and I met in 2015 at the Peruvian gastronomy festival Expo Ceviche, which took place at the Casa de Espanha. She had already sent me an email saying she was interested in studying Peruvian immigration in Rio de Janeiro, but we had not yet met in person. I was in line to buy my ceviche when Ketty approached with a hearty smile. “Are you Camila?” she asked. “Yes, I am,” I responded, also smiling. Ketty told me about her research plans and I expressed my joy that more people would be working with Peruvian immigration in Rio de Janeiro. In 2016, Ketty and I became even closer. This was the year that I did my post-doctorate in the United States, mentioned above. In addition to being one of my interviewees, Ketty conducted interviews with other Peruvians in Rio de Janeiro and also transcribed interviews. She also helped my undergraduate research assistant. Finally, I had the honor of being on Ketty’s dissertation defense committee, at her invitation.

I interviewed Ketty over skype. At the time, I was living in Baltimore, a mostly Black city north of Washington D.C. There, I was systematically rejected by Peruvians, who read me as an African American. This rejection was often manifested by silent expressions of hostility, such as inquisitive looks. Sometimes the rejection came in a passive-aggressive way, with hypocritical praise, followed by demeaning comments about my body, my intellectual capacity or my morals. Each time this happened, I felt pain and anger. The silent or ambiguous character of Peruvian racism towards myself left me confused and full of doubts, with no resources to resist it. It took me a few months to understand that I was suffering from racism. This only happened after I joined an art-activism collective in Baltimore that socialized concepts about racism in order to politicize our experiences (Daniel 2019).

Ketty claimed that, like Diana, she does not feel at ease in Rio de Janeiro. Comparing her Carioca life with her Peruvian experiences, she reflected that she is more exposed to discrimination in Brazil; she does not have a support network and is not represented in the city's spaces of power. As an example, Ketty cited the university which she attends. While in Peru, she found many teachers and students with whom she identified, at least phenotypically. In Rio de Janeiro, she feels isolated and therefore more vulnerable. In the interview, she confided that she feels intimidated at the university. I told her that I had the same feelings, which indicated that our sensations were not episodic, but part of the power structure built into and around us. Ketty's phenotype – brown skin, straight black hair, short stature – situates her on the non-white side of the racial hierarchy. The racialization is aggravated by her Peruvian and Andean accent. While Diana found a way of expressing herself in the Arequipeño Carnival, Ketty did the same thing in her dissertation: “We are discriminated against in both public and private venues by officials, police, teachers, drivers, politicians, and government officials” (Aire 2017, p. 90).

Ketty acknowledges that there is racism in Peru, but says that she did not feel she was in a minority there. In Lima, Ketty navigated geographic and social spaces with people who looked much like her. At the university in Lima, for example, her colleagues and teachers were also “cholos”. In Rio, Ketty circulates in spaces mainly occupied by the white elite. She feels that her body is rejected in these spaces. This is very similar to the discrimination I suffered in Peruvian spaces in the United States. Ketty reports that the discrimination she faces in Rio is almost never verbalized. Even so, it is effectively materialized in looks of disgust and paternalistic acts. Ketty points out that the Indigenous ancestry in her body breaks the order of the white spaces of Rio's elites. Since coming to the city, the young Peruvian has faced different forms of racism. Shortly after her arrival, she was intercepted on the subway by a man who, looking at her, asked if she was on her way to the city Center to sell stuff. Ketty didn't understand the question. When she got off the subway, however, she quickly understood: in downtown Rio she found numerous street vendors with a phenotype similar to her own. Most of the vendors were Ecuadorians. At that time, Rio was receiving significant numbers of Ecuadorian immigrants involved in street commerce (Vieira 2014). On another occasion, Ketty, her boyfriend and two other Peruvian friends was harassed by an Uber driver. When Ketty's boyfriend tried to close the car's window, the driver shouted at him: he ordered the window to remain open, because the Peruvians “stank” (p.14).

For her master's dissertation, Ketty analyzed the migratory processes of Andean migrants in Rio de Janeiro. I was surprised and also a little disappointed. As there is no other study on Peruvian immigration in Rio de Janeiro, I had hoped that Ketty would write about some of the various issues that I was able to observe in the field, but had no time to analyze. In one of our conversations, Ketty told me that she noticed many similarities in her interaction with Peruvians, Bolivians, and Ecuadorians of Andean descent in Rio. Many of these immigrants also suffered discrimination because of their phenotype and accents. Ketty was also not comfortable in predominantly white and mixed-race Brazilian and Peruvian spaces. She associated her choice of her research object with the racism she had suffered at the hands of the Uber driver. “The driver was about 24 years old. He was white. He, a white man, did not believe he was working, even less so for ‘Indigenous’, ‘poor’ and who ‘stink’. For this reason, my research ended up being a personal and demanding project, a struggle for the recognition of the cultural diversity of us, Andeans, because in no way are we ‘all the same’”(p.14) .

With great sensitivity, Ketty narrates the feelings emerged during the Uber case. She felt “a mixture of fear, panic, helplessness, anguish, despair, terror”. The driver's screams expressed his “anger, wrath, and resentment”. Ketty emphasizes the importance of these feelings in revealing power structures that are often silenced. Rocha (2014) notes similar feelings in the movement of mothers whose children were murdered by the police in Rio de Janeiro. Feelings such as indignation, pain, and longing form the parameters of their to fight for justice. In their struggle, these mothers reveal the anti-Blackness reproduced by the State. In addition to killing their children, states makes it almost impossible to punish the guilty. Thus, it refuses to recognize

the mother's citizenship and, ultimately, their humanity. Along these lines, Rocha (2014) develops what she calls the "Anthropology of Outrage". In the same way as Ketty and Rocha, I have analyzed the importance of racialized anthropologists validate their feelings as criteria for analysis and execution of fieldwork from an autoethnographic perspective (Daniel 2019). In the article, I analyze the most serious case of racism I faced in fieldwork with Peruvians in the United States, when I found myself in physical danger. I discuss how much silent racism - which I suffered from Peruvians, but also in my life in Brazil - affected my ability to validate my feelings. These feelings are fundamental to the establishment of the limits of how much I, as a Black anthropologist, should expose myself in the fieldwork while refusing racism. The authors above also offer us elements to reflect upon the different forms that whiteness is reproduced in national and transnational contexts, at both institutional and interpersonal levels.

It is interesting to note that the debate about racism in Brazil tends to focus on the relationships between whites and Blacks (McCallum, Restrepo and Reesink 2017). If anti-Indigenous discrimination were to be called "racism", a transnational alliance could be created between Black and Indigenous peoples against the racial inequalities that preserve white privileges (Bento 2014) in Latin America. A good example of the kinds of connections that could be made can be seen in Brazilian Indigenous university students' recognition that the discrimination they suffer is racism. This has led these students to repudiate discrimination using, as a legal reference, the Brazilian laws that classify racism as a crime (Peixoto, 2017). The experience of the racialization of Black and Indigenous bodies is also something that should not be restricted to intranational space. Often, national identities spread abroad as ethnic identities reproduce the oppressions of their countries of origin, relegating Black and Indigenous immigrants to subordinate roles in their national community overseas. This subordination is often expressed in the refusal of the recognition of Black and Indigenous people as part of the immigrant community, or by their inclusion as exotic or inferior.

Although she has never denied his Indigenous ancestry, living in Brazil is making Ketty reconsider how she identifies herself in racial terms. An important episode in this process was the day she enrolled for the master's selection exam at the Postgraduate Program in Anthropology at the National Museum. The Program had already created an affirmative action policy, guaranteeing vacancies for self-declared Black and Indigenous candidates. "The Indigenous line is on that side," said one candidate when she saw Ketty trying to register. With her form in hand, Ketty hesitated before responding to the interrogation, "what is your race / color?" It was the first time that she faced with such a question. Initially, Ketty resisted the question. She refused to go to the "Indigenous" queue. She also found the question about "race / color" to be inappropriate. "Don't you have a 'human' option?", she asked, in a mocking tone.

For both of us, being a racialized migrant presented the challenge of dealing with racial classification systems whose codes we did not know. Neither of us accept the place of subordination to which we are assigned. Resignifying race as a force for transforming subordinate subjects into free ones (Segato 2010), we each built a path that led us to review our identities and our political positions. Ketty notes that she and her other friends face difficulties in finding a space in Rio de Janeiro that accommodate their reflections on the racism they suffer in Brazil. Such a space is rare in both the Peruvian community and in Brazilian society at large. Ketty has been looking for references in Brazilian Black thinkers and activists. In 2019, she enrolled in the "English and Social Justice" course, an English course that focuses on social, racial, and gender justice<sup>16</sup>. Ketty told me that she became interested in the course after seeing it promoted on my Facebook profile. She also participates in Magdas Migram, a collective of migrant women formed around the methodology of the Theater of the Oppressed.

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<sup>16</sup> A class created by Priscilla Pinto Ferreira, a post-doctoral student in the Department of African and African Diaspora Studies of the University of Texas and a Black Brazilian political activist.

When reading the first version of this article, Ketty asked me to make some corrections. She rejected the term “india”, but accepted “chola” and “Andean”. Now, she accepts terms like “india”, “Indigenous”, “serrana”, and “chola”, but rejects the violent and paternalistic ways in which they are often employed. Today, Ketty encompasses her identities in one sentence: “soy quechua wanka.” Recognizing herself as *wanka*, an ethnic group from the Junín region, and *Quechua*, Ketty situates herself in the ethnic diversity of populations of Quechua origin, often ignored in hegemonic representations of the Andeans. The dialogue between Ketty and I has enabled us to share emotional and political support, as well as theoretical reflections from an Afro-Indigenous perspective (Goldman 2015; 2014) as racialized women and researchers. We have proposed an article for the 32<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Brazilian Anthropological Association, where we will draw parallels between our experiences as racialized researchers in transnational contexts. As outsiders-within (Hill-Collins, 2016), we hope to contribute to unraveling anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racisms in Latin America.

## Final Remarks

In expressing her need to write a book to tell “how she discovered herself to be índia”, Diana reveals the classification power Brazilian society wields over her. She also reveals the pain of being silenced when she shares how it feels to be incorporated into a lower category in the Brazilian and Peruvian racial hierarchies. Many Brazilians overlook this pain, including some with whom Diana has intimate relationships. In the book on my bookshelf, Diana found an opportunity to relate her experiences of discrimination, as a Peruvian with an Indigenous phenotype in Rio de Janeiro, to those Black Brazilians who “discovered themselves to be Black” face, just like me. While I self-identify as Black (that explains the Black-themed books on my bookshelf), Diana does not self-identify as “índia”. Despite this fact, when she took the lead in incorporating “Carnaval Arequipeño” into the Grupo Sayari’s repertoire, she publicly acknowledged Indigenous culture as part of her Arequipeña identity. By doing so, Diana also expanded the representation of *peruanidad* in Rio de Janeiro.

The racialization experienced by Diana, Ketty, and Luis Fernando when they are identified as “Indian” indicates that Brazilian racial categories impact upon their migratory experience. It also demonstrates how Brazilian society imagines and treats the country’s own Indigenous populations. Krenak (2019) warns of the urgent need to incorporate racism into the debates regarding Indigenous issues in Brazil. He points out that an exclusive focus on ethnicity is not capable of recognizing that Indigenous populations were the first to be affected by the genocidal colonial project still at large in the world. As they move through middle class neighborhoods and occupy spaces of power, such as universities, Peruvians face different forms of discrimination. Being called an “índio”, in spite of how they self-identify, is one of these. It is a way of exotizing Peruvians or of calling into doubt their intellectual capacities, projecting onto these immigrants stereotypes that also affect Native Brazilians. The anti-Indigenous racism to which Peruvians are exposed is often not even verbalized. Even silent, it insidiously attacks through hostile looks, displays of disgust, and paternalistic behavior.

Thus, Peruvians experience the migratory experience as “colonial immigrants” (Grosfoguel and Maldonado-Torres 2008). They are immigrants positioned in the area of non-being, in the position of national racialized populations in this case: Native Brazilians. Their processes of racialization, however, are not experienced in the same way. Luis Fernando, for example, can escape racialization by hiding his nationality since his body is socially read as white. Diana and Ketty don’t have that option. The “índio” category is used within the Peruvian community in Rio de Janeiro, reproducing the racialization processes in Peru. Many Peruvians who are phenotypically close to their Indigenous ancestors, come from the lower classes living on the outskirts of Lima or were born in Peru’s Sierra, suffer from discrimination in the Peruvian immigrant community itself or feel excluded from the *peruanidad* performed in Peruvian public events in Rio de Janeiro. In dialogue with Carioca society, this *peruanidad* often takes on stereotyped forms that contribute to reinforce discrimination.

However, Peruvians in Rio de Janeiro do not completely ignore anti-Black and anti-Indigenous discrimination in both countries. For example, the performance of the poem “Me gritaron negra” and the event “Dialogues from el Sur: Discussing racism in Latin America” put racism on the agenda.

Movements against structural racism and the political construction of ethnic-racial identities in Brazil also affect how Peruvians understand race. When Ketty was asked if she would apply for the quotas for Indigenous people in an Anthropology master’s selection process, she encountered the term “Indigenous” as potentially applied to herself. In the political organization of Brazilian Indigenous populations, this category is reframed. A category that originally represented colonial domination is thus assumed as an ethnic and political identity: self-identification based on the capacity for self-definition (Hill-Collins 2016), a driving force for emancipation (Segato, 2010). Ketty did not apply for the quota. She did not identify herself as “Indigenous”. However, the question generated a profound reflection on her place in Brazil, Peru, and the world. The question made Ketty aware of race not only as a criterion of oppression, but as a political identity. Ketty and I, two negatively racialized researchers, used our agency to transform our pains into action and analysis. From a decolonial perspective, we took our individual feelings and experiences as a source of theoretical reflection, engaging in our own experience of the Afro-Indigenous as a process of becoming (Mello, 2014; Goldman, 2014) – a form of action that reveals the (un)spoken veiled racism (Gonzalez 1988) in Latin America. I close this text, certain and hopeful that it does not end the debate, but opens up spaces for transnational and inter-ethnic anti-racist dialogue.

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# “I left too late, I go back too often”: sentiments of belonging and home among Indian scholars in the United Kingdom

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## **Abstract**

This paper addresses current notions of belonging amongst Indian scholars in social sciences building an academic career in the United Kingdom. Drawing on concluded PhD research in social anthropology, it articulates a multi-sited ethnography of centres of research and in-depth interviews. This research project acknowledges the fact that while the literature on circulations of scholars is vast and continues to grow, ethnographic studies on this matter are still rare. For this reason, this paper focuses on an ethnographic comprehension, based on everyday conversations and evocative situations, of these lives that are built in a context of mobility. Here, I address notions of diaspora, global citizenship and cosmopolitanism as relevant hermeneutic tools for the comprehension of transnational sentiments of belonging amongst these scholars. At stake are intersectional elements that include class, gender, origin and caste, in the construction of transnational academic circulations.

**Key words:** mobility, intellectuals, post-coloniality, globalisation, India, United Kingdom.

# “Parti muito tarde, volto com muita frequência”: sentimentos de pertença e lar entre pesquisadores indianos no Reino Unido

## Resumo

Este artigo analisa noções de pertença presentes entre pesquisadores indianos em ciências sociais que buscam construir uma carreira acadêmica no Reino Unido. Baseado nos resultados de uma pesquisa doutoral em antropologia social, o presente texto articula uma etnografia multissituada de centros de pesquisa e entrevistas em profundidade. Apesar da existência de uma vasta e ainda crescente literatura sobre circulações de pesquisadores, raros são os estudos etnográficos sobre o tema. Por esta razão, privilegia-se neste trabalho uma compreensão etnográfica, ancorada em conversas e situações antropológicamente significativas, dessas vidas construídas em contexto de mobilidade. Eu reflito aqui sobre noções de diáspora, cidadania global e cosmopolitismo como conceitos hermeneuticamente relevantes para o estudo da produção transnacional de sentimentos de pertença entre esses acadêmicos. Elementos interseccionais como classe, gênero, origem e casta ocupam aqui um lugar central no debate sobre as circulações transnacionais de acadêmicos.

**Palavras-chave:** mobilidade, intelectuais, pós-colonialidade, globalização, Índia, Reino Unido.

# “I left too late, I go back too often”: sentiments of belonging and home among Indian scholars in the United Kingdom<sup>1</sup>

Vinicius Kauê Ferreira

Even though he had decided he would walk where the legs lead him, why had he walked all this way within earshot of those bamboo cowbells, that cowherd boy's fluting sounds? Whatever his decision, his feet still walked him close to the habitations of men. This is the limit of his world, his freedom.

(U.R. Ananthamurthy, *Samskara: a rite for a dead man*, 2012 (1976), p.80)

## Introduction: for an ethnography of academic circulations

June 2015, University of Paris 8, Saint-Denis. With its precarious structure, this university located on the outskirts of Paris, known as a stronghold for migrant students and those of popular origin, hosts the conference of an eminent Indian historian who has made his career between India and the United States. He comes to speak of theories of democracy from a post-colonial point of view, a scene that is less and less rare in French universities, historically refractory to post-colonial criticism, but which still occurs in a geographically and politically marginal institution of Parisian academia. Although my doctoral research concerns the construction of academic trajectories of social scientists<sup>2</sup> in Europe, I considered this an interesting opportunity to meet an Indian researcher of great recognition abroad. As I would comprehend throughout the course of the research, meeting with researchers established in non-European countries, in addition to the field that I had initially defined in geographic terms, was a fruitful way of putting the initially defined circulation space into perspective.

Once his conference on post-colonial democracies was over, I introduced myself, mentioned my research on 'Indian diasporic scholars' and asked him whether he was available for an interview. He gave me a sceptical look and answered evasively. It then seemed clear to me that he was not interested and I began to wonder whether my approach had been inadequate. This question haunted me for several days until, progressively, and thanks to certain dialogues with colleagues, I began to elaborate it through an image that seemed right to me: that of a kite. While these researchers saw themselves as cosmopolitan people, global citizens flying across the planet, with my proposal to discuss their 'diaspora', I incarnated the boy who pulls the kite string back to India. As I would understand better later, from other interlocutions and field situations, the term diaspora was not welcome among my interlocutors.

In addition to the question of choosing the correct word that provides access to a specific field, this reflection led me to the need to review my research questions, the theoretical framework of my project, as well as the nature of my field. If my project was not about the 'diaspora' of researchers, then what was it about? This question seemed even more difficult to me as a vast literature explored such circulations precisely through this *non grata* notion (Assayag & Bénéï 2004). This was a fundamental step in the construction of a research problem and which I return to in this article. The analysis specifically proposed here is part of a

<sup>1</sup> The translation of this article was funded by the Graduate Program in Social History of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

<sup>2</sup> By social scientists, I use the European understanding of the term, which includes sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, historians and specialists in cultural studies.

broader research on the social, cultural and political conditions of constructing an academic life between India and Europe. The fieldwork was carried out between 2015 and 2017, in England, Germany and India, where I conducted participant observation of academic events, institutions and political mobilisations, in addition to about 50 interviews with 50 researchers at different career levels – from post-doctoral students to retired professors –, 30 of them in the United Kingdom, the focus of this article.

I discuss here notions of belonging articulated by Indian researchers in social sciences who have built an academic career in the UK at the present time. More precisely, it is about understanding how the experience of constructing an academic trajectory is meant by Indian social scientists in a context in which a long colonial and post-colonial history is resignified through the lexicon of globalisation and its avatars, such as transnationalism, cosmopolitanism and the diaspora. In this sense, post-colonial studies constitute a privileged theoretical framework in the analysis of these circulations, insofar as they equip us with valuable tools to reflect on how imaginaries, projects and subjectivities are produced by the circulations of people, objects, symbols and ideas within a long colonial history which, although *mise à jour*, remains largely structured on ancient practices and connections (Hall 1996).

This means that, when put into perspective with reflections on post-coloniality, notions like ‘transnationalism’ and ‘cosmopolitanism’, consecrated by the literature on contemporary flows (Hannerz 1997), become categories that must be critically analysed from the point of view of historically unequal power relations that are currently reframed through a lexicon inherent to so-called ‘globalisation’ (Ferreira 2017a). Even the term globalisation, and its heuristic capacity in the analysis of knowledge production and circulation processes, must be considered from a post-colonial point of view (Krishna 2009). This is because much of the consecrated literature on globalisation disregards the post-colonial nature of these processes (Abélès 2012), not to mention authors who despite weaving relationships between the two, do so in an almost celebratory (Appadurai 1996) or fatalistic manner (Bhabha 1994). In short, the analysis proposed in this article addresses specific dimensions of a broader multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995) of academic lives constructed in the context of circulation within a post-colonial space.

In this article, I focus on the narratives of three interlocutors, named Binoy, Irrfan and Tridib<sup>3</sup>, and analyse their *trajectories* from an anthropological viewpoint (Velho 1986), in order to privilege an articulation between spheres that are deeply constitutive of the latter: from a reflection on family trajectories and social capital, through schooling, and class and caste belonging (Bénéï 2008; Bourdieu 1980; Bourdieu and Passeron 1964, Lahire 1995, Srivastava 1998), up to narratives on circulation and sentiments of belonging in transnational contexts (Hall 1997), without losing sight of the historical background in which these circulations are inscribed and from which the imaginaries and subjectivities that are characteristic of it are produced. I also recover ethnographic situations of collective mobilisation in order to highlight practices of building active connections with India from Europe. At the same time, institutional and epistemological transformations (Bénéï 2005a, Ribeiro and Escobar 2006) play an important role in mapping the landscape in which such trajectories are forged, since the latter are shaped considerably by the institutional architecture of contemporary scientific policies and a certain ‘knowledge economy’ (Wright 2014, 2016) that characterises the English-speaking academic world in particular. Therefore, the effort consists of composing an ethnographic reflection that articulates history and scientific policies in the construction of subjectivities in the context of academic mobility.

The circulation of Indian scholars between India and Europe is a traditional and well-known dynamic in European academic circles. Although this topic has occupied an important place in the field of intellectual history for many decades (Bayly 1999, Cohn 1996, Lardinois 2007, O’Hanlon 2014, Trautmann 1997), not to mention texts of an autobiographical and hagiographic nature (Assayag and Bénéï 2004, Subrahmanyam

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<sup>3</sup> The names of the interlocutors have been changed to protect their privacy.

2015), such circulations have never been the subject of an ethnographic study in which the circulations of researchers were studied in the same methodological, conceptual and axiological terms as other subjects of anthropological interest. While it is true that there is a vast and solid ethnographic production on student circulations (Barros and Adnane 2017, Cicchelli 2012), including that dedicated to Indian students in Europe (Tejada *et al.* 2014), it must be emphasised that the analysis of circulations of researchers implies some specificities concerning professional projects, trajectories, sociability, family relationships, and scientific policies that are distinct from, albeit related to, those involved in the study of student circulations. Moreover, although it is possible to speak of an important sociology of academic circulations (Garcia 2005) that seeks to restore contemporary processes of mobility, there are few works that conduct an ethnographic approach to academic life guided by participant observation and dense description of events and institutions, or even accompanying interlocutors in their daily experiences.

### **The figure of the 'Indian intellectual': social and imaginary origins**

A young professor at Cambridge University, Binoy greeted me kindly in his almost ascetically decorated office. On his desk, a bust of Mahatma Gandhi; on the wall just behind him, a photo of three eminent male figures in Indian history, including Rabindranath Tagore, the great writer, poet, composer, philosopher and educator of the turn of the twentieth century in India. This is the first of a series of occasions when I would find references to Tagore and Gandhi in the work spaces of my interlocutors – especially those of the men. Binoy is a young researcher born in the state of Assam, located in north-eastern India, from a family of university professors specialised in English literature and philosophy, who came from different states of India. Although his parents are Hindus, his Christian aunt had an important influence on his religious background, to the point that he identified as a Christian thanks to her. His mother was a practicing Vaishnava (a devotee of Vishnu as the supreme god), while his father, a trained Hindu, always told him that 'his religion was Tagore'. It is precisely through this story of a family interwoven at the crossroads of different religious practices, regional origins, values that are at the same time spiritual and secular, Anglophiles and practitioners of a cosmopolitan Hinduism, often represented in the figures of Tagore and Gandhi, that Binoy interprets his intellectual trajectory and its ethical position in relation to the world. And it is through this set of elements that he speaks of the 'Indian intellectual'.

Binoy's social origins echo the origin of the vast majority of my interlocutors, men and women equally represented, in the United Kingdom: they belong to the middle and upper classes of high caste, intellectual, light-skinned<sup>4</sup> families, formed in a highly appreciated Anglophilic culture, while proud of a certain cosmopolitan aspect of 'Indian culture'. This was the profile of about 90% of the researchers I interviewed, and it was no different when it came to his academic background: like many, Binoy had passed through the great institutions that constitute the *voie royale* of the Indian researcher who finds success in Europe. He graduated from St. Stephen's College, the most renowned college in India, and which was founded—Binoy told me in detail—in 1881 by a British Anglican mission called the Cambridge Mission. In retrieving this history, Binoy demonstrated a precise knowledge that allowed him, above all, to inscribe himself in the history of the most prestigious and elite Indian college, frequently elevated to the role of the nation builder of modern India (Rao 1991, Trivedi 1991), and through which many of my interlocutors in England had passed. Binoy highlighted more than

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<sup>4</sup> The debate on race in India is complex and intersects with caste, gender and regional origin in terms that are quite specific to the Indian context. However, it is widely recognised that "fair" skin is socially associated with high castes, while "dark" skin is associated with lower castes and *Dalits* (those who are theoretically excluded from the caste system) (Beteille 1990). Recent literature on the consumption of whitening cosmetics in India has been important to understanding the social value of whiteness as a standard of social status (Srivastava 2013).

once that not only was this institution created according to Cambridge models, but also that this link persists, insofar as the majority of St. Stephen's teachers are still trained in Cambridge. It is not for nothing that he, like others of my Indian interlocutors, claimed to feel a certain familiarity with Cambridge even before moving on to his post-graduate studies: 'St. Stephen's College fits Cambridge perfectly', he said.

This Anglophile education was as present in the school environment as in the sphere of the home. As young students, they developed great familiarity with certain spheres of British and American culture, especially their respective expressions of classic and modern art and lifestyle. The main references to the United Kingdom revolved around the English language, classical literature and, of course, academic references, while the United States provided a more 'modern' repertoire, including certain musical styles (such as jazz and rock), certain food culture and consumer goods<sup>5</sup>. In this context, leaving for the UK to continue their studies was often conveyed as an unplanned step and rarely engendered deep feelings of academic or cultural displacement. On the contrary, the 'premier institutions' they had passed through 'fit' perfectly in renowned British institutions. As one of my Cambridge-based interlocutors would say, 'after passing through St. Stephen's College, continuing your studies at Cambridge is an almost natural step'.

Evidently, this is not the case for the every one of my interlocutors. Some of them of more modest origin, had passed through less elite institutions and were critics of the dominant figures mentioned by Binoy, such as Gandhi and Tagore, as symbols of cosmopolitanism and the very archetype of the 'Indian intellectual'. In this context, the figure of B.R. Ambedkar, a *Dalit* intellectual and political opponent of Gandhi<sup>6</sup>, has been revived as a symbol of a non-Brahmin intellectuality, given that the first two, although critical of the practices of 'untouchability', are among the Hindus and Brahmins that compose the pantheon of Indian national heroes. However, it is not an exaggeration to underline that this is a recent movement with expression in less traditional academic networks than those that lead to universities like Cambridge and Oxford. Binoy's trajectory is quite representative of the general and incredibly homogeneous profile of my interlocutors in England<sup>7</sup>.

In the main, the narratives articulated by Indian social scientists employed at European universities<sup>8</sup> reveal extraordinarily similar academic and family structures. These are women and men born into families of middle and upper classes<sup>9</sup> and castes, to parents employed in positions of relative or high social prestige. Among the researchers I was able to interview in the United Kingdom, at least half are children of civil servants, for example, which in India is not only a relatively well-regarded occupation, but above all a strategic social position in terms of access to material and symbolic resources. Others are the children of doctors, diplomats, university or secondary teachers (usually the mother) or private sector employees in commanding positions. In addition, it is easy to perceive how their families, through their brothers, uncles and other close relatives,

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5 The USA has emerged as a cultural reference with greater force since the 1990s, when it marked the economic liberalisation of India. Before that, under the preponderance of the Nehruvian development project, more closely related to soft socialism, there was significant resistance to cultural products and consumer goods that referred to the US. Representative of this is the famous ban on Coca-Cola by the Indian government in 1977, which lasted 16 years.

6 Ambedkar, an intellectual of *Dalit* origin, then known as *untouchable*, was especially opposed to Gandhi in the debate about the caste system and Hinduism. In this regard, see his text entitled "What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables" (1945). For a more comprehensive reading of his ideas, see his work "The Annihilation of Caste" (1936).

7 The profile of Indian students in England is certainly more diverse thanks to ongoing changes in the funding policies that structure these circulations, especially through scholarships programmes. When it comes to permanent teaching positions, however, the latter are still mostly occupied by scholars of wealthy backgrounds.

8 As is widely known nowadays, working conditions in European academic institutions are increasingly precarious, mainly due to the expansion of temporary teaching and research contracts. Despite being an important point of reflection for this research, having been the object of analysis in another publication (Ferreira 2017a), it will not be possible to address it in detail in this article. Here I deal specifically with the trajectories narrated by researchers employed in permanent positions in research and teaching institutions in the United Kingdom.

9 It is important to emphasise that the term middle-class does not have the same meaning in India as it does in many European countries. If, in the latter, this category usually refers to part of the working class, in the Indian subcontinent, as well as in many countries of the global South, it mostly concerns much more restricted and privileged groups in terms of access to financial resources and symbolic capital (Fernandes 2006).

extend into different professions, including: public service, military careers, political positions, international institutions, financial institutions, engineering, and technology companies. Equally relevant is the fact that these family networks extend beyond India, thanks to relatives (uncles, cousins, close friends, etc.) who live or have lived in Europe at some point. In other words, participating in such a diverse, extensive and prestigious network exponentially reinforces the social capital necessary to access certain intellectual spheres both in India and in Europe.

Intranational or regional migration also seems to be a constituent element of my interlocutors' recent family trajectories, as occurred in Binoy's family, where it was not uncommon for the parents or grandparents to have migrated regionally, within the Indian subcontinent itself. If, on the one hand, this is a relatively common narrative in South Asia – since the history of the region is marked by numerous processes of displacement and migration –, in the case of these intellectuals, such narratives become a key element in claiming the essentially cosmopolitan nature of their personal and intellectual development: their personal and family histories are presented as stories of continuous displacement and linguistic and religious syncretism that accompanies such circulations. As a result of this family mobility, so common to the Indian researchers I met, Binoy speaks five languages: Assamese, Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, and English. These are the languages he learned at school (Assamese, the official language of the state Assam, and the national languages Hindi and English<sup>10</sup>), spoke at home (Assamese and English), in addition to those learned informally with friends in Assam and later in Delhi (Bengali and Urdu, respectively).

This, incidentally, is a key element widely shared among these researchers: India is a cosmopolitan space *par excellence*. According to this narrative, the great Indian metropolises, such as Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai, represent an eminently cosmopolitan national landscape, since these urban spaces embody the cultural, linguistic and history diversity that characterises the country. In this sense, these are described as highly modern, intellectualised and culturally vibrant cities, located at points of intersection of the intense circulations that mark Indian society: ideal places for the production of cosmopolitan intellectuals, as also shown by Sanjay Srivastava (1996). It is no wonder that almost all of my interlocutors who grew up in smaller cities, moved to Kolkata, Mumbai or, especially, Delhi for their undergraduate or post-graduate studies. Many of them used the expression 'eye-opener' to refer to the experience of moving to these cities: it was a movement to expand cultural repertoires, perspectives on the world and knowledge about the very cosmopolitanism that characterises India.

This cosmopolitanism is expressed in the progressive stance of their families, essentially modern in terms of morals, politically liberal and 'secularised', which means that they do not subscribe to conservative forms of Hinduism expressed in the *Hindutva* movement<sup>11</sup>. Given this context, my female interlocutors reported relative freedom concerning how they could plan their futures, having been encouraged to study and travel, and having been pressured to marry far less than other women close to them were.

Thus, like Binoy, almost all of these researchers went through the same restricted group of prestigious higher education institutions in India, and later in the United Kingdom or the United States (particularly Ivy League institutions), revealing a kind of layered funnelling system that represents the select 'premier institutions'. Therefore, not being accepted at a certain stage of their development into such institutions represents a serious setback in the very important project of maintaining their social position (rarely social ascension) that marks these trajectories. In this context, family expectations about these young people gravitates particularly towards

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<sup>10</sup> In general, language teaching in Indian schools is structured in the following triad: the official regional language of each state (from among the 27 official regional languages), English and Hindi.

<sup>11</sup> The *Hindutva* movement is characterised by its essentially anti-Muslim nationalist religious ideas and is associated with the far-right Bharatiya Janata Party, BJP (literal translation: the Indian People's Party). For an analysis of the movement's history, its symbols and the place of women in its structure and symbology, see Paola Bacchetta (1994 and 2005).

professions like medicine, engineering, technology, or well-paid positions in the private or public sector, but they also turn to the social prestige linked to certain educational institutions at all levels, even though the traditional respect associated with the profession of university professor is in sharp decline.

Indeed, for many middle and upper class Indian families, the academic career is not as desirable as it has been in the recent past, due not only to precarious wages and working conditions, but also to the profession's loss of prestige. Even though many of my interlocutors argue that salaries for permanent positions are not dissatisfactory in higher education, especially in some private institutions, it is clear that the prestige associated with this profession has declined. Susan Bayly (2007) is quite assertive when relating this drop in the prestige of the academic career in the country, which from the 1990s onwards began to be seen as 'unrewarding', to the implementation of positive discrimination policies in order to guarantee the access of low caste students and teachers to university. For a large part of the Indian middle classes, argues Bayly, such policies are the denial of the most fundamental meritocratic principle that should govern academic work<sup>12</sup>. Even though this seems to be a very distant position from that adopted by the vast majority of my interlocutors, more aligned with the fight against the caste system, such factors cannot be ignored in the consolidation of social representations that inform family expectations.

Thus, it is common to hear from my interlocutors that they were able to assert their choices for the humanities – and for an academic career – because they were accepted in the most prestigious institutions in Delhi, Kolkata or Mumbai. This can often end up being a strong argument in family negotiations: 'If you want to study history, you must do it at St. Stephen's College', as one of my interlocutors, currently a professor in the north of England, heard from his father.

### **Mobility and sentiments of belonging**

With this background in mind, I would like to focus on my fieldwork in the UK in order to explore representations and sentiments of belonging that are proper to this given context of circulations. Which elements are articulated in the everyday production of meaning for their own trajectories in the context of intense – and often indefinite – geographical mobility? As I intend to show, the narratives in question raise very particular understandings of terms like cosmopolitanism, global citizen and diaspora that need to be carefully analysed. In addition, I try to sustain that such trajectories mobilise certain strategies of production of belonging that are quite specific to academic life in the context of scientific circulation policies, although practices quite common to non-academic migration also carry great weight in scientific circulations.

Even though many of my interlocutors had never visited the United Kingdom before (indeed, most had never even travelled outside India), their arrival in the United Kingdom was described by feelings of 'familiarity'. Those who mentioned difficulties with adaptation raised relatively banal everyday problems (like the use of a laundry), alongside certain more important factors (such as food practices, distance from their family and the climate); however, even the latter did not seem to imply any sense of deep unsettlement, much less rupture, on the subjective plane. All described processes of swift local adaptation and integration with research centres and groups of friends. Apparently, their intellectual development underwent familiarisation at a distance with the English academic and cultural context, especially British and American.

However, this does not mean that their subjective establishment in the United Kingdom – that is, the consolidation of ties, sentiments of belonging and sense of home – was a less complex process. Although the set of historical and cultural connections that engender the sharing of stories, values, projects and models are

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<sup>12</sup> For a detailed analysis of the decline in the prestige of the academic profession in South Asia, see the report resulting from research coordinated by Partha Chatterjee (2002).

quite real, notably for the more well-educated Indian strata, contributing to the production of very Anglophile identities, these same connections are also a source of complex sentiments that require meticulous analysis.

During one interview with a US-based professor who was spending a sabbatical year in Cambridge, I heard that 'being in Cambridge is different, here even the street names tell us something'. Indeed, street names, institutions, architecture, libraries, the city as whole seem to compose a landscape of relatively familiar and meaningful imaginary for these newcomer Indian students and researchers. An interesting sense of belonging can be glimpsed, for these spaces 'make sense' to them, allowing them to situate themselves within a long historical narrative that articulates both Indian and British territories in the construction of a transnational trajectory. Seen from another perspective – and subscribing to a necessary criticism of methodological nationalism (Peirano 2004) –, this speaks to a continuous, transnational, historical, and epistemological space, within which such projects and subjectivities are forged.

On the other hand, these continuities do not translate into simple settlement processes. Decidedly more complex, their lives are built on a continuous circulation between the new country and an alleged 'land of origin' (to use one of the many botanical analogies that constitute the semantic field of belonging<sup>13</sup>). The reasons generally listed for this are mainly two-fold: family and academic work. Regarding family ties, many opted for the United Kingdom rather than the United States due to the closer proximity to India<sup>14</sup>. Concerning academic travels, almost all of them work in India and usually go on research trips and, in some cases, to participate in events. Visits are made once or twice a year and occasionally – when receiving a year-long sabbatical, for example – the stay may extend for months.

However, it is not uncommon for their narratives to minimise the weight of these affective and professional connections in their daily lives, even though important references to India are frequently found in their offices, such as a bust of Mahatma Gandhi, images or writings of the poet Tagore on the walls, religious images, not to mention dozens of books on South Asia or even the fact that many are married to Indian partners. A certain attitude of minimising the weight of daily and affective ties tends to serve as a line that differentiates these scholars from those who harbour 'nationalist' feelings, which they describe as being excessively attached to identity-oriented discourses that they consider incompatible with the type of people they consider themselves to be. For themselves, they claim the status of 'global citizens'.

## **Cosmopolitanism and global citizenship: diaspora and political engagements**

Irrfan welcomes me to his office at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) of the University of London. Founded in 1916, initially named the School of African Studies, the institution was conceived as part of a new strategy of the exercise of soft power of the then British empire over its colonies: the SOAS was the cornerstone of a policy of 'academic hospitality' (Bénéï 2005a: 65), which consisted of the active enticement of children of the elites from the colonies to be trained in the metropolis, who then returned to their countries. In the context of the eminent collapse of the empire, due to the growing strength of the movements for independence in Africa and Asia, the United Kingdom adopted a new strategy to guarantee influence over local elites: university studies on South Asia and intellectual training of young people within British models thus became a central geopolitical issue. It is not by chance that in 1936-37, the 174 foreign students at SOAS represented 40% of the enrollees, while in 1960-61, they made up 81% (Philips 1967).

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<sup>13</sup> For an interesting analysis of the use of botanical terms (like soil, genealogical tree, roots, culture) and their implications for the definition of anthropological terms, such as culture and native, see Liisa Malkki (1992).

<sup>14</sup> Very similar arguments have a privileged place in narratives involving much more recent circulations among some academics with whom I was able to talk, and who have been working in the Middle East and South Asia, often in branches of American and British institutions recently opened in these places.

Today, the SOAS is a vibrant institution that welcomes students from different parts of the world, with different trajectories and with very active political lives. More than a mere site to train in Asian and African languages and culture, it has become a space for the affirmation of the intellectual cosmopolitanism that my interlocutors speak about. Here are taught not only young people from different parts of the world, but also the children of the Indian diaspora (among numerous others) established in the United Kingdom (Bénéti 2005b). An internationalised, global institution that, like other British institutions, began only recently to hire international teachers to attract international students. In the last decade, this notion of cosmopolitanism has extended to the recruitment policies of several British and European institutions, and the presence of Irrfan and many of my interlocutors form part of this movement.

Irrfan's office is small, simply decorated, with a table, two chairs and a pair of shelves attached to the walls. Among the books arranged on the table and on the windowsill, I see works by Edward Saïd and Paul Ricoeur. He is a very kind and considerate man in his forties. As soon as I enter, he says that he was waiting for me, showing a sincere interest in my research, which seems evident to me since he works on cosmopolitanism and political engagements. Irrfan was born in Bangalore, into a middle class family: his father is an engineer and his mother is a secondary school teacher. Like Binoy, he studied at an English-medium school, founded and run by a Christian mission<sup>15</sup>, with very traditional methods, minimally political, and eminently middle and upper class. As with all my interlocutors, caste was not an issue brought up when talking about social origins, since this is a very delicate topic and remains in a kind of unspoken ambiguity. However, Indian surnames are directly associated with specific castes, and Irrfan's surname is a common Brahmin surname from South India. And my conversation with Irrfan was very revealing of what these 'cosmopolitan' scholars understand by 'diaspora' and their own relationship with the term.

As I described at the beginning of the article, the notion of 'diaspora' had gained relative centrality in my research precisely because of the resistance I had observed to the term, but for some time, the heuristic implications of that were not entirely clear to me. My conversation with Irrfan led us to a discussion about the term, in which I asked him whether he recognised himself as a diasporic subject, to which he replied: 'I don't feel in diaspora. I left too late and I go back too often'.

Most of my interlocutors strongly refute the idea of diaspora as a descriptive term for their trajectories, since 'diasporic' is equated with 'identity', 'essentialism', 'patriotic exile' or even 'ghetto' sociability<sup>16</sup>. This representation of 'the Indian diaspora', especially its British version, essentially refers to the first and second generation of India-origin communities united around Hindu nationalist feelings, marked by political and cultural conservatism, with high doses of anti-Muslim tendencies. Right-wing nationalist movements, based on a certain form of religious revivalism, have defined contemporary political life not only in India, but also among its so-called 'diaspora', which has increasingly been the subject of much attention by the current right-wing Indian government<sup>17</sup>. It is not by chance that official statuses, such as Non-Resident Indians (NRI) and Person of Indian Origin (POI), have been coined by the Indian government in order to create and strengthen policies specifically aimed at these groups in the project of transnational construction of a Hindu nationalism.

Therefore, among my interlocutors, what is at stake is the opposition to such feelings, sociabilities and political positions that, in their eyes, reproduce nationalist narratives. For these researchers, this distance traverses the refutation of the notion of diaspora. Also emphasised is the fact that they participate in local and international networks and spaces of sociability, which do not traverse the 'Indian community'.

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<sup>15</sup> Many of my interlocutors studied in Catholic school; however, that does not mean that they come from Catholic families or they have converted to Catholicism. In India, confessional schools are a highly sought-after alternative to ensure quality education at reasonable, sometimes modicum, cost, especially in the case of families with many children.

<sup>16</sup> Positions like this are expressed in texts published by Indian researchers, like in Sanjay Subrahmanyam (2015).

<sup>17</sup> For an in-depth debate on the articulation between nationalisms and religion in South Asia and Europe, see van der Veer and Lehmann (1999).

For some, the simple question about the significance of the term diaspora to describe their own trajectories may sound slightly offensive, for others, just meaningless. They argue that they do not participate in social events defined by their ethnic nature, they do not live in Indian neighbourhoods, they do not participate in festivities like Holi or Diwali, nor are they attached to religious traditions that generally constitute such 'communities'. Apparently, one cannot be in diaspora and occupy the position of a global citizen at the same time.

Irrfan's statement is especially potent, meaningful, insofar as it speaks in a very synthetic, but incisive, manner about a fundamental feature of a hermeneutically fertile notion of diaspora amid a rather unfortunate proliferation of meanings – and, therefore, lack of them – attributed to the term in recent years<sup>18</sup>. Khachig Tölölyam (2005, 2007) has developed an argument that is certainly plausible when contesting the idea, overly disseminated by a vast literature, that diasporas concern the *circulation* of people. He argues that in most contexts, 'diaspora' describes *settlement* processes.

If we assume, following Tölölyam, that diasporas are produced by *settlement* processes, then their strength lies in their ability to circulate goods, imaginaries, nationalisms, money and films, while the real and intense circulation of people is reserved for restricted groups of people who have the financial resources for that. This is not to say that Indian persons or those of Indian origin living in countries like the United Kingdom, the United States or Australia do not organise visits to India; indeed, this is a popular practice among Indian diasporic communities. However, it is necessary to bear in mind that these are normally activities undertaken by families that have the financial and symbolic capital for this purpose<sup>19</sup>. Diasporic identity is then much more related to the construction of imaginaries about a land left behind, of a belonging nurtured at a distance.

That said, it can be argued that social and political positionalities are determinant in the adherence, or lack thereof, to the notion of diaspora. Additionally, social class plays a dual role<sup>20</sup>. First, the idea of cosmopolitanism, of 'global citizenship', is presented as the stamp of an education in which the project of an international life is inscribed within a vast 'field of possibilities' (Velho 1986) presented to these individuals from privileged groups. Second, it is class that allows such individuals to see themselves as global citizens, to the extent that, as 'privileged migrants' (Croucher 2012), their geographical and institutional circulation is facilitated, even though their class status does not exempt them from migratory complications inherent to post-colonial circulations between metropolises and former colonies. As one of my interlocutors, who is dedicated to reflections on diaspora and cosmopolitanism, would say, it was their class privileges – a class of 'global intellectuals' – that allowed them to 'not be diasporic' precisely because they did not need to rely on local diasporic communities<sup>21</sup>.

This researcher strongly criticised those academics who are resistant to the term diaspora. He not only claimed this category to designate his own trajectory, but he also accused these others of being 'elitist', unable to recognise the class privileges that allow them to claim an abstract, uprooted global citizenship. This interlocutor was much more open to talking about the ways in which he nurtured emotional ties with India through symbols that inhabit his youthful memories: certain brands of frozen food, soft drinks, musical genres, etc. Like the other scholars I met, he does not live in an 'Indian neighbourhood', nor does he participate in particularly 'Indian' sociabilities. However, in his discourse, he approaches an understanding of diaspora that is closer to that proposed by James Clifford (1994): a transnational space through which imaginaries can

18 For a debate on the uses and abuses of the term 'diaspora', see Tölölyan (2007) and Brubaker (2005).

19 In line with this, it is important to keep in mind that a large part of the Indian diaspora occurs within the framework of policies to attract highly qualified professionals to the USA and the UK, using special visas for such professionals, especially in the technology sector. This means that the Indian community in these countries is often a diaspora of the middle and upper class, as shown by Jackie Assayag and Véronique Bénéï (2005) and David Washbrook (2013).

20 By *class*, I refer to a marker defined mainly by the possession of certain types of social capital and the incorporation of a certain lifestyle (Bourdieu and Saint-Martin 1976), in which money has an important weight but is not a qualifying or, on occasion, even a necessary condition.

21 I develop this argument in greater detail in another publication (Ferreira 2017b)

circulate and be shared among people established in different parts of the planet. However, even this definition remains not only vast and imprecise, but does not take into account the diversity of meanings and vernacular understandings of the diaspora<sup>22</sup>.

For the most part, the narrative articulated in the interpretation of a life in which circulation acquires an encompassing dimension of its projects – and which also occurs between institutions and countries throughout their careers – favours ideas like cosmopolitanism and global citizenship. These ideas evoke the image of a person detached from national borders and national cultural identities. However, what is at stake here is the notion that leaving for the United Kingdom clearly expresses an eminently cosmopolitan tendency characteristic of so-called global citizenship. Thus, if the Indian intellectual is a cosmopolitan intellectual *par excellence*, the United Kingdom is ‘the world’ *par excellence*. Leaving for the United Kingdom – this space which in a certain historically and epistemologically sense overlaps that of India – is leaving for ‘the world’. Thus, the United Kingdom not only transcends the status of ‘locality’, but also erases the post-colonial connections that engender such circulations as contemporary intellectuals progressively detach themselves from the post-colonial lexicon to forge themselves in another, now global, lexicon.

What is interesting here is the very peculiar relationship that is produced between the local and the global, because it is based on a double assertion. On the one hand, the local appears as global because, as stated above, India is evoked as a cosmopolitan place *par excellence*<sup>23</sup>. On the other hand, the location that is so important in the modern history of India, the United Kingdom, is equated with ‘the world’. Together, India and the United Kingdom constitute an eminently ‘global’ circulation space, as they are both connected and cosmopolitan locations. Even though new circulations have emerged – not only to the USA, already a traditional destination, but also Australia, Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and other European countries<sup>24</sup> – the United Kingdom continues to occupy a privileged space in the imaginary of Indian academics.

### **Engaging from Europe: the transnational construction of identities**

The evening of November 9, 2015. The classroom at King’s College, Cambridge, is packed with researchers and students. Some of them are looking for a place to stand at the door, because the space cannot accommodate the approximately 70 people who participate in the discussion. They are mainly Indian academics or Indianists, from students to senior professors, gathered to express their opposition to what they consider unacceptable news: as part of an official visit by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the United Kingdom, the University of Cambridge had invited this highly controversial far-right politician to deliver a talk at the university. Shortly after the first rumours about this invitation spread through college hallways, a few weeks before Modi’s arrival, Indianists and Indian researchers from several countries signed a public letter addressed to the university administration, expressing their concern about the possible ‘disrepute’ that such an official invitation could provoke for the institution. Even before the university’s invitation, several demonstrations were organised by a large number of associations and political groups opposed to the prime minister and his party. All that remains is the prospect of a formal and celebrated alliance between the university and a far-right Indian government, accused of attacks on freedom of expression and promoting religious intolerance, which triggered the joint mobilisation of Indian scholars based abroad.

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<sup>22</sup> A positivised, alternative understanding of the notion in question is developed by one of my interlocutors, who speaks about the diaspora as an ethical position. I will not be able to address this here, but it is well represented in an article published by Dibyesh Anand (2009).

<sup>23</sup> Some Indian researchers subscribe to the controversial perspective that British colonisation was the historical fact responsible for the insertion of India in a true process of globalisation (Roy 2000).

<sup>24</sup> I have also established dialogues with researchers in countries in the Middle East. On the contemporary circulation of Indian university professors in Africa, particularly in Ethiopia, see Thubauville (2013).

Entitled *Let's Talk Modi*, the meeting was organised by the Cambridge Action association and was presented on its Facebook page as a 'University-wide discussion on the attacks on academic freedom, privatisation of education and rising tide of intolerance in India'. Among the speakers were three professors and a student, a member of the South Asian Solidarity Group, known for organising debates on freedom of expression and equality in South Asia. The purpose of the meeting, announced by one of the organisers, was to discuss concrete actions that could persuade the university to withdraw the controversial invitation. Speakers included students and university professors, all Indian, who spoke briefly before an animated debate with the public. The debate, in which a large number of people participated, focused on two fundamental aspects: (a) the perception that the BJP, Narendra Modi's party, and its socio-religious movement RSS, not only promote violence against non-Hindu beliefs and religions, but also against lower castes and other marginalised groups in India; and (b) the reason why the University of Cambridge was interested in promoting close ties with this government, despite the fact that, in the very recent past, the political leader was the centre of a diplomatic imbroglio between these two countries<sup>25</sup>.

Among those present in the debate, it was widely agreed that the invitation to Modi was linked to strategies to attract Indian students and funding to the University: in the second decade of the twenty-first century, British universities began to receive significant sums of money from the state and Indian companies to found research centres, chairs and scholarship funding. Mobilisations against Modi's visit proliferated in the days leading up to his arrival, all organised by associations for the defence of human rights, political freedom, and economic development in South Asia. Finally, amid dinners with Prime Minister David Cameron, lunches with Queen Elizabeth, and business meetings with local tycoons, the University of Cambridge eventually cancelled the invitation, bowing to pressure from researchers from different parts of the world.

These events reveal how apparently separate dimensions, that is, diplomatic matters of the Indian government and the academic life of Indian researchers in the United Kingdom, are intertwined not only in the construction of knowledge geopolitics by institutions, but also in processes of the formation of subjectivities, trajectories and narratives of these individuals. It is evident here how official politics, political commitment, and sentiments of belonging take on an increasingly transnational dimension, while playing a central role in the constitution of self-representations among Indian researchers based in Europe. Seen from an ethnographic point of view, the question here is understanding how researchers negotiate sentiments of belonging and political commitment within a transnational social space; in other words, what kind of ethical and subjective relationship can be built with India from the United Kingdom? A central question is that the notion of 'getting involved with India in Europe' is widely shared by the younger generations when identifying themselves as 'global citizens', whereas for the generations who studied abroad up to the 1990s, political involvement with India was essentially associated with returning home based on the desire to contribute to the development of post-independence India. As I show in the following pages, a more recent movement has resignified this political bond with India by staying in Europe. These 'global citizens' are inscribed in a changing global academic context in relation to those who have returned in the past, either by choice or for lack of opportunities.

Installed in his office, a poem by Rabindranath Tagore fixed on the wall behind him, Tridib, who teaches history at a university in the north of England, speaks enthusiastically of his thesis in history defended at the University of London. A very political issue, indeed controversial, that expresses his ethical involvement with India. Tridib, who is married to a researcher in another area of knowledge, gave a very particular account of his academic trajectory when compared with other male interlocutors: he credited the choices of his professional life to the desire to follow his wife, thanks to whom, says Tridib, he would eventually become a researcher.

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25 In 2002, as the Chief Minister of the state of Maharashtra, Narendra Modi was accused of deliberately not taking action to stop a series of anti-Muslim riots. As a result, more than 1,000 people died and a travel ban was imposed on him by the US and the UK until 2012, when the diplomatic boycott was ended as his popularity grew not only in India, but also amongst the influential Indian diaspora present in these countries.

After meeting during their undergraduate studies at St. Stephen's College and pursuing a master's degree at the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, the two left to pursue their doctoral studies in different cities in England. Having been raised by his grandfather, a diplomat, he spent most of his childhood and adolescence living in different countries (West Germany, Cambodia and Bangladesh), and returned to live in India only during his secondary education. Like many of my interlocutors, Tridib describes his Indian school as an excellent school, but 'not an elite one': a private school, eminently English-speaking, which had many places for the children of well-placed civil servants who held positions of high mobility.

During our conversation, I ask him if they planned to return to India at any time – which is, in fact, an issue for some –, to which he responded by evoking questions of a political nature:

But at least in my family I was the first person who married a non-Bengali, and in her family too, the first person who married a non-Punjabi. So, there was a rebellion going on there. [...] So those connections remain, but the only tension that my wife and I now feel is that there is now a younger generation from the families willing to... that is coming up. That is actually quite right-wing, it's very middle class, right-wing politics, where the politics of aspiration and ambition, these are now buzzwords for the current right-wing government. Which we are very, very uncomfortable with, because if it was just aspirational perhaps it would have been okay, but this aspiration combined with blaming the other, or creating a very simplistic definition of what it is to be a Hindu, or what it is to be an Indian, that is now creating tensions for us. *But again, we feel in our social media blogs, we feel that we can be much more critical sitting here, than we could be from there.* And I think it's certainly true that, I think, people notice what we're saying, our criticism from here, much more because [of] what we do here, than if we had been teaching in a small undergraduate college in Delhi.

Tridib, like many of my interlocutors, evokes the idea that *being in Europe allows him to engage politically, critically and freely with Indian society* in a context of growing political and religious tensions promoted by the far-right government currently in power in India. He refers to the recent advances of the religious nationalist right in the construction of a nationalist history, centred on narratives that essentialise Hinduism as a constitutive trait of Indian national identity. Such processes have acquired considerable dimension within Indian universities, through professors aligned with these political currents that support a certain type of anti-Muslim historical revisionism<sup>26</sup>, and even through the persecution of professors who express dissenting opinions or contest orthodox readings of texts considered sacred<sup>27</sup>. More recently, between the end of 2015 and the beginning of 2016, much attention was paid to cases of casteism (Kumar 2016) and attacks on political and academic freedom at the University of Hyderabad and Jawaharlal Nehru University, two of the main bastions of higher education in the country.

Faced with this situation, many academics based in the country and abroad have positioned themselves theoretically and academically by means of open letters<sup>28</sup>, interviews<sup>29</sup> and articles (Datta 2016; Sharma 2016).

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26 An interesting case is the attempt by Indian historians to prove that the Taj Mahal, widely recognised as a construction from the Mogul period, was erected by Hindu dynasties. See 'How the Taj Mahal became part of the campaign to erase India's Muslim past', *Scroll.in*, November 12, 2015. Available at: <http://scroll.in/article/767712/how-the-taj-mahal-became-part-of-the-campaign-to-erase-indias-muslim-past>. Attacks like this have been commonplace in the active work of erasing Muslim history in India.

27 See 'JNU row: SAR Geelani arrested, sent to two-day police custody', *Indian Express*, February 29, 2016; 'Mysuru professor arrested for "insulting" Lord Rama', *Indian Express*, June 19, 2016; 'Dalit Professor Arrested For "Insulting" Ram and Modi: Here's What You Should Know About Him', *India Resists*, June 21, 2016.

28 Some of the international institutions that have written letters denouncing such attacks are: the Centre for Modern Indian Studies (CeMIS, University of Göttingen, Germany); the University of Warwick (United Kingdom); and a letter written jointly by eight British institutions, namely: the Centre for South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge; the Contemporary South Asian Studies Programme, School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies (SIAS), University of Oxford; the South Asia Institute (SOAS), University of London; the Centre for South Asian Studies, University of Edinburgh; the King's India Institute, King's College London; the Gender Institute, London School of Economics; the Institute of Asia and Pacific Studies, University of Nottingham; and the School of International Development, University of East Anglia. This list is not exhaustive.

29 Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate in Economics, was one of them: 'Amartya Sen Attacks Modi Government For "Extraordinarily Large" Interference In Academia', *HuffPost India*, July 7 2015.

The great majority of these scholars consider that being in Europe allows them to remain freely active in the debates on the paths that India has taken in its national project. Somehow, being outside the Indian academic system appears as a form of possible autonomous, unrestricted engagement with India. In fact, many of them, especially among those who share this argument, publish prolifically on political issues, especially linked to issues of economic development projects, foreign relations and public policies in various fields. This political engagement is underlined in their narratives, and they are often not restricted to publications of an essentially theoretical nature, but end up being transposed to public debates and participation in political demonstrations, as I was able to witness during my fieldwork.

In short, I would like to suggest that, beyond an expression of simple affective attachment, these political manifestations need to be considered in terms of political performativity and the production of collective identities forged abroad. In other words, it is necessary to mobilise an anthropology of politics here in order to better understand the construction of mobilisations around political projects and, above all, a transnational construction of progressive mobilisations in the face of the transnationalisation of deeply conservative nationalist projects.

### **Post-colonial identities?**

There seems to be the assertion of histories and subjectivities produced in an overlapping space between India and the United Kingdom: not only do Indian institutions 'fit' British institutions and forge highly Anglophone subjectivities, but British history, in its imperial-national construction, is also inseparable from the history of the Indian subcontinent. In this regard, when dealing with subjectivities forged in colonial power relations, Stuart Hall (1997) recalls that there is no British cultural identity without India, after all, its great modern symbol, tea, has always been cultivated on the subcontinent:

Where does it come from? Ceylon/Sri Lanka, India. That is the outside history that is inside the history of the English. There is no English history without that other history. The notion that identity has to do with people that look the same, feel the same, call themselves the same, is nonsense. As a process, as a narrative, as a discourse, it is always told from the position of the Other.

What is more is that identity is always in part a narrative, always in part a kind of representation. It is always within representation. Identity is not something which is formed outside and then we tell stories about it. It is that which is narrated in one's own self. (Hall 1997: 49)

What Hall says about the notion of identity in the context of post-colonial circulations is absolutely fundamental for overcoming quite current essentialist conceptions about the trajectories in question. It helps us shed the necessary critical light, for example, on accusations made since at least the 1990s by North Atlantic intellectuals against Indian researchers who left for Europe and the United States in order to pursue an academic career. Such criticisms mobilise unflattering expressions, as Jackie Assayag and Véronique Bénéï remind us:

Briefly, these criticisms range from a way of resisting European hegemony that is none the less expressed in European concepts and terminology (Sahlins) to an elitist endeavour to fit oneself up with the a transdisciplinary niche within the Anglophone academic system (Ahmad 1995; Robbins 1993: chap. 5 & 6); a *comprador* bourgeoisie of Western style and educational background, composed of a group of intellectuals who play a mediating role in trading the cultural merchandise of global capitalism in and for the periphery (Appiah 1992: 149); a legitimation, on the academic stage of 'globalisation', of globalised thinkers (Friedman 1999) [...] (Assayag and Bénéï 2004: 18)

If we want to elaborate an anthropological reflection on production in the academic field, we can affirm that the problem with these criticisms – professedly based on theoretical reflections – is that they do not consider the complexity and peculiarities of post-colonial circulations, which also provide the necessary material for the production of identities from different parts of the world. Moreover, this principle applies not only to India and Indian intellectuals, but to any region of the globe – such as Latin America and its ‘westernisation’ project (Mignolo 1995) –, including Europe. Believing that such intellectuals are ‘westernised’ is not just a primary theoretical essentialism that has as its object ‘the Indian’ – should the ‘native’ remain caged in ‘a culture’ and territory, both in the singular, arbitrarily attributed to them? –, while also essentialising, and therefore ethnocentric, concerning what ‘the Westerner’ is.

I stress, Hall reminds us that there is no Europe, there is no European identity, detached from the colonial and post-colonial circulations that are a constitutive part of their histories and identities. The understanding of identity production in a post-colonial world – and, for some authors, post-imperial (Ribeiro 2008) – cannot be restricted to terms like fragmentation and hybridism in the description of individuals who are supposedly “more post-colonial” than others – that is, more fragmented and hybrid than others (Bhabha 1994), produced at the interstices of disjunction zones –, while others – such as a young man born to a bourgeois family in Paris, student of French philosophy at the *École Normale Supérieure* – were apparently more unified in their cultural identities and subjective understandings of existence in the social world. If we subscribe to such principles, we run the risk of believing in the existence of a kind of raw cultural material (as if ‘purer’ is associated with metropolises) that is used in the construction of hybrid identities (as if these were species of cultural paraphernalia, associated with the colonies).

With that, it is not my intention to deny that identities forged within old colonies are traversed by ambivalences, ambiguities or even conflicts that can be difficult to overcome. Authors like Gloria Anzaldúa are a powerful example of how identities can be constructed in complex frontier spaces<sup>30</sup>, which individuals born in hegemonic social spaces probably do not know until later in life or indirectly. To paraphrase Hall again, at the present moment when the margins begin to occupy the centres (movements of black youth in London, of migrants from Maghreb in Paris, etc.) everyone begins to feel like they have migrated. What we need to question is the naturalisation of the apparent homogeneity of national identities, especially nowadays, when a post-colonial critique has widely shown that national identities are very often imperial identities.

Thus, it was not only through primary products, like tea, that this circulation of subjectivities and imaginaries was produced. As contemporary studies on the history of science (Raj 2006) and Indian colonisation (Cohn op. cit.) show, modern science, allegedly European, is the result of a multi-sited fabrication between the so-called ‘West’ and ‘East’. The birth of disciplines like botany and astronomy, such works argue, is inseparable from the dialogues between European and South Asian scientists *in situ*. On the other hand, and contrary to the now widespread idea, Orientalism is much more than the making of a barbaric and uncivilised Other, as it was founded on an admiration for once glorious and culturally elevated civilisations. Besides its imperial usage and presumptuous prejudice, Orientalism therefore, was also driven by wonder at certain civilisations that, from an Orientalist point of view, suffered from the decline that led them to a tardy civilisational inferiority. What is important to apprehend from these narratives is the fact that ‘European’ science fed immensely on such advances and was constructed not only in ‘European’ centres, but also in the colonial territories in dialogue – if not in partnership – with local intellectuals; even though the appropriation carried out in Europe was so anthropophagic that the history of this joint construction was completely erased.

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30 As argued in her bilingual book *Borderland/La Frontera*: “And if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture – *una cultura mestiza* – with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture” (Anzaldúa 1987: 22).

It is evident that the trajectories present in this work, of Indian scholars living in Europe, are the result of such historical, class, gender, and caste relations, highly specific to the circulation space to which I refer. Moreover, they need to be analysed through sufficiently effective tools in order to identify privileges associated with the social positions occupied by such individuals both in India and in the global space of academic circulations – even though privileges in the global context are more fragile, given the accelerated precarity of the scientific career that is now legitimated through the idea of ‘mobility’. However, it seems to me that the challenge associated with understanding the formation of such trajectories more closely approximates the efforts of authors like Stuart Hall, who seek a productive and positive understanding of such complexities, than arguments inhabited by the ghosts of moralism, or even theory that is content with notions like hybridism.

### **Final considerations: return to India?**

By way of conclusion, I would like to mention the possibility expressed by my interlocutors to return, in some undefined future, usually after retirement, to India. Many of those now established mention this project, while seeming to recognise that the concrete conditions for such are difficult in today’s circumstances: children of school age, European partners who are unlikely to move to India, or Indian couples who would need ‘dual career prospects’, in which both are offered permanent positions. Even those who consider leaving only after retirement must face complicating factors, such as a European spouse who has no plans to move or even the rise of the aforementioned conservative Hindu policies. This view is corroborated by the fact that few among those already retired – and, therefore, historically the first to have undergone such movement of professional mobility to Europe – have effectively returned to India.

Here, too, not only class, but particularly gender, carry great weight in understanding such projects. Some of the rare interlocutors from castes and lower classes argued that leaving India was essentially linked to the difficult living conditions for those who do not belong to the most privileged strata of Indian society. One of my interlocutors clearly said that her departure for the United Kingdom was a way of leaving behind situations of violence that low caste, ‘dark skinned’<sup>31</sup> women suffer from daily in India. When asked about the possibility of returning, her response was: ‘the UK is home’. This researcher does not romanticise her memories concerning India, which are marked by ‘challenges’ linked to the intersection of gender, caste and class. Similarly, some of my interlocutors recognised that belonging to a higher caste and to a middle class family turned out to be a kind of ‘shield’ that had the effect of minimising sexist experiences and gender discrimination.

I cannot explore such articulations in more detail here, but what is important is that the prospect of return inevitably depends on the positionality of such individuals in this vast space connecting the United Kingdom and India. To the extent that the project of returning proves to be very unlikely, for numerous reasons, and rarely comes to fruition, it seems to be a virtual space in which one of their feet can remain well grounded. This option seems like an open window to a backyard, through which you can look and see your own, intimate landscape, which allows you to cultivate for yourself a little of that left behind<sup>32</sup> and what it would mean to return after building an international life.

Finally, I would like to emphasise that ordinarily India imposes itself as a mandatory theme and research field on these researchers, though rarely explicitly (Ferreira 2017b). The narrative of one of the researchers interviewed shows how this epistemic geography is delineated along these trajectories. After many years working on topics unrelated to India, which is quite rare among my interlocutors, he said that he could “return to South Asia” in his postdoctoral position, since he was setting up a new project, this time on the history

<sup>31</sup> See footnote 2.

<sup>32</sup> See Ghosh (1989) for a similar interpretation, exploring the diaspora as an act of bringing with you these spaces that must be nurtured in the new land.

of India. He had decided to return to South Asia through theory. Many referred to their theoretical interest in India as part of a process of constructing a cultural identity or producing an 'understanding' of their own trajectories and constitution as subjects.

It is true that there is nothing new in the fact that their choices of research topic are directly determined by personal experiences or belongings that are significant to them. The debate on subjectivities in scientific research is sufficiently old and consolidated for us to accept this as evidence. What I suggest, however, is that in the case of intellectuals who produce a career in a context of post-colonial migration, the theory itself becomes a space for the construction of belonging to circulations, narratives, historical processes and even a territory. I argue that these researchers resort to academic reflection to produce narratives that theoretically elaborate their place in the world. Particularly those who publish on topics directly related to notions of belonging, displacement and political mobilisations in the global South are engaged in reflections that not only describe worlds, but also cultivate habitable landscapes for themselves within them. Writing, representing, dismantling and reorganising India as an object of reflection are ways of continuing to construct their own place in this geographic, historical and epistemological space.

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# Interpreters of difference: “Universal” communication and the national body of Brazilian artists in the USA

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## **Abstract**

Centered on examining the trajectories of Brazilian actors who migrated to the United States with the purpose of studying and working in that country, this article aims to discuss the rhetoric of difference mobilized by subjects to describe states, markets and their own experiences. The proposal is aligned with anthropological research focused on investigating the politics of difference in transnational contexts. During 2015 and 2016, I conducted interviews with eleven Brazilian artists who lived in the USA. These individuals argued that there was a “universal” communication conferred by “art” and relied on the transcendence of their acting techniques – they believed they were capable of playing any character in the new country. However, as they tried to obtain roles, they encountered restrictions precisely because they were foreigners: their accent, physical appearance and the visa-related limitations prevented them a regular professional practice. The main question is: how these subjects formulated about difference?

**Key words:** Discourses of difference; actors; theater; Brazil; United States.

# Intérpretes da diferença: A comunicação “universal” e o corpo nacional de artistas brasileiros nos EUA

## Resumo

Centrado no exame das trajetórias de atrizes e atores brasileiras/os que migraram para os Estados Unidos com o propósito de estudar e trabalhar naquele país, este artigo tem como objetivo discutir as complexas retóricas da diferença mobilizadas por sujeitos para descrever Estados, mercados e suas experiências. A proposta está alinhada a pesquisas antropológicas interessadas em investigar as políticas da diferença em contextos transnacionais. Realizei entrevistas com onze artistas brasileiros/as que moravam nos EUA, entre 2015 e 2016. Essas pessoas defendiam existir uma comunicação “universal” conferida pela “arte” e apostavam na transcendência de suas técnicas – consideram poder interpretar qualquer personagem no novo país. À medida que tentavam obter papéis, perceberam restrições justamente por serem estrangeiros/as: o sotaque, a aparência física e o tipo de visto impediam o pleno exercício profissional. A pergunta central é: como esses sujeitos formulavam a respeito da diferença?

**Palavras-chave:** Discursos da diferença; intérpretes; teatro; Brasil; Estados Unidos

# Interpreters of difference: “Universal” communication and the national body of Brazilian artists in the USA

*Bernardo Fonseca Machado*

Theater is usually seen as a local phenomenon, limited to a specific region.<sup>1</sup> However, shows, artists and texts have been in intensive transit across the globe since at least the nineteenth century (Balme 2012). On some of these trips, actors are enchanted by the new territory and start living and working in the local theater market. These migrants exercise a profession in which (in most cases) they perform an “other” – a character – in a territory where they are foreigners. When traveling, they provide depth to roles mobilizing multiple social references and, therefore, invite an anthropological discussion of the relationship between migration and alterity. What challenges do they face in their profession? How are their bodies perceived? What strategies do they mobilize to circumvent any restrictions?

In this article, I discuss the trajectory of Brazilian actors who migrated to the USA with the purpose of studying and entering the entertainment market in that country. The purpose is to work with the complex rhetoric of difference mobilized by subjects to describe states, markets and their own experiences.

My interest in the theatrical sphere as a field of research is not new. Since 2010, I have conducted investigations regarding the meanings and effects of theatrical practices as a social phenomenon. Between 2014 and 2018, I developed my doctoral analyses in theater schools in São Paulo and New York investigating how stage performers materialized, produced, updated and negotiated the most diverse social repertoires (Machado 2018a). Regarding experiences outside Brazil, I have scrutinized about the migratory practice of female and male actors on two occasions. The first, in partnership with Lilia Schwarcz, in which I analyzed the way artists dealt with the distance between their initial expectations and the conditions they experienced. Thus, we investigated how notions of time were managed in these actors’ migratory projects (Machado & Schwarcz 2017). The second, I scrutinized the racial classification process of female Brazilian actors in the US market (Machado 2018b).

Here I explore how these artists in transit handled and produced a rhetoric of difference. The performers defended a “universal” communication conferred by “art” and valued the transcendence of their acting techniques – they believed they were capable of playing any character in the USA. As they tried to obtain roles, however, many perceived restrictions precisely because they were foreigners: their accent, physical appearance and type of visa prevented full professional practice.

The proposal is therefore aligned with anthropological research concerned with discussing the politics of difference. Bela Feldman-Bianco (2001), for example, analyzed how Portugal and Brazil produced similarity and alterity in two distinct political moments in the 1990s. Igor de Renó Machado (2012), in turn, dealt with the “management of difference” in Portuguese and Brazilian legislation concerning the entry, permanence and departure of foreigners with regard to their territories. Inspired by their work, I propose a small shift:

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<sup>1</sup> This text is an improved and abridged version of chapter 5 of my doctoral thesis entitled “*Atos da Diferença: trânsitos teatrais entre São Paulo e Nova York no início do século XXI*” [Acts of Difference: theatrical transits between São Paulo and New York at the beginning of the twenty-first century] defended at the Graduate Program in Social Anthropology of the University of São Paulo (PPGAS/USP) in 2018 under the supervision of Prof. Lilia Schwarcz and funded by the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP; grant no. 2014/15902-2). These reflections continue in my postdoctoral research – also funded by FAPESP (grant no. 2019/08713-2) – in which I investigate how the bodies of artists are qualified in terms of gender, race and sexuality based on the ideas of “theatrical truth” and “representativeness”. I would like to thank the two blind reviewers and the English revisions made by Sebastián Ramírez and Thomas Lemouche.

instead of focusing the reading on government attitudes, I try to understand how Brazilian migrant artists mobilized the notions of difference to explain the qualities the US State and the entertainment market attributed to them. With that, I discuss forms of presentation, classification and self-perception in a universe of multiple representations.

### **Theatrical routes: migrate and interpret**

Since the nineteenth century, theatrical shows have been conceived and produced with the intention of serving the fledgling entertainment market in numerous cities worldwide. The plays formed part of the imperialist, colonial strategies of expanding European standards beyond their territories (Balme 2012, 2015).

In more recent years, new routes have been consolidated. Over the span of a little more than a decade, an organized system of Broadway shows on tour was set up in a large number of countries, including Brazil (Machado 2018a). New York has established itself as a center for the diffusion of musicals. In São Paulo, a number of factors, such as, legal conditions, business interests and the fascination of part of the artistic class have come together to deepen commercial relations with the USA and facilitate economic, aesthetic and social exchanges. Within the context of expanding Broadway plays in Brazil, American theatrical-symbolic imaginaries stimulated a group of young people to try to work abroad.

Regarding migratory relations between Brazil and the United States, in 2014, the American Community Survey (ACS)<sup>2</sup> estimated that for a period of just over 20 years, the number of Brazilians living in the USA had increased from 82,485, in 1990, to 335,608, in 2014, a 307% increase (Lima & Castro 2017). In the same year, 2014, the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE) estimated that 1,368,300 Brazilians lived in the United States,<sup>3</sup> based on data from its consulates in North America. The discrepancy between the numbers reveals the difficulty in computing the exact number of national migrants in foreign lands. In the following years, the percentage continued to grow: in 2000, Brazil had the 28<sup>th</sup> largest migrant community in the US (U.S. Census 2000), and by 2014, it held the 19<sup>th</sup> place (ACS 1 - Year Estimate 2014). It is important to remember that, although the migration of actors to the USA seems an anomalous and uncommon act, it is inserted in a broader migratory context. The four sectors that most employ Brazilians in the United States are “Professional, Scientific and Technical Services” (18%), “Construction” (13%), “Other Services” (12%) and “Arts, Entertainment and Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services” (11%) (Lima; Castro, 2017); male and female actors fall under the last heading.

In the anthropological literature of the past two decades, a growing body of research has focused on Brazilian migrants around the world (Sales 1999; Piscitelli 2007, 2013; Machado 2008; Dias 2009; Assis 2011; Tiriba 2017). These are works committed to understanding people’s relationships with the State, their economic motivations, what experiences they face and the like. Some research, dedicated specifically to Brazilians living in the United States, is centered on the constitution of a “national identity” in contrast to their new reality (Riberio 1999; Beserra 2007; Margolis 2009). Although they follow distinct approaches and investigate numerous scenarios, these works reveal the complexity in dealing with the subject and indicate certain paths to be followed.

<sup>2</sup> This is a division of the U.S. Census Bureau that regularly collects information and updates the data produced by the United States government on its population profile.

<sup>3</sup> Data obtained at <[http://www.brasileirosnomundo.itamaraty.gov.br/a-comunidade/estimativas-populacionais-das-comunidades/estimativas-populacionais-brasileiras-mundo-2014/Estimativas-RCN2\\_014.pdf](http://www.brasileirosnomundo.itamaraty.gov.br/a-comunidade/estimativas-populacionais-das-comunidades/estimativas-populacionais-brasileiras-mundo-2014/Estimativas-RCN2_014.pdf)>.

In order to select actors for my interviews, I spoke with an acquaintance who had moved to New York in 2010, precisely to take a course in theater. She told me a little about her life and provided the emails and social media addresses of Brazilian artists she knew.<sup>4</sup> I got in touch with these people and made appointments. I interviewed six women and five men. The youngest, was 18 years old, and the oldest, 35. The age of the interviewees contrasted with the average age of Brazilian migrants in the USA, which was 39 years, according to the American Community Survey (ACS 2014). Most of the actors interviewed – seven – were between 20 and 30 years old in 2015. One year after the interviews, at the end of 2016, I considered it relevant to select some subjects to evaluate how they compared the migratory experiences after our initial conversation. Thus, I got back in touch with three people: two women and one man. The women still lived abroad and the man had returned to São Paulo.

Throughout the text, I present these subjects, paying particular attention to their trajectories, discourses and singularities.

### **The educational difference**

Vicente landed in New York in January 2011.<sup>5</sup> Born in 1984, he was betting on a professional change. Born in a large city in the state of São Paulo, his father is a lawyer and an accountant, while his mother had been a teacher and later became a psychologist. From an early age, he had nurtured the dream of living in the American metropolis and building an international career. At 27, his professional experience was vast: the actor had already worked with important theater companies in São Paulo and had played prominent roles for a TV station that produced soap operas.

The travel plan derived from a diagnosis regarding the educational establishments in his country of origin: “Brazilians don’t have a model of interpretation (...) I came here to study methods of interpretation and to develop into a better actor.” As the young man explained to me, the acting technique in Brazil is the result of a poor mixture of procedures: “it draws a little from the European model, and a little from the American.” The actor resented not having a methodology that originated from his native land that could give him more acting tools.

Jessica’s opinion seemed in tune with Vicente’s. Born in 1990 in São Paulo, she had dreamed of being an actor since childhood. Her parents were doctors – her father, a cardiologist and her mother, a neurologist – who had enrolled their daughter in a ballet course while still a child. As she grew, she wanted to know more about the new fad in São Paulo – Musical Theater – so she signed up for a free course. For two years, she actively participated in ongoing amateur productions, but it was a “shitshow”: “people didn’t arrive on time, didn’t rehearse collectively...” At the same time, a new school opened its doors in the state capital that promised to properly train aspiring performers for the new market of musicals that was heating up. In the first year, however, the experience did not meet her expectations. The administrative disorganization and academic inconsistency of some of the teachers disappointed the young woman. A dilemma started to trouble her: “nothing worked in Brazil and I wanted to be an actor in musical theater. What should I do?” Her mother embraced her anguish and supported her search for institutions outside the country. Jessica progressed in her search and was accepted at an American drama school, which ensured parental authorization for her to move to New York and student visa. Initially, she would stay three months. The short journey gained momentum and since 2011, she has resided in the city.

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4 At the time, I was conducting research abroad, supported by a grant from FAPESP (no. 2015/04818-3).

5 Names and certain details have been changed throughout the text to protect the identity and privacy of the individuals concerned.

These two experiences are representative of the assessments made by a large portion of the migrants I met. Both Vicente and Jessica took their individual trajectories and generalized them as an example of “Brazilian” theatrical pedagogy. The country was perceived to lack technique – “it has no method of its own” – and as a nation lacking in order – “it was a shitshow.” My interviewees did not list any national educational institution that could offer what they wanted. In Jessica’s assessment, “They [Americans] are learning something that we [Brazilians] are not learning. (...). I think that’s the difference: it’s the education, it’s the teachers, it’s the culture.”

Once in the classrooms, young Brazilians commonly encounter their first unforeseen circumstance: “They sing and dance when they leave their mother’s belly,” complained Jessica. Americans’ premature theatrical initiation called into question the aspirations of numerous migrants. To pursue a career in the musical theater in Brazil, I was told, extra economic support was needed: “So you want to be that [a musical actor]? Then expect to graduate from college, or pay to do it as an extracurricular activity. And not everyone has the money to do it.” The availability of economic resources depended on the subject’s own trajectory. Imagining yourself on the New York stage was not everyone’s privilege.

However, the assessment with regard to American students was not unanimous. Otávio lived in New York between 2013 and 2015, with a view to improve his acting techniques. He moved there aged 25, after graduating from a bilingual school in São Paulo and attending a prestigious acting course in the same city. Even so, he lacked security as an artist: “I knew a lot, but I didn’t feel I had ownership of anything.” American procedures, he believed, would make him “a better artist.” One year after our first interview, back in São Paulo in 2016, the actor took stock of the experience. With regard to American technical procedures, he reiterated the opinions of his fellow countrymen: “they develop their skills earlier than us.” On the other hand, he said: “Americans have no reference (...). [They] knew all the films and plays in the theaters, but they knew nothing about more experimental and cutting-edge theater.” The repertoire of different theatrical aesthetics qualified his knowledge as a currency of distinction. Actors in Brazil – “more theoretical” and “very academic” – had some comparative advantage in relation to the Americans. Even though the excess reflection on the part of these artists resulted in a creative paralysis: “One thing I miss about the Americans is how they make things happen: taking a scene, knowing how to analyze and bring it to life.”

A majority of my interlocutors shared a sense of enchantment and fascination with US educational establishments. The techniques and the foreign organization were valued for providing a superior result, in their opinion. The Americans themselves were the result of this unique “education.”<sup>6</sup> Despite the initial difficulties, young artists completed the courses and, not infrequently, decided to extend their stay. Their reasoning took into account the benefits and setbacks of staying in the destination country and also the possibilities and advantages of returning to the cities of origin. Migrant actors wanted to do auditions, expand their opportunities and, who knows, get a role in a production. The American market looked promising.

Brazilian men and women assumed that, by attending educational establishments in New York, they would guarantee the necessary attributes to compete. However, children and adolescents from the US educational system received sophisticated stage training from an early age and showed a familiarity with the musical productions environment. My interlocutors did not characterize this knowledge as an insurmountable “natural gift”, they believed they had the abilities to move swiftly through the stages and match their competitors, despite the unequal footing resulting from their educational experience in Brazil. The difference could be overcome, after all, since acting was seen as transnational and “universal”, they could find work.

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6 In her research on Brazilian graduate students in Europe and the USA, Claudia Barcellos Rezende (2009) drew attention to the enthrallment experienced when face with universities and local values.

## Between the State and the market: a legal difference

While the actors trusted their artistic qualities and their ability to learn, they also identified restrictions beyond their control. During the interviews I conducted, almost everyone mentioned the difficulty in obtaining permission from the foreign government to work. As I explained in a previous article (Machado & Schwarcz 2017), there are numerous legal requirements. Travelers who enter the country on a student visa can extend their stay through an OPT (Optional Practical Training) without major bureaucratic obstacles. It is a document that allows non-American citizens to exercise the profession for a year in the country after having graduated from a course. Following the “training” interval, the deadline ends and professionals have to return to their country of origin, unless they request an O1. This is a visa for workers with “extraordinary skills” in the areas of science, arts, education, business, athletics or “extraordinary achievements” in television and film production.

Brazilians experienced these obstacles in a unique way. The American entertainment industry presented itself as an open and attractive market, however, the bureaucratic structure of the United States guaranteed market reserve for its domestic artists. After Vicente graduated from the course he had enrolled in, he received warning from a casting agent: “foreign artists, if you don’t have a green card, you can’t work.” Initially frustrated, the Brazilian did not want to give up and decided to request documentation from the American authorities<sup>7</sup>. Bureaucracy in the land of Uncle Sam demanded a document that detailed Vicente’s long career on the stage and screen in his native country. The Brazilian consulate was required to issue a letter of confirmation with the proper letterhead. A few months after applying, however, the young man had not received the necessary documents from his country to obtain the desired visa. The actor interpreted the failure to issue the statement as negligence: “the American government has given me more [than the Brazilian government]. My health insurance has expired, and I joined Obama Care.<sup>8</sup> Since then, the United States has been paying for me to have quality of life, to be successful. And the government of my country can’t sign a letter for me?”

The outrage was such that it spilled over to other sectors. He then listed the labor market problems in his homeland: “Brazilian actors have no support whatsoever.” National cultural policies would always result in failure: “the law that supports culture is a bust,” “actors are hostage to two TV stations,” “actors have no platform for anything.” In comparison, the United States offered opportunities to work in series, films and plays: “here it looks like they want you to be successful. And in Brazil, I don’t feel that.” Interestingly, the actor transferred responsibilities, and considered that the bureaucratic barriers experienced in the country of arrival ought to be resolved by his state of origin. Or even that Brazil, with its precarious cultural policies, had a market that was so problematic it justified facing all the legal obstacles in the USA. It is worth noting the nations were qualified differently and the burden of barriers was assigned to the country of Vicente’s birth.

The sacrifice was worth it, confirmed Jessica. After all, in Brazil “there are a lot of cliques. Here too. But there you have to know everyone to get in.” She explained: “Brazilians don’t know how to cast.” She narrated how an acquaintance of hers had been chosen for a role for which she was not prepared. Another candidate, who was more apt for the challenges of the character, was disregarded because the show’s producers knew a particular actor auditioning. In Jessica’s eyes, the objective examination of theatrical technique had been relegated to the background. In the American market, on the other hand, she considered the attitude was different: “They make money from this, it’s an investment.”

Rita’s position diverged appreciably from her countrymen. The Campinas native was born in 1989, her mother worked in an NGO and her father was a real estate agent. In Brazil, she studied at an American school and moved with her parents to the state of Florida early on. Citizenship in the United States arrived in 2006:

<sup>7</sup> The United States Permanent Resident Card, popularly known as the green card, guarantees more rights for the migrant: it does not expire and classifies the individual as a permanent resident in the United States.

<sup>8</sup> Formally known as the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, it is a federal law signed by then President Barack Obama on March 23, 2010. The legislation regulates health insurance prices and expands public and private insurance to the American population.

the father had invested a large sum of money to start a company and, in return, the government granted green cards to the whole family. Entering a private college in New York meant she was able to work as an actor in musical theater. In years that followed, she paid her bills with the training she offered to teenagers applying to attend theater universities across the country.

Rita confessed to helping aspiring Brazilian actors who faced bureaucratic impasses in the new land. To grant or renew the O1 visa, the US government requires that actors have jobs scheduled for two years following the date of application for the document. “That’s impossible,” she told me. For this reason, she invented projects and sent letters addressed to the American migration office signaling her interest in working with her Brazilian compatriots. The plays almost never reached the stage.

While the majority of my interlocutors emphasized the broad market for musicals in New York, the situation delineated by Rita was somewhat different. The young woman recognized that there are many plays in the city, but she said: “there’s very few plays that pay.” Since graduating in 2012, her income depends primarily on working as a baby-sitter and coaching teenagers looking to enter college. Whereas working in a professional theater company offered her no financial return. Comparing her trajectory with that of colleagues who have acted in major musicals, she explained: “It’s complicated, because I have friends who are working on Broadway. They’re earning a very good salary for the theater, [but] for the real world it’s low.”

In this regard, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the US Department of Labor, in the first half of 2016 – the period in which I conducted the interview with Rita – the average weekly wage for an American worker was \$ 823.00 (US Department of Labor 2018: 5). Based on a simple calculation, if an individual worked 48 weeks a year, they would receive gross earnings of US\$ 39,504.00. In contrast, according to data from the annual report of the American actors’ union, for the 2015-2016 season (which corresponds to the second half of 2015 and the first half of 2016), actors were paid a median of US\$ 7,789.00,<sup>9</sup> per year. Clearly, while the comparison may require greater statistical care, this attests to the argument made by Rita: even on Broadway – the peak of a theater actor’s career in New York – the earnings were not so promising.

In addition, Rita reflected that in order to work in entertainment in the USA, you had to join the theater artists’ union. Actor’s Equity charges an initial fee of US\$ 1,600.00, an annual fee of US\$ 170.00 and members are required to contribute 2.375% of their wages. In return, the union claims to exercise protection for its affiliates from the producers. The actor also explained to me that there were three types of auditions. Two of them were intended exclusively for union members and a third type was open so that anyone – unionized or not – could try to get the role. At auditions organized by and for the union, there is a list of 150 to 250 people who will be seen, but those who are not union members are not called. Familiar with New York’s competitiveness, Rita explained how plans to participate in the scene stumbled on legal obstacles. Broadway’s own salaries, while showy for Brazilians/migrants, were tiny (and unstable) when compared with other professions.

Upon becoming aware of the importance of the union, many Brazilians were informed about the procedures for joining. The surprise was a “cold shower,” as Vicente said. To join Equity, it was necessary to have a green card, and the criteria for obtaining that were highly restrictive. Although the horizon initially presented itself as broad and promising, it soon gained a limited framework. Vicente and Jessica, for example, both gave up theater and directed their efforts toward cinema and television, whose actors’ union was more flexible in relation to international artists.

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<sup>9</sup> The union chose to adopt the median and not the average value to prevent the high salaries of big stars from impacting the data (DiPaola 2016). The median is the value that separates the largest and the smallest half of a sample, i.e. it corresponds to the value in the middle of a data set. For example, in the sample 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 15, 230, the median is 8.

Migrants described the American market either as an example of liberal autonomy or as an environment under the protectionist scrutiny of the State. Sometimes they understood that there was “room for everyone,” sometimes they highlighted the existing bureaucratic “barriers.” The coexistence of these two narratives is indicative of the ambivalent and intricate relations that the American imagination produces and the State implements. While, on the one hand it promises space, on the other, it imposes legal mechanisms for these subjects. Following the logic of this imaginary, obtaining work emerged as the result of much merit, commitment and sacrifice.

In contrast, the Brazilian musical theater market was described as inefficient and narrow-minded. The low degree of professionalization could be measured by the selection process – too personalized – or by the lack of financial conditions to earn money. Even so, there were those who suggested some optimism: “I think they’ll get somewhere eventually,” said Jessica. From this perspective, Brazil – as a national entity and with no regional hue – was learning to increasingly professionalized itself, after all, it was equipping their nationals with foreign resources and references.

Actors based in New York considered individual effort a determining factor for a successful outcome. Initially, they claimed the difference in their education compared with their Americans counterparts was due to structural inequality – “they” had classes at school that could only be obtained in Brazil through sufficient economic resources. Then, the children of Brazilian urban middle classes relied on their own qualities to overcome this disparity. The difficulty in obtaining recognition in the USA was attributed to competition, to cultural particularities of the USA, to market barriers and to state bureaucracy; however, paradoxically, personal artistic attributes or professional qualities were almost never considered a decisive element in their trajectory. Subjects used to explain the return to Brazil in terms of resolve (or failure): “an individual will leave if they don’t have enough drive to stay,” they said.

The obstacles of the State and the foreign market, although recognized, were not translated as impossible to overcome. It seemed inconceivable for them to justify the difficulties in terms of national aptitude: “Brazilians aren’t fit for the North American artistic market.” Given the profession they exercised, actors assumed they were able to learn and compete equally in that environment. Moreover, the desire was to get a job in which the character was American. Thus, they would attest to their qualities: sufficient technical skills to play any character, regardless of nationality. However, they did not account for how the Americans would read their bodies.

### **The difference in bodies**

As they attempted to find roles, the actors realized how they were generally classified as Latinos/as due to their physical shape and Portuguese accent. Despite the rhetoric of a universal interpretation, their appearance made them reduce and reevaluate their plans for work and success in the United States (Machado 2018b).

Since arriving in the new country in 2014, Lucas has sought work in the so-called “physical theater,” that is, shows in which body partiture is the form of narrative expression – which does not depend on text. He was born in Porto Alegre in 1980 and at age of 14 moved to São Paulo. His father worked as a businessman in a multinational company and his mother was a teacher. Enrollment in a professional actor course at a prestigious private school in São Paulo intensified his interest in the stage. He became known in the entertainment industry after working for several theater companies and major musical productions in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, but a passion for Broadway shows led the young man to New York, in 2011, where he lives today.

In 2015, Lucas was shortlisted for a casting audition of a new show. In the production there was no dialogue, the actors presented the intrigues of a family using body language alone. The Brazilian was one of 30 artists who performed. In the first stage of the casting process, the production discarded 22 people and kept the young

man in the process. After further tests, in front of the group of actors, those responsible said: “we’re looking for a very specific type, so we’re going with this one.” The Brazilian explained the reason for the selection: “the guy looked like... he was half Latin, half Arab. He was very ethnic. Well, it wasn’t for me anyway. He and I will never compete for the same role.”

Among the interviewees, Lucas was the only person with light-colored hair and eyes. The actor’s resume, available on the Internet, described his appearance as: 1.75m (5’9”), 70kg (156lbs), an “athletic, toned” body, “blond hair” and “green eyes.” When I asked him about his “color”/“race” he responded with other questions: “White? Caucasian?” As a Brazilian living in the USA, he pondered what form of classification to use. In his country of origin, he was categorized (and was understood) as white; in New York, he translated that as Caucasian. The term “Latin” was way outside Lucas’ consideration, even though the word is often used to define Brazilians in the USA (Beserra 2005, 2007; Margolis 2009). Perhaps it bothered him to be assigned to that group. Some studies show how certain Brazilians highlight their difference in relation to Latinos and Hispanics in terms of their work ethic, physical appearance, social class, education, language and culture (Sales 1999; Beserra 2005, 2007; Margolis 2009).<sup>10</sup>

From the outset, however, production for the show had probably intended to select an actor whose physical traits were read as “ethnic” – at least by American standards. Lucas’ nationality may have been an element in his favor in the recruitment process for the audition; however, at least in the justification he received, the team expected someone with physical characteristics different from those present by the actor’s body. In 1999, the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) – an academic research center based at the University of Southern California – listened to the community of Latino workers in the American entertainment industry and developed a report, the conclusions of which were decisive: “Latinos need to fit a certain stereotype to be selected as Latinos [...] [those] who do not fit that stereotype do not receive Latino roles” (Pachon 2000: 4-8).

When he finished telling the anecdote, I asked him whether there were any other obstacles he had faced in his search for work in the New York theater entertainment. “I have an accent when I get nervous,” explained the actor. “I’ve been doing more physical things than text [...], so everything has worked out.” The investment in a career closer to the circus and physical theater was strategic. The only feature that highlighted Lucas’ nationality, ethnicity or race – his accent – was silent on stage. Even so, this was not a dream occupation, since the vast majority of people longed for a prestigious role in a show, preferably with many lines.

Among the interviewees, only one young man reached the American stage. A native of Brasília, Amilton was born in 1993, the son of a civil servant and a businessman. In 2013, Manhattan became his home not long after he enrolled in an acting course. After two years in New York, he joined a large show, performed on a tourist cruise ship on the Mediterranean Sea. The contract was for the interpretation of a drag queen<sup>11</sup> in the musical *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. For the character – one of three protagonists – Amilton had to walk around in six-inch high heels, wear a corset and shave his legs. During the interview, the young man classified himself as “white” and, on his personal website, in the USA, he stated he was 1.77m (5’10”), with “brown hair” and “brown eyes.” The cast was composed exclusively of people whose “mother tongue” was English, except for the young Brazilian. As the actor declared, his accent was barely noticeable. Amilton got a prestigious job in the eyes of his countrymen, perhaps because he was white and did not appear Latino, or because his Brazilian accent was almost imperceptible, or because the character was a sensual drag queen.

It is worth investigating Amilton’s success in light of the literature that deals with the social meanings of transvestism and drag queens. According to Esther Newton (1972), between drags, there is a double inversion of “appearance and illusion”: while the exterior appears feminine, the interior (the body) is masculine and,

<sup>10</sup> For an introduction to the constitution of the “Latin” category in the USA, see Nicholas De Genova and Ana Ramos-Zayas (2003).

<sup>11</sup> Here I use the emic classification, present in the play and in his words.

at the same time, while the exterior appearance is masculine due to the bodily form, the subjective essence is experienced as feminine. From a similar perspective, Paula Rodríguez Marino (1997) argued how transvestism was a central element of the narrative in some American films, such as *Mrs. Doubtfire* (1993), *The Birdcage* (1995) and *Victor/Victoria* (1982). Set in a comical tone, some of the characters in these productions cross-dress with a view towards hiding their “true” gender identity. Thus, when Amilton was in a scene interpreting a drag queen, a game of presentation and concealment was constituted. His ability to “imitate” or “interpret” gender was in the foreground. In this case, the actor’s transvestism “eclipsed” other differences, or, at least, transformed Amilton’s accent, nationality and race into less relevant factors – at least on the stages of the cruise ship – allowing the young man to circumvent the rigid American classification system.

In any case, in the experience of these two men, overcoming their accent seemed to be fundamental for them to thrive in the competitive field. The same could not be said of women. Giulia’s New York teacher expressly suggested that she keep her Brazilian accents with a view towards guaranteeing more job offers. The actor was born in São Paulo, in 1988. As a child, the family moved to New Jersey, where she lived from ages three to eight. Back in Brazil, in Salvador, the parents chose to fight their daughter’s shyness with theater classes. A few years later, as a teenager, she decided to attend a vocational school for actors. After going backwards and forwards between schools, in 2010, she boarded a plane determined to spend three months studying in New York. After this initial period, she postponed her return several times until she assumed her new address.

In September 2015, the first time I interviewed Giulia, the way she was treated and designated in the US market bothered her deeply: “People look at me and judge me as a Latina. [...] And they classify you. This is the bad thing about the United States. They judge you a lot. They have to specify: ‘you’re white,’ ‘you’re Latina,’ ‘you’re Chinese.’ They separate people into boxes” (Machado 2018b: 64). At the time, the actor was committed to not being assigned a definition that would restrict her work.

A little over a year later, in December 2016, we spoke again. Her consternation had taken on another dimension and she talked enthusiastically about her latest work. Her career route had been reevaluated after realizing the difficulties faced in gaining space in musical theater, as a result of the constraints of both the American visa and the union’s fee. Aware that in television and cinema the laws were more flexible, she packed her bags and moved to another city. In Los Angeles, new contacts opened up horizons and the actor entered an unexpected niche: the Persian music market. A music video director repeatedly invited the young woman for several shoots in which she played the romantic couple together with a Middle Eastern singer.

In the United States, Giulia realized how her racial classification was both restricted and broad. Historical examination of the way in which Latino actors were cast for films and plays throughout the 20th century offers clues to explain the diverse reading regarding Giulia’s body. According to theatrical researcher Brian Herrera (2015), the selection of Latino artists in commercial films, television and theatrical productions in the mid-twentieth century documented the paradigms of racial intelligibility during the first decades of the Cold War. According to the author, the “Good Neighbor”<sup>12</sup> policy adopted by the United States developed a series of strategies to place Latino artists in the American entertainment market. Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban actors were useful for producers and directors, because, according to the classification framework of the period, their bodies allowed a racially malleable reading. These artists performed two tasks: on the one hand, they guaranteed authenticity for characters designated as Latino; on the other, they were used to interpret multiple “non-white” characters. The entertainment industry explored the notion of an uncertain or mixed “Latino” race with the aim of increasing the legibility of their bodies. Taking the trajectory of Puerto Rican

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<sup>12</sup> The “Good Neighbor” policy was introduced by President Franklin Roosevelt to describe the diplomatic line that guided his administration (1933-1945) in relation to Latin America. The purpose was to encourage and guarantee commercial, cultural and military exchanges between neighbors.

actor Rita Moreno<sup>13</sup> as an example, Herrera explains how, in 1956, she played an Asian descendant in the play *The King and I*. While in an episode of the 1958 television series *Father Knows Best*, Rita played an Indian student. In both characters, Moreno's ethnicity was extended beyond her origin and ancestry.

During the 1960s, the Latino artistic community began to demand that the American film and theater industry stop selecting Latinos to interpret "other ethnicities." The claim, according to Brian Herrera (2015), paid off; however, as Giulia's discourse attests, in some circumstances it still seems acceptable to assign a Latina woman to perform a character of another ethnicity/race.

Despite these issues, the young actor seems to have adapted to the context. In her curriculum, in English, available on a foreign website, she classified herself as Hispanic, ethnically ambiguous and mixed race. When I asked her to explain why she was defined in these terms, Giulia said: "I think these are probably the ethnic groups that I can be cast for." The perception regarding her body was, in fact, broad: "I can be Italian, French, Brazilian, Mexican and, apparently, Persian." At the same time, she positively evaluated the scenario that was being delineated in the USA: "Now it's good. It's good to be Latino. They want to diversify more." In 2015, she told me how they still used to frame her as certain types of characters: "the sexy woman, the woman who cheated, the woman of the lead guy's dreams" (Machado 2018b). But, a year after our first conversation, now in 2016, she no longer considered this casting a problem, perhaps because she had requalified her expectations due to limited offers, or even because she saw potentialities in the American entertainment market that increasingly desired Latino artists. The only caveat she made was related to the accent: although agents and teachers insisted that she maintain her Portuguese accent, Giulia refused: "They don't know where I'm from. I don't have a typical Brazilian accent. But I also don't have a typical accent from here." Performing characters from multiple ethnicities/races was no longer a problem, but she did not seem to want to force her pronunciation either. A similar fact occurred with another female actor.

The first interview with Amanda took place in December 2015. At that time, I asked her which "color"/"race" she used to classify herself and she immediately replied: "On the certificate it says I'm brown, but I say I'm black. Put 'mixed.'" When she worked in Brazil, she said she was recruited for black or white characters "depending on the wig" she wore (Machado 2018b; Machado & Schwarcz 2017). Her curriculum available on the internet describes her as a "thin", 53kg (118 lbs), 1.72m (5'8") woman with "brown hair" and "brown eyes." One year after our first chat, on Christmas eve 2016, we spoke again, via Skype.

Over the course of an almost two-hour conversation, she brought me up to date with her news: during this time, she underwent an important audition. It was a television series whose main character "had to be a mix of Black and Asian." She explained that she was shortlisted after having sent a photo in which she looked "very Asian," even though she had no ancestry. Interestingly, during the audition, "I was told I was not black." Amanda was surprised, but persisted, asking to read the scene. The director's team accepted the proposal and enjoyed her performance, but was not convinced. The team said: "we want you for the character, but she needs to be black." Faced with the impasse, the Brazilian laughed: "look, there's nothing I can do to help you if you can't see it." Once again, the process of the racial reading of Amanda's body was at issue. Although the actor defended her black ancestry, the series team seemed to read the young woman as a Latina; that is, Amanda's ethnicity/race could be extended to Asian, but it would raise doubts if she performed the role of an Afro-descendant.

To get around this situation, the director asked the interpreter to read another role – a Latina Adriana – with a Brazilian accent. "That's something I don't know how to do," she explained to me, "since I learned English by listening," because she watched American TV series and copied the sound, "I don't have an accent."

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<sup>13</sup> Born in 1931 in Puerto Rico, Moreno moved to New York at the age of five and, at the age of eleven, began work as a voice actress dubbing American films in Spanish. During her career as an actor, she received an Oscar and a Golden Globe for her interpretation of Anitta, in the film *West Side Story*.

Even so, the young woman volunteered to learn to imitate the national accent. The director was satisfied and confirmed her selection. The character was the villain of the plot, a “beautiful Latina,” or “femme fatale,” Amanda explained to me – “the Latina who is sexy, they always buy it.” The “sensual Latina” category itself preceded and transcended the actor, the image contained a past memory reified by time and revised with each new selection of female artists. The expectations of directors and producers concerning Brazilian women are in dialogue with what Adriana Piscitelli calls “conventions of eroticization” (2007: 23), that is, attributes such as accent, hair, silhouette and facial features are perceived in such a way that they often trigger erotic responses in foreigners.<sup>14</sup> The qualification caused Amanda discomfort – “I always find it annoying.” However, after considering possibilities available to her in the market, she decided to take advantage of it: “this is the door that’s open now, so why wouldn’t I use it if it’s there?”

In the United States, the association between sensual practices and Latin women is perennial. According to the historiographic work of Brian Herrera (2015), producers of films and plays in the USA began producing a repertoire of imagery, sound and narratives concerning Latin people after the onset of the “Good Neighbor” policy, until then, these other republics of the Americas were absent from the stage. They only gained the spotlight in the 1930s and 1940s, and were characterized by striking colors, prominent rhythms and phrases that mixed English, Spanish and Portuguese. Taking stock of the issue, Herrera (2015) considers that these productions taught the American audience to identify what “Latinity” looked and sounded like, and how it made them feel. Although the constitution of this imaginary has certainly changed over the years, time has preserved certain analogies, like the fact that Latin women, and Brazilian women in particular, are associated with sensuality. More recently, migrant women from Brazil signaled discomfort due to the persistent relationship. For example, Bernadete Beserra’s (2007) interlocutors, who lived in Los Angeles, complained about the direct association between their nationality and a possible natural disposition to sex.

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, this approach seemed to take on other forms. The identification with “Latinity” sometimes appealed to and sometimes repelled my interlocutors. Amanda perceived being cast for characters qualified as “sexy” as a restriction: “I always had the idea of being an actor to become other people. To be different. I like to create characters where it’s not clear to you that I can play.”

The conflict between a potentiality for “universal” interpretation and physical “particularity” – defined in terms of race, gender, age and nationality – impacted the female actor’s projections. During our second interview, Amanda repeatedly explained discomfort in the way her body was epitomized, “if the job is to be who I am every day, it’s no fun... I’m a tall, thin, singer and dancer every day. And then everyone sees that as ‘oh, how cute she is when dancing.’ I don’t want people to look at me and think I’m cute.” Even so, Amanda grudgingly calculated the benefits of fitting into the prevailing imaginary regarding Brazilian women, which made her life easier and allowed her to get jobs.

In previous articles, I explained how actors were defined in terms of nationality, race, gender and sexuality (Machado 2018b; Machado & Schwarcz 2017). Arriving in the USA means for most people – especially female actors – being “racialized.” For some migrants, when they were in Brazil, race was not reinforced as a striking diacritical trait. However, in New York, the same actors were readily classified in terms with which they did not identify.

I want to emphasize here how men and women explained a certain shift in their position in the market. Lucas obtained works in which there was a dissociation between his body and his voice, he began to claim space in physical theater and circumvented the obstacle of his accent – his opportunities were associated with his vocal silence. Amilton’s transvestism on stage transformed his gender presentation into a more

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<sup>14</sup> Research by Susana Maia (2009) has contributed to contextualize the sexualized and racialized readings of Brazilian and Latin women in New York.

relevant element than his accent. As if gender had momentarily shifted race and nationality from frontstage to backstage. Thus, he was able to pierce, at least on that occasion, the difficult frontier that limits the entry of Brazilian artists into the American market.

It is noteworthy how, during the interviews, the men classified themselves as “white.” In the shift between countries, they do not seem to have undergone a process of “racialization” like the one experienced by the women. In their case, nationality was not coupled by a “racialized” perception of what was expected of a Latino or a Brazilian. Women’s bodies, on the other hand, were defined by an inherent “Brazilianness.” Identified as Latinas, they were required to reinforce this attribution with their own accent, in order to guarantee entry into the sector.

Accepting the challenge to participate in the American entertainment market, migrants identified the difference in their bodies and in the roles they could claim. The body assigned these actors to a restrictive set of characters. Despite this, the subjects resorted to another argument to indicate their artistic advantage.

### **Emotional difference**

Emotional rhetoric was used intensely by the subjects, feelings emerged as substances that were either favorable or harmful to work, but intrinsically related to Brazilian nationality. If the technique could be learned, the bureaucracy overcome and the bodies assigned, the emotions were unavoidable.

Several times during her interview, Priscila repeated: “I’m very *gringa*.” Born in 1990 in Campinas, a city in the interior of São Paulo, aged less than one month, she gained refuge in Los Angeles, California. Her father made his career in bank administration and when he was transferred, his architect wife and two children went with him. After traveling back and forth between the two countries, Priscila returned to São Paulo as a young girl aged eight and was enrolled in a bilingual American school. Years later, a teacher encouraged the teenager to join a musical theater course offered in the elective curriculum. Gradually, her interest grew and so did her commitment.

Her first job was in a grand show and guaranteed her initial enthusiasm; “I was young and I was enchanted.” A large portion of the production team was foreign, which led the young actor to compare herself to her fellow cast members: “Americans are very professional. Like, they get things done. Brazilians are also professional, but like all Latinos, their emotions are more involved in the decisions.” The experience allowed her to draw important parallels: “for Americans, I can say something straightforward, without fear of offending. I can voice my opinion, my ideas.” According to her, the same did not apply to all nationalities: “for Brazilians, I’m more careful with my words. Brazilian culture is more easily offended.” The actor reiterated, in several ways, that emotions were more prominent among her countrymen, and this characteristic required greater attention and caution during the communication process.

By the end of the season, she was already tired. Her interests had shifted and her desire called for a learning trip abroad. In 2012, with the help of her parents, she entered film school at a private college in New York. At the time of our interview, she took stock of the pros and cons of the course. On the one hand, the school was good and offered new interpretation techniques. On the other hand, she had become uncomfortable with her American colleagues. From her viewpoint, “Brazilians are emotional and know how to deal with emotions. And here, for six months, people needed to learn how to invade each other’s space. In Brazil there’s no space, you just invade.” As an example, the actress contrasted the two cities stating that, in São Paulo, she had done exercises in which she had “rolled over the person”; while in New York, even “a ‘hi’ is from way off.” In Priscila’s discourse, emotions appeared either as a negative national characteristic or as a positive quality.

References to feelings persistently emerged among my interlocutors in the USA. Amanda, for example, identified this national uniqueness as an advantage: “Broadway is missing something [that theater] in Brazil

has, and it always will. That is, an open heart on stage. A Brazilian on stage is the most beautiful thing to see.” The comparison between plays performed on national and foreign soil should not be made only in aesthetic terms: “the plays that I saw there [in Brazil] don’t have a lot of the things that they have on Broadway, and I understand that. But what I saw there, they don’t have in any musical here.” From this perspective, the national particularity resides in something that borders on the ineffable, that “which makes you tingle from start to finish. It’s a truth. It’s something that comes from within. It’s not the plasticity of the technique, it’s not the plasticity of the scenario, it’s not the knowledge they have here. It’s the truth that comes from within.”

In her experience in the United States, she attended shows that “took [her] breath away.” However, the actor amended: “you see the girl singing, so beautifully. But you don’t see her heart. In Brazil you do.” The young woman’s goal, as an actor, was to ameliorate the lack of “truth” in the New York scene: “I want to do it here. Because I want to bring heart to their sweet perfection.” The emotional availability of Brazilians was a decisive attribute for the work that was to be performed. Amilton shared the same perception: “In Brazil, we are very affective. And we let ourselves be seen by another and get involved with another in a more fluid and natural manner. Americans have more rules for the way they behave.” The argument presumed a nation whose essence could be apprehended by a trait: the emotions.

On the other hand, there were those who considered that emotional excess compromised the work itself. For Lucas, the professional decisions made in Brazil were too “emotional,” because producers felt betrayed if their preferred actors worked with someone they did not like. In this perspective, exaggerated sensitivity produced inefficiency, favoritism, protectiveness and other forms of deviation. Emotions were considered to be related to a lack of control, an absence of method and a deficiency in technical discipline. Only a market detached from feelings could generate vigorous economic growth. The underlying assumption was that professional activity and practices of intimacy were incompatible.

The sets of arguments concerning emotions coexisted and seemed to be in tune with the very uniqueness of the work performed by actors. Two dimensions were called into question: the exercise of interpretation on stage, and relationships behind the scenes. Emotions could not positively serve both environments. On stage, they were welcomed and desirable. In this case, at least for Amanda and Priscila, Brazilians had an advantage over Americans. Behind the scenes, affective relationships prevented the pragmatism seen as necessary and, in this respect, sentimental excess corresponded to an obstacle to the adequate performance for the market.

The argument that mobilizes emotions as a natural sign of Brazilians is not new. Claudia Barcellos Rezende (2009), for example, researched people who pursued graduate studies abroad, in countries such as the United States, France and England. In her work, the interlocutors defended national differences, suggesting that Brazilians were more spontaneous and emotional, characteristics used as synonymous for superiority. Emotions guaranteed a “vital force,” an involvement, as opposed to detachment and indifference. The ethnographic research conducted by Igor de Renó Machado (2008) reveals how in Portugal there loomed an expectation that Brazilians are happy, friendly and cordial. The people understood as “more Brazilian” were those who knew how to samba, make feijoada, play football and “be happy.” In this context, migrants became the “victims and agents” of a continuous manifestation of nationality, what Igor de Renó Machado (2008) called “active subordination” to stereotypes. In the case of actors in the United States, due to the particularity of the profession, exaggerated nationality could jeopardize future jobs; that is, if they were too “Brazilian,” they might not obtain diversified roles and, therefore, would manifest an “active insubordination” to the referential of Brazilianness.

Following the argument outlined by Lila Abu-Lughod and Catherine Lutz (1990), I am not interested in defending which is the most affective nationality. Rather I am interested in understanding the context in which this rhetoric was triggered. Emotional speech is inserted in a dispute for power games. In the theatrical setting, discussing affective skill is essential, having or lacking emotions corresponds to the capacity to perform a scene properly. Either people were poorly prepared – because they are irrational and overly emotional – or highly

qualified – because they are more truthful and sensitive. In a less evident way, migrant actors vied for their qualities in a market that insisted on closing its doors to them. While some affirmed a passionate Brazilian side, others denied it, valuing a technical rationality that allowed them to access jobs.

Regardless of the strategy people adopted, there was a consensus: Brazilians were emotional. The national brand possessed a “natural” difference compared with Americans. Interestingly, it was suggested that an alleged substance – emotions – would guarantee the possibility of translocal communication. Feelings, according to these actors, were a universal value.

### **Final considerations: mobilized differences**

The actor’s discourses compared countries, cities, interpretation techniques and people, mobilizing the most varied references. I am aligned with the stance of Avtar Brah (2006) for whom the concept of “difference” has multiple meanings and allows us to study how discourses are constituted, contested, reproduced and re-signified. Thus, it is not my intention to identify what the “biggest” difference between these countries is, rather to understand what resources were used to qualify and constitute them.

The subjects suggested the coexistence of multiple sets of distinction, which oscillated between degrees of difference and differences in the essence. A first type was translated by Brazilians using an educational rhetoric. Migrants considered that there was a difference in the type of learning available to Brazilians and Americans. Based on this argument, these individuals imagined that, once in American schools, they could take advantage of the proper techniques and overcome inequality vis-à-vis other foreigners. Within the students’ imaginary, it is understood that the subjects could achieve exactly the same results if they shared the same educational institutions and were evaluated according to the same methods. Based on this argumentative key, the difference between students – Americans and Brazilians – resided in their degree of knowledge. Having completed the stages of self-improvement, everyone could compete equally in the market.

On balance, Brazil was invariably backward and at fault. In the discourse of these subjects, the United States was understood as a seductive land yet also exclusionary, given the market-imposed barriers, and curbing these actors’ international aspirations. Further, a legal distinction persisted, which divided and classified people as citizens or foreigners. In this sense, migrants began to perceive a second type of difference traversing their choices and projections. Their bodies were understood to be different in their essence.

From the viewpoint of foreign producers, the rapid classification of migrant artists as a particular type of character (“the Latinos/Latinas”) domesticated national differences, forged a Latin identity and excluded confronting the complexity of individual experiences and techniques. In addition, of course, to assuming that the “others” – the Latinos/Latinas – were similar in their difference compared with Americans. Brian Herrera (2015) comments on how in the musicals and films produced during the “Good Neighbor” policy, many of the scenes and songs assumed that the “other” American republics were similar to each other and maintained an important distinction in relation to the United States. The American bureaucracy procedure reinforced inequalities in access to the allegedly free labor market. The rapid assignment of migrant bodies to particular types appeased any fear of dealing with the unknown and assumed to know, in advance, what to expect from these “Latin” bodies.

Following this procedure, a neocolonial practice was reinvigorated. The celebration of the open market in the United States was more beneficial to Americans than to Latin artists since producers and directors understood themselves as liberals at the expense of actually offering real chances for migrants. In this game, the US protected its market, but declared itself a land of opportunities, in order to accommodate conflicts via a discourse with easy acceptance among Brazilian migrants.

The immersion in an unknown racial classificatory system gained multiple explanations and produced diverse reactions by actors who seemed to be unaware of the meanings of “Latin” in the new country. Some Brazilians ceased insisting – as in the case of Otávio –, others fought for space – like Vicente – and there were those who had assumed the difference and played with it – like Amanda and Giulia. In addition, people who had economic resources sought to overcome bureaucratic obstacles. These subjects, due to their privileged, middle class position in Brazil, imagined transiting anywhere unimpeded. In their view, efforts to diminish their accent and sound like “Americans” would mitigate the racial difference. Irrespective, some bodies – mostly male – were assigned to the margins of the entertainment market, while other bodies – mostly female – were encouraged to emphasize their Brazilianness to advance their careers.

By understanding the manner in which these people were inserted in this market, we can discern how Brazilian actors were “used” or “discarded” by producers and, simultaneously, note the meanings that nationality, race and gender gained for these migrants. Except as universal notions, these concepts took on the contours of exclusion and some kind of inclusion, even if “exoticized.”

For the State and market in the United States, bodies and nationality were different in essence, whereas emotions and interpretation techniques could be learned. Brazilian actors disagreed: the only essential difference lied in the affective temperament of Brazilians. Feelings were, at the same time, destiny and power. An ambivalent logic was present. On the one hand, in the migratory project, actors assumed that their artistic skills would enable them to interpret characters in any cultural reality. At the same time, they considered it easier to be more “emotional” compared with Americans. Emotions were “universal” and “particular” – universal in communication, particular to the Brazilian experience.

Thus, on the one hand, the “less Brazilian” the greater the possibility of exercising the profession of artists. To ensure their employability, actors avoided claiming to be from a particular country – so they gauged the degree of the accent. In order to play “any character” they needed to control the alterity of their bodies. At the same time, some professionals pointed out that the “more Brazilian,” that is, the more emotional they were, the greater their artistic advantages in relation to the Americans, who were described as “colder.”

Under the rules of the stage and in a migratory experience, alterity took on a double connotation. Actors abroad wanted to materialize in their bodies, both a character and an “American” reference. The choice to perform these plays on the stage of another country was in dialogue with a form of particular sensitivity, according to which “imitation” was a mode of existence. It was certainly not a point-by-point mimesis, or a schematic copy, but the desire to materialize the “other” in the “national body” – in the very skin of Brazilians. There was a desire to belong and integrate the cosmopolitan “arts” and, thus, to be molded in the ideals of the “metropolis” with the desire to achieve a “universality.” While Brazilian actors thought they belonged to a global community of artists, the eyes of the Americans saw only Latin bodies and Latin characters.

In the discourses of Brazilian actors, the two types of differences coexisted and were based on specific logics. On the one hand, the difference in training assumed a certain “universality”: all people shared the possibility of development – Brazilians and Americans considered that everyone could learn. On the other hand, the difference in essence presumed a “particularity” that could not be overcome – for Americans, Brazilians were different in race/body and, for migrant actors, the distinction lay in the temperament of each “nationality.” Simultaneously, artists in transit, producers and directors abroad imagined a communion in communication and in the sharing of emotions.

In leading with these operations, the subjects were able to benefit and negotiate. Actors performed displacements anchored in the will of another. A project of becoming. A being realized by not being, by its incompleteness and, therefore, as a highly volatile act. As a difference in a continuous state of transit.

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# Sports migrants in ‘Central’ and ‘Eastern’ Europe: beyond the existing narratives

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## Abstract

Outside of Europe’s top football leagues, migrant athletes are often subjected to short-term contracts, poor housing conditions, isolation and the ever-present risk of premature career termination due to injuries. This paper is part of a current multi-sited ethnography on Brazilian futsal and football migrants in Central and Eastern Europe. It is based on life-history interviews with migrant players and uses transnational lenses to approach sports migrants’ movements in these regions. The study conceptualises futsal and football as an *ethnographic continuum*. Football and futsal players participate in similar processes of early professionalisation. However, at the ages of 16 or 17, athletes become professionals in either football or futsal, seeking specialisation. The role that borders, families, injuries and emotions play in the lives of sports migrants are also analysed. The current study presents a diversified narrative of contemporary sports migration movements.

**Keywords:** Borders, Central and Eastern Europe, futsal migration, football migration.

# Atletas migrantes na Europa 'Central' e 'Oriental': para além das narrativas existentes

## Resumo

Longe das principais ligas de futebol da Europa, atletas migrantes são frequentemente submetidos a contratos curtos, condições precárias de moradia, isolamento e o risco de interrupção prematura de suas carreiras devido a lesões. Este artigo faz parte de um projeto etnográfico multi-situado com jogadores brasileiros de futebol e futsal que atuam na Europa Central e Oriental. O presente estudo conceitua o futsal e o futebol como um *continuum etnográfico*. Jogadores de futebol e futsal participam em processos semelhantes de profissionalização precoce. No entanto, aos 16 ou 17 anos, os atletas se tornam profissionais no futebol ou no futsal, buscando uma especialização. O artigo também analisa o papel das fronteiras, famílias, lesões e emoções na vida dos jogadores migrantes. O presente estudo tem como objetivo mostrar uma nova narrativa sobre os movimentos contemporâneos de migração esportiva.

**Palavras-chave:** Fronteiras, Europa Central e Oriental, Migração esportiva, Futsal, Futebol.

# Sports migrants in ‘Central’ and ‘Eastern’ Europe: beyond the existing narratives

*José Hildo de Oliveira Filho*

*Now and then I felt overwhelmed by all I did not know, by the number of things still to find out, and by the awareness that there was much I could never learn – Hortense Powdermaker, Stranger and Friend: The Way of an Anthropologist, 1966 [1987].*

## Introduction

Is there a more suitable research methodology for studying sports migration in “Central” and “Eastern” Europe?<sup>1</sup> What are the difficulties and challenges these regions present to researchers? These are the questions I address in this paper. This paper is thus an attempt to reflect on the use of some methodological “tricks” of our “trade” (Becker 1998, Brownell 2006, Descola 2005). I will make use of a hermeneutical tradition that is the basis of anthropological knowledge through a multi-sited ethnography to present a broad understanding of Brazilian sports migrants’ lives and careers. My current study reflects on the lives and careers of Brazilian football and futsal players in Central and Eastern Europe. While Brazilians are often seen as a “global football workforce” (Poli, Ravenel and Besson 2019), there is still much to be learned about the specificities of Brazilian sports migration to “Central” and “Eastern” Europe.

In this sense, I will confront some “research gaps” that stem from previous ethnographers’ methodological choices. Most of the literature about Brazilian sports migration has tended to focus on highly successful football players. These footballers can easily move family members, commodities and resources across borders (Rial 2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2014, 2015, Damo 2008, 2014). As I had difficulty gaining access to football stars, I shifted my research interests to less “successful” migrant athletes. Less prestigious sports migrants have been more or less ignored in previous ethnographies with Brazilian migrant athletes. Furthermore, as I discovered in the course of my research, there is no ethnographic account that focuses on how migrant Brazilian athletes’ families access public education and health care systems for themselves and their children, the struggles athletes face in dealing with serious injuries, learning languages, or living temporarily apart from their families.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Central Europe” must be specified. Central Europe, as a geographical characterisation, has a complicated history. In the nineteenth century, the term Central Europe was used to indicate a superiority of German culture in comparison with Hungarian, Romanian, and Slavic cultures. The assumption in the usage of the term was that German culture should be the dominant one. World War II and the Cold War led to an end to use of the term. The dualistic division between Western and Eastern Europe became prominent. In the 1990s, Central Europe was used to distance Visegrad countries (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Slovenia) from other countries that were supposedly more unstable and marked by Orthodox Christianity. With the European Union’s expansion, the use of the term Central Europe as a region striving to catch up with the West is still quite common (Cervinkova, Bikowski and Uherek 2015). As with “Central” Europe, some countries included under the term “Eastern” Europe, such as Kazakhstan, could be classified as “Central Asian”, or even part of “Eurasia.” I include these countries in “Eastern Europe” because they participate in UEFA, and Kazakh futsal clubs can challenge Western European ones in the UEFA futsal champions leagues. Recent efforts have reconsidered the separation between Europe and Asia and the validity of the concept of Eurasia (see also Halpern and Kideckel 1983, Berdahl 2010, Tlostanova 2012, Hann 2015, 2016, Testa 2015, 2017).

Throughout this paper, I will approach Brazilian sports migration in Central and Eastern Europe by focusing on sports migrants in both football and futsal<sup>2</sup>. In this sense, I present one main argument: football and futsal<sup>3</sup> should be conceptualised as an *ethnographic continuum*. While football and futsal are separate global sports (Moore, Ramchandani, Bullough, Goldsmith, and Edmondson. 2018; Moore, Bullough, Goldsmith, and Edmondson 2014), the relationship between them is much less known. In this study I pay attention to athletes' career trajectories to analyse the specificity of Brazilian players. Brazilian migrant athletes practice both futsal and football, throughout their apprentice years. Throughout their lives and careers, athletes actively use both the skills and opportunities provided by both sports to pursue professionalisation and specialisation in either futsal or football.

## Football and futsal: Methodological considerations

To understand futsal and football migrations in “Central” and “Eastern Europe”, I adopted a multi-sited ethnography as a methodological tool. In announcing the rise of multi-sited ethnography, George Marcus (1995) sought to connect the emergence of interdisciplinary studies with the guiding principle that world-system analysis may no longer be easily applicable for understanding the contemporary world. Multi-sited ethnographies constitute an attempt to analyse current cultural formations, that is how world inequalities and cultures have become enmeshed (see also Hannerz 2003). In searching for justifications for multi-sited ethnographies, Marcus warned ethnographers about some of their potential risks, such as the loss of “subaltern<sup>4</sup> voices” (Marcus 1995, 114) and a distancing of ethnographers from specific local contexts (see also Candea 2007).

To construct my fieldwork with futsal and football players, I sought to highlight the “subaltern voices” of footballers and futsal players working in “Central” and “Eastern” Europe. The following approach should open new understandings of sports transnational diversity and power relations. By focusing on lower-division footballers and futsal players, I both follow Marcus, and try to more explicitly include “subaltern” voices in this multi-sited ethnography. While Marcus has warned ethnographers about the risk of erasing “the subaltern”, he did not offer a precise proposal about how to construct multi-sited ethnographies that focus on both “the subaltern” and the most mobile occupations.

In this sense, my analysis focused on both localised challenges athletes face in their professionalisation processes, their struggles to maintain their current positions, and constant transnational movements (Glick-Schiller and Çağlar 2009, Agergaard 2018). I have used life-history interviews as the main method for data collection.<sup>5</sup> This paper is based on 16 life-history interviews with Brazilian migrant athletes and informal conversations with migrant athletes, one futsal coach and one football agent. Life-history interviews build

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2 Futsal is a variation of association football, played on a court, and usually indoors. Futsal dates back to the 1930s and 1940s in South America. There are two main narratives about the origins of futsal. In one, the sport was invented in Uruguay and the other in Brazil, by YMCA members. In the 1980s, tensions arose between FIFA, under João Havelange's presidency, and FIFUSA, an international futsal federation created in Brazil. FIFA unified futsal rules and promoted it globally. FIFUSA changed its name to Asociación Mundial de Futsal, AMS, and is still responsible for organising some futsal competitions, especially in South America (for a critical understanding of FIFA's recent history, see Tomlinson, 2018. For a brief historical account of the incorporation of futsal by FIFA, see Salles and Moura 2004).

3 There is a research gap in futsal migration, as I will demonstrate. In my fieldwork, I have come closer to futsal players while considering literature about football.

4 “Subaltern” is a term used by George Marcus in his analysis of the emergence of multi-sited ethnography. In this paper, “subaltern” refers to lower-division football players, and futsal players. The sportsmen I have met and interviewed were far from the usual footballer interviewed in sports migration studies. In football migration, preference has been given to footballers playing in top-leagues. While I discussed George Marcus' ideas of multi-sited ethnography, I nonetheless had Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira's (1999) analysis of Brazilian anthropology in mind. The distinctiveness of Brazilian anthropology, he argued, was a focus on the most marginalised groups and peoples of Brazil.

5 I have also tried to follow migrant athletes' career trajectories after I conducted interviews with them. Brazilian athletes' constant transnational movements were a fruitful source of inspiration for this paper.

upon the presupposition that people tell stories to construct meaningful experiences. These narratives allow researchers to understand both the patterns of interviewees' narratives and the contradictions of personal stories (Cardoso 1986, Debert 1986, Kofes 1998, Atkinson 2014, Messner 1992, Connell 2010).

In Brazil, futsal and football players participate in the same process of early athletic professionalisation. Most athletes interviewed in my study tend to practice both sports in their childhood and early adolescence, and at around the age of 16 or 17 specialise in one of these sports. In this sense, it is possible to establish an *ethnographic continuum* between these sports. Football and futsal clubs, private and public schools and universities, local and regional sports associations, sports agents and families participate in this *continuum*, and condition players' professionalisation in one or another of these sports.<sup>6</sup> However, these sports subject players to different market demands and imagined geographies. While the leading football leagues are in Western Europe,<sup>7</sup> futsal provides players a route to Central and Eastern European clubs, in leagues considered prestigious in the futsal world, such as the Russian, the Ukrainian or the Kazakhstani and Azerbaijani leagues. The prestige of these leagues is associated with certain clubs' numerous UEFA Futsal Champions League titles, and that they pay higher wages.<sup>8</sup>

In the next section, I will analyse the relationship between football and futsal. The relationship between these two sports has emerged from the analysis of sports migrants' career trajectories in Central and Eastern Europe.

### **Football and futsal as an *ethnographic continuum***

While Brazilians are often referred to as a "global football workforce" (Poli, Ravenel and Besson 2019), there is a research gap in studies about Brazilian sports migration in Central and Eastern Europe. This research gap is even more pronounced in futsal. The only studies about Brazilian sports migration in futsal are by Dimeo and de Vasconcellos (2009, see also de Vasconcellos and Dimeo 2009) and Tedesco (2014). In football, Carmen Rial has done extensive fieldwork with football stars in the world's largest football leagues.

An attentive reader will find no relationship between futsal and football in most of these scholarly works. Only Tedesco (2014) documents a relationship between football and futsal. However, he does not incorporate an empirical study of futsal and football migrants in his research design. During my fieldwork, I slowly began to realise that futsal and football cannot be thought of as isolated sports in Brazil. As my fieldwork developed, I understood that I would have to see football and futsal as an *ethnographic continuum*.<sup>9</sup>

For instance, football players begin playing futsal either in their childhood or adolescence, when they play both sports. Eventually, a series of factors conditions their professionalisation in one or another sport. As Miguel,<sup>10</sup> a footballer currently playing at Red Bull Salzburg told me:

6 Futsal players are able to have longer careers than footballers. Some futsal players might extend their careers until their late 30s, and early 40s, which is very rare in football.

7 Rial's works, for instance, have been marked by a decisive focus on Western European and US leagues. See Rial, 2009, 2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2014, 2015.

8 Rial (2012b) has recognised that her use of the concept of transmigrants (see Basch, Glick-Shiller and Blanc-Szanton 1994, Glick-Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton 1995) to characterise highly-successful footballers' is based partially on her interviewees' high salaries, and their capacity to move family members and commodities and establish a variety of plans across borders. However, when referring to less successful footballers, Rial conceded that they may have experiences closer to high-skilled Brazilian migrants. In shifting my lenses to often unseen Brazilian migrant players, I argue, as other researchers already have, for a *transnational perspective* (Carter 2011, Rial 2008, Aggergaard 2018). By looking at footballers and futsal players' life-histories, I gained a more diversified understanding of the different modalities of transnationalism these sports open to professional athletes.

9 Carmen Rial, in a personal communication, has confirmed to me that the footballers she has done fieldwork with have begun their athletic careers in futsal.

10 I have changed all athletes' names to preserve their identities.

Me: Did you play futsal too?

Miguel: Yes, I played for many years. I guess I played futsal until the age of 14, 15 more or less. I always played futsal and football together. Because when I was playing football, I didn't play every weekday. So I could play other sports too. So I could play futsal. Later on, when things started to get serious, when I needed to work and train all the time, I had to quit futsal. I only played football later. But I played futsal since I was 6. I spent quite a good time playing futsal.

The conceptualisation of an *ethnographic continuum* between football and futsal must understand sports as influenced by various institutional actors: families, sports clubs, local and regional sports associations, and private and public schools and universities - which provide youth with scholarships so that they can study and play on school futsal teams - physical education teachers, coaches and sports agents. Let me tell a few stories of the sports migrants I have met in "Central" and "Eastern" Europe to illustrate my points.

The story of Pedro, a footballer currently playing in the first division in Israel, is revealing. He told that me he played futsal for his school. He was later spotted by Flamengo staff, at a futsal championship. When Flamengo accepted him, his training routine began to interfere with school. Pedro came from a family of military men. His early career success in football did not persuade his mother to fully support his football career. Instead, she insisted he quit Flamengo, one of the richest football clubs in Brazil, and finish high school.<sup>11</sup> He was preparing for a career in the military after high school and a series of unsuccessful attempts to restart a career as a footballer, when he was spotted by a sports agent at an amateur football tournament in Rio de Janeiro, the Favelas Cup. He then resumed a professional path in football in Bulgaria, and later in the Czech Republic and Israel.<sup>12</sup>

Roberto's case is another that illustrates my point. Roberto has been a migrant player in the Czech Republic for many years, he is married to a Czech woman, and has one son. He began his career at the Santos FC futsal team. After a period of futsal training, he turned to the football pitch [fui para o campo]. However, he only trained in football for one month. Roberto told me that at the time he reached the Santos FC football team, two of the most highly talented players of his generation were also training there: Diego Ribas and Robinho. These circumstances made Roberto decide to come back to futsal. At a club such as Santos FC, Roberto could easily transition from futsal to football and back.

Another player, Antônio, told me that he began his career at the Corinthians FC futsal team. When he turned 18, Antônio decided to try a career as a footballer on a third-division club in São Paulo state. He told me that after one year, he decided to go back to futsal. "There are simply too many people in football. You have to know people in the football business. I already had connections in futsal. With futsal, I became a migrant player". In Antônio's words, migration becomes an achievement, hard won through a continuous attempt to build a career in both futsal and football.

In this sense, one of the most important aspects of understanding the relationship between futsal and football is to build an ethnographic account to grasp the specific process of production of players in contemporary Brazil. Football and futsal should be seen as related industries. However, they have different characteristics, and Central and Eastern Europe present themselves differently than other regions to sports migrants in these

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11 Futsal has been present in Brazil since the 1940s and has been incorporated into official physical education curricula. According to Salles and Moura (2004), the first attempts to institutionalise futsal in physical education classes date back to the 1960s in Brazil. The role of private schools is particularly prominent in futsal. These private schools are partially responsible for organising local and state-level futsal championships. These schools also offer scholarships for lower-class students who are promising futsal athletes. The BBC recently identified at least 10 players on the Brazilian national squad at the 2014 World Cup who began their careers in futsal (see BBC 2014).

12 Van der Meij and Darby (2017) have found that depending on family aspirations, careers in sports appear to offer more or less desirable futures for youngsters. In some instances, families try to discourage youngsters from seeking a career in sports because they have different plans for the social ascension of the youth, with white-collar jobs seen as more desirable.

sports. For instance, futsal seasons last between eight to ten months, and depending on their migrant status, health, family and contractual situation, futsal athletes might return to Brazil and wait for another offer from a Brazilian or a foreign club. These offers depend both on their agents and transnational networks.

Furthermore, futsal also allowed me a closer contact with the athletes themselves, which assisted in understanding how they deal with the risks associated with athletic careers, such as the risk of injury (Roderick 2006, Donnelly 2004). Futsal clubs might have weaker means to help players in case of injuries. As we will see next, some futsal players cannot find adequate treatment through the public health care systems in host countries. In this sense, despite participating in the same process of early professionalisation as footballers, futsal players might face *different* working conditions in Central and Eastern Europe, with shorter contracts and more precarious conditions than footballers.

### Denis' story

I met Denis at the end of a futsal match in which his team let a victory escape. The match ended in a draw and fans were holding their breath until the last minute. Denis' team almost let a nearly certain victory become a loss. A bittersweet result for the fans, and himself. Denis was the only Brazilian futsal player on his team, an unusual situation in the Czech Republic, where futsal teams tend to hire more Brazilians, so they can help each other in the "*adaptation process*."<sup>13</sup>

As Denis and I sat together for the first time, I introduced myself in Portuguese, and told him my name. We shook hands, and I began my usual presentation. I said I was studying at a university in Prague and asked if he would like to be interviewed for my Ph.D. project. His reaction was to compare me with previous researchers that had already approached him in Lebanon. He told me "I didn't know there were such projects in the Czech Republic. There were lots of projects in Lebanon." It was his way of agreeing to participate in "my project." In the course of our first informal conversation, he told me that he had been a migrant player for 12 years. He had played in Georgia, Serbia, Macedonia, Ukraine, and Lebanon and was now performing in the Czech Republic. I also learned that he had never had a serious injury. Wherever he went, except for Lebanon and the Czech Republic, he learned the local language to be able to manage his daily life. He was largely using English to communicate with other players in the Czech Republic, except with the coach. They spoke in Serbian which Denis had learned during his experience in Serbian futsal.

After a while, I decided to ask him about his family. It seemed like a "natural" question. After all, he had been away from his home country for 12 years.

Me: Do you have family in Brazil?

Denis: Yes, I do. I recently married. We have a kid now, a boy. He is three-years-old. They [his wife and kid] are not with me now. They stayed with me the whole time in Lebanon. My wife told me I should finish this contract alone.

When the conversation shifted to his family affairs, Denis suddenly changed his tone. He told me he had been a champion in Lebanon. He was calculating this Czech team's chances of success, and the prospects for him to return to his family as soon as possible. He added:

I'm already 32. I'm glad I made it this far in my career. I miss them and I want to go back. This is my last season as a professional futsal player. After this season, I will rest and retire.

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<sup>13</sup> Adaptation is an emic category. I have never heard Brazilian athletes use other terms such as "integration."

I confess that I was surprised to hear such a statement. I had been following footballers' and futsal players' lives for a year. In the course of my fieldwork, I had learned about the sacrifices players make in case of injuries, and possible unpredictable career terminations (Roderick 2006). Having met some transnational families, I found it puzzling to hear Denis talking about retiring. I thought that we should meet again so I could try to understand his story. During the 2018/2019 futsal season, we met three times. Denis has always been accessible. However, by responding to Denis's question about my migration story, I was able to understand better his wish to end his futsal career. He asked me,

Denis: What about you? What are you doing here?

Me: Well, I had studied in Sweden, and then found a job here in the Czech Republic. I was working at a call centre. It was quite tough, you know. People would call, and they would yell at me. So I decided to quit my job, and I was thinking about going back too [to Brazil]. But I decided to try to get accepted to a Ph.D. program in Prague.

Denis: I see what you mean. I also worked at call centres in Brazil.

Me: Really? The literature on football says that players don't do anything else. They only play because they start too young.

Denis: Not my case, I started to play futsal and work quite young. I had a career outside futsal. I worked at call centres, and I worked at retail shops too, before I turned pro.

Denis' previous work experiences were key factors for him to imagine a career transition before age would not allow him to continue playing, or before any decisive event, such as a serious injury, may occur. When I asked him about his plans, he revealed that he was negotiating with a private university in Brazil to play on the university's futsal team in exchange for a scholarship. He was about to begin his studies online, and he would later move back to Brazil, and study in this university's classrooms. He wanted to pursue a business administration degree.<sup>14</sup>

Edward Said entitled his memoir "Out of Place" (2000). "Out of place" is both a reference to Said's Palestinian background and an epistemological idea. Knowledge, Said wrote, is constructed out of one's place. The experience of exile, displacement, confrontation with new worlds, and reinvention of one's past is abundant in Said's work. I invoke Said to call attention to the fact that he was a fierce critic of "area studies". "Orientalism" (1979) offers attentive analysis about how American military interests were connected with academic routes. Said's major works, "Orientalism" and "Culture and Imperialism" (1994), cannot simply be described as works of a specialist in French and British literature. Said's erudition takes us around the globe, presenting the pain of the Palestinians' mass displacement. As Said wrote (2003, 173):

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever.

14 When I asked Denis if he thought that his previous experience in futsal would help him in a business career, he answered "Of course, in sports and business, you have to motivate people." Investments in higher education seem to be more common among futsal players than footballers. Denis did "retire" from professional futsal to play for a scholarship in Brazil. The last time we talked through an instant message application, he told me he was glad he could be closer to his family, and vividly narrated his travels with the new team around Brazil. Other futsal players and coaches in Portugal and the Czech Republic, such as Aristóteles and Bernardo, have also been enrolled in physical education courses while building a professional career in futsal. Aristóteles even told me he misses going to classes, and that he would like to finish earning his degree in physical education by the age of 33.

The experience of being out of one's place does not come without costs, risks, and emotions. Exile constitutes a "terrible" experience, as Said portrayed in his unique work on migration. I would argue that scholars of sports migration could engage more with this "essential sadness" and the "loss of something left behind forever". If these experiences are certainly more present in the lives of refugees, when I listened to sports migrants' narratives, such as Denis', I heard similar remarks.

In the next section, I will analyse the spatiality of migration, and the challenges and opportunities for sports migration scholarship in Central and Eastern Europe.

## The spatiality of migration: Central and Eastern Europe in Sports Migration

Sports migration scholars have either turned their lenses to sports academies (Damo 2009, 2014, Esson 2013, 2015a, 2015b, Ungruhe 2016) or faced the challenge of interviewing migrant athletes in the receiving countries.<sup>15</sup> In sports academies, professionalisation and a systematic form of sports discipline are articulated through young apprentices' bodies. Sports academies provide researchers with a fertile social context in which issues of nationalism, race, class and gender are prominent. In this context, Alan Klein's (1991, 2014) influential scholarly works have combined a rich use of qualitative methods to construct a multi-sited ethnographic account of the lives of both professional players, key participants in the baseball industry in the United States and the Dominican Republic, and the everyday life of baseball academies in the Dominican Republic.

Much like the early work by Linda Basch, Nina Glick-Schiller and Cristina Blanc-Szanton (1994) that sparked a series of questions about migrants' cross border activities, and fomented the emergence of a transnational perspective, Klein has escaped traps of methodologies with overly narrow nationalist scopes by framing his ethnographic project in dialogue with Wallerstein's world-systems analysis (Wallerstein 1990, 2000, Basch, Glick-Schiller and Blanc-Szanton 1994, Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002). Although Klein's ethnographies are rich in the detailed analysis of the hierarchical world of athletic careers, he seems to have inspired a series of qualitative studies that have left the context of sports academies and a long-term ethnographic fieldwork behind. These studies focus on sporadic contacts between athletes, through interviews. In studies by Elliot (2012, 2014), Elliot and Bania (2014), and Molnar (2006, 2007, 2011, 2015, Molnar and Maguire 2008), the consequences of an overly simplified application of world-systems analysis to football migration become more evident.<sup>16</sup>

The main concerns of these researchers are to understand the motivations of migrant footballers that lead them to play in Central and Eastern Europe. Without a profound dialogue with a historical sociological perspective, these scholars define Eastern European leagues as football's semi-peripheries, according to Wallerstein's world-systems analysis. As such, these researchers interpret footballers' discourses about Eastern European football leagues accordingly. Leagues in "postsocialist" countries such as Hungary or Poland appear as "stepping stones", places to start one's career, or as "places to retire" and end one's productive life in football.<sup>17</sup>

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15 According to Klein (2014: 48), a sports academy "has the same characteristics as any educational institution: It is hierarchical, and designed to educate, evaluate, and elevate those who go through it. It matters little whether what is being taught is [sports] skills or language. The overwhelming direction is toward the resocialization of those who go through it."

16 Richard Elliot and Gyozo Molnar have both been supervised by Joseph Maguire. In this sense, Maguire's work has inspired both Elliot's and Molnar's studies. I argue that Elliot's and Molnar's engagement with world-systems analysis has been based on a dialogue with Alan Klein's (1991, 2014) pioneering ethnographic works. My current discussion aims to highlight that Klein's work is much richer in detail than Molnar's and Elliot's.

17 Carmen Rial (2008) has done an extensive analysis of Brazilian footballers currently working in Western Europe and the United States. Brazilian footballers' discourses about retirement never mentioned Central and Eastern European countries as attractive destinations for retirement. Brazilian footballers would, at first, seem to figure as a counter-examples to Molnar's and Elliot's works. The inclusion of futsal and football aims to provide an empirical option to this model. Because futsal's geography is more fragmented than football's, I at first argued that Brazilian futsal players saw Central and Eastern Europe as "stepping stones" or "places to retire". However, as my fieldwork developed, I was able to problematise the place of "Central" and "Eastern" Europe in sports migration scholarship.

In my fieldwork, however, I noticed that some migrant footballers did not necessarily refer to Central and Eastern Europe in these terms. In addition, when I tried to reconstruct the career trajectories of Brazilian futsal and football players, their narratives about migrating to Central and Eastern Europe involved issues that Gyozo Molnar (2006, 2007, 2011, 2015) and Richard Elliot (2012, 2014) have left behind, such as injuries, the role of families, players' gendered identities, and religious affiliations.<sup>18</sup>

For instance, I met Joaquim after waiting two-months for an opportunity. He was playing in Czech football's second division. Before coming to the Czech Republic, he had played in Brazil, Kosovo and Germany. The reason I had to wait so long to meet him was that he had gone to Brazil for surgery. Joaquim was the first footballer I tried to contact, and he inadvertently opened my eyes to the importance of injuries in footballers' careers. In telling his story, Joaquim detailed for me how an undiagnosed thyroid issue prematurely terminated his career.

He had a friend who was a medical student who, along with his professors, had helped Joaquim diagnose his condition. After he had begun his treatment, Joaquim went to a pitch where he knew former players would meet to play informally. He knew sports agents could spot him there. At the end of one of these matches, a German sports agent approached him, with a "European offer". Since the legal transfer window was closing, this agent told him he had managed to find a club interested in him in Kosovo. At the next transfer window, his agent would try to sell him to a German fourth division club. Once in Germany, Joaquim told me:

In fact, when I arrived in Germany, my agent couldn't find me a good team, it was January. So I had to play on a quite amateur team. This team belonged to my agent's friend. They played in the 9<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> division. So I stayed there, at this team waiting for the next transfer window to open. On this team there were three other Brazilians. We trained during the week at a fourth division team, but during the weekends, we would play for an 8<sup>th</sup> division team. When everything was more or less settled, so I could come play on this 4<sup>th</sup> division team, the team was relegated to the 5<sup>th</sup> division. So it was better for me to come here [to the Czech second division].

Joaquim did not refer to Central and Eastern European leagues as either "stepping stones" or "places to retire." As seen in Connell's (2010, 62-67) analysis of Michael, a financial sector manager, Joaquim's chronic disease allowed him to think about his football career in broader terms. His conception of "success" was closely connected with his concerns about the limits of his body, since he could clearly see that the continuation of his career depended on medical assistance from the Czech club.<sup>19</sup> Because of his thyroid condition, Joaquim needed constant treatment, and the surgery in Brazil sought to provide a more or less permanent medical solution, compatible with his athletic career.

It seems that in studies by Molnar (2006, 2007, 2011, 2015) and Elliot (2012, 2014), sports migrants are always seen as rational actors in search of maximizing their economic gains. Migration research has deconstructed the view of migrants as rational actors, but this view seems to have remained in sports migration scholarship.<sup>20</sup> There seems to be very little room to understand how emotions also play a role in sports migrants' careers (Svašek 2005). In this sense, both Joaquim and Denis were able to relativise financial success. In their stories, the view of Central and Eastern Europe did not directly relate to the idea of moving to Western football or futsal leagues. In the case of Joaquim, his ideas about career progress were often combined with his religious views, and could not be easily subsumed to a one-dimensional interpretation.

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<sup>18</sup> Maguire (1999) has criticised world-systems analysis for not being able to capture the specificity of sports economies and migration (see also Maguire 2004, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> I have found that "success" is often evaluated as a multi-dimensional side of athletes' lives. Being "successful" involves, above all, a work ethics, very close to the ethics of sacrifice for one's family that Rial (2008) has examined.

<sup>20</sup> The exception in sports studies is Alan Klein's (2000) attempt to rethink the concept of machismo in Mexican baseball. Klein worked with the sociology of emotions, developed by Arlie Hochschild, and the analysis of machismo by Mathew Gutmann and Alfredo Mirandé. See also Martes (2011) for a perspective that problematises the view of migrants as merely "rational economic actors".

While Joaquim was able to receive the medical treatment he needed to continue his career, Antônio, a futsal player in the Czech Republic, was not able to count on assistance from his Czech club. I met Antônio at the training centre of his Czech futsal club. He told me he was about to leave the Czech Republic to travel to Portugal, with his family, because of an injury. Antônio told me he could not get the treatment he needed in the Czech public health care system, and his current team did not provide further medical assistance. He was already in his thirties, but unlike Denis, Antônio was accompanied by his family. Antônio insisted his injury would heal easily, and he did not see himself as fully responsible for this situation. I met Antônio twice, once before he broke his contract with the Czech team, and another time at the Prague airport, when he was leaving for Portugal with his wife and daughter.

After interviewing Antônio, I kept in contact with him through an instant message application and a social media platform. The predictions of his recovery turned out to be true. With appropriate medical support, Antônio was able to quickly recover from his injury and play in the Portuguese futsal league. Antônio told me that his salary in Portugal was lower than in the Czech Republic, possibly because of his injury. He did not provide details of the amounts. Despite earning less, Antônio recognised the advantages of Portugal<sup>21</sup>. There is a sizable Brazilian migrant “community”, his daughter was able to access the public education system without a lengthy language learning process, and his wife was able to find a more “busy life” than in the Czech Republic<sup>22</sup> (see Margolis 2013).

In this sense, I advocate for a multi-sited ethnography in Central and Eastern European regions because, following Marcus (1995), multi-sited ethnographies offer new ways for researchers to follow the global diffusion of meanings, objects and identities. I argue that, given the limitations faced by multi-sited ethnographers, researchers should follow players’ career trajectories as much as possible. In this way, researchers would be able to leave the binary framework that considers Central and Eastern Europe as either “stepping stones” or “places to retire,”<sup>23</sup> and build methodological strategies that capture the variety of athletes’ perspectives on their migration experiences in these regions.

## Final thoughts

In this paper, I have tried to argue that multi-sited ethnographic works substantiate approaches to sports migration in Central and Eastern Europe by leading to a broader understanding of the difficulties and possibilities migrant athletes face in these regions. In this sense, Denis’ and Joaquim’s cases should be contrasted. While at first glance it appears that Denis has “retired” in the Czech Republic, he nevertheless constructed his whole career as a futsal player in “Central” and “Eastern” Europe and the “Middle East”.

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21 Despite deep colonial and postcolonial ties, Portugal is rarely analysed in studies about Brazilian sports migration. Rial (2009) has admitted the relative absence of Portugal in her studies. Portugal still remains the top destination for Brazilian football players.

22 Under the notion of “precarity of masculinity”, Besnier and his team of researchers have been advocating for a gendered lens to approach sports migration (Besnier, Guinness, Hann, and Kovač 2018). However, because of their methodological choices, these researchers have mostly been interacting with young aspiring athletes. The fact that most of these athletes do not have families of their own makes some of Besnier and his team’s claims somewhat vague. One of the principal claims they make is that sports serves as a way for men in the global south to play the role of provider. I would argue that this “politics of the provider” that Besnier and his team defend, must be further elaborated. As the cases of Denis and Antônio show, they needed to stay close to their families, otherwise they could not see the point in simply assuming the role of provider. I argue that ethnographic research in sports migration needs to go beyond simple statements about masculinities to understand the gendered negotiations in players’ private lives.

23 Bourdieu (1992: 223) reminded us in one chapter of his “Language and Symbolic Power”, there are no natural borders: “Nobody would want to claim today that there exist criteria capable of founding ‘natural’ classifications on ‘natural’ regions, separated by ‘natural’ frontiers. The frontier is never anything other than the product of a division which can be said to be more or less based on ‘reality’, depending on whether the elements it assembles show more or less numerous and more or less striking resemblances among themselves.” (see also Okley 1996 for a discussion on borders and regionalisation in social anthropology).

Joaquim, on the other hand, even if he eventually considered moving back to Germany, expressed when I interviewed him that an experience in the Czech first division was already a good step forward in his precarious career, which had been punctuated by his constant battle with a chronic disease.<sup>24</sup>

The career trajectory of Roberto, a long-term migrant futsal player in the Czech Republic illustrates the points I have tried to make in this paper:

Me: How did you start your career?

Roberto: I started in Brazil. [I usually get longer answers. I remembered I was forced to ask Roberto directly about the relationship between futsal and football]

Me: At a football club?

Roberto: Yeah, I started at Santos [FC].

Me: But at this club, did you play futsal and football at the same time?

Roberto: Only for one month, when I went to the pitch, Diego and Robinho were training there. So I couldn't advance. So I thought to myself "I need to come back to futsal". Football didn't work for me. In Brazil, it's like a mafia, football, you know? But I returned to futsal and I liked futsal better. I'm playing until today [Roberto is in his late 30s, a significant achievement for a sports career]. I've played in various Brazilian states, I played in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul. I am "rodado" [an experienced player]. I've played in Italy, Spain, and Azerbaijan. When you play well, there are lots of agents who come and ask you if you would like to play somewhere else.

Me: Okay, okay. Wait a minute, you started at Santos FC, right?

Roberto: Yeah, I did.

Me: After that you went to Santa Catarina?

Roberto: No, I started at Santos, then I went to play at Banespa, in São Paulo. After that I went to Joinville, then I went back to Banespa in 2004. After that I received an offer from an Italian club. I then left for Italy, then Spain. From Spain, I went back to Brazil, to Rio Grande do Sul. Then I came here [to the Czech Republic]. Here, I played until we reached the final. Then I went back to Italy. I've had a few problems there because the Italians are a little crazy. From Italy I came back to Brazil, I am a *gipsy* [my emphasis]. From Brazil, I went to Azerbaijan.

Me: When was that?

Roberto: Ah, it was a long time ago, 2012, around that time.

Me: So you played in the Czech Republic for a while, and then you went away.

Roberto: Yeah, I arrived here in 2011. I played half of the season, then I received an Italian offer. Then, I've had lots of troubles in Italy, I was really upset there. So I came back to Brazil, but this Italian club screwed me up. They held my transfer, so I couldn't play in Rio Grande do Sul. When the transfer arrived, and I had all the papers in order, I told this Brazilian club that I had an offer from Azerbaijan, so I went there to play.

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<sup>24</sup> Joaquim eventually reached the Czech first division. I felt proud to witness his achievement.

Roberto's use of the same adjective, "rodado", that footballers used to describe their transnational moves to Carmen Rial (2008) is telling. While he would in theory agree that international experiences made him a more experienced player, his career trajectory reveals other routes, unexplored by Rial. Futsal allowed him to play in one of the world's best futsal leagues, in Spain, and provided a route to "Central" and "Eastern" Europe. Roberto also characterised himself as a *gipsy*, a reminder that in the city where he lives with his wife and child, in the Northwest region of the Czech Republic, there is a strong Roma "community". Roberto's story not only illustrates the *ethnographic continuum* between futsal and football, but also constitutes an example of the modalities of transnational migration opened to Brazilian migrant futsal players.

Furthermore, sports migration researchers should incorporate the role of emotions in the lives of sports migrants (see Lutz and White 1986, Maguire 1991, Svašek and Skrbíš 2007) to avoid seeing migrant athletes simply as rational economic agents searching to maximise their gains.<sup>25</sup> While monetary rewards are an undeniable characteristic of sports migration, previous studies have consistently tried to understand people's movements across the world, through various sports industries, without simply reducing sports migrations to the monetary rewards involved (Klein 1991). Roberto's story is not one of continuous movement towards Western Europe. His constant returns to Brazil, until he settled in the Czech Republic, have helped me deconstruct the exclusive prominence of material gains in the lives and careers of sports migrants.

### **An Afterthought: Does Red Bull still give you wings?**

Transnational migration studies rose with a focus on the cross border activities of Caribbean migrants at the beginning of the 1990s (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton 1994; Glick-Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton 1995). In this sense, transnational migration studies emerged in tandem with neoliberal market policies in the 1990s, and sports industries have been affected by neoliberalism. Neoliberalism's advocacy that "human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms" (Harvey 2005, 2) fosters contradictions. Sports studies have been documenting the contradictions and conflicts surrounding the growing commercialization of sports industries (Maguire and Falcoux 2011).<sup>26</sup>

Social anthropologist Daphne Berdahl (2010) has extensively analysed citizenship, consumption and memory in "post-wall" Germany. Her analyses have shown that East Germans had to adapt to a post-industrial capitalism, in which consumption has become more important than work, while East Germans have seen the breakdown of manufacturing jobs in the former GDR. Learning how to consume "properly", and "behave" in a post-industrial capitalist society, entails rebuilding a form of bodily discipline, materialised in everyday life as forms of investments in one's appearance. Berdahl showed how East Germans gradually learned how to "dress for success" to compete in a labour market in which their diplomas, skills and work experience had suddenly become "undervalued".<sup>27</sup>

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25 In their review of American perspectives on the anthropology of emotions, Lutz and White (1986, 427-428) acknowledge both the centrality of ethnographic descriptions in the analysis of emotions, and the necessarily "incompleteness" of data regarding emotions. To deal with these difficulties, the authors suggest a series of problems in social relationships that would be able to descriptively capture the emotionality of "others". In my current ethnography, I have followed at least two themes suggested by Lutz and White. My focus on injuries, borders and families, allowed me to focus on both the need athletes develop to keep relationships at a distance, a common theme among transnational migration studies, and the constant possibility of professional failure, which is usually described as the "precarity of athletic careers". For various perspectives on families in contemporary Brazil, see Scheper-Hughes 1993, Goldstein 2013, Dias Duarte and Menezes Aisengart 2017, Fonseca 2002.

26 Transnational migration studies emerged in the same context as Alan Klein's classic study of sports migration "Sugarball". Klein developed his thesis based on both dependency and world-systems analysis. At that time, even though social anthropologists were searching for new conceptual tools to understand the complexity of contemporary global processes and migration flows, a constant dialogue with world-systems analysis in the development of transnational migration studies can be noticed (see Basch Glick Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton 1994).

27 As Matti Bunzl (2010) analyses, in the introduction to "On the Social Life of Postsocialism: memory, consumption, Germany", Daphne Berdahl's attentive look into everyday practices of East Germans led her to consider "ostalgic", and "ostalgic practices" as integral parts of how the memory of transition from socialism to capitalism took place. Berdahl's analyses encompass both everyday consumer practices in the beginning of the 1990s and a series of board games, museums, and films expressing various discourses about *die Wende*, the process of German reunification.

In this sense, no transformation of contemporary football epitomises better the importance of consumption than the involvement of Red Bull in former East German football. Red Bull's investments have been highly polemicalised by the media. East German teams are said to have failed to "integrate" into contemporary football. Often accused of corruption and mismanagement, these teams have been associated with far-right extremism (see for instance, The Blizzard March 1, 2017). Furthermore, Red Bull is often accused of having changed the form of club management in German football, distancing fans from club policies (The Economist May 16, 2016). The controversial entrance of Red Bull in Leipzig led to the ascension of an East German football team to the top of German and European leagues. In fact, during the 2017/2018 season, Red Bull became the prey of its own success in European football when Red Bull Salzburg and RB Leipzig both qualified for the UEFA Champions League. Both teams were accused of violating UEFA's article 5 that impedes the same owner from having two teams in UEFA-organised competitions (UEFA 2017).

After a series of measures to separate these teams' close links, UEFA decided that both teams could compete. I was fortunate to interview Miguel before a match between Red Bull's two European teams in the 2018/2019 season. Miguel offered me a detailed story of his migration and his close association with Red Bull teams in Austria and Brazil. Other characteristics in Miguel's story aroused my attention. He is white, Catholic, and comes from a comfortable middle-class background. These features set him apart from the usual representation of Brazilian football migrants (Rial 2012).

Miguel told me he was the first Brazilian footballer to take what is now a somewhat common migration route for Red Bull Brazil's footballers. He went from Red Bull Brazil, a team based in São Paulo state, to Austria's third division. There, not only his football performance was monitored, but also his language skills. Learning English and German were also prerequisites for advancing his career and reaching the main Red Bull Salzburg team. Miguel saw these requirements as an *ethical* way of managing players' careers. Contrary to much media discourse, Miguel seemed at home with Red Bull's way of doing business in football. He responded to my questions:

How was your adaptation process? Do you speak German?

Yes, today I can get by. I mean it's always difficult to tell you how good is my German. But today I speak German, English, and Spanish. Spanish is quite close to Portuguese and I played with other footballers that spoke Spanish. English was my first language for communicating with people. My English was terrible in the beginning. I could only say these basic things "hey, how are you? Where do you come from?". But the club provided us language classes once or twice a week. I now get by well in German, I give interviews in German, and I do everything in German. I speak better German because I have been living here for a while.<sup>28</sup>

According to Miguel, local language learning is a crucial aspect of football's labour *adaptation*.<sup>29</sup> After Red Bull Salzburg, Miguel went to Germany. The fact that he did not make the starting team there made him *happier* to return to Salzburg, where he did. However, when the interview accidentally changed to the forthcoming match between Red Bull Salzburg and RB Leipzig, the contradictions of highly commercial football became more evident.

28 Red Bull's investment in players' language skills should be noted because, as Rial (2006, 2008, 2015) wrote, many Brazilian players are only able to speak Portuguese. Language access is one of the main difficulties for researchers in Central and Eastern Europe. For instance, in one of his studies Molnar (2015) was only able to interview four players working in the top Hungarian league because football migrants in Hungary could not speak Hungarian or English.

29 I interpret Red Bull's investment in footballers' language skills as a deliberate attempt to avoid xenophobic fans' complaints about football migrants.

Me: Tomorrow you play, right?

Miguel: Yeah, tomorrow we play in the Europe League.

Me: So it's a very important game...

Miguel: Yeah, it's against RB Leipzig. I don't know if you know them.

Me: RB Leipzig... Is it the other Red Bull team?

Miguel: [He laughs] Yeah, it is.

Me: So it's a polemical match.

Miguel: Yeah, there are lots of polemics, but everything was already sorted out. People say that teams belonging to the same owner cannot play against each other. But whoever saw the first match saw two teams wanting to win. It's quite complicated, but one team is supported by Red Bull, and the other is partially owned by Red Bull.

Me: So is Salzburg owned by Red Bull?

Miguel: No. It's only sponsored. RB Leipzig is partially owned by Red Bull.

Miguel did not explicitly mention the previous UEFA intervention in both Red Bull teams to avoid conflicts of interest. Instead, he preferred to emphasise the teams' performances on the pitch and that they follow UEFA's regulations. Nonetheless, Red Bull's roles on each team are differentiated in terms of the reach of its commercial interests. However, in his interview, Miguel revealed that in contrast to the highly commodified Red Bull sports network, he did not have any written contract with his agent. *Trust* was the basis of Miguel's relationship with his agent. He told me his agent was a family friend, a friend of his parents, and there was no reason to have a contract with him.

Trust<sup>30</sup> in Miguel's circle of family and friends has limits, however. Miguel is the only footballer whose club I analyse in more detail in my ethnographic writing. I adopted this approach to Red Bull football teams, not simply to highlight the commodification of contemporary football, but mostly because Miguel gave me permission to use his real name, which I did not do. Throughout his interview, Miguel simply dismissed a narrative of suffering and pain. He has mostly focused on the "glamorous side" of football, and actively sought to highlight Red Bull's ethical way of managing his career. Miguel also rejected the importance of injuries. When I asked him directly. He told me: "Of course I have already been injured, but these were small injuries, nothing serious".

While I cannot attest that Miguel's statements are false, I would argue that the absence of a deep discussion of injuries in Carmen Rial's ethnographic works with Brazilian footballers at top European leagues stems from athletes' reluctance to reveal issues that might *hurt* them financially. Miguel's dismissal of injuries and pain as a vital part of his career as a professional sportsman, I suspect, is a cautionary tale for researchers in sports migration. As in Berdahl's ethnographies of East Germans trying to cope with the contemporary neoliberal labour market, Miguel's long-term identification with "the Red Bull brand" did not allow him to speak more freely about the painful side of football.<sup>31</sup>

In this sense, I argue that researchers should understand both how professional athletes embody contemporary investments and business ethics, and the effects these might have in social studies of sports.

30 "Trust" is usually analysed as an element of "social capital". The concept of social capital has been associated with the works of Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman (see Portes 1998). In applying social capital as a concept, both Bourdieu and Coleman sought to show that nonmonetary forms of capital can also be sources of prestige. Marcel Mauss' classic work (1990 [1950]) on "the gift" is an inspiration to contemporary sociological perspectives on social capital. For an analysis of the epistemological implications of trust involved in the social sciences, see Barone (2003 [1995]).

31 For a perspective on the relationship between injuries and athletes' religiosities, see Oliveira Filho (2020).

## Endnote

At the beginning of 2020, I had found a welcoming sociology department at Jagiellonian University, and I was planning to go to futsal matches and interview Brazilian futsal players in Poland. In March, Czech friends told me to come back to the Czech Republic because the Czech borders would soon close. At that time, I still thought the European Union would close its exterior borders, and allow some movement within the EU in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, I decided to follow my friends' advice, and a few hours before the Czech borders were closed, I returned to the Czech Republic on a train from Krakow. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, governments and sports governing bodies have suspended professional sports activities in all countries I have analysed in this paper. In these times of crisis, professional athletes in the Czech Republic have reacted differently to the possible abrupt end of the 2019/2020 sports season. Footballers in the Czech Republic told me they could not return to Brazil to see their families due to both visa restrictions and travel bans. Futsal players waited until the last minute for a decision from the Czech Futsal Association. On April 15, 2020, the sports governing body declared the end of the 2019/2020 Czech futsal season. Most Brazilian futsal athletes contacted the Brazilian embassy for assistance in their efforts to return home.

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Caribbean Routes: Ethnographic Experiences,  
Theoretical Challenges, and the Production of Knowledge

# Tracing routes, mapping destinies: presenting the dossier

Traçando rotas, mapeando destinos: apresentando o dossiê

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## **Paving the way<sup>1</sup>**

The Dossier “Caribbean Routes: Ethnographic Experiences, Theoretical Challenges, and the Production of Knowledge “ gathers 11 articles about different regions of the Caribbean, signed by Brazilian and foreign researchers, most of whom are associated to graduate programs or academic centers in Brazil. The publication is the outcome of a wider effort to disseminate the results of ethnographic research about a region that, until the 1990s, had not emerged as a privileged destination for Brazilian anthropologists. The studies presented here reveal a diversity of themes, lines of inquiry and theoretical dialogues mobilized in this transnational endeavor.

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<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank Sara Santos Morais, Omar Ribeiro Thomaz and Federico Neiburg for their readings and suggestions for the final version of this introduction. We are also grateful to Antonio Carlos de Souza Lima and Andrea de Souza Lobo, for their support. Roberta Ceva had a fundamental role as editorial coordinator of Vibrant, to whom we express our sincere gratitude. Of course, mistakes and inaccuracies are our responsibility.

With the exception of Ruy Coelho's (1920-1990) pioneering research on Afro-Caribbean populations in Honduras in the second half of the 1940s, aligned with Melville J. Herskovits' scholarly project (1895-1963),<sup>2</sup> the Caribbean remained an unexplored region for Brazilian anthropology—although, since the 1970s, classical texts on the region have guided discussions and research on peasantry in Brazil.<sup>3</sup> This was the case, for example, of work by the important research group the *Comparative Regional Development Project*, a cooperative effort between the Museu Nacional (UFRJ) and Harvard University in the 1970s. Young anthropologists such as Lygia Sigaud, Moacir Palmeira, Afrânio Garcia, Beatriz Heredia, and others took on a markedly collective ethnographic initiative (Palmeira et alii, 1977; Sigaud, 2008; Lopes, 2013). Examining the Northeast of Brazil, they were inspired by studies of complex societies, particularly the theoretical advances on plantations in the Caribbean and the Americas, developed by authors linked to the *Puerto Rico Project* (1948-1949), coordinated by Julian Steward at Columbia University, and led by Sidney Mintz, Eric Wolf, and others (Wolf and Mintz, 1957; Giusti-Cordero, 2011; Edelman, 2018).<sup>4</sup>

Due to its commitment and obsession with the ideology of nation-building, until a few decades ago Brazilian anthropology was marked by the almost absolute predominance of national themes (Peirano, 1992; Sigaud; Neiburg; L'Estoile, 2005). Few anthropologists risked doing field research outside of the country. In 1995, Gilberto Velho identified 25 Brazilian researchers who did field research, with greater or lesser ambition, in foreign countries (Velho, 1995). In the Caribbean region, only Coelho was cited. In 2004, Wilson Trajano Filho and Carlos Benedito Martins noticed a slight increase, having found 40 researchers working abroad (Trajano Filho & Martins, 2004). In an article in the same volume, Peter Fry presented a list of “dissertations defended in Brazil that focus on social situations outside Brazil” (Fry, 2004, p. 245). Their titles indicated that some of these studies were dedicated to Caribbean themes or populations.

It is also true that the marginal position of the Caribbean is not exclusive to Brazilian anthropology. This ethnographic field has always occupied a marginal place in the history of the discipline in general, as it seemed to be halfway between so-called primitive societies and post-industrial contexts. However, it was precisely this hybrid nature that guaranteed the region what Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1992) defined as an “undisciplined” character. This would be expressed both by the Caribbean's unsuitability to a classical research agenda and by the opportunity to develop a critical perspective that the region offers the anthropological imagination.

That said, in the last twenty years there has been a significant change in the relation of Brazilian anthropology with the Caribbean. We have witnessed a growing wave of academic research, especially theses and dissertations, but also several publications in Brazil and abroad, focused on the Caribbean in its multiple dimensions. Ethnographies have examined specificities by country, regional borders and articulations, as well as global movements, revealing a broader panorama of the region. It is beyond doubt that Coelho's isolated experience is now a distant reality (Ramassote 2018), and the Caribbean has become an increasingly popular destination for Brazilian anthropologists since the early 2000s.

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<sup>2</sup> The influence of Herskovits in consolidating anthropological research on African American populations in the Caribbean cannot be overlooked (Yelvington, 2001; Ramassote, 2016). In parallel, in the wake of anthropological concerns about “Black Americas” (Bastide, 1967) authors such as Roger Bastide (1898-1974), Alfred Métraux (1902-1962) and Pierre Verger (1902-1996) should also be remembered. Besides, it is important to stress the significance of Aimé Césaire (1913-2008) for the constitution of Antillean thought, drawing especially from the *négritude* movement that was born in Paris in the 1940s, marked by the impact of the work of the Haitian ethnologist and diplomat Jean-Price Mars (1928). For more details see, among others, Price & Price (2003); Magloire & Yelvington (2005); Yelvington (2006); Frioux-Salgas (2009); Luhning (2002); Capone (2005); Peixoto (2010); Toledo (2014); Bulamah (2017) and Goyatá (2019).

<sup>3</sup> In the field of the historiography of slavery in Brazil, debates on Caribbean peasantries also had an important impact on the formulations of slave agency. On this subject, see, for example, Lepkowski (1970); Cardoso (1987); Slenes (2011) and Gomes (2015).

<sup>4</sup> We have only recently observed an investment in the translation into Portuguese of texts that address themes that go beyond the classic studies on peasantry, such as the translations of Price and Mintz (2003), Mintz (2003); James (2000); Williams (2012); Césaire (2012); Glissant (2005); Trouillot (2016; 2018); Scott (2017). Essential books such as *Sweetness and Power* (Mintz, 1985) and *Mintz's Caribbean Transformations* (1989), among many others, are still awaiting Portuguese editions. It is also important to highlight the impact of Frantz Fanon's work in Brazil due to early translations published between the late 1970s and early 1980s. For a reconstruction of this trajectory of influence in different social fields in Brazil, see Guimaraes (2008), Silva (2013), and Faustino (2018).

This is due, among other reasons, to the recognized public policies for investment in education and science in Brazil that, at the federal and state levels, have allowed the expansion of graduate programs and funding sources, boosting and strengthening transnational intellectual networks.

An example is the body of research conducted by Olívia Maria Gomes da Cunha, professor in the Graduate Program in Social Anthropology at the Museu Nacional (UFRJ). In the early 2000s, Cunha began historiographical and ethnographic investigations on African-American populations in different Caribbean regions—with special emphasis on Cuba and Suriname.<sup>5</sup> In recent years, within the Laboratory of Anthropology and History (LAH), her students have examined important questions through fieldwork in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Panama and Suriname.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, a number of research projects have emerged in Haiti, thanks to the work of Omar Ribeiro Thomaz, professor at the Department of Anthropology at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp), and shortly afterwards studies by Federico Neiburg of the Museu Nacional (UFRJ). Their investigations were conducted through their respective research groups, the Center for International Migration Studies (CEMI-Unicamp)<sup>7</sup> and the Center for Research on Culture and Economy (NuCEC-UFRJ),<sup>8</sup> leading an endeavor initially inspired by Moacir Palmeira's and Lygia Sigaud's collective research. These studies were fashioned through the construction of partnerships between Haitian intellectuals and foreigners. For example, in 2007, the Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED) was created, coordinated by Louis Herns Marcelin, anthropologist and professor at the University of Miami, in partnership with Sigaud, Thomaz, Neiburg and other researchers.<sup>9</sup>

Another center of reference in Caribbean studies in Brazil is the Department of Latin American Studies (ELA), linked to the Institute of Social Sciences (ICS) at the University of Brasília (UnB). For two decades, they have been receiving Brazilian and foreign students in their graduate program, part of which is dedicated to the production of interdisciplinary knowledge about the Caribbean. The *Revista Brasileira do Caribe* also stands out in the field and is published by the Graduate Program in History and the Caribbean Studies Research Group of the Federal University at Maranhão (UFMA). The first issue was published in 1998, through the initiative of Olga Cabrera, when she was an associate professor at the Federal University at Goiás (UFG). This journal aggregates contributions from various fields of knowledge focusing mainly on Caribbean studies. Also important in this scenario are the translations and articles published by the *Revista de Estudos Afro-Asiáticos*, based at Cândido Mendes University, and edited by Livio Sansone, an anthropologist with an important trajectory who has also focused partially on the Caribbean and Black diasporas (see, among others, Sansone, 1994).

More recently, new ventures have taken shape, from seminars and round-tables at annual meetings to the creation of research groups. This was the case of the working group organized in 2009 at the 33rd Annual Meeting of the Brazilian Social Sciences Association (ANPOCS) named “Between boundaries and disciplines: studies on Africa and the Caribbean” and the joint seminar “African and Caribbean Dialogues”, held by research groups at Museu Nacional (UFRJ) and the Federal University at Minas Gerais (UFMG). To name a few more initiatives: there is the Research Center for the Caribbean and the Guyanas, linked to the Center for Afro-Oriental

5 See Cunha (2007) as well as two important collections organized by the author (Cunha, 2010; 2018). A 2011 issue of the *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* included articles by Cunha (2011) and Christine Rufino Dabat (2011) that engaged directly with the Mintz's contributions to think about the Caribbean and other post-plantation contexts.

6 See: <https://www.lah-ufrj.org/> (access: 19/04/20).

7 See: <https://cemiunicamp.com.br/> (access: 19/04/20).

8 See: <http://www.nucec.net/> (access: 19/04/20).

9 In terms of bibliographic production, see Thomaz (2005), a text that composes the collection of Reis and Moore (2005) about national elites and their perceptions of poverty and inequality, in addition to Neiburg's (2016) text on imaginary coins, presented as a Sidney Mintz Lecture, in 2010, and the collection recently organized by the author (Neiburg, 2019), which resulted from these conversations and collective efforts. Among the projects in Haiti we also highlight a report by Sebastião Nascimento and Omar Ribeiro Thomaz about the impact of the January 2010 earthquake on higher education in Haiti, see Thomaz and Nascimento (2011). In a cooperation between INURED and the NGO Viva Rio, Federico Neiburg and Natacha Nicaise (2009 and 2010) also published two studies based on ethnographies in Port-au-Prince. See also the ethnographic film “Los huesos de la tierra”, which addresses deforestation and charcoal production in Haiti, with research by Thomaz and Nascimento, in 2005, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsoYgwnMV0&t=14s> (access: 14/05/2020).

Studies of the Federal University at Bahia (UFBA) and coordinated by Marcelo Moura Mello; the Graduate Program in Border Studies, at the Federal University at Amapá (UFAP) at which one of the focuses is the interaction between the Caribbean, the Guyanas and Brazil, idealized by Handerson Joseph; and the creation of the Global Caribbean Anthropology Group (CANIBAL),<sup>10</sup> coordinated by João Felipe Gonçalves at the University of São Paulo (USP). In addition to these already consolidated initiatives, a number of independent studies have been conducted at different universities from throughout Brazil.

## Crossing routes

This dossier adds to the efforts outlined above. Its eleven articles are characterized by firm ethnographic and historiographic contributions. That is, they are works motivated by rich and diverse empirical materials, which are the starting point and condition of the authors' reflections and analyses. Although the themes, methodological strategies and theoretical contributions are diverse, it is possible to identify "partial connections" between them, to borrow Marilyn Strathern's (1991) fruitful expression. We hope readers will expand upon and contribute to this exercise.

The research topics and "ethnographic theories" (Goldman, 2006) found in this dossier echo each other and their analyses draw from the established literature on socio-cultural heterogeneities of the Caribbean. As in a kind of spiral movement, these works engage with classical authors of Caribbean thought, while offering original reflections, bringing to the forefront authors of contemporary anthropological theory. Covering a wide variety of areas ranging from northern Colombia to the Caribbean diaspora, these articles thus show that, far from being closed and self-centered, this ethnographic region is open to the possibility of comparative dialogues with other worlds, and can contribute to developing new engaged and critical social theories. As Marcelo Mello and Rogério Pires emphasize in their introduction to their translation of Trouillot's article "The Caribbean Region" (1992), one of the author's most instigating suggestions refers precisely to the launching of a "program of possible intra-Caribbean comparisons that are not very obvious, on which we can base ourselves to generate equally instigating extra-Caribbean comparisons" (2018: 195).

With this in mind, we suggest below some lines of force or thematic foci, which allow us to present the articles gathered here by identifying some pairings: **economic exchanges and gender; mobilities and spatialities; material and spiritual transits; history and politics**. Far from imprisoning the works, these foci reveal possible reverberations and help project their insights beyond the region.

The articles by Maíra Samara Freire and Felipe Evangelista and Rosa Vieira highlight a fundamental aspect of social life in the Caribbean: the intense network of economic exchanges established in markets and public squares that are essentially led by black women, who form the base of economic support for families. Freire's article, entitled **Peddling sweets and pioneering territory: black women and work in Colombia's Caribbean region**, seeks to understand the perception and labor experience of women who produce and sell sweets in one of Colombia's most important and studied black communities: San Basilio de Palenque. Articulating categories of race and gender, the author, while considering the precarious conditions of informal workers, shows how these women find in their daily lives a place of agency, dignity, creation and knowledge through their products. The work of Evangelista and Vieira, **You must have people to make business: relations of proximity in small-scale trade in Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo**, offers a comparative exploration of the social dimensions of commerce in two different contexts: Haiti's Central Plateau and Kongo Central province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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<sup>10</sup> See: <http://www.antropocanibal.com.br/> (access: 19/04/20).

Also seeking to describe the knowledge and practices of women traders, and contrary to what the imaginary of poverty and deprivation might suppose, the authors' strive to understand how trade exchanges in contexts of scarcity mirror a proliferation of goods, currencies and affective relationships. More than an autonomous and self-contained field, exchanges are constituted by the dynamics between formal and informal, merchandise and gift, morality and danger.

Exchanges, passages and movements are central themes of the articles presented here and also of Caribbean ethnographies in general. It is no coincidence that mobility—of people, objects, spirits and ideas—is present in virtually every text in this volume. Special attention is given to a subject that have been deeply examined in the social sciences, yet which gains new interpretations in this dossier: mobility and migration. They are explicitly addressed in the articles by Mélanie Montinard, ***Pran wout la: expériences et dynamiques de la mobilité haïtienne***, and by Gustavo Dias, João Carlos Jarochinski and Sidney Antonio Silva, ***Travellers of the Caribbean: Positioning Brasília in the Haitian migration routes through Latin America***. Indeed, the issue of transnational mobility and its dynamics also appears, although more tangentially, in the studies of Shelene Gomes—on Rastafari communities in Ethiopia—and Marcelo Moura Mello—who observes Hindu religious practices in Guyana. While Montinard's article focuses on the native concept of *wout* and presents individual and collective strategies of Haitians who migrate, especially from Rio de Janeiro to the United States and vice-versa; Dias', Jarochinski's and Silva's text addresses trajectories of Haitian mobility through the city of Brasília. Both articles stress the importance of seeing mobility as a form of becoming, to go beyond considering departures and arrivals as occurring at fixed cartographic points. They call our attention to the route, its intermediaries and the dynamics that are in constant negotiation. The authors thus put at the center of their research relationships that are created on the routes and that may continue, be destroyed or, above all, reinvented.

The articles already mentioned by Gomes, ***Notes on a yard-space in the everyday life of Rastafari in urban Ethiopia***, and Mello, ***Materiality, affection, personhood: on sacrifice in the worship of the goddess Kali in Guyana***, also reflect on movements by people, but especially highlight the work of material and spiritual agencies that, in the diaspora, mobilize forms of ancestral belongings. Gomes emphasizes the materiality of kinship, present in houses and yards built by Rastafari families in a diasporic context in Ethiopia, showing how identity and culture relate to ways of creating relatives not only through relationships between people, but also between spaces and histories. Mello, in turn, discusses ritual acts and actions involved in animal sacrifice to the Hindu goddess Kali in Guyana, with special emphasis on the ritual manipulation of objects used in the sacrifices. Through a detailed description of dynamics and meanings involved in immolation ceremonies in a temple located in Blairmont, the author reveals the entwinements between non-material elements and affections in the manipulation of ritual artifacts.

Mobility is also considered, but spatialities and collective historicities are the focus of the ethnographies by Claudia Fioretti, ***How to listen to an Afro-Caribbean landscape***, and Jose Arenas Gomez, ***Partiendo de líneas, llegando a lugares: notas sobre territorio entre los indígenas de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta en el Caribe colombiano***. Both works are inspired by a notion of space and environment that goes beyond geographic and biological limits as well as state borders. The formation of Caribbean territorialities of an African matrix is investigated by Fioretti and of an indigenous matrix by Arenas Gomez, with both considering how these territorialities are made and remade through their relationships with time. Fioretti evokes, not by coincidence, the notion of "landscape", developed by Tim Ingold (1993), which inscribes the depth of time in space and draws attention to the relationships, no longer separated, between nature and culture. The author analyzes histories of occupation in the region of Old Bank, a village on the island of Bastimentos in Panama, to simultaneously examine the inhabitants' relationship with the land, their families and God.

Arenas Gomez, meanwhile, questions discrepancies between government and indigenous perspectives of the notion of territorial limits of an indigenous *resguardo* [reserve] in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta region on Colombia's Caribbean coast. Evoking the idea of *Línea Negra* employed by the indigenous people of that region, Arenas Gomez points to a territoriality built from the interconnection of spaces, people, practices and temporalities—a multidimensionality that clashes with the government perspective, which defines the region by a fixed temporal and spatial limit.

Ana Elisa Bersani's article, **(Extra)ordinary help: untold stories on disaster and generosity in Grand'Anse, Haiti** also confronts institutional dynamics and native practices. Through ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Haiti's Grand'Anse region, the author analyzes how daily dimensions linked to principles of solidarity and help gained new meanings through the critical event of the earthquake of January 12, 2010. Bersani distances herself from visions that overemphasize aid operations by international humanitarian agents and systems. What seems extraordinary, the author shows, is in fact the expansion of kinship and friendship bonds, giving *help* a truly ordinary meaning that is far from exceptional.

The production of history, which implies considering, as Trouillot (1995) suggested, the mutual entanglements between history as a social process (*history*) and history as narrative (*stories*) is also a paradigmatic feature in this volume. The works of Vincent Joos, **Echoes of past revolutions: architecture, memory, and spectral politics in the historic districts of Port-au-Prince**, and Frantz Rousseau Déus, **The construction of identity in Haitian Indigenism and the Post-colonial debate**, are efforts in this direction. The former uses ethnographic resources and the latter a bibliographic reflection. Joos examines both the house and the memorial and literary narratives of the jurist and writer Ulrick Rosarion, engaging in dialogues with his interlocutor to synthesize the complexity and ambiguities of the political legacy of prominent Haitian leaders such as Jean Jacques Dessalines (1758-1806), Dumarsais Estimé (1900-1953) and François Duvalier (1939-1971). Joos reveals how they are still present in the physical, political and affective landscape of the capital Port-au-Prince. Déus' article, on the other hand, considers the history of Haitian Indigenism, an important intellectual and artistic movement of the first half of the twentieth century, and retraces a political genealogy of discussions about identity. He also proposes an approach that reflects on both Haitian social thought and post-colonial literature, which has often been ignored by anthologies and collections on the subject.

Finally, two considerations should be made about the rich and heterogeneous body of work in this dossier. The first is that, although we have not mentioned kinship as a specific thematic focus, we would like to emphasize its importance. The production of kin as well as "relatedness" (Carsten: 2000), in its material and extra-material dimensions, permeates many of the articles, reaffirming itself as a topic of great relevance to Caribbean studies. Another point that should be highlighted is the preponderance of Haiti as an object of research in the articles: of the eleven, six texts focus on the country and its diaspora, and of these, five are by scholars based at research institutions in Brazil. In addition to the institutional and political dynamics described above, other possible reasons for this prevalence is that Haiti has a strong presence in the Brazilian public sphere. This is due both to the fact that the Brazilian Army had a leading role in the United Nations Mission for Stabilization in Haiti (MINUSTAH), which extended from 2004 to 2017<sup>11</sup> and that Brazil became part of the

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11 MINUSTAH had ambivalent effects on Brazil's political scene. While it raised Brazil's role in global geopolitics, the mission served to recentralize its Army, which had been relatively fragmented since the re-democratization after the country's dictatorship. It simultaneously intensified politicization of the Brazilian military. This helped push the Armed Forces closer to Brazil's extreme right, made clear by their support for the candidacy of Jair Bolsonaro. Added to this are the outbreak of cholera and scandals linked to abuses of power and sexual violence promoted by UN peacekeepers, a topic that still needs greater coverage by the media as well as systematic investigation from public authorities, the Army and the government itself. On these topics, see, for example, Omar Ribeiro Thomaz (2011) and Ana Elisa Bersani (in this volume). See also Federico Neiburg, "The Brazilian Army in Haiti - Foreign Intervention and Domestic Politics", *OpinioJuris*, May 1, 2010, available at: <http://opiniojuris.org/2020/05/01/the-brazilian-army-in-haiti-foreign-intervention-and-domestic-politics/> (access: 14/05/2020). For a chronicle of the beginning of the occupation, see the fascinating work by Jemima Pierre (2020).

Haitian diasporic landscape, a process that gained momentum after the 2010 earthquake.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, there is also the general centrality of the Haitian historiographic debate, especially regarding the Haitian Revolution (1791-1803), which led to the first successful black independence movement of the Americas and the Caribbean (1804), and became paradigmatic for emancipation processes in the nineteenth and twentieth century and, consequently, for studies on slavery and global history.

## Expanding horizons

When we issued the call for papers for this dossier, we were interested in gathering a set of texts that portray the anthropology of the Caribbean made from Brazil in recent years. The final result presents something that we believe goes beyond the horizon we originally envisioned. In addition to addressing a repertoire of classic Caribbean themes—such as colonialism, the plantation model, slave agency, creolization processes, diasporic dynamics, power modulations, and the relations between commodities and capitalist modernity—the texts presented here are embedded in contemporary debates, revealing how the region continues to inspire new contributions and reflections that go far beyond a specific agenda, crossing disciplines and academic traditions.

It is also important to say that the publication of these texts in a foreign language offers the opportunity to insert new voices in the production of knowledge about the Caribbean. As Peter Fry reminds us, “one does not evaluate internationalization just by computing the geographical displacements of students, professors and researchers and their respective publications, but by understanding the capacity of Brazilian anthropology to be heard (and taken into consideration, I suppose!)” (Fry, 2004, p. 229). By presenting authors of various nationalities who work in the Caribbean, this edition of **Vibrant** confirms that Brazilian anthropology and its apparatuses of scientific production and dissemination have attained an important space within international academic production, beyond Lusophone contexts.

Thus, while the Caribbean has always awakened new sensibilities towards human diversity, we hope that these articles can be seen as a sample of the heuristic and critical potential of the region and its multiple diasporic landscapes, inviting readers to face the challenges and possibilities of research that navigates Caribbean horizons. Finally, we are pleased to announce that the dossier also includes, in the *Déjà lu* section of the journal, a transcription of an unpublished text by Ruy Coelho, **The Black Caribs of Central America: a problem in three-way of acculturation**, written in 1948, and the republication and translation into Portuguese of the classical article by Michel-Rolph Trouillot, **The odd and the ordinary: Haiti, the Caribbean, and the world**, first printed in 1990.

Translated by Rodrigo C. Bulamah

Revised by Jeffrey Hoff

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<sup>12</sup> A violent earthquake struck Haiti on January 12, 2010, a tragedy that destroyed much of the city of Port-au-Prince, killing around 250,000 people and injuring many thousands more and leaving more than a million homeless. For more details on the disaster and the Haitian diaspora in Brazil, in addition to the articles by Bersani, Montinard, Joos, and Dias, Jarochinski & Silva present in this volume, see Thomaz (2011) and Joseph (2015).

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# Peddling Sweets and Pioneering Territory: black women and work in Colombia's Caribbean Region

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## Abstract

This article is the result of ethnographic research carried out with black women from San Basilio de Palenque, a black community located in the Colombian Caribbean. These women work as peddlers of different types of sweets in Colombian territories and neighboring countries. My ethnography followed the movement of Palenquera women who circulate with sweets, in order to examine the dynamics, movements, interactions and meanings of this activity in terms of race, gender and work relations. The women find social dignity in the universe of sweets, despite affirming and experiencing harmful effects on their bodies - that is, despite recognizing that peddling sweets is work that can kill, and that makes them “slaves” – and express positive valuations and emotions about the work. This dual meaning of working with sweets permeates the descriptions presented in this article. The trade offers a marginalized and ambiguous strategy that allows them to survive and promote their social mobility, especially by investing the material gains in the formal education of their children, and the sense that this marginal strategy, although it is difficult, provides them autonomy and dignity.

**Key words:** Black women, Palenque, work, peddling, Colombian Caribbean.

# Na rota dos doces: mulheres negras, comércio e trabalho no caribe colombiano

## Resumo

Este artigo resulta da pesquisa etnográfica realizada com mulheres negras oriundas de San Basilio de Palenque, uma comunidade negra localizada no caribe colombiano. São mulheres negras que trabalham vendendo diversos tipos de doces nos territórios colombianos e em países fronteiriços. O trabalho acompanha etnograficamente a circulação das palenqueras e seus doces com o intuito de refletir sobre as dinâmicas, os deslocamentos, as interações e os significados desta atividade em termos das relações de raça, gênero e trabalho. Ao encontrarem no universo dos doces um espaço de dignidade social, mesmo afirmando e vivenciando nos seus corpos os efeitos prejudiciais para a saúde – isto é, mesmo reconhecendo que os doces são um trabalho que pode matar, e que as torna “escravas” –, elas manifestam valorações e emoções positivas sobre o seu exercício laboral. Esse duplo significado do trabalho com os doces permeia as descrições desse artigo. Este ofício oferece uma estratégia marginal e ambígua que lhes permite sobreviver e promover a sua mobilidade social, sobretudo através dos ganhos materiais que destinam à educação formal de seus filhos, e da sensação de que essa mesma estratégia marginal, mesmo sendo dura, lhes permite autonomia e dignidade.

**Palavras-chave:** mulheres negras, palenque, trabalho, comércio, caribe colombiano.

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## Introduction

Its 8:40 on a sunny Sunday morning, in the rural black community of San Basilio de Palenque, Colombia. Walking through the unpaved streets, people are seen moving about. Women, men and children go to the streets to obtain what they need for the day. They go out to buy supplies, to work, visit family. An intense flow of people, cars and goods is noticed on one of these busy Sunday outings. Sunday is a day of particular effervescence in this community. It is the day to receive tourists who come to discover *un rincón de África*<sup>1</sup> in Colombia, it is a day for distant relatives to visit. It is the day for parties, drinking and *champeta*<sup>2</sup>. On the main square, the movement of various Palenquera women is noticed on their way to neighboring municipalities to work and return at the end of the day to their homes. They work selling different types of sweets, in various Colombian cities and in various bordering countries. They are recognized in Palenque as peddlers and pioneers.

Walking a bit more, at 9 AM I find myself at the house of a peddler who is about to begin her sales routine. She has just finished a big breakfast of fish, manioc, plantains and soup. She puts on her sandals, rubs body oil on her feet and legs and puts her apron on her waist. The motorcycles that will take us out of Palenque is already in front of her house. She gets her *ponchera*<sup>3</sup> loaded with sweets and takes a few moments to place it on her head. To relieve the pressure of the dozens of kilos that she balances there, she first puts an old cloth wrapped in a doughnut before placing the aluminum basin on top. The basin with sweets is placed at the front of the motorcycle, and behind she carries, in one of her hands, the plastic stool that will support her sweets at different moments. The time has come to get on the motorcycle and leave Palenque.

This article will analyze experiences with this type of informal work conducted by black Palenquera women, in an effort to understand their social agency and the consequences of this experience. The attempt is to accompany the movement of women who circulate with sweets, and in this way to consider the flows, travels, interactions and meanings of this activity in terms of relations of gender, labor and race. In most cases, the sale of their products is the main source of family income and their bodies are used as a vehicle and propaganda for the sweets.

1 "A piece of África in Colombia", this is how the local residents and the mass media evoke and refer to this community.

2 *Champeta* is a musical rhythm present since the 1960s in the Colombian Caribbean. It gained notoriety in regions with a strong black presence in the cities of Cartagena and Barranquilla, and in San Basilio de Palenque. The *champeta* is inspired by various African musical genres. This diasporic musical universe was, as emphasized by Claudia Mosquera and Marion Provenzal, "influenced by African music, the interpreters of the traditional Palenquera music created the creole *champeta* imitating the way of singing of Africans with their dialects and words in Spanish and in the Palenquera language" (Mosquera, Provenzal 2000:105). Luis Martínez also analyzed the genesis and historic development of the *champeta* in the identity processes found in San Basilio. His interest is in showing that behind this musical phenomenon of the *champeta*, "are hidden elements that in one way or another articulate the way of life of the Palenqueros. With the inclusion of this musical manifestation in the cultural archives of the Palenque they have been able to keep alive vital aspects of the culture like the musical tradition, the customs and the form of social organization in both the home town, and in the urban enters to which the Palenqueros arrived in search of new horizons" (Martínez 2011: 172).

3 *Palaganas*, *porcelana* and *poncheras* are synonyms used to refer to the aluminum basins that the black Palenquera women place on their heads.

The women who I will accompany come from San Basilio de Palenque,<sup>4</sup> a community located in the municipality of Mahates, in Bolívar state, Colombia, some sixty kilometers from the city of Cartagena de Indias, capital of the department<sup>5</sup> of Bolívar, which is part of the Colombia's Caribbean region. San Basilio de Palenque is a community founded by enslaved people who took refuge in the *palenques* on Colombia's northern coast since the sixteenth century. This grouping of black communities was pioneer in the first peace agreements in Colombia, and became converted into the first free black territory in America due to a mutual non-aggression agreement signed between the Spanish Crown and the local residents in 1713 (Arrazola 1970). In 25 November 2005, San Basilio de Palenque was placed on Unesco's list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and is important to the presence of Afrodescendants in Colombia.

Among the numerous Palenques existing during the colonial period (Navarrete 2003), San Basilio is the only one that remains (Cunin 2003). Local residents regularly refer to the epic deeds of Benkos Biohó, the great *cimarrón* leader and founding hero of the Palenqueros, who is revered as the person who led the village to freedom. Domingo Biohó, according to colonial authorities, arrived in Cartagena de Indias as a slave in the sixteenth century, having organized palenques, he shaped forms of military resistance and established the conditions and mechanisms for political negotiation with the colonial administration (Hernandez et al, 2008).

The ethnographic research in Palenque de San Basilio was conducted from September 2015 until June 2016, and included brief stays in the cities of Cartagena, Bucaramanga, Bogotá and Barranquilla<sup>6</sup>. I lived in San Basilio de Palenque for nine months with Flor María and her family<sup>7</sup>. My initial network of women developed mainly through my stay in Flor María's house in Palenque. She had spent years working with the sales of fruits and sweets, and through her I gradually gained access to her network of contacts. I thus came to speak, interact, circulate and interview mostly her nuclear family: mother, sisters, daughters, in-laws, daughter-in-law, friends and *comadres*.

It was not immediately easy to conduct field research with black women in a black community, even as a black woman - although my skin is less pigmented than the women with whom I worked. I felt an initial lack of trust towards my presence, for being an "outsider", young and single, who would remain in the community for nine months, triggering looks and sensations of suspicion. In this respect, one Palenquero man told me: "the theme of your research is not easy, it involves making a good first contact, the Palenquera women are not easy". I tried to carefully heed this advice during the work and be attentive to this process of approximation through which I should gain their trust.

In my initial contact with Palenquero men, they were quite helpful and attentive, the opposite of the situation with the women. Even during my preparations to arrive at the location, through contacts I had made while still in Brazil and Bogotá, the men were more accessible. In addition to cordiality and expressions of interest in my research and in helping, a number of times I felt I was the target of flirting that disturbed me. To protect myself in these situations, I would say that I had left a boyfriend in Brazil who would soon be visiting me in Colombia.

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4 San Basilio is the name of a saint. The older residents of the location prefer to call it San Basilio de Palenque, instead of Palenque de San Basilio. In the first form, the saint comes from the community and not the community from the saint. Nevertheless, it is realized that in recent decades black subjects and collectives have sought to give priority to the recognition of the Palenque, reviving the history of the *cimarronaje* found in this term. Among various authors, use of both names for the city is found. In this article I will respect both forms, and will alternate between only Palenque or San Basilio, and not the complete name.

5 Departments are the administrative-political regions into which Colombia is divided. The notion is equivalent to the concept of "state".

6 This article is part of the result of fieldwork conducted for a doctoral thesis in social anthropology defended in late 2018 at the Museu Nacional/UFRJ, under the supervision of professor María Elvira Díaz Benítez. The thesis, entitled "Doce, suor e lágrimas: trabalho, gênero e família em uma comunidade negra do Caribe colombiano (San Basilio de Palenque)", presents how race, gender and work are themes that are articulated in the life of black women residents of San Basilio de Palenque, showing how they produce their survival amid the context of poverty and deep social inequality.

7 This family includes her husband and four children. Most of the time the children were in the city of Cartagena, working or studying, and returned to the community on the weekends, with the exception of one of her sons who worked as a teacher in Palenque and lived with his paternal grandfather. All of the names included here are real and their use was authorized by the interlocutors.

I gradually sought to circulate less with the men who showed me important aspects of social organization in the community and were my first “guides”. For this reason, at the beginning of the field work, I decided to circulate with Flor María. Thus, the female universe opened up, with the dosage altered by time, affection and trust. Through Flor María it was possible to access her network of women, which included both the women in her family as well as the friends closest to her home. When I was presented to them, they expressed to me the receptivity and respect they offered Flor, which was crucial to conducting the study.

Over time, I gained the trust of these women, so much so that a few months later the people of the community referred to me as the “Brazilian-Palenquera”, denoting proximity. The women no longer saw me as a “mujercita” – a reference they use, usually in deprecation, to refer to non-Palenquera women – and I came to be called “hija”, “sobriña”, “niña”, [daughter, niece, little girl] especially towards the end of my fieldwork. Since my command of Spanish was weak, my initial concern and challenge was to be understood and to explain that I was there to conduct academic work about their work. This was an effort to not be confused with the various tourists who passed through daily.

My routine helped to inform my experience and affected me greatly, both subjectively and emotionally. In the morning I would conduct domestic activities in Flor’s house and then go to the street to interact with my interlocutors. I participated with them in shopping for their homes, family parties, religious ceremonies, funeral rituals, festivals in the local square, in their houses, their yards, and in the cities of Cartagena and Barranquilla. I helped to make sweets, I assisted in their production and sales. When going out for walks in the streets with them, I was responsible for handling the plastic stool they carried to support the basin of sweets. A few times while they were doing domestic chores, they asked me to take their place in the main square of Palenque selling their sweets to passing tourists.

During my stay in San Basilio de Palenque, I closely accompanied the work and sales routines of three women: Andrea Simarra and La Burgo, who sold their products during the week in Palenque; and Sol María, who sold her sweets on the weekends in Turbaco, which was 40 km from San Basilio. I also accompanied the routines of seven other Palenquera women for one month in the city of Bucaramanga, in Colombia’s Andean region, some 605 km away. The work routine began at home, or earlier, when they left for the neighboring towns to buy the ingredients for the sweets. It is the women who negotiate and buy the products needed to make the sweets.

I present readers my ponderations based on interviews about the paths taken by the interlocutors when they entered the universe of sweets, about the experience in the locations mentioned, combined with my reflections about relations of gender, race and work in this context.

By finding in the universe of sweets a social dignity, despite affirming and experiencing in their bodies the harmful health effects – that is, despite recognizing that working with sweets can kill, and makes them “slaves” – they expressed positive values and emotions about the work. While the sale of sweets can be interpreted as a form of labor that the women agency in contexts of poverty and within situations of inequality, socio-racial exclusion and limitations of education and employment, the work with sweets is also experienced by its agents as a mark of identity and a legacy that has been passed down for generations.

This reveals the ambivalences of the senses and meanings of the struggle for independent and informal work. This dual meaning of work with sweets permeates the descriptions presented in this article. This trade thus offers a marginal and ambiguous strategy that allows them to survive and promote their social mobility, above all through the material gains that they invest in the formal education of their children and of the sensation that this marginal strategy, although difficult, provides them autonomy and dignity.

There are various kinds of sweets. Within this broad universe I highlight *cocadas* (made from milk, coconut and sugar), *alegrías* (corn, coconut and *rapadura*), tamarind balls, *macaxeira* [manioc] cake, sesame sweets and papaya candy. Depending on the location where the products are presented there a certain sweet may predominate or be absent due to the demands and preferences of local consumers<sup>8</sup>.

**Figure 1:** The *Alegrías*



Photo by the author, 2016.

**Figure 2:** The sweets



Photo by the author , 2016.

<sup>8</sup> On the Colombian coast there is a preference for the *cocadas* and *alegrías*, in the Andean region they sell sweets in the form of a paste.

## Reports on beginnings

In the conversations with the Palenqueras I sought to map the beginning of their work with sweets and learned that their main economic activity was not always based on the production of the variety of sweets found today. It would not be possible here to offer precise historic data about each sweet in Palenquera cooking, but I sought to pay attention to the memory of the older people in the region. When I asked about this, I was told that sweets were always present in Palenque cooking, particularly the *alegrías* and the sweets that are made and consumed during Easter Week. The women with whom I spoke remembered that since they were young, sweets were part of family cooking, although their sale has taken place in the past six decades, because before this women were involved in other types of commercial activities, particularly the sale of fruits, fish, rice or root crops. Some of these products come from plantings in Palenque, raised by the men and sold by the women.

In the 1930s, the Palenquero men were traditionally farmers, and the women of the family (mother, wife, daughters, nieces), were responsible for selling products in the squares of the public markets of the cities near Palenque, such as: Cartagena, El Carmem, El San Juan, Mahates, Arjona, and Turbaco. In this decade, a group of nine women, some accompanied by husbands and children, particularly members of the Cañates family, migrated to Cartagena and dedicated themselves to the sale of products cultivated in the *monte*<sup>9</sup>, as the Palenquero historian Fredman Padilha told me in an interview (FREIRE,2018).

In terms of the work routine, the Palenquero men dedicated to farming left the home in early morning, just before sunrise. They went very early to the community agricultural area, by horse or on foot. The *monte* is a place where the work is done typically by men, who since a very young age are prepared to relate to this space as were their grandfathers, fathers, older brothers, other relatives or friends. The group would initiate seven- or eight-year-old boys to work in the fields, introducing them to the universe of adult masculinity and the public sphere. The tasks ranged from marking the harvest space, to planting and caring for crops, to the harvest and transport of products to people. In the care for livestock, the men built and repaired wire fences, cleaned the stalls, fed the animals, gave them vaccines, milked them, drove the cattle or led them to corrals and from the *monte* to the village.

The agricultural activities of men, generate economic resources from the sale of products and food resources for the family. There is a symbolic frontier, of action in the city and homes. When the products raised and harvested on the *montes* enter the city, they are the responsibility of women, who sell them or prepare them for the families to eat. The husbands contribute to the family income with their earnings from agricultural work. Some of them also work in civil construction, as masons, carpenters or their assistants. I saw various Palenquero men who live in Cartagena shining shoes at the *Plaza del Reloj* or working as bus drivers or fare collectors in the city. In Palenque, some work as local tourist guides or driving motorcycle-taxis, and some have small stands where they sell food and beer. The work of men fluctuates due to the few options and survival strategies. It should be considered that the contribution of the husband is very often irregular and at times not very significant compared to the contribution of the women, which comes from ongoing sale of sweets.

What I perceived in the gender relations seen in Palenque is that there is a reality of a formal economy on one hand, to which they have poor access to stable and well-paying work, which causes the Palenquero men and women to perpetually shift their types of work to guarantee survival. I believe that because the work of men is conducted in early morning and in the fields, it is less visible and public to the society in general. The work of the women, in contrast, is visible to the public and goes beyond the community to spread through the streets, squares and beaches of distant cities. It is their work that everyone sees or hears.

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9 The word *monte* refers to planting and caring for livestock in Palenque.

The commerce undertaken by black women is an important research theme in Caribbean studies. Mintz (1961;1971) analyzed the work of Haitian merchants in the markets of that country, addressing financial independence and the circulation of women peddlers. Haitian markets drew attention from a few generations of anthropologists during the twentieth century, from Herskovits (1952), Bastien (1951) and Mintz (1959; 1961; 1971; since the 1940s and 1950s; to Woodson (1978) in the 1970s and 1980s (Silveira 2009). The systematic study of these spaces – which stands out in Mintz’ work for its pioneering and influential nature – characterized as dedicated to the exchange and circulation of objects, services and people, brought important contributions to economic anthropology and studies about commerce. Mintz’s work highlighted the central role occupied by women in these spaces; the mechanisms of negotiation used in the exchanges – such as bargaining – and client relations, the so-called “pratik”, a market constituted from non-economic relations, such as personal relations and kinship. However, the work of Silveira (2009) affirms that if we analyze the Haitian markets as spaces that are related and structurally connected to the universe around them, we see that more than being specific characteristics of the markets, the independence and autonomy of the women-merchants is another variation of the relations of interdependence that give structure to genders and spaces within a certain social universe. It can be said that the markets, more than only female spaces, although they are, are locations of opposition and complementarity between genders.

Returning to the case of the women Palenquera peddlers, their commercial activities in the city of Cartagena began in the 1930s, in the city’s old market, where a Convention Center is now located. In this space, the women sold fruits and vegetables. Since the 1970s, other groups of women circulated as peddlers among different neighborhoods. In the 1980s, they also sold and circulated on the beaches of Cartagena de Índias, especially in those with more tourists: Playa Blanca, La Bonquilla and Bocagrande, which were and continue to be a scene of sales of fruits and sweets, and of other work opportunities for Palenquera women, such as offering massages to tourists or braiding hair.

I observed that the initiation in peddling for each woman took place at different moments in life for different motivations, but it can be affirmed that the main desire was and continues to be a search for economic resources and thus to improve the quality of personal and family life. The women commonly began work when they were still young, either single, already married or even pregnant. In addition to responding to a search for income and means for survival for most of them, among younger women today peddling sweets offers an opportunity to invest in schooling, and pays for their university studies, whether at private or public schools. The younger and single women also work to help their mothers.

Dona Antônia Márquez, 91, the mother of Flor María, belongs to the group of women who sold products coming from the plantings outside of Palenque. The mother of eleven children, she began to sell products that her husband raised in the fields: “my husband had his crops and I sold what he brought me”. They sold corn, rice, taro, cassava, banana, guava, sapota and sesame. With the earnings she bought other articles that were not produced in Palenque, like salt and butter.

In the 1970s, when the trip to the neighboring cities was made by bus, it was called the *bus de las mujeres*, because of the many Palenquera women who took the route. It was the only vehicle to make the trip, leaving Palenque at 4am and running through a region that was at times unpassable due to the poor roads and the rainy season. As Nilson Salgado emphasized:

And it was not possible because in the winter you could not reach the community, because the road was bad, so the people had to use burros to bring the loads in the early morning for the women to take to Malagana, because there was a bus that came in the summer. This bus was the prime means of transport for the sale of yucca, taro, platanos, rice and the fruits from Palenque, sold by the women in neighboring villages and in Cartagena (Salgado 2011:26).

Flor María Márquez, 57, married, mother of four children and who has two grandchildren, who was mentioned at the beginning of this article, is a black woman of average height, with stocky arms and legs that makes it difficult for her to walk. Flor often had swollen feet due to circulatory problems, as well as a recent knee surgery in response to her worn kneecaps because she is overweight. Because of these characteristics, the people of Palenque call her the “la gorda” [the fat one]. She is a member of a group of women who began circulating in neighboring towns, and then in other more distant Colombian cities, and in her case, even in Venezuela. She now often sells homemade cakes in the square of Palenque, or to meet orders of her “comadres”, that are simpler and easier to make, she says. She began to work when she was 14, to help her mother. At this age, she went to work in Barranquilla, a city on the Colombian coast, some 170 km from her community: “I wasn’t married, I did it to help my mother with my other siblings, then I went to Venezuela, there I sold sweets and then sold avocados, apples, pears and *nísperos*” (Flor María, 2016). She began peddling to help her mother, then, when she was married, continued for her children. The sale of sweets was accompanied by that of fruits.

The practice of selling various types of sweets arose between the 1980s and ‘90s. The *alegrías* were mainly made in the summer, from January until April, when corn was ready for harvest, given that it is the main ingredient. The activities began with the monthly harvest and when the corn was gone they made *cocadas*, *enyucados* (*macaxeira* or cassava cakes) and papaya sweets.

A number of women reported that they began peddling through relations among family members and neighbors. The preparation and sale of sweets can involve mothers, aunts, cousins, grandmothers, and *comadres*. When a Palenquera woman goes to a certain region, others would await her return so she could tell them about the difficulties and successes of the sales process, instigating or discouraging possible sales routes, as is the case of Catalina Herazo, who I will present below. Each of the narratives of women about their beginning with sweets involves reports of networks and actions of solidarity among them and reveals a web of affections and responsibilities in which women advise women, in which women teach women and in which women take other women by the hand along sales strategies and paths.

Catalina Herazo, 56, is a friend and neighbor of Flor María, a mother of six children, and separated. She lives in Palenque with two children and a grandson; her other children live in Cartagena, a city in which she began peddling with the sale of fruits, after the birth of her first daughter. Her experience, as that of many others, revealed that it is common for women to begin peddling when they are already married or when they have their first child, that is, a family becomes an important reason to begin peddling.

Catalina also sells fruit salad on the beach of Bocagrande in Cartagena throughout the month of January, which is a good time for sales because of the many tourists and is taken advantage of by the Palenqueras. Eighteen years ago she stopped working with fruit to dedicate herself to sweets, and explained why: “it is good, because there are times when the fruits are scarce and when fruit is scarce, it is more expensive and one does not earn much” (Catalina, 2016). She would buy fruits in the market of Cartagena and then go out to sell them in different neighborhoods. At a certain moment, one of her neighbors decided to sell sweets in the city of Bucaramanga, “a number of women had already gone to Bucaramanga”, then her good friend Flor María went together and upon returning encouraged her to go on the next trips. “A time came when I became excited about the sweets”, Catalina said.

The *Palenquera* women use a series of strategies to sell their products. Wearing multicolored clothing, the form of display and colors of the sweets in the aluminum basin, play, dance, singing, smiling, jokes and certain phrases compose the universe of strategies that facilitate the sale of products, which I will mention and that I call appeals. This is because they are phrases that appeal, invite, incite and call attention to the purchasing public. They are persuasive sales strategies.

The phrases such as “¿No me quieres? [Don’t you want me] ¡Venga a comprar de la negrita que está caminando en el sol caliente! [Come buy from the black girl walking in the hot sun]” or even “¡Aleegreen-se!” [Enjoy yourself] are key statements in the interactions between peddlers and clients.

The phrase “¿No me quieres?” [Don’t you want me] is generally used for possible male clients. While “¡Venga a comprar de la negrita que está caminando en el sol caliente!” is used so a potential client will have pity on the condition of this women who walks for hours in the hot sun, carrying a very heavy load. And another, more commonly used in the streets of Palenque, Turbaco and Cartagena, as I mentioned, is “¡Aleegreen-se!” [Enjoy yourself]. Some of these phrases have a certain poetry in their expression. Sol María often uses part of a phrase that is known among those who sell in Cartagena: “Alegría con coco y aní, casera, cómpreme a mí, que vengo del barrio Getsemaní [a neighborhood in Cartagena]” [Homemade happiness with coconut and anise. Buy from me, from Getesemani].

There are also phrases with dual meanings, like; “¿Mi amor, que vas a comprar?” [My love, what will you buy?] and the complement: [My love, what will you suck?], or “le traigo el redondo, el grande y el peludo, no se burle niña, yo hablo del coco”. [I bring you the big, round and furry one, don’t make fun girl, I’m talking about coconut]. And they also profess that, by buying a certain type of sweet, the “activity at home” (a sexual connotation) will improve. This dual meaning demonstrates the humor of the statements, and expresses and effort to create empathy with possible buyers. We can say that each one of these phrases has the effect of creating relations, which may be ephemeral and circumstantial, but which are effective in that they allow interactions with strangers and in some cases increase sales.

In the city of Cartagena de Indias I found a higher presence of black women using colorful dresses selling fruits or *cocadas*. The dresses are predominantly yellow, red and blue - the colors of the Colombian flag. These dresses and turbans are distinctive corporal marks of black women, as they are seen in public spaces, above all the streets. The other *Palenqueras* who work in neighboring towns and in distant cities, use shorts and blouses with or without sleeves, an apron on their waist and sandals.

There is a belief among the *Palenqueras* that if they count the number of sweets they produce, their sales will not be successful, so “they don’t know for sure” how many are made and sold. The “not knowing for sure” about how many *cocadas* are made tells us that the concern is for earning what is essential to return home. It is not a concern that focuses on high profit, but on immediate profit, in the present, on what it is viable to earn at the time, because the next day more *cocadas* will be made. In addition to an economic equation, their work seeks to sustain relations. In this sense, the monthly income from sales can vary considerably. It is possible to earn from 500 thousand pesos (or less) per month to 1.500.000<sup>10</sup>, when the demand is high, depending on the location, month, clients and strategies used.

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<sup>10</sup> 1.000 pesos Colombianos (COP) is equivalent to R\$1,50 (em reais, BRL) in August 2019.

**Figure 3:** In front, Andrea Simarra, in the background, La Burgo. Palenque.



Photo by the author, 2015

The sales allow buying domestic goods for home, food products and clothes, as well as paying the costs of their children's college. The use of money is broad, or as the anthropologist Federico Neiburg said "people continue to experience the social world through ordinary categories" when using their money (Neiburg 2007:122). Money in the broad sense of the term will allow access "to that which the person wants or believes is positive for themselves and their family" (Sautu 2011: 65). Economic decisions are often made through monetary and social evaluations based on the common conditions of the group. For example, considering the payment of university fees, the "choice" of investing in one and not another course at a public university is determined by the budget available budget for this expense and the cost of a course.

When I was in the city of Bucaramanga, one night there was a discussion in our house about the daughter of a peddler who wanted to go to medical school. The women said that the course was too expensive to be supported by selling *cocadas* and recommended that the mother encourage her child to choose another more viable course. I remember that they suggested nursing or social service courses, which they said would have low costs. Specific reasonings are used to set family budgets that negotiate meanings of money and evaluate destinies.

## From *alegrías* to the slavery of sweets: meanings of work

In an attempt to analyze the notion of work expressed in the statements of my interlocutors, I sought to expand the notion presented by Sidney Mintz, an author who raises a few aspects for considering this category: work as a means of giving meaning to life, and work as a source of pride and self-esteem for the individual (Mintz 2010). I will conduct the discussion based on the aspects mentioned above.

I also seek to consider the meaning of work, its representations, as well as these women's idealizations about the meaning of liberty and autonomy, based on the sale of sweets. The question is: how do the Palenqueras feel about their work? How is their trade experienced and perceived?

The work activity and sales of sweets are exhausting. I was able to accompany a trip to work in another city other than San Basilio when it was possible to perceive that the women only rest their physical bodies when sleeping. But the work is also intense for those who peddle in Palenque and who circulate in neighboring towns, beginning with the preparation of sweets, followed by the exhausting sales trips. To walk long distances for seven or more hours, often under intense sunlight or under rain and cold, supporting up to dozens of kilos on their heads, brings suffering to the body and requires discipline to support the daily marathon.

I heard from them that the work is a tradition of Palenque that has been passed on by family members, and that for decades women have worked in this way. It is certain that, a few decades ago changes occurred in the way of making the sweets, with the use of gas instead of wood stoves in certain places, for example. The women say that the sale of sweets has allowed them to buy appliances for their homes, such as stoves, refrigerators, televisions, clothes and shoes for the children, food and personal hygiene products; restore their homes or build new rooms. Their main source of pride was that, with this work, it was possible to "support the family and children".

Due to the experience working with sweets and based on their statements, I was able to enter a universe in which the idea persists that this is a painful and difficult trade, but that is it compensated for and becomes satisfactory to the degree that they can attain some success, from the opportunity to have an income and buy basic goods, such as vegetables and packages of macaroni, to the possibility that a member of the family, mainly their children, can go to college. The objective of this text is to reflect on a type of autonomous activity that can lead to physical exhaustion. When and how do these women act when freedom and autonomy depend on a field with limited opportunities? Liberty and autonomy were founding principles for the formation of black communities, such as that of Palenque. How does this sentiment and desire to be free and autonomous in their actions gain depth in the relations that guide their work?

Nevertheless, the complaints about the work accumulate gradually, and it is later affirmed that the domesticated and disciplined suffering experienced can also lead to moments of personal satisfaction. Based on Mintz (2010), we can reflect on what it means to work at the level of human exhaustion and to understand how they are able to perceive that a type of work may be deadly, and nevertheless return to this practice to survive and bring dignity to it. In Mintz's words:

I hope that they do not think that I intend to glorify the effect on the human spirit of the physically exhausting toil under terrible conditions. No one should have to work like these people worked – and in certain parts of the Caribbean region, must still work. Instead, I intend to comment on how the human spirit survives and transforms these abuses, by remaining human (...) People are able to extract meaning from their acts; they can have pleasure in their work, even when it is demanding and difficult work from a physical perspective. And they can do this in the modern world, if the work they do is seen by them as socially valuable (Mintz 2010: 64-65).

Below, I present some fragments of what these black women indicate about their work with sweets. “This is work that kills you”, affirmed Sol María, 50, who is separated, and the mother of three children, adding: “the sales help to buy materials and eat, nothing more. But it is done because it is tradition and nothing more. Need forces you to do the work, but it is work that kills. The hands hurt. It is hard work”. In turn, La Burgo, 54, married, and the mother of four children, said: “this is an inheritance that I am also leaving to my children. When they do not have any work anywhere, they turn to this”.

La Burgo corroborates Sol to a certain degree by mentioning that the trade comes from a tradition, a family inheritance that has been perpetuated and proliferated for generations by the women of Palenque. She also highlights that it is an activity that can be undertaken when there is no other type of paid work. Meanwhile, Sol María constantly emphasizes that this is work that can kill those who undertake it, verbalizing the consequences that are felt and experienced in the body of black Palenquera women.

Lucia Helena, 45, married, has a daughter, and is a peddler who works in the city of Bucaramanga. She commented: “it is independent work, you are the owner of your own business”. Josefa Hernández, 28, single, with no children, who previously worked with her mother and then alone to pay her college course in political science, is now a political scientist and no longer sells sweets, said something similar to Lucia Helena about being owner and conductor of her own work, including the control over the days she works: “like here it’s very hard, you are your own boss, if one day you don’t want to go, you don’t go. And I did that, on a day I didn’t want to go, I didn’t”. She also expresses a familiar concern about the sales:

Because I worry about the fact that selling sweets is too hard, to prepare the sweets and then when they are ready, to go out and sell them in the street, to walk for hours. So I am concerned about this because my mother has high blood pressure. Then I immediately began to work, I told her not to continue, she keeps insisting and said she does not like to do nothing, and I say no Mommy, no. Now, fortunately, she no longer does it. (Josefa Hernández, Palenque, 2016).

Catalina Herazo emphasized the notion of exhaustion and the approximation of the work with servitude and dependence:

With the sweets, we are slaves to the work, slaves to the sweets. You have to spend all your time grating coconut, cutting papaya...It is hard work, very hard because you get up with the same thing and go to bed with the same thing, doing the same thing. It is not like other jobs that you go out; you go out to win a daily battle. You go, and when you come home from a day of ironing it’s over and that’s it. You know that with sweets that when you arrive you have to break coconut because if not there won’t be enough time in the morning and you’ll be very late; there is one that you start at night and finish making [the next] day.(Catalina Herazo, Palenque, 2016).

Contudo, Yosaín, 36, married, with two children, indicated another place that this work has in the imaginary of the Palenqueras: “Well, thanks to this I know a good part of Colombia, that is, it is very beautiful. I am one of the Palenqueras who took photos of the places that I worked. It was all very beautiful”.

There are different concepts about what the work offers or offered in the comments of Catalina and Yosaín. The expressive statements of Catalina associates her work to slave labor, in which a woman is a hostage to the products she sells, a hostage to the arduous and intensely taxing work routine. Yosaín, sees in the universe of the sweets an opportunity to visit and admire other Colombian cities, which shows the relation that the work has to circulating and traveling in other geographic, social and economic contexts.

Catalina, upon comparing her work to that of slavery, brings to the analysis the thoughts of Angela Davis (2016 [1981]), who raised essential questions:

As a layperson, I can only propose some tentative ideas that may guide a reexamination of the history of black women during slavery. (...) The enormous space that work occupies today in the life of black women reproduces a standard established during the first years of slavery (...) Apparently, however, the starting point of any exploration of the life of black women in slavery would be an evaluation of their role as workers (Davis 2016: 24).

The role of black women as workers often confines them to situations of physical exhaustion. All of the women with whom I interacted during the study have some infirmity caused by years of work and its conditions. “Walking like crazy carrying the sun and the earth”, was the way Flor María described her work: “walking a lot to sell, walking to one street and another, walking and walking. For this reason, I am exhausted”.

The effect of this, as indicated is physical exhaustion. Flor also had difficulty walking because she is overweight. She stopped selling sweets about four years ago, and at times makes simple cakes to sell in the square of San Basilio or if someone makes an order. I regularly saw her shake her hands and I asked what she felt. She said that her hands no longer “serve” very well. She felt pain and numbness because of the repetitive movement of mixing the pot to prepare the sweets, and suffered from varicose veins. When she sat down, she always “rested” her swollen legs on a bench. When she was working in Venezuela, in São Felix, still young and eager, she walked through many neighborhoods, that were very hilly, just up and down. Finally, when her legs couldn’t take any more, she worked seated, and the cars passed and the passengers bought from her because they knew where she was selling from and would go there. When she began to feel pain, she asked her companions to buy the ingredients for the sweets; she said that she no longer went to the market to shop because she was very tired and at times this bothered her colleagues. Sometime later, she stopped traveling.

When we were on the trip to Bucaramanga, at night, when it was time to sleep, Catalina, while lying down on a thin mattress at my side, complained of back pain: “oh child, I have great pain in my back”. She spent a lot of time massaging her own back, legs and hips and before going out for a day of work took a pill to prevent muscle pain. The parts of her body that suffered most are the hands, legs, head and back. At some time of life, having worked many or just a few years, some of these effects on the body appear. The women suffer momentary numbness in the hands, have pains in their knees, feet and legs, headaches, at times in their necks, spinal column; and if they cook on a wood stove, the smoke can be blinding and cause respiratory problems.

When they are in other cities they often self-medicate before sleeping and at times before going out to the street take medications such as paracetamol, anti-inflammatories and muscle relaxants that promise to relieve pain. When I was in Bucaramanga I took these medications twice on the weekend, because these are the days of the most intense walking. The rest for the body only comes when sleeping, and at times, they can only sleep by taking medication.

Josefa explains the pains caused by work with the *ponchera*:

Yes, of the knees, the backbone, for some head[aches] are very strong. It’s that you have to work with heat, then wet your hands, you eat poorly because although you have money and buy food it’s not like you sit down to lunch and digest. No, you are running, with one hand you do one thing and the other something else and have to leave like this. It’s the same at night you eat while you are doing something else, it’s a very fast pace, there’s no rest. (Josefa Hernández, Palenque, 2016).

What is hoped for here is to reflect on a type of autonomous activity that approaches physical exhaustion. Being a “slave to the sweets”, to go beyond the metaphor, updates a history of struggle for autonomy and liberty that has as a background the political-historical process since slavery and that was reinvented by the diaspora. Although it is exhausting work, spaces of autonomy and liberty are found from the simple fact that they do not have to work for someone else and can administer their own money, deciding how to spend and invest it, which gives these women a status as owners of their own destiny. It is through their hands that comes the source of family income. It is through these black hands that entire families are supported, fed and educated.

The work for the Palenquera women who sell sweets is experienced as a synonym for struggle, autonomy, pain, resilience, strength, respect, independence and family legacy. It is, in the sphere of commerce, in the sale of foods, that these black women seek to obtain dignity. They feel valuable and as contributors to the family and community by executing the trade, even if it is physically and mentally exhausting. The work is a way to feel active. Since they were children, the work was a determinant in the organization of their lives and of their very existence and thus gives meaning to them. We see that the body gets ill: it is work that can kill, because it is heavy activity, that requires muscular strength and repetitive movements, predominantly physical strength. For this reason, the women complain of muscle pain, injuries, osteo-articular diseases, back problems. The time of the sweets occurs in the time of illness, it is not by chance that when they return home after long stays away they visit the only local health clinic, where they are medicated and are almost always told to do physical therapy.

It is work that makes them ill, but that is valued as a strategy of social autonomy for themselves and a guarantee of social mobility for their children. The Afro-American sociologist Winnifred Brown-Glaude (2011) affirmed that an international standard evolved in informal economies, and the poor black women who come to occupy these economies develop creative forms of “earning a living” that provide them a way to establish autonomy and guarantee a future for their families. Looking at the Brazilian reality, the place of black women in the labor market is demarcated in the ghetto of subalternization and the realization of manual activities (Bento 1995).

Some of the Palenqueras have worked as domestic housemaids. When they refer to this work in houses of families, there is a suggestion of aversion and repulsion. The person who worked the most time as a housemaid among the women who I met was Flor María, who spent about ten years working for a family in Cartagena, with whom she traveled to the United States when she was young and had no husband or children. Ismênia worked as a housemaid for seven years in Rioacha, the capital of the department of Guajira, in Colombia. This was an interval in her life that she had grown tired of the work selling *cocadas*.

Bernadina, when referring to domestic work said that she tried it at a certain time of her life when she was young and did not have children or a husband: “once I had a crazy idea and went to Cartagena to work in the house of a family”. To work in the house of a family is not an option that is desired, it’s better to work as a “slave to the sweets” than to work taking orders from other people. Work in the home of a family takes place when they are young and still not married, and usually are experiences of a short period within the universe of women with whom I worked. They are moments, as Bernada said, of a fantasy “a crazy idea...” Thus, they do not see working as housemaids as an acceptable work opportunity.

I heard similar thinking during the fieldwork for my dissertation with youth in *quilombola* communities in Rio Grande do Norte. When I asked one of my research collaborators, a young black *quilombola* resident about work as a house maid, she charged: “I won’t work in the house of a family, no!”. And youth from the *quilombola* community of Capoeiras said that “working in the house of a family” is precisely something they want to avoid when they set their personal projects (Freire 2012).

### **Looking at the map: blazing trails in the country**

On a warm Saturday afternoon in San Basílio in front of Flor Maria’s house, I sat down to speak with Josefa Hernández, who told me of her experience with the universe of sweets. In addition to reporting on her family trajectory with this type of work, she indicated that the travel of Palenquera women to cities far from Palenque took place by looking at the map of Colombia, that is *mirar en el mapa* initiates the movement of blazing trails through the country. Josefa said:

So then they began to leave, some even left not knowing where they would go because they did not know the interior of the country, for example, so they began to look at the map. Look at the map! [Expressing surprise]. The first city that they began to go to was Bucaramanga. When they began to go to Bucaramanga I said, huh! It's so far, Bucaramanga is far. Because, that is, they had never gone beyond Cartagena, Barranquilla and the communities close by, then the first group went to Bucaramanga and then from there began to go to nearby cities. (Josefa Hernández, interview, Palenque, 2016).

The capitals of the departments of Colombia serve as starting point for exploring the nearby cities: if the women were in Bucaramanga, they could also explore the interior of the department of Santander, traveling to Barrancabermeja, Floridablanca or Carmen, which is two hours from Bucaramanga. They also came to work in other countries, like Venezuela, in the cities of Caracas, Barquisimeto, Ojeda, Bachaquero, San Félix, Mérida and Maracaibo (on the border between Colombia and Venezuela), and in Ecuador they worked in Quito (the capital) and in Imbabura.

**Map 1.** Sweet Paths



Source: digital library, adapted by the author, 2018

Their pioneering trajectories through Colombian cities are also influenced by the eating habits and health practices of the clients. When the sweets arrive in a new location they usually stir curiosity because they are a novelty, causing sales to flow. But after years of consuming sweets, doctors' warnings begin to be felt, and health concerns can limit sales. When I was walking with them I would often hear someone say: "not today, my doctor doesn't allow it", or "the doctor said that I can't eat more sweets", often regular customers. It is clear that these declarations can be used as friendly justifications to decline purchasing sweets on a day they simply do not feel like having them, while being polite to the peddlers who they have known for some time.

In these situations, they say the sale is *dañada* [damaged], and when this happens they look for other consumers; in this search for new clients, they broaden the territorial scope of the work:

When sales become damaged, you had to go far away[...] the sales were not the same there, everyone had sugar [diabetes], they didn't want to eat sweets, and so sales dropped. I left to expand the sweets to other places that did not know them, so we became nomads. Today we are here, tomorrow in Palenque, or if I don't want to come here, I go to Montería, I go to Sincelejo and so on (Bernada Hernández, interview, Bucamanga, 2016).

Bernada's words, "*we became nomads, today we are here, tomorrow in Palenque*", reflects the quality of this movement. When sales become weak, the women must explore other cities that they do not know, cities with climates, people, resources and logics different from their own, cities that are mostly urban, that are very different from the reality they live in San Basilio. They gradually entered large cities, small ones, neighborhoods, villages, they were spreading out:

Well, the first time I worked was in Cauca. The first time that I left, I left with a sister-in-law and a friend who took me to Cauca [Antioquia]. Well, I was there for a month. When we began to leave for other places one wouldn't stay for a month, we would go for 15 days, for 20 days. The product sold because the people did not know it. Well we earned money and then soon we would leave because we didn't have money to stay, so we bought clothes, shoes for the children, a bit of food, and we left, but then it also became damaged there.

So I went to Cauca, from Cauca I went to Sincelejo, from Sincelejo I went to Montería, from Montería I went to Tierra Alta which is in the department of Córdoba, I was also in Ibagué. I had to go to Venezuela, in Venezuela I lasted about four years but it wasn't stable like here, coming and going (Bernada Hernández, interview, Bucaramanga, 2016).

**Figure 4:** Bernada and her omnipresent *poncheira*. Centro, Bucaramanga.

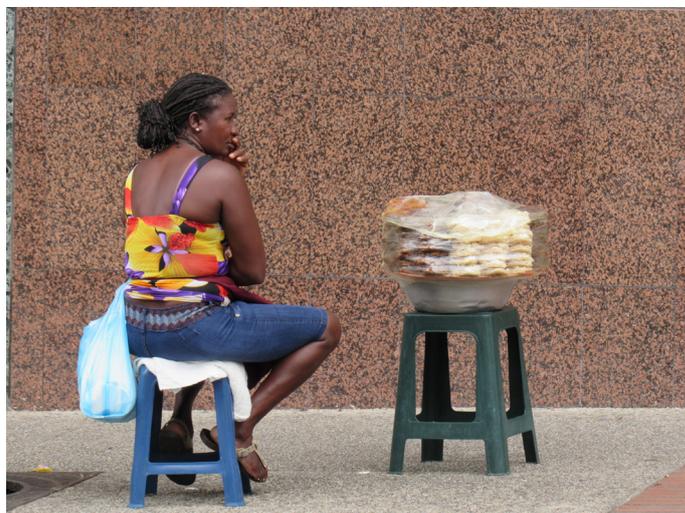


Photo by the author, 2016.

The trips to other regions of the country are not taken alone, they are taken with other companions, who may be relatives, friends or companions. As Yosáin said, “we always leave in a group, in a group of women, we never, never, never go alone”. One of the first actions when they arrive in these locations is to look for a home to rent, that has space for a few woman and basic facilities. Then they try to find out where the commercial center of the city is. In this way they explore the possible locations for sales and look for future suppliers of ingredients. They do the work of learning about the territory by asking the local residents where they can rent a house, where it is possible to buy ingredients in large quantities for a good price. They recall that looking for a place to stay is difficult work that does not always yield immediate results. Looking for a place to rent on foot, often “scared” the residents of the neighborhood; strangers, mostly white, who do not understand what a group of black women is doing knocking on the door. “We go out a lot knocking on the houses of people to see if they will rent a house. Some are scared because we are seven women arriving together. Many people made fun of us, discriminated against us and joked about us”, said Flor María. If they do not find a place to stay, some women sleep in the city bus station.

Each house is rented by four to eight women, a number that can shift up or down. Usually the houses are located in peripheral neighborhoods of the city. When I accompanied one of these groups, the house where we stayed was in a poor neighborhood of Bucaramanga, but was strategically located in a region central to daily movements. To the right of the house where we lived was the house of the owner of our house, and in front of the two residences was a stairway that connected with other houses. Also on our side there was a Catholic Church parish. On the corner of the “house of the Palenqueras” we found a small shop and in front there was a main street where we usually took taxis to get around. In the last five years, some husbands have traveled with their wives.

Upon leaving Palenque, those who had some money and initial products took what they could like manioc, corn and coconut, essential ingredients for beginning production. They also take the utensils needed to make the sweets like pans, knives, spoons, basins and wooden boards. The first trips are permeated by uncertainty, sacrifice and courage, and a constant desire to return home remains on the horizon. The tranquility of life in Palenque is left behind for a busy life in the cities. Josefa recalls that on her first trip to the city of Barrancabermeja (department of Santander) she scratched the walls to mark the days left until she would return to the village. “But there is always one time that from the first moment when you arrive you are thinking of the day you will return. I remember that the first time that I went I scratched the wall counting the days until I would go back”. Her routine as a student at the time, strongly contrasted with the work routine, in her words it was, “very hard, so I obviously I missed the peacefulness of Palenque”.

The need to leave is, in principle, a question of social and material survival, because they envision that the sale of sweets outside of their region can offer a better opportunity to earn money. But to leave is also a question of social mobility, which will be felt through the children. The circulation of these women to other regions is related to their children’s entrance to university.

Twenty years ago it could be said that the boom of the Palenqueros and Palenqueras began so more could go to university. So obviously, the sweets sold here were only enough for food but not for the children’s studies. So they began to leave (Josefa Hernández, Palenque, interview, 2016).

Time is precious and valuable on a sales trip. They know precisely how many days of work and what efforts are needed to return with a better financial situation than when they left. Catalina said: “you never return as you left”, an affirmation that has various meanings. A first is related to money and the articles purchased during the stay at a location. The second, no less obvious, concerns the experience and knowledge acquired on a trip that is transformative on various levels. The third is a reference to the process of very fast adaptation in a distinct context: they are no longer the heads of their households and despite the sisterhood,

the living with other women, in precarious material and spatial conditions, inevitably generates conflicts, fights and disputes. Waking up at 5 in the morning to continue the work of the night before; washing and eating quickly to go out and sell; the weather in the new city that may be hot or cold, depending on the altitude; everything contrasts with life in San Basilio de Palenque. The exhausting daily work requires skills to deal with the dangers of the streets: assaults, harassment, prejudice. It requires subtlety in dealing with clients, and with prejudiced neighbors, to deal with the exchange of services with men who temporarily pass through their houses. The use of time in this sense is crucial. This time is variable according to the objectives and availability of each one. The minimum time in another location is usually 15 to 20 days; but the period can extend to 3-4 months, and there are rare cases of women who reside in a city permanently. Catalina, when she was ready to begin a new trip, recalled: “When I am about to travel, I have soul (*yo tengo alma*)”. “To have soul,” in this sense is to have courage, strength, energy, to be imbued with an interior strength that is energizing but that is combined with sadness.

I had to do it, I go very sadly, and with much pain. But at times I have to tighten my heart that day and I go, I go. At times I say, I know how to say it: I go because I want to get away from this stress, because I feel like I am between a rock and a hard place. Because on the days that I am about to travel I don't eat well, or sleep well (Catalina Herazo, interview, Palenque, 2016).

To be stuck between a rock and a hard place reflects the feeling on the days before a trip, the tension that even affects eating and sleeping. The tension is relieved in this case by leaving, circulating, traveling. For Catalina, the lack of money is an incentive, because the amount she saved on the last trip was gone weeks ago, her daughter is not working regularly, and the money that her other children send her is not enough.

Flor María comments: “When I would leave to peddle, I cried, I left my children and cried, I cried the whole way, because they were so young, it hurt me, and I would cry.” The emotion in this statement reveals the duality of the work: on one hand it is necessary to guarantee resources for the children, on the other, in name of the “responsibility”, of being a mother these women need to momentarily “renounce” the functions of the nomenclature in the sense of physical presence. This is how these women continue to be read as brave peddlers who spread through the interior of Colombian cities and neighboring countries, becoming, through this process, nomadic, fearless, exhausted workers.

## Final considerations

In this article I examined the work of black women from San Basilio de Palenque, in Colombia's Caribbean region, following the routines demanded by their work. By circulating with these women and accompanying their work trajectory I was able to enter a universe that confers to my interlocutors simultaneous sensations of satisfaction and exhaustion. It was through these ambiguous repertoires of satisfaction and exhaustion in relation to the work that they are able to reverse historic situations of discrimination and economic disadvantage.

The Palenquera women go out to public spaces, to the streets, to sell products, while Palenquero men often stay in the community raising taro, manioc, maintain the crops and take care of cattle in the *monte* and then their butchering. Their work is silent and less visible to the eyes of outsiders, whether of tourists or residents of other locations. I emphasized that these are distinct and demarcated forms of work, which confer to the group an image of a black community sustained mainly or solely by the work of women. I began by recognizing the work done by men in the community and the importance that the male work has for maintenance of family life. Nevertheless, I opted to direct my gaze more attentively to the place of the work of the women who sell sweets in the *Palenquera* families, accompanying its consequences. I considered the *Palenquera* women as administrators

of a creative economy, agreeing with philosopher María Lugones (2008) that the division of labor is completely racialized and geographically differentiated. At the heart of the complex socio-economic and racial reality of the context studied – but also of countless places with the presence of people from the African diaspora – black women continue to be responsible for the family, as mothers, educators, under-employed urban workers and informal peddlers. Sharing the ideas of Andrea Delgado (1999), who portrayed the memory and work of sweet makers in the city of Goiás, Brazil, these women negotiate their role within the family to the degree that they transform their work into the main source of income, making their activities the center of family projects.

Among these initiatives, I emphasize that working with the *cocadas* is a reality that is extremely difficult for most of the women involved. Despite the hardships, the trade is also valued, considering the perception that working with sweets means it is not necessary to work for another person. As owners of their own business, the pace of work is conducted and determined more or less individually.

The data from the fieldwork allow affirming that although female labor is seen as a means to provide subsistence in the realm of the family responsibilities of women, the obtention of monetary income is also valued by the women because it allows attaining autonomy and economic and social power. Thus, the work is increasingly valued as a strategy for social autonomy for the women and a guarantee of social mobility for their children. According to Afro-American sociologist Winnifred Brown-Glaude (2011) an international standard has evolved in the form of informal economies, and poor black women engaged in informal economies develop creative ways to “earn a living” providing a means by which they can establish their autonomy and guarantee a future for their families.

The movement to other states of Colombia and to neighboring countries, such as Venezuela, gives these women a broader vision of the world, different from that of their husbands and other family members. They become agents of their daily actions. To paraphrase Pakistani anthropologist Saba Mahmood: agency is not simply a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but a capacity for action that is created and made possible by concrete and historically configured relations of subordination (Mahmood 2006:123). Mahmood identifies a positive discourse about being in and inhabiting the world, in search of forms of acting within an adverse environment. Although the work is hard, the women are able to decide where to go and how long to stay, and choose when they want a brief rest. This also relates to a question raised by Anne McClintock (2010): what are the opportunities for agency in contexts of extreme social inequality? The opportunities for possible agency are constructed by mapping routes, paths and trajectories already faced by other women, given a limited range of options. It is knowing that friends and family were successful in this effort that they go out each day in the universe of the street where they eat, work, sleep from exhaustion, and establish relations that allow them to stay in another city. These include relations with people in the location where they circulate and relations among themselves, relations of care, solidarity, affinities, disagreements and affection.

In the narratives about work, they find in the universe of sweets a dignity in the trade. Although they affirm and experience in their bodies that this work can kill, they attribute positive values to the exercise of the work, which reveals the incongruities of feelings and meanings involved in the struggle for interdependent and informal work. As Anne McClintock (2010) indicated, it is at the crossroads of contradictions that strategies for change are found. I emphasize that *Palenquera* women have an important economic role in the commercial circulation of agricultural production, because they are the ones who sell the produce raised by their husbands. They are the ones who go into the *calle* [street] to sell the products and who assume decisive roles in the socio-economic organization of the domestic units.

The women learn to recognize, for example, the locations that can be most profitable for sales (middle class residential neighborhoods, commercial centers) and the most propitious times. The success of sales also depends on these factors. And on the personality of each woman, on a good strong voice for announcing the products, persuasive sales strategies, dresses that call attention, and appealing calls with dual meanings.

Reflecting on the meaning of work as an affective structure that is ripe with meaning, a trade that can cause suffering, as described by Catalina, who became a *slave to the sweets*, can also be transformed in pleasure because of the opportunity it provides to use their skills and provide individual liberties. It is a trade that can transform them into protagonists in the historic maintenance of themselves and their black families. It is a trade that allows these black women to transform the nature of the pain they experience into a generator of meanings and as an opportunity for autonomy that confers positive meanings to their work. In this way, selling the sweets becomes a tool that the black Palenquera women use to resignify work, a way to bring dignity and prosperity to black families in their location. The work is a source of satisfaction for them, which allows the realization of tasks, it is a creative act. They produce to meet their needs, like eating and dressing, it is a means of survival for their families and allows attaining autonomy and self-esteem. They understand work as the very act of living, to be alive is to work.

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# You must have people to make business: Relations of proximity in small-scale trade in Haiti and the DRC

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## **Abstract**

This article analyses the everyday activities of female traders in open air markets, houses and streets through a comparative approach based on two ethnographies, one situated in Haiti's Central Plateau, the other in Kongo Central province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In both studies, we identify an essential kind of knowledge needed to do business, namely the creation and maintenance of interpersonal relations that help the trader to form stocks, make journeys, guarantee a clientele, loans and financing in settings of uncertainty and economic instability. Simultaneously, we highlight a moral universe that qualifies more and less acceptable ways of obtaining money. In pursuing this comparative approach, we offer an alternative understanding of economies conventionally treated as informal, proposing an analysis primarily focused on the relations of proximity structuring them.

**Key words:** trade; person; money; Haiti; Democratic Republic of the Congo.

# Você precisa ter pessoas para vender: Relações de proximidade no comércio no Haiti e na RDC

## Resumo

Este artigo analisa as atividades cotidianas de mulheres comerciantes em feiras, casas e estradas através de uma abordagem comparativa entre duas etnografias, uma realizada no Plateau Central (Haiti) e a outra no Kongo Central (República Democrática do Congo). Em ambas as pesquisas, identificamos um conhecimento fundamental para fazer comércio, o qual consiste em criar e manter relações interpessoais que ajudam a formar estoques, garantir clientela e viabilizar deslocamentos, empréstimos e financiamentos em cenários incertos, de muita instabilidade econômica e em constante transformação. Por outro lado, assinalamos também um universo moral que qualifica as maneiras mais ou menos aceitas de se conseguir dinheiro. Através deste enfoque comparativo, oferecemos uma compreensão alternativa às economias convencionalmente tratadas como informais, sugerindo uma perspectiva centrada, sobretudo, nas relações de proximidade que as estruturam.

**Palavras-chave:** comércio; pessoas; dinheiro; Haiti; República Democrática do Congo.

# You must have people to make business: Relations of proximity in small-scale trade in Haiti and the DRC

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## **Introduction**

This article is based on two research projects, one in Haiti, in the commune of Belladère on the border with the Dominican Republic, and the other in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (hereafter DRC), between the city of Matadi and the villages of the Mayombe forest in Kongo Central province. Our studies involved accompanying female traders in their day-to-day activities of buying and selling goods, on their travels and also within their houses. In Haitian and Congolese marketplaces, the relations between buyer and seller may be anonymous, but may also be (and often are) highly significant. Transactions of money and products enable the development of mutual obligations and trust between people.<sup>1</sup> Our overall objective, therefore, is to contrast the definitions and explanations given by the traders themselves concerning their own routine practices and activities, seeking to provide a comparative description of a specific kind of expertise shown by these women in their creation and maintenance of relations of proximity.

While a substantial portion of anthropological studies of the economy seek to incorporate the formulations of professional economists and the institutions where they work (Neiburg 2010), here we propose an analysis centred on another kind of specialist, namely the market women themselves. Our aim is to comprehend what their expertise involves, a shared knowledge, partly standardized yet highly adaptable to new situations. This malleable expertise is encountered in the fluency of speech and gestures on the roads, in the warehouses and on the market stalls. Certain standardization indicate a shared know-how, at the same time as the capacity to improvise is essential.

We identify categories linked to a form of ‘knowing’ how to relate, maintain and multiply interpersonal relations, not within larger groups, but mainly one-to-one. As a general skill in relations between persons, some degree of overlap exists between trade and life – an overlap between instrumental relations, friendship and kinship. Fed by the need for credit and by the circulation of produce, interpersonal relations are fundamental to the flow of money, goods and other essential resources. At the same time, the potential for conflict is ever present, which partly explains the traders’ endeavour to multiply their relations. The dynamism of the trade that we identified in the Plateau Central (Haiti) and in Kongo Central (RDC) can also be explained, among other factors, by the fact that relations change (sometimes breaking definitively) and people seek out other relations, other circuits, and other places to buy their stocks and to sell their goods.

The comparative perspective proposed here differs from previous comparisons between the Caribbean and Africa, such as the model of surviving cultural traits advanced by Herskovits (for example, 1937), the cultural studies discussions (Gilroy 1993) and the analysis of beliefs and religious aspects between Haiti and the Congo (MacGaffey 2009). Although our work is based on ethnographies produced in localities with distinct geographies and histories, these were compared through various inter-related aspects that guided our inquiry.

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<sup>1</sup> We maintain a critical distance, therefore, from the hypothesis of “money-as-acid” perceived to corrode relations, an idea widespread in the social sciences, as Bill Maurer (2012) has argued.

First, both Haiti and the DRC are countries marked by the presence of international NGOs, agencies and organizations linked to the field of so-called humanitarian aid, an apparatus that configures forms of government typical of situations labelled as emergencies, subject to cycles of crises (Fassin & Pandolfi 2010). Consequently, both are defined as places of ‘lack,’ ‘underdevelopment’ and ‘unemployment.’ The metaphor of absence pervades and still pervades academic analyses of Africa in general (especially the DRC) and Haiti. Achille Mbembe (2001:8), for example, points out that social theory discusses Africa via the notion of lack and, in this sense, the analyst’s task becomes one of seeking explanations for such absences. The fundamental point of Mbembe’s argument, which applies equally well to Haiti, is the need to avoid the idea of Africa as a “dark cave” (Mbembe 2001:6; also see Roitman 1990). Our comparative proposal explicitly eschews descriptions based around the idea of lack, which envisage popular trade (whether fairs, markets, sidewalks, streets or itinerant trade) as an anomaly, or a chaotic and destructured proliferation, the outcome of a lack of regulation and order imposed by public authorities. So while it is not our intention to describe this trade in terms of what it is not, we also avoid a brand of romantic optimism that, as James Ferguson (2006:10) emphasizes, treats negative descriptions of Africa as the product of Western fantasy. We cannot lose sight, he argues, of Africa “as a place-in-the-world,” with particular inclusions and exclusions in a neoliberal global system that defines the varying degrees of uncertainties and instabilities in people’s lives. The question, though, is identifying the forms assumed by the practices and vocabularies of the female traders in everyday situations affected by wider political-economic projects, as well as encountering possible intersections between these forms that allow us to suggest other ways of comprehending those activities treated as ‘informal.’

This first aspect leads us to the second. The turbulent character of our research contexts is partly due to the scarcity of full-time jobs with stable wages. As a possible correlate of the rarity of full-time employment, small-scale trading seems to be one of the main self-employment solutions among the working classes. Even in the capital cities, Port-au-Prince and Kinshasa, there are very few formal employment positions, but there are many small jobs, “income-generating activities” (Hart 1973), to which people can dedicate themselves simultaneously, combining small and diverse sources of income. Along with the phenomenon of pluriactivity (originally formulated by Hart 1973), money flows in these non-wage economies tend to be highly irregular and accompanied by a proliferation of different forms of debt and credit, as well as small services, small business deals and small profits made through a continuous fractioning of goods (Neiburg 2016). In these universes, the generalization of selling as a practice extends to the most varied things. Objects, food, services always have a sellable potential, just as diverse spaces can become sales points (houses, streets, backyards, workplaces, roads, paths, crossroads). Money itself is also sellable.<sup>2</sup> The commercial practices analysed here emerge as a zone of invention in which initially original and creative solutions can acquire typical, shared forms.

The third point of approximation worth emphasizing is that most of those working in small street trading in Haiti and DRC are female. According to MacGaffey (1987), since restrictive laws are not in force in the “second economy” and educational qualifications are not required, women do not need to overcome the same barriers as those found in the formalized labour system, such as regulations and educational requirements, which allows them to become wealthy independent of men (p. 165). Traders in the city of Matadi (Kongo Central) remarked that having a daughter is good not only because she will help in domestic activities, she may always sell something. Diverse academic works have shown how the division of functions between men working the land and women selling its produce is normatively (though not exclusively) and historically deep-rooted in Haiti, preceding even the foundation of the country and the abolition of slavery (Herskovits 1937,

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<sup>2</sup> Especially in border zones populated by professional money dealers, physical banknotes are exchanged both for different currencies (the Haitian gourde for the Dominican peso, for instance, or the Angolan kwanza for the Congolese franc, or in both cases converting to the ubiquitous US dollar) and for the promise to return the money with interest at a later date. In the latter case, the moneychangers operate as moneylenders. Although there are people specialized in selling money, it is also sold occasionally by people with other primary occupations.

Lowenthal 1987, Mintz 2010, Garrigus 2006).<sup>3</sup> For the traders interviewed over the course of our research projects, doing business is a common and socially acceptable form of seeking a living, enabling a greater independence from men and the sustenance of the house when there is no husband or when the husband is not bringing in sufficient money.

Recognizing the cultural and historical idiosyncrasies of the regions where the ethnographic studies were carried out, the points highlighted seem to us persuasive enough to legitimate the comparison proposed here. The heuristic potential of this comparison will be tested through the material taken from each context. However, the first difficulty we faced was which concepts we should use to describe the activities of the female traders observed during our fieldwork. In the first two parts of the article, therefore, we discuss native categories, incorporating them as concepts and seeking to make intelligible the understandings of the traders themselves concerning their practices. Our aim is to specify and contextualize what we have thus far generically called trade.<sup>4</sup> Each section is also dedicated to analyzing the vocabulary and constitution of commercial relations, in order to discuss the knowledge mobilized to obtain and maintain people (whether suppliers and clients, or other people with whom business partnerships are forged). Next we turn to situations in which people do not act according to the expectations of others, revealing a moral universe that qualifies actions and behaviours.

### **The concept of *lizay* and the density of relations in Haitian popular trade**

In Haiti, the research was concentrated in small provincial towns and rural settlements in the region spanning the border between the Haiti's Plateau Central and the San Juan Valley in the Dominican Republic (DR). These are localities dynamized by flows of people and produce. The second most important route connecting the national capitals and largest cities on the island, Port-au-Prince and Santo Domingo, passes through this border area. Part of the research was undertaken in Dominican territory but usually following Haitian female traders in their frequent border crossings. It is their practices and dialogues to which we refer below.

Among the many different forms of engaging in trade in Haiti, the most basic distinction made by traders is between those dedicated to 'trading' (literally, 'doing commerce,' *fè komès*) and those who have just 'come to sell' something, typically a portion of their family agricultural production. It is one thing to 'sell' (*vann*) a harvest. It is quite another to make a living from the incessant activity of buying and then reselling in search of 'small profits' (*ti benefis*), immersing oneself in a routine that may include travelling long distances to find suppliers of a specific product or to reach places where people pay more for a given kind of merchandise. According to these terms, here we focus on 'trading' properly speaking.

There are two fundamental prerequisites to trading in Haiti. The first is capital, without which it is impossible to stockpile goods for resale. In the absence of hard cash (which undoubtedly was and continues to be deemed preferable: see, for instance, Métraux et al. 1951, Mintz 1964), this capital assumes other forms, like advance receipt of goods to be paid for after sale, loans from relatives or moneylenders, rotating credit groups, among other sources (Evangelista 2019). All the alternatives to hard cash require the establishment or maintenance of interpersonal relations with people (or groups of people) who help supply the necessary capital. We thus arrive at the second prerequisite to doing business, invariably cited by the traders and discussed in this section of the article: *lizay*.

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3 Selling (and also to a lesser extent buying) foodstuffs is a preeminently female task, to the point of it being shameful for a man to be seen selling agricultural produce, like a morally dubious intrusion in "women's affairs" (Bazabas 1997:19-20).

4 The parts of the text referring to Haiti cite terms in Haitian Creole. In the case of the DRC, most of the terms cited are from Lingala. When terms from French and Kiyombe are cited, we indicate their linguistic sources. Lingala and French, as well as Kikongo, are used in Matadi where a 'Lingalization' of Kikongo has been identified. Kiyombe is spoken especially in the Mayombe forest villages.

*Lizay* is a frequently employed concept that names an oral and dialogical skill, a form of addressing others. In the context directly related to trade, the idea of *lizay* appears as the art of speaking well to people. This entails being respectful, non-invasive, while transmitting enthusiasm, knowing how to greet (*salye*) people, or having a ‘sweet tongue’ (*bouch doux*). As one female interlocutor defined it, “*lizay* is the capacity to speak to other people in such a way that they like you.” It comprises a specific form of being kind and agreeable, a kindness that consists mainly of recognizing the other, their position, their needs and difficulties. *Lizay* involves knowledge of the codes, allowing those possessing it to make their needs and demands known in a way that ensures they encounter the least resistance possible. *Lizay* is something one has: someone may have more or less of it, or none at all.

It is always a criticism to declare that so-and-so has no *lizay*: it means that they fail to properly recognize the needs and difficulties of others, the people with whom the person is dealing. Not having *lizay* is dangerous, whether one is interacting with suppliers, buyers, moneylenders, transporters (from truck drivers to motorbike taxis), Dominican guards posted on the border, owners of depots and other storage spaces, or other female sellers. Use of this concept is by no means limited to trade, it applies to many areas of life. However, the fact that market women see this skill as something necessary to succeed in commerce provides an insight into key aspects of the environment in which these women operate.

In Haitian Creole, no distinction is made between buyer and seller: both partners are called by the same name, even if in a concrete situation, one of the parties is just selling without buying anything or vice-versa. Following Paul Moral (1960), Sidney Mintz (1961) made this fact more widely known to the Anglophone academic audience, describing the *pratik* relation in Haitian markets. This word reciprocally names both buyers and sellers, so long as the relationship between the two women enjoys a certain temporal stability. As Mintz notes, the emphasis on reciprocity is given by the language itself.

When two *pratik* meet in the market, the interaction between them typically includes salutations, questions about each other’s family, swapping news about their respective neighbourhoods, as well as, of course, the purchase itself. Describing how this type of connection emerges in Haitian markets, Mintz (1961) writes that everything begins with a conversation in which, “if the seller likes the buyer’s manner,” the seller makes a very reasonable offer, demonstrating her desire to invest in the relationship. Although his study primarily explores the rationality informing this personalized economic relationship, it is evident that the flows of goods and money are also accompanied by affects. Affection is indissociable from the development of the relationship, mediated by codes of showing respect and forms of etiquette. Their absence can interrupt this flow. If a particular product is in short supply, for example, the producers may refuse to sell it to unknown buyers who appear with ready cash, preferring to wait for a trader with whom they already have an established bond. Sometimes, therefore, access to particular stocks depends entirely on *lizay*, which also influences credit arrangements, as seen, for instance, in the care that each *pratik* takes to avoid ‘breaking’ (*kraze*) their partner financially.

The arrangements these preferential relations create are dynamic. Recognition of a *pratik* relation involves affirmation of a stronger bond, compared to which other relations appear more trivial. It is a privileged bond and like any privilege can be challenged and changed. Maintenance of a *pratik* bond comes with a cost for traders. A trader called Madame Jislen, for example, mentioned the need to give small ‘presents’ (*kado*) to clients when they are going through difficult moments without the money to buy anything.<sup>5</sup> In such cases, she gives small amounts, which at least will do for that day.

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<sup>5</sup> To protect the privacy of those with whom we lived during our fieldwork, we have not used people’s real names in this article, neither for the Haitian data, nor for the DRC.

These gifts are a way of investing in the relationship with the client in question. In her own words, she does this “because of *lizay*,” a point that adds another layer to its definition: more than simply the ability to perceive and acknowledge the situation experienced by the other person, having *lizay* also implies caring for this person when he or she finds herself in trouble. Madame Jislen considers it necessary to give not just to those presently unable to buy, but also when a *pratik* who took out debts with her some time ago finally pays her back: “you need to give a little present, a spoonful of sugar ...because of *lizay*.”

Here, in exploring the concept of *lizay*, we attempt to capture synthetically some of the micropolitics involved in the multiple relations each trader needs to maintain. While *pratik* is a specific relation of purchase and sale, a range of other interpersonal relations also prove fundamental. Each trader establishes and cultivates relations without which it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to access means of capitalization (from informal moneylenders, who tend to personally know the people to whom they entrust their money, to friends and family with the financial capacity to support someone else’s business), transport, storage and accomodation/hospitality, or even to guarantee her own safety. Trading demands travel and it is common – though not obligatory – for traders to personally know both truck drivers and motorbike taxi drivers who transport their merchandise.

Mobility requires more than just pathways to flow along. It also needs stopovers, both for the trader herself when the distance travelled requires her to stay overnight, and for her stocks. As well as the depots located close to the markets, traders make use of other spaces such as collectively rented rooms and the houses of other people (rather than her own house, considered a dangerous option best avoided). Houses strategically located near to roads, for instance, or on the border with the Dominican Republic, are especially favored. For traders, it is important not only to know the depots and people responsible for these spaces, but also to have friends along the routes one wishes to travel.<sup>6</sup> Alongside the buying and selling partnerships called *pratik*, there are many others, generally referred to by more inclusive terms, such as ‘friend’ [*zanmi*], ‘partner’ [*patnè*] or ‘my person’ [*moun pa-m*].<sup>7</sup>

Though necessary, these partnerships can also entail financial losses, as in the following scene. A woman called Maudeline went to the Kwa Fè market carrying three bunches of bananas, tied in a large cloth sack, harvested from her son’s garden. As she was approaching the market, she noticed Madame Lionel, a *madanm sara* (a term used by long-distance traders, also the name of a bird) from Lascahobas. Madame Lionel was sat at a strategic spot where the earth track joined the asphalt road, a point of access to the market difficult to avoid. Maudeline tried to pass by unnoticed, not because she disliked her, far from it. She was unsuccessful, though: Madame Lionel saw her from afar and called her over. Maudeline could not ignore her. She would have found it easier to “make a price” (*fè pri*) with a stranger to whom she owed nothing. With Madame Lionel, her bargaining room was much narrower given the length of their partnership.

Madame Lionel had been doing *sara* for years, mainly trading bananas. Maudeline, still a young mother looking to establish her own circuits, was welcomed by Madame Lionel both in her house in Lascahobas and in the room she rented in Port-au-Prince. Madame Lionel had already visited Maudeline’s house in the Lospwèt zone (returning visits is an important show of recognition). “She was my *pratik*,” Maudeline told me as she explained why she had tried to avoid her, a response that initially seemed to me both enigmatic and counterintuitive. Since I had failed to understand her point, she repeated her lament in another form, just as counterintuitive for me: “it’s because we’re friends” (*nou zanmi*).

<sup>6</sup> As a valued social skill, *lizay* undoubtedly helps make friends, but one thing does not necessarily imply the other. The parallel with the idea of ‘sympathy’ can help elucidate this point: while people generally prefer to deal with others who are sympathetic towards them rather than unsympathetic or even hostile, this does not mean that sympathy is a criterion necessary for friendship. It is perfectly possible to have antipathetic friends.

<sup>7</sup> This complex and fascinating term would require another article to be properly unpacked. Dalmaso (2014) brings important data and interpretation to it, though using a different (and synonym) form, more common in the area where she conducted her fieldwork, *moun mwen*.

The two women greeted each other affectionately and Madame Lionel then asked to see the merchandise Maudeline had brought. Cornered by her friend, Maudeline declared that the bananas were not hers, she was selling them for a neighbour. This lie was credible. It is common in the neighbourhood for people to sell produce belonging to someone else without taking any kind of commission. Maudeline herself did so now and then, but that day the load that she had brought to market came from her own son's garden.

Madame Lionel examined Maudeline's load and offered her 210 Haitian dollars (*dolà*) for the lot.<sup>8</sup> Maudeline replied, "my dear, you know I want to sell them to you, but I need to check with the owner first." Next to where Madame Lionel was sat were various other sacks already purchased by the *madanm sara* that morning. Maudeline left her sack alongside the others and left to wander through the market, as though she were heading off to consult somebody. She waited about 40 minutes before returning with the news that the supposed owner had considered the offer too low and told her not to sell for anything less than 250 *dolà*. Madame Lionel replied: "So you're going to tell him that bananas aren't selling like that, you managed to sell for 230 and he should be happy because it was an excellent deal." As she said this, she was already taking out and counting the money, handing it to Maudeline, who had no option but to accept it. Remaining cheerful, she thanked Madame Lionel before taking the money, saying in a complicit tone that she would persuade the owner to accept 230 *dolà*. Her own estimate was that had she traded with an unknown *madanm sara*, she would have turned up asking for 300, and could have eventually been paid as much as 270 *dolà*. At the exchange rate at the time, this difference of 40 *dolà* (or 200 gourdes) between what she imagined that she could have received from a stranger and what she ended up receiving from her *pratik* was equivalent to around U\$ 3.20, a substantial amount for her. Though disappointed, she did not let her mood show. She resigned herself to the situation with a smile on her face, treating her friend well, even though she had cost her money. She argued that it was necessary to maintain good relations even when they are disadvantageous, "since tomorrow nobody knows."

### Knowing *vanda bien* and having persons to trade with

The everyday practices of traders and the descriptions of these practices observed in some localities of Kongo Central (DRC) are very similar in diverse respects to those described above for Haiti. While the same categories may not say the same things in different places, distinct categories in localities far from one another may very well reference similar meanings. In this section we explore ethnographic situations observed on the other side of the Atlantic with the intention of considering the Haitian trade discussed above in a comparative perspective.

Situated in the province of Kongo Central (DRC) on the border with Angola and along the shore of the Congo River, the city of Matadi concentrates trade circuits of different scales.<sup>9</sup> These include the flow of produce from Angola to the DRC, a circuit of goods imported from other countries and unloaded at the river ports, the bulk of produce being sent to the capital Kinshasa, combined with circuits of produce arriving from rural areas, especially villages in the north and east of the province. The ethnographic research was concentrated on the palm oil circuit, originating in villages located in the Mayombe Forest and resold in small quantities in the Matadi street markets.

8 The Haitian dollar (*dolà*) is an imaginary currency, without physical existence, a pure unit of account, used in a scale of five (see Neiburg 2016). Haiti's official currency is the gourde, but people frequently refer to the 'Haitian dollar,' equivalent to 5 gourdes. Thus 210 *dolà* = 1,050 gourdes.

9 Matadi has around 300,000 inhabitants and is the sixteenth largest city in the DRC. In the city markets, people mainly speak two Bantu languages, Lingala and Kikongo, sometimes mixing the two.

The research began in one of the city's seventeen markets, a neighbourhood fair that was also called a 'parking,' where people arrived in cars, trucks and motorbikes, coming from rural villages to sell their produce: manioc leaves, coffee, sacks of *fufu* (dehydrated manioc), *kwanga* (manioc pulp), bananas, brooms, palm oil and other sundry items.<sup>10</sup>

This is the market in which Ma Henriette runs a *méza*, a wooden stall, where she sells a variety of products including grains, salt, sugar, powdered milk, coffee, tea, soap, sunflower oil and palm oil. She calls this type of trading *vente au détail*,<sup>11</sup> 'retail sale,' whose main characteristic is the resale of produce in small amounts, items able to be broken down into various measures. Ma Henriette and other *détaillantes* differ not only from the "people of the village" (*batu ya mbóka*) who come to sell their harvests in the city, but also from the wholesalers who sell imported products in large quantities in internationally standardized measures (25kg and 50kg sacks and 20l or 25l gallons). As well as *détaillantes*, they call themselves – and are generically called by others – *mamas* or *mamas ya wénze*, 'market women.' To define what they do to earn money, they usually say 'I sell' (*nateka*), very often without identifying what they sell and differentiating 'selling' (*koteka*) from *débrouille*.<sup>12</sup>

On Ma Henriette's stall it was common to hear assessments of whether a certain person knew how to sell or not (*koyéba koteka*). This is a skill with diverse layers of knowhow, some acquired through day-to-day experiences, others that approximate a relational knowledge (*kovánda mbóte* or *kovánda bien*)<sup>13</sup> that allows the trader to obtain and maintain clients and suppliers. Among the female market traders, however, the notion of 'knowing' or 'not knowing' how to sell emerged initially in reference to the practice of handling measures and products.

The peak hour of Ma Henriette's stall is between 8 am and 10 am. Arriving at the stall, the pastor's wife asks for two cups of rice, a mug of sugar, and 'a coke' of palm oil. Ma Henriette takes a glass Coca-Cola bottle and fills it with palm oil, then shouts out to her niece, Zoe, who slowly makes her way to the grains to fill the cup of rice. The client complains that Zoe is not filling the cup properly and tells Ma Henriette "she doesn't know how to sell" (*ayéba te koteka*). In retail sale, it is very important to know how to manage different types of measurement: 200 ml glass cups, plastic mugs, bottles, spoons. These need to be filled according to the pace of demand and to the precise limit so that there are no losses for the seller, but equally so that buyers do not complain.

"Knowing how to sell" does not depend solely on the use of one's hands, though. It requires a certain quickness of mind in calculating prices and change, counting and managing the money earned during the day. In one morning of sales, Ma Henriette earns somewhere between 100 and 200 *franc congolais* (between 60 and 115 dollars), which she uses to cover household expenses and restock her stall products. She spends some time at the market listing the products that have sold out, thinking about the suppliers with whom she has debts and planning how to pay them so she can take out new debts without jeopardizing her relationship with them. When speaking about her suppliers, there were some who Ma Henriette considered to be "her people."

This expression, "my person" (*mutu na ngai*) was associated in Matadi with the terms *camarade* (comrade, pal) and *ami* (friend) in French. It was also used in situations that made explicit the transaction of money and/or products, employed to refer to persons with whom one engages in a commercial partnership (e.g. supplier

10 The author Rosa Vieira spent the first phase of her fieldwork, lasting three months, selling alongside a market trader on her stall.

11 Ma Henriette used French terms to refer to her trade, which forms the final stage of a distribution chain.

12 The verb in French, *se débrouiller*, signifies to cope, to manage, to find a way. Gauthier De Villers et al. (2002) and Sylvie Ayimpam (2014) include the commercial practices in the DRC as part of something more general that they call an *économie de la débrouille*. In the dialogues of traders in Matadi, however, being in the *débrouille* is different to selling (*teka*). Asked whether her husband also sold produce, one female trader replied: he doesn't sell, he's in the *débrouille* (*ateka te, aza na débrouille*).

13 In Lingala, *kovánda* can also be written as *kofánda*. The expression is also very often pronounced along with the French adjective *bien* (*kovánda bien*).

and client). It was equally used when someone had a direct interest in asking another for something (“give me money, you are my person”). Just like *lizay*, “my person” is not exclusive to the commercial universe but the ability to “have people” is inherent to “knowing how to sell.”

One day as I worked on Ma Henriette’s stall, Ma Julie asked for a cup of salt. I leaned over to serve her and filled the cup the way I had learned. But as soon as she saw what I was doing, Ma Henriette intervened: fill it more, put more in, she’s “my person,” referring to Ma Julie. The relationship between these two *mamas* had begun with the sale of gallons of palm oil, which later became accompanied by conversations and the swapping of information. They gradually developed a degree of mutual trust, which made them a person to each other, a relational condition that, like any other relation, lacks stability if it is not cultivated through these kind of small everyday acts, such as adding an extra amount to the sold product.

For Ma Henriette, the supplier who is “her person” will understand her situation even when she has no money to pay. Ma Julie added other aspects to define someone who is her person, they “will eat together, sleep together, talk and will also make *cop* (...). You see how you give me your trust, you won’t give it to just anyone.”<sup>14</sup> Her description tells us that an important dimension of the “my person” relationship is mutual trust. And in trading, it is trust that makes partnerships, leaving your money with the other person, making deals in the transactions and negotiating the time period for repayments, an aspect made explicit by Ma Julie when she referred to Ma Henriette: “you see Ma Henriette, she comes every week, she became *my person*, even when she has no money, I’ll give her [the produce] and afterwards I’ll get the money. I’ve become habituated to her. Had I not done so, I would never give her [gallons of palm oil].” The notion of ‘becoming habituated’ to the other is also an important aspect. In trade, relations acquire trust with the frequency of the transactions. Furthermore, as we have seen, in the same way as *pratik*, being a ‘person’ to each other involves a one-to-one relation that requires some degree of reciprocity: you are someone’s person if the other is also your person. Like the other suppliers who are ‘persons of’ Ma Henriette, Ma Julie also needed Ma Henriette to maintain her sales. Despite the delays, she paid her debts, unlike other *mamas* who vanished or lied. She also sought to maintain her regularity as a client, not passing a single week without buying gallons of oil.

However, one-to-one relations do not involve suppliers and clients alone. Differently to Ma Henriette, Ma Julie travels a long distance each week to buy gallons of palm oil in her home village, located in the Mayombe Forest, some 200km from Matadi. She “has persons” who help her on her journeys and in maintaining her trade between city and village. When Ma Julie is unable to travel, she will, for example, send money via one of the *mamas* who undertake this journey constantly with her. She can also depend on “her people” in her village, like Pa Mana, with whom she leaves money in advance for him to buy the gallons of oil. She always explained that she had “many people” because she *vánda bien* with/in everyone<sup>15</sup>. This expression can be translated as “I relate well” and is also used in conjunction with the verb ‘to know’ (*koyéba*). Ma Julie’s explanations help us reflect on what this knowledge is.

In the dry season between May and September, it is not easy to buy many gallons of palm oil. It rains seldom, there are less fruits on the palm trees to produce the oil and the price increases. This prompted Ma Julie to turn to sources of income other than her trade in gallons. She began to rent land in another village to plant beans and sell them in the city. Unlike her home village, this was not a place where she had family and people. The first time she went to plant, she slept in the house of the owners of the land she had rented.

<sup>14</sup> The term *cop* comes from *coopération*, engaging in *cop* means to form a trade partnership. There are various types of *cop*, such as, for example, when two persons combine their gallons for one of them to take to sell in Kinshasa. Generally these are one-to-one partnerships, between two people.

<sup>15</sup> In Lingala, verbs in the infinitive are marked by the prefix *ko*, *kovánda bien*.

The second time, the house was no longer available. Ma Julie ended up sleeping in the house of Ma Tania, a young woman she had met only recently. When I asked Ma Julie how she had begun to frequent this house, she replied: “I know how to relate (*nayebi vándá*). I make some food. I give a little bit of sugar to people, we get on well. (...) I can relate (*navandi bien*) with anyone. You need to know how people behave.”

As we can see, Ma Julie uses the term *vándá*, which has various senses in Lingala. Two in particular are important to understanding the meaning of relating with another.<sup>16</sup> It can be used in the sense of dwell (where do you live? *ovanda wapi?*) and it may be said that “knowing how to *vándá*” also involves knowing how to *live with the other*. As Ma Julie makes clear, it presumes knowing how to share food and a space, whether a house, a market, or a neighbourhood. To some extent, it would even be possible to conceive the idea as knowing how to *dwell in the other*. Because knowing *vándá bien* requires comprehending the other, to the point of putting oneself in their skin, understanding the difficulties that the other person is facing. *Vándá* is also used to refer to the verb sit (sit on the chair! *vándá na kiti*) and we can venture the idea that knowing how to *vándá* also entails knowing how to sit with the other, since the act of sitting is closely associated with conversation. In Lingala, for example, before starting a conversation, people will usually say “come, let’s sit” (*yaka, továndá na biso*) or “do you want to come over to the house? we can sit and chat” (*okoya na ndako, tokovándá, tokosolola*). To sit with someone is to share a moment with them in order to exchange, and this exchange very often refers to commercial activity, whether maintaining partnerships or creating new ones.

This everyday knowledge of relating/dwelling/sitting with/in the other, linked to the experience of sharing food, money, information, gossip and spaces (like the market, neighbourhood, depots and roads), ensures making, obtaining and maintaining “one’s people,” so central to dealing with the difficulties faced by traders in their activities. But there are those who do not know how to *vándá* or, as people say in Haitian trade, who have no *lizay*, provoking conflicts, which reveal a moral universe that prescribes more or less accepted ways of behaving in the quest to make money.

### **A trader without *lizay***

A trader called Tina had for some months been smuggling beer, rum and cigarettes to sell in the Dominican Republic. She usually undertook various journeys, entering and leaving constantly, bringing a little produce each time, hiding packs of cigarettes (worth 30 *dolà* each, around U\$ 2.40) and small bottles of rum (sold in Haiti for between 15 and 18 *dolà*, around U\$ 1.20-1.45) underneath her clothes. On each trip, she managed to bring concealed at least eight small bottles of rum and a larger quantity of cigarette packs, relatively expensive items that practically doubled in price on crossing the border to the Dominican Republic.

Tina took them to a friend’s house, accumulating a substantial quantity to sell in one batch to a Dominican dealer, which for her was safer than selling retail herself in the streets of Elias Piña. One day, two guards from Dominica’s border security followed her to the front of the house she was using as a depot, where they stopped and searched her. Caught red-handed, not only was the merchandise on her person seized, but also the goods she had brought previously, stored in the room. The setback was huge: the lost batch was worth more than 3,500 *dolà* (equivalent to almost U\$ 300 at the contemporary exchange rate). For a trader like Tina whose finances were precarious, it was an extremely hard blow from which it would take her months to recover.

<sup>16</sup> The other uses of the term *vándá*: *vándá na yo* (shut up, enough, used during rows); *avándá na ye* (to say that the person got comfortable, like a trader who used the term to refer to a young woman who had not paid her: *avándá na ye, azofuta te*, she ‘got comfortable,’ she ‘stays sitting,’ she does not pay, she ‘became slack’; *vándá na ndáko* (in the sense of resting at home, relaxing, in contrast to selling or working).

While people took pity on her plight, several pointed out that the misfortune was at least partly Tina's own fault. She had always complained that the Dominican guards were thieves – an opinion by itself widely shared. However, the vast majority of traders who smuggled contraband into the Dominican Republic recognized the need to keep these guards happy, 'helping them,' which they did through small bribes. The standard amount was 100 pesos (a little over U\$ 2) but, depending on the volume of goods, it was prudent to give better 'presents' (*kado*). The fact that such prudence is a recognized and shared way to proceed highlights the limits between, on one hand, a sociability that demands the sensibility to perceive the other, where some degree of flexibility and improvisation is needed in response to concrete situations, and the existence of a set of shared codes, providing typical solutions to potential clashes. But Tina did not want to know: she was poor, she had her three children to care for, she needed the money, and she felt that she owed nothing to those 'thieves.' As one of Tina's aunts explained to me:

Every week Tina passed the border guards without ever giving them money, not once, nothing. She doesn't think that they have a family too, they have expenses, she doesn't want to see their side or contribute anything, she just complains that they're thieves, she doesn't owe them anything... Now, look, with twenty *dolà* today, ten *dolà* the week after, she would have avoided this, but, out of stupid pride, she took a much bigger hit.

But wouldn't the guards who found the contraband not have confiscated it anyhow? I asked.

Of course not! They know who brings in contraband, if they let us pass it's because they choose to let us pass... It was a young man called Montero, he was annoyed with her because she never gives anything and he took revenge. He didn't go after her himself, he waited until he was off shift and passed on the information to two guards who had arrived from the capital, telling them to search her, and the rest we know... Tina has no *lizay*, her aunt lamented.

Engaging in trade across national borders involves dealing with forms of regulation and control to which many of the activities of female traders in Haiti are subject. Certain kinds of knowhow, acquired in conversations and through experience, enable them to be circumvented. In Tina's story, it was necessary to have *lizay*, perceive the needs of others, recognize the place occupied by the other with whom one must deal, as well as recognize that if this other feels overlooked or disrespected, he or she may cause you harm, make your way more difficult. Reciprocally, it also implies possessing the skill to make the other feel compelled to perceive, recognize and respect your own place.

For a woman like Madame Jislen, therefore, paying your debts on time is also a question of *lizay*. The parallels with the idea of *vánda bien* cited earlier are clear: in both cases, the other person's needs must be recognized while ensuring one's own are met, caring for a relationship that may prove important in the future. In stressing the importance of paying on time, Madame Jislen recognizes that this is essential to being able to continue to take out new loans without a creditor refusing. As she operates mostly by consignments, a single default could jeopardize her entire future business. At the same time, you also have to recognize the situation and urgent needs of those people who have already loaned to you (whether in money or in goods), knowing that a delay on your part may jeopardize other people's operations where they also have deadlines to meet. She does not think it fair to setback the life of someone who advanced her own, and would feel deeply ashamed were she to do so. Madame Jislen prefers to complicate her own financial situation with new loans to cover a previous one than leave the other person waiting, failing to meet an earlier agreement.

As a moral principle that regulates codes of conduct and that not everyone manages to observe with the same zeal, the concept of *lizay* offers important parallels with our other ethnographic context in the DRC – specifically in the implications of the concept of "my person" and the idea of "dwelling in the other," which valorizes the capacity to understand the moment and other people's problems. *Lizay* refers to the observation

of specific codes of conduct, not only as a form of etiquette, but also as a valorization of empathy, the capacity to perceive the other. The small conflict narrated above indicates the potential damage caused by insufficient empathy, which, as we have seen, is necessary even in the interactions with supposed ‘thieves.’

### Eating the other’s money

Between Matadi and the villages of the Mayombe Forest, the motives for conflicts between female traders are diverse: unpaid debts, people who engage in *cop* and lied to their partner,<sup>17</sup> traders who steal others’ clients, theft of products, envy, and so forth. In these situations, insults are hurled between the parties involved: bad behaviour (*comportement mabè*), a false and deceitful person (*aventurier*).<sup>18</sup> bad hearted (*mutema mabè*), a sorcerer (*ndoki*). An important term to understand these conflicts is the verb ‘to eat’ (*kolya*) which can be used to refer to eating money, eating people (referring to both the sexual act and sorcery) and eating food.<sup>19</sup>

The expression ‘to eat money’ (*kolya mbongo*) is significant in terms of our comprehension of forms of relating and conflicts, whether in trading or in other areas of life. To eat money is used to refer to the act of spending, using the cash one has in hand. Very often it has a negative moral connotation: the expression may signal that the money was used in one way when it could have been better used in another: it was spent, rather than invested. Everyone is *eating* their own money all the time and also *eating* other people’s money. Selling requires travelling and it is common to send money via another person, to give money to one person here, pick up money from another there, leave a debt with the neighbour, accept that they owe you.

A trader like Ma Julie always has many people with her money. As described earlier, she leaves money with people in the village to buy gallons of palm oil for her. Although she knows that there may be some delay in returning the gallons, she prefers this arrangement, thereby avoiding, as she says, eating her own money instead of investing. But there is always the risk of the money or the gallons not making their way back to her hands.

If the gallon is overdue, this does not mean that the person ate the money. They eat it when they disappear, when they fail to give another deadline to pay, or when they lie, saying that they received a smaller amount than the actual money given. The problem is not the debt but the ignored debt, when the debtor shows no intention to pay it back or does not recognize its existence. It is then that people say “he ate my money.” This is when the expression acquires a negative sense, used, for instance, when a conflict breaks out at the weekly market held in a village in the Mayombe Forest.

This market attracts many people from nearby villages, occupying the length of an entire dirt road. At one end are concentrated the wooden stalls, at the opposite end the parking lot filled with the trucks ready to transport produce to the cities of Matadi and Boma. Ma Julie usually picks a spot in front of an empty house whose rooms are rented by the traders as depots. In the external area of the house there were clusters of oil gallons, sacks of *fufu* and bags of charcoal, separated carefully by trader. Shouting began. Ma Eva and Ma Julie were surrounding a young man on the right-hand side of the house, accusing him of owing them gallons (three and two, respectively). The tall young man was defending his actions. He told Ma Julie that he had returned the money to Cesar, her brother. Ma Julie immediately shouted out, calling her brother. Cesar denied receiving the money and the discussion continued. I asked another young woman from the village what was happening and she said: “he ate it,” making a gesture of wiping her hand across her lips, and said “it’s gone!”<sup>20</sup>.

17 See note 14.

18 This is different to the meaning identified by MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000) who refer to *partir à l’aventure* as a notion related to immigration and the activities associated with this experience.

19 To eat is also used in Kiyombe, the Bantu language spoken in the Mayombe forest, associated with money: *kudya zi mbóngo*.

20 This remark ‘he eats’ was pronounced in Kiyombe (*kadidi*), the language in which the expression to eat money (*kudya zimbongo*) is also used.

As people explained, this gesture expresses the act of “finishing eating and cleaning one’s mouth.” Without doubt, if the money had not returned to Ma Julie, it was being used in other spheres and circulating among other people. But the gesture shows a shared understanding that if someone eats your money, it has vanished for you, it will not come back, at least not very soon. To eat, not just money but food too, can be understood as materially finishing something, but this is not necessarily negative. In reference to eating food, for example, the gesture is only used if the person eats food they should not have. Thus there is a negative moral connotation when the verb is used in conjunction with the gesture: it indicates someone who ate food secretly and was discovered: we only see them “cleaning their mouth.” In other words, to eat is negative when it is done for one’s own benefit and harms others, as in the case of the young man who ate Ma Julie’s money.

The row in the middle of the market was a way of pressuring the man to return the money by embarrassing him publicly, showing that he was an untrustworthy person who did not think of others – thus he did not know how to *vánda bien*. People eating the money of others the whole time exposes a universe in which money circulates, mediating the relations needed to obtain and sell products, connecting persons through bonds of debt. Very often, unpaid debts lead female traders to re-evaluate and transform their commercial partnerships.

## Conclusion

Analysing the small-scale trade made in Haiti and the DRC, it could be argued that the huge majority of female traders operate as “one-woman businesses,” in the sense that each woman generates her capital by herself at her own risk, just as she decides herself what to buy and from whom, where to sell and how to transport the goods.<sup>21</sup>

Each trader establishes her own circuits, just as she maintains her own array of relations that assists her to travel. However, the individualism linked to the high level of autonomy entailed by the logic of self-entrepreneurialism coexists with and is informed by one-to-one interpersonal relations in all points of the chain of distribution. In both ethnographies, partnerships abound for trade with multiple aims: forming a relatively stable clientele, accessing producers and their produce, loan schemes, the dispatch of money locally to save time and money on trips, safeguarding against the confiscation of merchandise, among many others.<sup>22</sup>

These arrangements are dynamic: new connections are made, remade and unmade continually, some partnerships create deep proximities and acquire a long-term and stable form, others are occasional and ephemeral, some can convert into the other kind and vice-versa. This dynamism requires creativity and the capacity to improvise in adverse situations. But it is also impossible to navigate in trade without ever knowing the codes, practices, gestures and forms of relating to people, which constitute shared and evaluated knowhow, as we have shown in the analysis of the notions of *lizay* and *vánda bien*. This dynamic recognizable in both universes, despite their distance from each other, may also encounter parallels around the world, as a reorientation of the life of the poor under neoliberalism, especially in contexts subject to regular economic crises<sup>23</sup>. The identification of an element of individualism typical to the logic of self-entrepreneurialism can and should be complexified by paying attention to partnerships as we have aimed to show<sup>24</sup>.

21 It is from this perspective that authors like Mintz (1964) and Plotkin (1989), for example, characterize commercial activity in Haiti as fragmented and individualist.

22 An extensive description of the singularities of these diverse modalities of partnerships is impossible within the limits of this article. For a more detailed exposition in the case of Haiti, see Evangelista 2019.

23 For a global survey of ethnographies describing the strategies used by working classes under neoliberalism, see Ortner 2016.

24 It should be stressed that the traders do participate in collectives like associations, religious organizations or neighbourhood groups. These become spaces for the formation of new trade partnerships and also for a deepening of preexisting ties. For a discussion of trader associations in Ciudad del Este, see Rabossi 2004. In the case of Haiti, the absence of significant professional associations among traders has been identified as a problem, a lack of political articulation (for instance, Plotkin 1989). In the field, though, we observed that non-unionized traders or those not organized collectively in class entities still participated in other kinds of collectivities, especially neighbourhood and church groups.

However, these partnerships qualifiable as ‘commercial’ – indispensable to the viability of business ventures – are not just utilitarian and instrumental. Possession of *lizay* or knowledge of *vánda bien* may be fundamental to trading, but these qualities are not limited to this sphere. On the contrary, we have sought to examine trade not as a closed and self-contained circuit, a self-centred activity, but as an avenue for us to understand how people connect to each other, particularly in contexts where money is sparse and economic instability widespread. Discussing rural settlements in the Brazilian Northeast, Benoît de L’Estoile (2014) emphasizes how, in crisis situations, friends are of central importance. They ensure networks of support when money, though desired, is only fleetingly available. Something similar occurs in the ethnographic universes that we have accompanied. As shown in the transaction between Madame Lionel and Maudeline, the maintenance of long-term trade partnerships is taken to be a safer and more promising path to guarantee the future than ephemeral relations whose momentary profits do not ensure future support. Nevertheless, these relations should not be comprehended from a utilitarianist perspective, given that we are dealing with localities where the “future is irreducible to calculation” (ibid:71) and configures a field of open-ended expectations.

The vast diversity of the ethnographic universes discussed here cannot be disentangled in a few pages. To present this multiplicity, we have introduced concepts that allow us to transit through these relations without needing to immerse ourselves in the singularities of each particular modality – that is, concepts that articulate the capacity to obtain and maintain relations. *Lizay* and knowing how to *vánda bien* refer to a capacity, an ability, a know-how, expressed in the forms through which each person positions themselves vis-à-vis others, fundamental to accessing the types of circuit where money circulates in these two universes. When this relational know-how proves insufficient, the person can turn to informal institutions for the latter to penalize defaulters and bad payers. However, the force of the morality in play frequently overlaps with and renders the action of these institutions superfluous.

In Haiti, there are forms of regulating these behaviours that dispense with such institutions. These include stoning the house of the debtor, smearing the person’s name in front of other potential creditors, or making demands for payment in person. The debtor’s refusal to pay in the latter case legitimizes the seizure of goods to a value proximate to the debt (see Evangelista 2019). Such methods entail more direct, quicker and sometimes harsher consequences than the processes involving the slow formal justice system. Significantly, the mediation of the latter in conflicts tends to be preferred more by debtors than creditors. In the DRC, people also turn to modes of public shaming that force the debtor to pay the debt or acquire a bad reputation in the places that he or she frequents. Nevertheless, the ‘state’ (or *leta*, in the Lingala term) appears as something more commonplace and embedded in commercial practices than a formal institution separate from them. In villages of the Mayombe Forest, the *leta* can be ordered to capture (*kanga*) a defaulter, paying money to arrest the debtor and imprison the person if they fail to pay the debt. People also frequently resort to sorcery spells in order to coerce and punish those who have behaved dishonestly.<sup>25</sup>

As we have seen, moral qualifications are mobilized as a form of justice to punish those whose attitudes harm others. At the same time, they also amount to imperatives for the redistribution of money, guiding people who have become rich through trade to meet duties and obligations constitutive of relations of proximity.<sup>26</sup>

In the Mayombe Forest villages, the fear of envy (and the possibility of becoming the sorcery target of the envious) leads the traders, men and women, to conceal how much they are earning, while they also always seek to give a little money or small presents to people close to them, whether relatives, friends or acquaintances.

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25 For a discussion of forms of justice and sorcery based in an ethnography in Haiti, see Fiod 2019.

26 This aspect is not confined to trade but identifiable also in other activities, as Pierre Minn (2011) has emphasized in the case of Haitian doctors who need to support an entire network of “their people” (*moun pa*), thus placing themselves in economic difficulties.

Ma Julie, for example, sought to give a little of her money or hide it because, as she said, “you can never know a person’s spirit.” At the same time, negative moral qualifications are mobilized in reference to the traders who become rich, accused of having made “bad money” either through trips to the cemetery, an act related to sorcery, or through contact with a *ngáanga nkíisi*.<sup>27</sup>

In Haiti too, becoming rich is morally suspect, readily linked to rumours of sorcery. Likewise, the redistribution of wealth is an important means of forging and maintaining alliances<sup>28</sup>. The very fact that the capital used in trade is frequently stored not in the form of paper money (and less still in bank accounts) but dispersed through multiple credit schemes, which necessarily involve other people, demonstrates how resource management requires sharing and implies interpersonal relations. It comprises a logistical necessity that, simultaneously, is reflected in moral imperatives, in a sociability informed by mutual dependency and the expectation of mutual help.

This interweaving between lives gives the relations woven in the sphere of trade much more density than what would arise from simple exchanges limited to the delivery of goods and the respective payments. Consequently, along side the more technical forms of knowhow specific to commercial activity, the relational knowhow employed by Madame Jislen, Madame Maudeline, Ma Henriette and Ma Julie configure a modality of knowledge also fundamental to their trade.

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<sup>27</sup> In Kiyombe, *ngáanga nkíisi* (in Lingala, *nganga nkisi*) is not a sorcerer and can be seen as a healer. In villages in the Mayombe Forest, people also resort to such figures in search of money and need, in exchange, to sacrifice members of their family. *Nkíisi* is a proto-Nbantu term widely discussed among Africanists and very often understood as an object with spiritual force or a charm. For a critique of the literature on Kongo culture and the notion of *nkisi*, see Hersak 2001. Over the course of fieldwork, this term appeared in reference to a power (force, potency) imbued in an object or animal, associated with both the *ngáanga* and the ancestors.

<sup>28</sup> As shown too, in an urban context, by the ethnography of Braum 2014.

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# *PRAN WOUT LA:* Expériences et dynamiques de la mobilité haïtienne

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## Résumé

En privilégiant, à partir d'une perspective ethnographique, les points de vue des personnes en mouvement, le présent article cherche à traiter des différentes *wout* (routes, en créole haïtien) que les Haïtiens ont empruntées, spécifiquement à partir du Brésil. Je propose une analyse des configurations et des dynamiques de la mobilité pour *chache lavi* (chercher la vie). Quels sont les sens et les usages pratiques de la catégorie *wout* ? Comment s'articule la circulation des individus et des familles face aux contrôles des gouvernements et des agences d'immigration ? Comment se déploient les stratégies pour que les *wout* des individus puissent avoir lieu en dépit des impasses physiques et symboliques ? *Chache lavi* non seulement crée, construit et déconstruit des relations entre les personnes, mais il implique également des tensions et des dimensions subjectives, outre des jeux permanents entre le légal et l'illégal.

**Mots clés :** *chache lavi*, mobilité, diaspora.

# *PRAN WOUT LA:* Experiências e dinâmicas da mobilidade haitiana

## Resumo

Ao privilegiar, a partir de uma perspectiva etnográfica, os pontos de vista das pessoas em movimento, o presente artigo busca tratar das diferentes *wout* (rotas, em crioulo haitiano) que foram transitadas pelos haitianos, especificamente a partir do Brasil. Proponho uma análise das configurações e as dinâmicas da mobilidade para buscar a vida (*chache lavi*). Quais são os significados e os usos práticos da categoria *wout*? Como se articulam os movimentos dos indivíduos e das famílias junto com os controles dos governos e das agências de imigração? Como as estratégias estão implantadas para que a *wout* dos indivíduos possa acontecer apesar dos impasses físicos e simbólicos? O *chache lavi* cria, constrói e desconstrói não apenas relações entre pessoas, mas também implica tensões e dimensões subjetivas, bem como jogos permanentes entre legalidades e ilegalidades.

**Palavras-chave:** *chache lavi*, mobilidade, diáspora.

# *PRAN WOUT LA:* Experiences and dynamics of Haitian mobility

## Abstract

By privileging, from an ethnographic perspective, the points of view of people on the move, this article sets out to explore the various *wout* (routes/roads, in Haitian Creole) undertaken by Haitians, specifically from Brazil. I propose an analysis of the configurations and dynamics of mobility involved in *chache lavi* (pursuing life). What are the meanings and practical uses of the category *wout*? How is the movement of individuals and families articulated in response to the controls imposed by governments and immigration agencies? What strategies are deployed to ensure that the *wout* of individuals can take place despite the many physical and symbolic impasses? *Chache lavi* not only creates, constructs and deconstructs relations between people; it also implies subjective tensions and dimensions, as well as a constant interplay between legal and illegal.

**Keywords:** *chache lavi*, mobility, diaspora.

# PRAN WOUT LA:

## Expériences et dynamiques de la mobilité haïtienne

Mélanie Montinard

### Introduction

Cet article examine les expériences et les dynamiques de la mobilité haïtienne et analyse, à partir des récits recueillis durant ma recherche (Montinard 2019),<sup>1</sup> les différentes *wout* (routes, en créole haïtien) qu'ont parcourues les Haïtiens, spécifiquement à partir du Brésil, pour *chache lavi* (chercher la vie), en quête de *lavi miyò* (une vie meilleure), ce qui fait du mot *wout* une catégorie native constitutive de la mobilité haïtienne.

Si, à partir de 2010, le Brésil est devenu un lieu de passage pour de nombreux migrants haïtiens qui, à l'époque, cherchaient à rejoindre la Guyane française (Joseph 2015a), ce pays est devenu partie intégrante de l'espace sociogéographique haïtien ainsi qu'un lieu de passage et de résidence,<sup>2</sup> s'insérant dans le vaste répertoire des paysages qui composent les différentes *wout* empruntées par les Haïtiens pour *chache lavi*. Cependant, il est important de considérer la société haïtienne également à partir de la diaspora qui y est constitutive (Joseph 2015a et 2015b ; Glick-Schiller 2011), car aucun événement particulier n'a produit ou provoqué la migration, il s'agit bien d'un ensemble historique de départs et de flux migratoires. C'est en effet un enchevêtrement de différents facteurs économiques (environ 59% de la population vivant avec un revenu inférieur à 2,41 USD par jour selon l'enquête auprès des ménages de la Banque mondiale réalisée en 2012), sociaux, culturels, politiques (les régimes autoritaires de François puis Jean-Claude Duvalier [1957-1986] et les crises politiques qui leur ont succédé – voir Zolberg & al. 1989) et naturels (comme les inondations, les cyclones ou le tremblement de terre de janvier 2010) qui fait d'Haïti un pays qui se construit et se reconstruit au travers des départs et de la mobilité.

Les études sur l'historicité de la migration haïtienne (Anglade 1982 ; Joseph 2015a) montrent que, depuis plus d'un siècle, les Haïtiens tentent majoritairement de rejoindre les États-Unis, l'une de leurs destinations privilégiées, pour échapper aux problèmes économiques et politiques. Or, ce mouvement migratoire s'est intensifié et complexifié en raison de la récession économique au Brésil, depuis la fin de 2015, qui a directement touché les Haïtiens y vivant depuis 2010/2011, principalement ceux qui avaient bénéficié de la forte demande d'emplois due aux événements internationaux tels que la Coupe du Monde de Football en 2014 et les Jeux Olympiques en 2016. Dans ce contexte, de nouveaux projets migratoires ont vu le jour, comme la *wout Miami* ou *pran wout la* (prendre la route), expressions utilisées par les Haïtiens pour parler d'une personne qui a emprunté la route vers les États-Unis, en traversant les frontières de différents pays d'Amérique du Sud et d'Amérique Centrale pour réaliser le rêve de devenir *diaspora*.

1 Cette recherche s'insère dans le cadre de mon doctorat en anthropologie sociale au sein du Museu Nacional de l'Université Fédérale de Rio de Janeiro (PPGAS/MN/UFRJ).

2 Les estimations relatives au nombre d'Haïtiens ayant émigré au Brésil varient, mais selon les données du Ministère de la Justice en 2019, il y aurait environ 107 000 Haïtiens répartis principalement dans les différents États du sud du Brésil tels que Paraná, Santa Catarina, Rio Grande do Sul, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, entre autres.

Comme je l'ai démontré dans ma recherche doctorale (Montinard 2019), *pran wout la* ne se réduit pas à un seul voyage du Brésil aux États-Unis, à une décision ou un itinéraire spécifique, intégrant des représentations sur des pays tels que celui de l'Oncle Sam, d'Haïti, du Brésil, du Chili, du Mexique, de la République dominicaine, du Canada, parmi tant d'autres contextes. L'expression dénote une pragmatique de la mobilité et un état d'être et de devenir au sein de la diaspora haïtienne contemporaine, faisant du terme *wout* une catégorie native afin de comprendre les dynamiques des réseaux de mobilité:

*Pran wout la* est un devenir, un état de construction, un mode d'être en mouvement intégrant des dimensions physiques et symboliques, et pouvant prendre des dérivés constitutifs de la mobilité (comme *ouvè wout la* – « ouvrir la route », ou *kite wout la* – « abandonner la route », entre autres), comme une manière d'être en différents espaces et moments de la mobilité. (*op. cit.*, 2019: 257).

Cependant, analyser la catégorie native *wout* à partir de ses propres termes et contextes au sein des trajectoires individuelles en perpétuel mouvement en explorant les différentes relations et les (des)équilibres des logiques de mobilité a constitué aussi bien un défi pour l'étude ethnographique qu'une richesse analytiquement fructueuse pour une théorie ethnographique de la mobilité. En effet, l'étude ethnographique s'est déroulée en de multiples lieux et en mouvement, ce qui a impliqué des défis méthodologiques singuliers, et elle n'a été possible que grâce aux multiples insertions dans les réseaux haïtiens dont je fais partie et ce de différentes façons : en tant que chercheuse, membre d'une famille haïtienne et de ses réseaux, mais aussi en tant que co-fondatrice d'une association de migrants,<sup>3</sup> ayant une vision de juriste et d'anthropologue,<sup>4</sup> d'ethnologue et de « native », de femme et de mère de deux enfants haïtiens, mariée à un Haïtien, de française et d'haïtienne, de migrante vivant au Brésil, immergée et impliquée dans les réseaux haïtiens et les réseaux de discussions sur les politiques publiques migratoires. Ainsi, ma propre recherche a nécessairement une dimension d'auto-analyse ou d'auto-ethnographie, ce qui m'a obligée à considérer mes différents engagements et les multiples lieux que j'occupe et la façon dont je suis perçue par les divers agents faisant partie de l'univers analysé. En ce sens, au sein de ma propre expérience ethnographique, la dimension de « l'objectivation participative » est indissoluble de celle de la « participation observante » (Bourdieu 1991 et 2003).

Durant ma recherche de terrain entre Haïti, le Brésil et les États-Unis – où l'analyse et la compréhension des dynamiques de la mobilité haïtienne m'a été possible à partir d'une étude ethnographique aux détours des (en)jeux de la multiplicité de mes engagements (Montinard 2019: 54-65) –, j'ai pu observer les sens du mot *wout*, terme utilisé par les Haïtiens en mouvement ou préparant un (nouveau) départ. En effet, ce terme peut prendre des dimensions physiques et symboliques. Lorsque l'expression *wout Miami* est apparue, à la fin de l'année 2015, dans le quotidien des Haïtiens au Brésil qui ont pris la route des États-Unis, elle s'est insérée dans le vocabulaire de la mobilité haïtienne avec l'expression *pran wout la*, rendant ainsi plus floue encore la frontière entre chacune de ces dimensions. Et s'interroger sur les sens et les usages du concept natif *wout*, c'est renvoyer la pragmatique de la mobilité à celle de la diaspora décrite par Joseph (2015a et 2015b) ou Glick-Schiller (2011).

<sup>3</sup> Mon mari et moi avons créé, en 2014, le projet *Haïti Aqui*, qui est officiellement devenu, en 2017, notre association brésilienne d'appui à l'intégration des migrants (Mawon - [www.mawon.org](http://www.mawon.org)). L'association est membre et partenaire du Comité Étatique Intersectoriel de Politique d'Attention aux Réfugiés et aux Migrants (CEIPARM), de RedeMir, de l'Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations (OIM), entre autres.

<sup>4</sup> Avant d'obtenir mon doctorat en anthropologie sociale au PPGAS du Museu Nacional/UFRJ, je me suis formée en droit et ai obtenu deux masters en droit international comparé et en droits de l'homme à l'Université de Münster, en Allemagne.

## Dérivés du mot *wout*

En Haïti, le mot *wout* se conjugue principalement avec le verbe *faire* au futur, *m pral fè wout la, ann fè wout la* (littéralement, je vais « faire » la route, partons sur la route), ce qui peut révéler une dimension physique de déplacement d'un point à un autre, d'un lieu à un autre, signifiant la route qu'une personne emprunte pour se rendre à un endroit désiré. Un paysan peut dire qu'il prendra la route des montagnes (*fè wout mòn*), une autre personne qu'elle prendra la route du sud pour dire qu'elle se rend à Baradères (*fè wout sid*) et une autre encore peut dire *fè wout plezi* pour indiquer qu'elle va se divertir à la plage par exemple.

En outre, *fè wout* peut également renvoyer à une dimension de magie (*maji, mistik*). Comme pour appeler la population haïtienne au vaudou et à ses pratiques afin de se mobiliser, de reprendre courage et espoir en un avenir meilleur, le groupe racine RAM chantait, dans une musique du carnaval de 1997, intitulée *Zanj* :<sup>5</sup> « Messieurs dames, je vais faire une route, venez avec moi ... ne regardez pas derrière vous si vous entendez tirer, suivez-moi, ne regardez pas derrière vous si vous entendez les canons tirer, suivez-moi. »<sup>6</sup>

*Pran wout la* n'est non seulement pour une personne qui entreprend un voyage, planifié ou non, qui s'établit dans la durée, plus ou moins courte, entre départs, transits et arrivées, entre rester, partir et repartir, entre stratégies individuelles et collectives, et qui navigue donc entre la dimension physique et symbolique de la *wout*, car le terme renvoie également à une idée de privilège pour ceux qui sont sur les *wout*, à un processus de réussite, de construction des sens du mot diaspora, même s'ils ont souffert (*pase mizè*). En effet, une réussite ne se définit pas toujours par le fait d'avoir obtenu un emploi ou de bien gagner sa vie, mais peut prendre des sens différents : par exemple, lorsqu'un père fait venir sa femme et son fils pour qu'ils vivent ensemble au Brésil, quand un couple se marie ou qu'un enfant naît au Brésil, quand l'un arrive à Miami alors qu'un autre est promu à un poste de responsable au sein d'une entreprise française à Brasilia, autant de possibilités dénotant du sens purement économique d'une réussite. Dans ce dernier cas, on entendra alors davantage des expressions comme *fè mouvman, vire won, brase lari a* (littéralement, faire un mouvement, tourner en rond, brasser la rue), autant de concepts qui se réfèrent à l'idée de stratégies pour gagner de l'argent (*fè kob*), malgré le fait que tous renvoient à une image de mouvement, de se débrouiller, sans s'insérer automatiquement dans la terminologie de la mobilité.

Si *pati* (partir), *vwayaje* (voyager), *ale* (aller)<sup>7</sup> sont des verbes conjuguant et tissant les différents sens de la mobilité haïtienne (Montinard 2019: 177-178), ils reflètent une réalité sociale dont la destination, qu'elle soit finale ou non, informe sur les représentations de la catégorie diaspora (*ti diaspora, gwo diaspora*), comme la décrit Joseph (2015b). Si *pati, kite Ayiti* (partir, quitter Haïti) a été l'expérience de milliers d'Haïtiens, la grande majorité répétait les mots qu'Yves m'avait dit un jour, alors que nous organisions une fête commémorative du drapeau haïtien (le 18 mai) au sein de la communauté haïtienne de Rio de Janeiro : *Ayiti pap ka kite nou, li nan kè nou* (Haïti ne peut nous quitter, elle reste dans nos cœurs), une phrase ponctuée d'un lourd soupir, comme si Haïti, malgré ses précarités et le manque d'opportunités, représentait, dans le quotidien des personnes vivant à l'étranger, un espace de références, d'obligations, de mémoires, de tensions où les sentiments d'appartenance se mêlent à ceux des souvenirs, d'un pays qui nous manque. Ces liens se vivent à distance et se (re)tissent sous différentes formes, lors des voyages et des visites quand cela est possible, à travers les transferts d'argent à la famille, entre autres. Cependant, le soupir d'Yves renvoyait à une ambivalence entre le fait que la personne diaspora ne quitte jamais *de facto* Haïti et le fait que le pays se vive au sein de la mobilité des personnes et représente un lieu que l'on doit quitter pour *chache lavi*, non seulement pour soi-même, mais aussi pour ceux qui y sont restés.

5 A écouter sur : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgluGf7gJNk>.

6 *Lapèsòn, m pral fè yon wout, ann ale avè mwen ... mèt tande tire, piga ou vire gade, ann ale avè mwen, ou mèt tande kanon, piga ou vire gade, ann ale avè mwen.*

7 Il est à noter ici que le verbe migrer est totalement absent du vocabulaire créole, alors qu'il existe en français, en anglais, en portugais ou en espagnol, par exemple.

Ainsi, la personne diaspora se voit obligée de *pran wout la* pour reconstruire une vie à l'étranger et rechercher une vie pleine et digne (Neiburg 2017 et 2019), répondant aux obligations morales de la famille et de la communauté, une réalité qui n'existe pas seulement à partir d'Haïti, mais également des pays de passage ou de résidence, comme le Brésil. Quand Pipo a annoncé qu'il allait prendre la *wout Miami*, il s'est justifié en disant : *bagay yo pa bon mwen bò isit, m gen yon pitit Ayiti* (les choses ne sont pas bonnes pour moi ici, j'ai une fille en Haïti), comme si *chache lavi* au Brésil ne représentait alors pas (ou plus) les sens d'être diaspora. Pipo se devait de prendre une nouvelle *wout* avec l'idée de devoir aider sa famille restée en Haïti, selon ce qui était *pi bon* (meilleur) pour lui et ses proches, révélant ainsi une forme d'échec de la *wout* qui l'avait amené au Brésil. Les dires de Pipo étaient scandés d'expressions comme *tèt chaje* (la tête est remplie de problèmes), *pwoblèm pap fini* (les problèmes ne finiront jamais), *bagay yo rèd* (les choses sont difficiles), *m bouke chita pa fè anyen* (je suis fatigué d'être assis à ne rien faire), entre autres, qui me glacent toujours, car j'avais pleine conscience du poids social que représente le fait de ne pouvoir envoyer chaque mois de l'argent à ceux qui sont restés en Haïti. Paul m'avait un jour lancé, du seuil de l'église protestante qu'il fréquentait chaque dimanche, que « les personnes en Haïti m'attendent » (*moun Ayiti yo ap tann mwen*), comme pour résumer qu'il avait échoué, comme s'il était mort socialement et qu'un simple numéro de transfert envoyé sur le WhatsApp de sa femme restée en Haïti pourrait en quelque sorte le faire revivre, si seulement il trouvait un emploi.

Cette situation reflète la pluralité non seulement des relations entre les individus, mais également entre eux et leur lieu de résidence ou d'origine, révélant les perspectives, les actions et les principes moraux en jeu dans les dynamiques de la mobilité et les formes à travers lesquelles elle se construit ou se déconstruit au quotidien des individus, entre proximité et distance relationnelle, émotionnelle et territoriale, où la menace des frustrations (*pwoblèm, fristrasyon, konfli*) demeure présente (Neiburg 2017). En ce sens, Comerford souligne que, même en cas de coexistence pacifique, il existe « une familiarité qui nous permet de tolérer des problèmes [...] qui, en d'autres circonstances, pourraient avoir de graves conséquences », circonstance pouvant alors « changer rapidement et de manière inattendue [...], et cela demeure toujours comme une possible perspective ou menace, même dans la plus paisible et familière coexistence » (Comerford 2003: 40).

La *wout Miami* répond(ait) donc avant tout aux représentations d'être diaspora, de pouvoir envoyer régulièrement de l'argent à sa famille (dans ce cas, des dollars américains, une monnaie forte), de pouvoir planifier le projet de faire venir un proche ou de visiter Haïti, entre autres. Ces représentations, ce rêve de devenir diaspora, ont eu pour conséquence d'ouvrir la route (*ouvè wout la*) à des milliers d'Haïtiens vivant au Brésil. Publiant de belles photos sur les réseaux sociaux, ceux qui sont arrivés aux États-Unis espèrent une régularisation afin d'ouvrir d'autres routes pour leurs proches restés en Haïti ou dans le pays de passage ou de résidence.

## Quand *pran wout la* mène à Miami

C'est un soir de décembre 2015, lors d'un *churrasco* d'anniversaire, dans les rues de Merk, quartier de Cidade de Deus, à Rio de Janeiro, que j'ai entendu pour la première fois les planifications de nouvelles routes à partir du Brésil. J'ai été immiscée *de facto* dans une conversation où Pipo expliquait à Bob, mon mari, qu'il partirait le lendemain matin pour *pran wout Miami*:

Bob, tu sais que je te respecte beaucoup pour ton leadership au sein des Haïtiens de Rio de Janeiro. On est des rastas, tu nous as beaucoup appris, notre *baz*<sup>8</sup> n'existerait déjà plus si tu n'avais pas été là.

8 Bien que polysémique, le mot renvoie à un espace de sociabilité et d'appartenance où les personnes se rencontrent. Il peut être en effet associé à un gang, à un groupe de personnes qui s'y réunissent pour parler, à un groupe d'amis, à un groupe de musique ou à une association, entre autres.

Par respect, je suis obligé de te dire quelque chose : demain matin, Étienne et moi allons à São Paulo prendre la *wout Miami*. On va tenter notre chance.<sup>9</sup>

Cette nouvelle m'a laissée perplexe, car je savais que très rapidement des milliers d'autres Haïtiens allaient entreprendre ce nouveau départ (*vide sou wout la*). En effet, les conséquences de la présence haïtienne au Brésil, considérée comme un « problème » de gouvernement (Dias & Vieira 2019), ont impliqué l'adoption de politiques publiques spécifiques afin de pouvoir rendre gouvernable cette nouvelle population, réanimant ainsi les discussions autour de la « gouvernementalité » définie par Foucault (2004) comme:

L'ensemble constitué par les institutions, les procédures, analyses et réflexions, les calculs et les tactiques qui permettent d'exercer cette forme bien spécifique, quoique très complexe de pouvoir qui a pour cible principale la population, pour forme majeure de savoir l'économie politique, pour instrument essentiel les dispositifs de sécurité. (Foucault, cours donné au Collège de France en 1978 intitulé *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, pp. 111- 112, 2004).

Aussi, quelques semaines avant que Pipo ne nous annonce la nouvelle de son départ, le gouvernement brésilien venait de publier une décision au Journal Officiel pour régulariser près de quarante-quatre mille Haïtiens dont la plupart était entrés par les frontières d'Amazonie.<sup>10</sup> Bien que les effets de la récession économique aient commencé à se faire sentir au Brésil, la majorité des Haïtiens, à la fin de l'année 2015, avait un emploi formel, situation révélée par le rapport annuel de 2016 de l'Observatoire des Migrations Internationales (Cavaltanti & al. 2016), en partenariat avec le Ministère du Travail et de l'Emploi et l'Université de Brasilia, qui montre aussi que la population haïtienne représentait la première nationalité sur le marché du travail (se référant à un travail déclaré), devant les Portugais : les Haïtiens sont passés de 815 immigrants en 2011 à 33 154 en 2015. Selon ce rapport, il a été constaté qu'en 2013, les Portugais avaient déjà été dépassés par les Haïtiens. Ceux-ci représentaient, en 2015, 26,4% de la force de travail immigrante au Brésil. Alors que la fin de l'année 2015 présentait un bilan positif vers une certaine volonté d'intégration des nationaux d'Haïti au Brésil, dont les politiques publiques et la situation économique répondaient plutôt favorablement, de nouvelles routes se dessinaient déjà au sein des réseaux haïtiens répondant à cet imaginaire où *chache lavi* ne pourrait être possible que sur les terres de l'oncle Sam.

Durant sa conversation avec Bob, Pipo révélait les stratégies individuelles et collectives qu'il avait mobilisées pour préparer son départ. Même s'il venait tout juste de faire venir l'un de ses petits frères à Rio de Janeiro, il a décidé d'entreprendre la *wout Miami* avec ses deux colocataires et amis d'enfance, Étienne et Kenken. Les trois amis avaient négocié leur démission au sein de l'entreprise de construction civile pour laquelle ils travaillaient et avaient utilisé l'argent de leur licenciement pour organiser leur départ et financer leur *wout* jusqu'en Équateur. Laisant derrière lui son frère à qui il avait trouvé un travail, Pipo s'est rendu à São Paulo avec ses deux amis pour y passer quelques semaines et obtenir une nouvelle identité africaine, avant de prendre l'avion, le 7/02/2016, pour Rio Branco, dans l'état de l'Acre.

En effet, dès les premiers mois de la *wout Miami* (entre fin 2015 et mars/avril 2016), il fallait acheter une fausse identité d'un des pays d'Afrique (Côte d'Ivoire, République Démocratique du Congo, Sénégal, Cameroun ou Togo, entre autres) reconnu par le Haut-Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les Réfugiés comme pays dont les ressortissants pouvaient être candidats au statut de réfugié afin d'éviter les risques de déportation dans les pays traversés par la *wout*. Cette identité leur permettait de traverser les frontières et d'obtenir un statut

9 Baz mwen, ou konen m respekte-w anpil pou tèt lidè ou ye nan mitan nou isit Rio. Rasta nou ye, ou aprann nou anpil depi nou isit, baz la tap gentan kraze si ou pat la. Pou tèt respè sa, m oblije di-w li : demen maten, nap pran wout Miami, mwen mèm ak Etienne. Nou pral tante chans nou.

10 Le Brésil a répondu au « problème » des flux migratoires haïtiens par des décisions gouvernementales comme la Résolution Normative n° 97 ou l'ordonnance du 12/11/2015 du Ministère du Travail et de l'Emploi (*Diário Oficial da União*, Section 1- 13/01/2012, p. 19) qui « dispose la concession d'un visa permanent prévu aux articles 16 de la Loi n° 6.815, du 19 août 1980, pour les nationaux d'Haïti » ou l'arrêté interministériel du 12/11/2015 (section 1, p. 48) concédant la résidence à près de 44 mille personnes. Voir également Vieira (2014 et 2017).

légal provisoire de « sollicitant du statut de réfugié » dans le pays par où ils transitaient, tout comme cela avait été possible au Brésil après 2010, évitant alors tout risque de déportation. Mais après mars/avril 2016, la *wout Miami* était connue de tous, des États où les personnes transitaient, des médias locaux et internationaux et l'identité africaine avait perdu tout son poids dans les stratégies de passage d'une frontière à une autre, certains voyageant même avec leur passeport haïtien et leur carte d'identité brésilienne. Ces couloirs parallèles où il était possible d'acheter de faux papiers révèlent donc les « fissures » ou les stratégies à partir desquelles la mobilité se construit, montrant l'importance du rôle des agences au sein des réseaux et de la mobilité haïtienne.

Les récits de Pipo ont aussi révélé les dimensions physiques et symboliques de la *wout Miami*, mobilisant des ressources personnelles et collectives, des stratégies, des rencontres, le hasard ou le destin, les *lwa* (esprits) ou les espérances en *Bondye* (Dieu), quand se présentaient des obstacles tels que des montagnes, où les frontières ne devenaient plus seulement physiques, mais encore symboliques. Lors de l'un de mes voyages en Floride, alors que j'allais lui rendre visite à Margate, Pipo m'a révélé les détails de son expérience au sein de la *wout Miami*. Une conversation qui a commencé sur un ton très sérieux:

Chacun a vécu cette *wout* d'une manière différente. Pour moi, c'était un *trip*, tu sais. Je suis un rasta, il me faut voir chaque étape de la vie d'une manière positive et croire en moi, croire au fait que je vais réussir.<sup>11</sup>

Pipo répétait souvent qu'il avait dû interdire à plusieurs reprises à son frère, resté à Rio de Janeiro, d'entreprendre la *wout Miami*, car l'expérience était selon lui « indigne » d'un être humain. Il avait choisi de s'appuyer sur ses croyances rastafari dont la positivité allait l'accompagner à chaque étape de la *wout* et lui redonner forces et courage pour y affronter les obstacles les plus difficiles. Ce choix lui a valu une position de leadership tout au long de la *wout* : par exemple, il s'est retrouvé à la tête d'un groupe devant traverser les eaux plutôt turbulentes sur des embarcations de fortune (*la lancha*) et franchir des montagnes pour rejoindre le Panama.

En effet, après quelques jours de voyage en bus depuis Quito, Pipo s'est engagé, comme d'autres milliers de personnes, sur la route qui l'a conduit à Medellín en vue de se procurer un laissez-passer de 30 jours auprès des autorités migratoires colombiennes lui permettant de continuer légalement son voyage en quête du « rêve américain ». Arrivé à Turbo, une ville de la côte caraïbe sur le Golfe d'Urabá, dans le nord de la Colombie, base de départ de la *lancha* pour Capurgana, Pipo a remarqué une dame dont le visage lui était familier : c'était la propriétaire de la maison que sa maman avait auparavant loué, dans le centre-ville de Gonaïves – ville dans le nord d'Haïti dont il était originaire. Cette rencontre inopinée s'est traduite par un instant de retour en Haïti, où les souvenirs qu'ils ont évoqués prenaient place, et Pipo m'a raconté combien cette dame les avait aidés, sa maman, son petit frère et lui, alors que son père venait de quitter Haïti pour les États-Unis par *canter*,<sup>12</sup> un récit révélant les liens de solidarité entre les deux familles.

Lors de leurs retrouvailles, ils avaient échangé des nouvelles des uns et des autres, de ceux qui étaient restés en Haïti, de ceux qui étaient décédés, de ceux qui avaient pris la *wout* pour le Brésil, le Chili ou les États-Unis, chacun tentant sa chance en quête de *lavi miyò*. Mais leur conversation est très vite revenue sur les détails de l'organisation de la *wout Miami* et des stratégies à déployer pour traverser le Golfe d'Urabá et parcourir les montagnes, les rivières et les broussailles pour arriver au Panama, stratégies qui s'articulaient principalement autour de la composition et du choix du groupe. Souvent, me racontait Pipo, s'insérer dans un groupe avec des enfants ou des femmes pour une traversée en mer ou à pied dans des conditions vraiment difficiles était risqué car ils ralentissaient la marche et se plaignaient davantage ; le choix et la composition

<sup>11</sup> *Chak moun viv wout sa yon jan diferan. Ou konen, pou mwen wout sa te yon trip. Se yon rasta m ye, m dwe wè chak etap lavi a ak yon je pozitif. M dwe kwe nan tèt mwen pou m kapab rive kote m vle a.*

<sup>12</sup> *Li te pran dlo me dira Pipo, expression pour dire qu'une personne s'aventure sur une wout par la mer.*

du groupe étaient cependant articulés sur la nécessité d'avoir la présence de femmes afin qu'elles cuisinent pour le reste du groupe qui devait être essentiellement composé de personnes fortes et capables de supporter les conditions éprouvantes du voyage.

En effet, parvenir au Panama depuis Turbo était l'étape la plus meurtrière de la *wout Miami*, car il fallait s'enfoncer dans l'enfer vert du bouchon du Darién, aux mains de paramilitaires et de trafiquants. Les vidéos ou les photos montrant une forêt tropicale et amazonienne dense, avec sa faune et sa flore inconnues des Haïtiens, et témoignant des conditions extrêmes de traversée, nourrissaient toujours d'intenses discussions sur les groupes de Facebook ou de WhatsApp dont je faisais partie. Cette frontière, située dans un environnement tropical hostile appelé le bouchon du Darién, est très difficilement franchissable et aucune route ne permet de passer d'un pays à l'autre – c'est d'ailleurs le seul tronçon manquant à la route panaméricaine. À partir de Turbo, la plupart des migrants traversent clandestinement la frontière panaméenne soit par voie terrestre, en marchant dans la jungle du Darién des jours durant, soit par la mer, en prenant un bateau commercial pour traverser le Golfe d'Urubá. Selon certains récits recueillis sur les réseaux sociaux, beaucoup n'ont pas résisté aux conditions extrêmes et aux risques d'une randonnée aussi traîtresse entreprise par des randonneurs non expérimentés et non équipés et où l'on rencontrait les dangers les plus effrayants (groupes criminels, animaux sauvages, maladies, inanition ou déshydratation) ; les plus faibles sont morts, abandonnés sur le chemin aux cris et aux pleurs de leurs proches impuissants, qui devaient continuer leur route.

Toutefois, cette rencontre a sans aucun doute marqué la décision de Pipo et de la dame de continuer leur route ensemble, comme si « Dieu m'avait envoyé cette personne me trouver » (*se Bondye ki voye moun sa bay mwen*), me dit Pipo. Si la dame voyait en Pipo un jeune homme débrouillard à l'esprit positif en qui elle avait confiance car elle l'avait connu enfant, Pipo voyait en elle une femme forte et courageuse (*fanm vayan*) qui saurait prendre soin de lui, lui faire à manger, l'aider ou le soigner en cas de besoin. Un groupe de douze personnes a alors été formé et la dame s'est chargée d'acheter tous les accessoires utiles. Il fallait penser au plus simple et au minimum pour ne pas surcharger les sacs à dos tout en garantissant la survie de tous : acheter du savon pour le linge, des aliments non périssables, des gamelles et autres ustensiles de cuisine pour faire à manger, des médicaments en cas de maladie ou d'accident, se procurer quelques couvertures au cas où les nuits seraient froides.

Pipo et ses compagnons de voyage ont accepté de prendre la tête du groupe et ont planifié le voyage en bateau pour traverser le Golfe d'Urubá, ce qui leur a coûté 200 USD par personne. Ce dangereux périple a duré environ huit heures et les a finalement obligés à finir à pied la *wout* jusqu'au Panama. Pipo souriait en m'expliquant que l'embarquement dans *la lancha* a sans doute duré aussi longtemps que la traversée, qui devait durer de 2h30, car il fallait peser les bagages, chaque kilo en surplus devant être payé, et gare à ceux qui n'avaient pas protégé leurs affaires avec des sacs poubelle. Cependant, une fois en mer, le moteur de *la lancha* s'est arrêté puis est reparti après quelques minutes comme si de rien n'était – *la lancha* possédait trois moteurs fonctionnant l'un après l'autre par souci d'économie d'essence. Le voyage en mer avait dû inclure une escale d'une nuit sur une île pour faire le plein d'essence et se reposer. La moindre houle sur une mer pourtant relativement calme faisait décoller la barque, qui tapait très fort et tanguait comme une coque de noix au ras de l'eau, faisant sauter les passagers qui hurlaient de peur, beaucoup ne sachant pas nager, et dont la plupart avaient le mal de mer.

Arrivé à Capurgana, le groupe dirigé par Pipo s'est une nouvelle fois engagé à pied pour franchir montagnes et broussailles, un récit qu'il m'a raconté la gorge serrée, révélant que *chache lavi* pouvait également se mêler au sens et aux pratiques du *mistik* (magie, mystique) quand la *wout* exigeait d'affronter des conditions de voyage extrêmes. En effet, pour arriver au Panama, le groupe a dû marcher cinq jours durant dans les montagnes, traverser des rivières en crue, marcher dans la boue, dormir d'un œil dans les broussailles, attentifs aux scorpions, vipères ou autre serpent venimeux. À Capurgana, Pipo avait négocié le voyage à 250 USD par personne avec un Indien colombien qui servirait de guide. Il m'a expliqué qu'il y avait, dans cette petite ville

colombienne, un vrai marché pour le passage des migrants sans document : « C'est un marché, ils savent que tu es étranger et ils t'abordent en te disant leur prix. Après, tu peux négocier. C'est un vrai business dans la région. »<sup>13</sup> Parfois, il fallait attendre des jours, voire des semaines, car il était plus difficile de négocier avec les passeurs qui refusaient de s'engager à pied dans les montagnes quand il y avait des opérations militaires du gouvernement de Panama pour combattre le trafic de drogues, fragilisant davantage la région du bouchon du Darién. On entendait alors dire : « *la selva come* » (la jungle mange) pour indiquer que la jungle peut engloutir en cas de fortes pluies, d'opérations militaires ou de présence de groupes paramilitaires et de narcotrafiquants. Une fois la négociation faite, l'Indien avait demandé à Pipo d'organiser son groupe ; l'important était d'avoir de l'eau et des bottes pour marcher en cas de pluies. Ils ont entrepris la marche derrière l'Indien qui ouvrait la route au reste du groupe avec sa machette. Le récit de Pipo révélait une marche où il était difficile de respirer du fait de la chaleur et de l'humidité, même si l'Indien avait prévu des pauses toutes les 30 minutes pour se reposer. Il était important pour les passeurs colombiens de comprendre la composition du groupe qu'ils devaient guider jusqu'à la frontière panaméenne car leur réputation pouvait être remise en cause. Parfois, Pipo riait :

Quand nous faisons une pause pour reprendre notre souffle et nous reposer, l'Indien nous demandait de prendre des photos ou de faire des vidéos avec nos téléphones portables pour montrer à nos familles que nous allions bien, qu'il nous traitait bien. Mais c'était surtout pour envoyer à ceux qui étaient encore derrière des messages en disant qu'untel était un bon type, un bon contact, et que, une fois arrivés à Capurgana, il leur fallait le demander et négocier le passage de la frontière.<sup>14</sup>

Mais Pipo m'a confié que ce *raketè*<sup>15</sup> les a abandonnés après quelques heures de marche – sans doute, selon lui, parce que le groupe était trop lent du fait de la présence d'enfants en bas âge –, et ils se sont retrouvés seuls, perdus, sans carte ni boussole, et sans savoir quelle direction prendre. Alors que la panique et la peur envahissaient les esprits de chacun, les enfants pleuraient sans bien comprendre ce qui se passait, les femmes hurlaient, Bible à la main, implorant *Bondye* (Dieu) de les sauver de cette situation et de ne pas les abandonner. Mais Pipo m'a dit que, en tant que leader du groupe, il ne pouvait laisser place aux émotions et à la démobilisation du groupe et qu'il lui fallait trouver une solution pour survivre et parvenir au Panama. Étienne et lui ont donc très vite décidé de se séparer en deux groupes, marchant en parallèle, mais à une certaine distance de sorte que l'un pouvait communiquer avec l'autre en criant.

Avant de reprendre la marche, Pipo m'a expliqué qu'il avait longtemps parlé à la dame, lui demandant de convaincre, une fois de plus, le reste du groupe à le soutenir dans cette décision et lui confiant qu'il entendait une sorte de voix, un « *ti zwazo* » (petit oiseau) qui lui chantait le chemin à suivre. C'est alors que Pipo m'a révélé que, la dame étant une *manbo* (prêtresse du vaudou), l'avait compris et avait su préparer, avec le peu de choses à portée de sa main, un rituel pour implorer la protection des ancêtres, des *lwa* qui les accompagnaient durant tout le voyage pour arriver sains et saufs. Pipo m'a raconté qu'elle avait ramassé quelques plantes (*fèy*) et les avait fait bouillir dans de l'eau sur un feu qu'elle avait confectionné avec trois pierres (*wòch*) au pied d'un arbre (*pyebwa*) qu'elle avait soigneusement choisi. Il ne s'agissait pas ici simplement de *fè maji* (faire de la magie) en réunissant les éléments importants du vaudou comme *fèy*, *wòch* ou *pyebwa*, mais bien de se rapprocher des *lwa* et de leurs demander protection pour *ouvè wout la* (ouvrir la route) et les aider à vaincre les obstacles qui se présentaient. En ce sens, *maji* et *mistik* ne renvoient pas au sens strict de la magie telle que définie par Richman :

13 *Se yon mache. Yo konen ou se etranje, yo rive sou ou epi yo tou bay ou pri pa yo. Apre sa, ou ka negosye. Se yon biznis nan zòn nan.*

14 *Lè nou te konn fè yon ti pòz pou reprann souf nou, pou nou repoze, endyen an te konn mande nou fè foto oubyen fè vidéo ak telefòn nou pou nou voye bay fanmi nou pou di yo nou byen, yo trete nou byen. Men bagay la te plis pou di moun ki te dèyè sou wout la fè kontak ak nèg sa lè yo rive Capurgana epi negosye avè-l paske se yon bon nèg, lap fè-w pase fwontyè a.*

15 Les *raketè* occupent une place prépondérante dans les récits de mobilité, moins en raison de la possibilité d'être considérés comme des « agents illégaux » que parce qu'ils sont acteurs et facilitateurs de la mobilité des personnes sur les *wout* pouvant faire face à des restrictions légales ou matérielles, générant ainsi des situations d'immobilité. Catégorie native que je définirai plus précisément aux pages 16 et suivantes de cet article.

Le mot *maji* est souvent utilisé, au sens strict du terme, pour désigner la sorcellerie et la classe de pouvoirs connue sous le nom de *pwen*. Symbole dominant d'une option morale et existentielle, la magie évoque ce qui est transitoire, le contrat et l'individualisme (Richman 2005: 151).

Durant cinq jours, le chant de *ti zwazo* guida Pipo et le groupe jusqu'au Panama, pays où certains ont passé trois semaines alors que d'autres durent y rester trois mois, selon la position du gouvernement dans la gestion de ces migrants en situation irrégulière. Quand entendre le chant d'un *ti zwazo* ou pratiquer un rituel prenait les sens d'une demande de protection des esprits ou des ancêtres afin d'affronter les impasses de la *wout*, réciter les prières évangéliques d'une Bible que certains avaient glissée dans leur sac à dos, comme objet garant de leur protection, c'était implorer *Bondye* de les sauver. *Pran wout la* s'accompagnait donc d'éléments d'une dimension collective sur les plans spirituel et transcendantal, où les rituels et les objets étaient nécessaires à la sécurité des individus tout au long de leur voyage, certains même se devant de pratiquer un tel rituel avant leur départ (Richman 2005: 152).

Arriver au Panama n'était pas chose facile et la déclaration du gouvernement panaméen du 9 mai 2016 interdisant aux Haïtiens et aux Cubains venant de Colombie d'entrer sur son territoire a compliqué la *wout* de milliers d'individus souhaitant traverser plus tard le pays pour se rendre aux États-Unis. Une nouvelle impasse de la *wout Miami* qui a poussé à inventer de nouvelles stratégies pour franchir la frontière, outre les négociations de prix.

Lorsque Pipo et Étienne sont arrivés au Panama, dans le petit village très pauvre de Yaviza, ils ont été accueillis par une communauté indigène qui n'avait que peu à leur offrir. Ils ont négocié le passage de la frontière avec les policiers pour 100 USD chacun. Puis, Pipo et Étienne ont pris un bus pour se rendre à Paso Canoas, à la frontière avec le Costa Rica où ils se sont séparés, Pipo ayant prié son ami de continuer son chemin et lui donnant le reste de ses économies (40 USD) car Étienne, fiancé à une jeune femme vivant à Port-au-Prince, n'avait qu'elle pour lui assurer le financement de sa *wout*. Contrairement à Pipo, Étienne n'avait pas de famille proche aux États-Unis pouvant l'aider financièrement et Pipo savait combien il était difficile pour une personne de classe moyenne vivant en Haïti d'envoyer de l'argent à un proche qui se trouvait sur la *wout Miami*. Pipo a attendu quelques jours avant de récupérer les 500 USD que son père lui avait envoyés par transfert international, somme qui lui a permis de négocier les services d'un *raketè* pour atteindre la frontière du Nicaragua, à Penas Blancas, un voyage connu sous le nom de *la ruta del tráfico* (la route du trafic) en raison de la circulation des drogues, des marchandises illégales, voire même du trafic de personnes. Située à proximité de la côte Pacifique, Penas Blancas, d'où une mince bande de terre permet d'entrer au Nicaragua, est le seul et unique point de passage terrestre entre les deux pays dont les impasses diplomatiques imposeront à certains de revendiquer leurs droits devant les médias locaux. Le temps d'attente pouvait aller de trois à quatre mois pour certains, alors que d'autres optaient pour différentes possibilités illégales afin de traverser la frontière : à pied par la montagne (pour 1 000-1 200 USD),<sup>16</sup> en camion ou en bus (pour 1 500-1.800 USD) ou en bateau par Los Chiles (pour 900 USD), souvent au péril de leur vie.

Si certains avaient abandonné leur emploi et disposaient de l'argent de leur licenciement ou de leur aide au chômage pour acheter des billets d'avion de Rio de Janeiro à Rio Branco et financer ainsi leur *wout* de la frontière péruvienne à Quito, d'autres achetaient leur billet d'avion à crédit sur leur compte bancaire et d'autres encore empruntaient à des amis vivant au Brésil. Mais s'engager sur la *wout* a demandé dans la plupart des cas une certaine garantie que la famille vivant en diaspora était prête à financer chaque étape où le marché des transferts d'argent a alors pris son essor, surtout à Quito (Équateur), Penas Blancas (Costa Rica) et Tijuana (Mexique).

<sup>16</sup> Voyage de 3 jours environ si le passeur accomplit honnêtement sa mission car beaucoup abandonnent le groupe à mi-chemin et les personnes se voient obligées à faire demi-tour pour payer les services d'un autre *raketè*.

Aussi, le marché illégal du *raketè* a alimenté les négociations entre les *raketè* et les personnes engagées sur la *wout* qui ont fait appel aux membres de leur famille vivant en diaspora et au brassage d'argent pour obtenir un document ou passer une frontière d'un pays à un autre, les prix variant selon la demande. Plus le passage d'une frontière est demandé, comme celle de Penas Blancas entre mai et septembre 2016, plus le prix demandé par les *raketè* augmente, pouvant atteindre 1 800 USD par personne selon le moyen de transport utilisé : bateau, véhicule motorisé privé (voiture, taxi, camion, etc.) ou public (bus), ou à pied par des routes sinueuses.

En général, la *wout Miami* dure entre trois et six mois et coûte jusqu'à 7 500 USD par personne en moyenne, selon les informations recueillies dans les longues conversations sur les groupes de WhatsApp, qui ont fortement marqué le quotidien des Haïtiens au Brésil durant le premier semestre de l'année 2016, mais également dans les récits plus personnels recueillis lors de mes séjours à Miami et en Haïti. La durée du voyage et la valeur du financement – que les individus indiquent par l'expression *fanmi-m ap ede-m* (ma famille va m'aider) – ont varié selon l'intensité des flux dans le temps : plus la demande était forte, plus le prix demandé par les *raketè* locaux augmentait et plus la durée du voyage diminuait.

Si Pipo mentionnait le Pérou comme un *vye peyi, peyi lèd*, pour dire que le pays n'est pas beau, peu attrayant et où il ne ferait pas bon vivre, même en transit, il définissait le Honduras et le Guatemala comme des pays où il était facile de transiter illégalement pour environ 150 USD, bien qu'il se souvienne de scènes marquées par la violence. Alors que son récit relatait avec une certaine résignation (*rezinye*) les tentatives de négociation d'argent contre un laissez-passer de la part des autorités locales frontalières ou les *raketè*, du Pérou au Guatemala, une fois arrivé sur le sol mexicain, un certain apaisement l'a envahi avant de s'engager sur une nouvelle *wout*, cette fois-ci d'ordre administratif, organisée entre les autorités d'immigration mexicaines et américaines.

En effet, une fois enregistré sous sa nationalité haïtienne par les services de la Police Fédérale mexicaine, ce qui lui a valu un laissez-passer de vingt jours, Pipo a entamé un nouveau voyage de quelques jours en bus jusqu'à la frontière de Tijuana/San Diego où des services humanitaires locaux étaient déployés, à la demande de l'*Immigration and Customs Enforcement* et des services de douane et de protection des frontières des États-Unis, pour recevoir et abriter les migrants, bracelet électronique noir à la cheville, attendant le jour de leur audience auprès du tribunal d'immigration qui statue sur leur demande d'asile ou de réfugié. Tous attendaient le formulaire I-94 qui leur permettrait d'entrer légalement aux États-Unis, pour une durée déterminée, jusqu'à la décision judiciaire finale.

Au pied du mur grillagé marquant la frontière entre Tijuana et San Diego, beaucoup ont hésité à passer la frontière lorsque le gouvernement américain a déclaré, le 22 septembre 2016, la reprise des déportations des Haïtiens en situation irrégulière sur leur territoire.<sup>17</sup> Les messages envoyés par les autorités américaines à ces migrants et demandeurs d'asile, qu'ils laissent entrer tout en leur promettant l'expulsion, les ont plongés dans l'incertitude. Sur le point d'atteindre la fin de leur *wout*, après une traversée épique de la moitié du continent américain, du Brésil à la Basse-Californie, ils se tenaient au poste-frontière de San Ysidro, côté américain, où ils présentaient leur demande pour vivre aux États-Unis, au risque, hautement probable, d'être renvoyés en Haïti. Certains se sont découragés de tenter de passer la frontière et, voyant leurs espoirs s'évanouir, ont décidé de rester à Tijuana, au pied du mur, pris au piège entre mer et désert, car ils n'avaient jamais pensé à rester au Mexique, loin de la représentation qu'ils se faisaient du rêve américain, du rêve de devenir diaspora.

Comme la majorité de ceux qui se sont engagés sur la *wout Miami* et qui ont été entendus par les officiers des services américains d'immigration de San Diego, Pipo a passé quatre mois dans un centre de détention avant d'être libéré, en novembre 2016. Une fois sorti, il a rejoint son père, à Margate, en Floride, chez qui il vit depuis lors. Il a attendu près de six mois avant d'obtenir son permis de travail (*Employment Authorization Document*), un laps de temps dont il a profité pour prendre des cours d'anglais. Durant ces quelques mois, il a passé trois

<sup>17</sup> Article du *Miami Herald* du 22/09/2016.

entretiens devant un tribunal durant lesquels il lui a été demandé d'apporter des preuves de sa demande d'asile ou de sa demande de regroupement familial, des rencontres où il était représenté et accompagné par un avocat que son père avait engagé pour 500 USD. C'est en janvier 2018 que, sur décision judiciaire, sa résidence temporaire (pour deux ans) lui a été octroyée sur la base du regroupement familial. De temps à autre, Pipo aime publier des vidéos *live* et des photos sur Facebook s'affichant avec sa nouvelle compagne haïtiano-américaine ou sur un yacht de luxe naviguant dans la baie de Miami Beach où le *konpa*<sup>18</sup> et le whisky se mêlent à la fête sur les rythmes de groupes comme T-Vice, Nu Look, Disip, entre autres, composés d'Haïtiens résidant aux États-Unis et influents sur la scène musicale haïtienne, en Haïti et à l'étranger.

Car être diaspora, ce n'est pas seulement envoyer de l'argent ou des objets à ceux qui sont restés en Haïti, réaliser un projet social ou bien organiser le voyage d'un proche, mais c'est aussi le montrer publiquement sur les réseaux sociaux, révélant alors le comportement, la valeur morale, sociale et symbolique du succès de la *wout*, autant de caractéristiques définissant la personne diaspora selon l'imaginaire des Haïtiens, où l'idée de *gwo dyaspora* (grand diaspora) ne serait possible que vivant dans des *gwo peyi* (pays économiquement riches), comme les États-Unis. *Chache lavi* ne serait donc vrai qu'en dehors des frontières terrestres d'Haïti, à l'étranger, faisant de la mobilité une ressource cultivée pour atteindre le progrès social, économique et culturel de l'individu.

### Retour au Brésil ou *tounen anwon*

À partir d'une ethnographie des expériences de mobilité des personnes sur la *wout Miami*, l'intention est de détailler les différentes stratégies utilisées par les ressortissants haïtiens pour franchir les frontières de plus en plus réglementées par les différents États des Amériques. Les *wout* peuvent être longues, fragmentées, dangereuses, inachevées et redéfinies tout au long du processus ; les lieux de destination peuvent même être repensés. Les processus de mobilité sont alors interrompus par des régimes d'immobilité empêchant les migrants de se déplacer dans les directions souhaitées, créant de fait une immobilité involontaire (Carling 2001) qui se révèle être la réalité de plusieurs personnes qui se sont aventurées sur les *wout*. Cette impossibilité de poursuivre le voyage, ajoutée à la honte de rentrer dans le pays d'origine sans avoir réussi à devenir *dyaspora*, a conduit à un processus de reconfiguration des villes frontalières (comme Tijuana, par exemple - Montinard 2019: 211-222 ; Lebfèvre 2017) et de la dynamique des migrations internes sur le continent américain. Dans ce contexte, qui a de nombreux points communs avec les réalités de la migration et du refuge de groupes et d'individus dans d'autres parties du monde et en Amérique Latine,<sup>19</sup> les actions des intermédiaires deviennent des agents fondamentaux de la mobilité.<sup>20</sup>

En effet, une fois arrivés aux États-Unis, certains, comme Pipo, partent en quête du premier emploi pour envoyer de l'argent en Haïti, d'autres travaillent durant quelques mois et tentent d'épargner assez d'argent pour financer une nouvelle *wout*, celle qui les amènera au Canada, mais beaucoup sont déportés vers Haïti. En effet, la déportation (ou sa menace) a dévié la *wout* de beaucoup, certains préférant attendre à la frontière mexicaine de Tijuana, d'autres (en prison ou libérés sous caution) attendant le jour de leur rendez-vous au *Court* (tribunal américain) pour se présenter devant le juge qui statue sur leur demande d'asile ou de réfugié.

18 Genre musical haïtien popularisé par le saxophoniste et guitariste Jean-Baptiste Nemours dans les années 1950.

19 Voir Bálamo (2009) sur les récits de jeunes migrants qui ont embarqué sur des bateaux en route vers une Europe imaginaire et se sont retrouvés en Amérique du Sud ou le documentaire de Carlos Sandoval Garcia, « *Casa en Tierra Ajena* » (2017), qui relate les histoires et les rêves de Nicaraguayens obligés d'émigrer vers l'Amérique du Nord. Disponible sur : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AkrZlumTRji&fbclid=IwAR377JONVtQllraDeT4yhbGgToljPpLXwc5cbk7-E9wxv9ZlOwXhX3iMlHY>

20 Les intermédiaires, figure centrale de la littérature anthropologique classique sur la migration et la mobilité, en particulier des études sur les relations politiques et économiques au niveau local, sont généralement définis comme des *brokers*, terme venant de l'anglais. Voir les auteurs de l'école de Manchester (Gluckman, Mitchell et Barnes 1949 ; Fallers 1955), Eric Wolf (1956) et Clifford Geertz (1960).

D'autres enfin, provisoirement libérés sur le sol américain, la peur de la déportation au ventre, s'engagent, sans même attendre la décision judiciaire, sur la *wout* vers le nord de l'État de New York pour rentrer au Canada, pays frontalier offrant une politique d'accueil plus favorable et où les risques de déportation seraient plus faibles.

Malgré le fait que de nouvelles *wout* se dessinent depuis Haïti ou le Brésil, la déportation ne constitue pas seulement un malheureux événement de migration pour un individu et sa famille qui y voient un échec, mais elle a aussi de graves conséquences sur l'économie nationale, un enjeu majeur pour Haïti qui dépend essentiellement des transferts d'argent de sa diaspora. Ce point est important puisque la diaspora haïtienne comprend plus d'un million deux cent mille personnes en déplacement régulier,<sup>21</sup> soit 11% de la population, selon le rapport OCDE/INURED publié en 2017 sur les *interactions entre politiques publiques, migrations et développement en Haïti*. En outre, selon le rapport de la Banque mondiale sur les migrations et le développement, Haïti est le septième plus grand destinataire des transferts d'argent de la diaspora, lesquels occupent une place clé dans l'économie nationale. En 2017, ce montant s'élevait à deux milliards et demi de dollars américains, soit 34% du PIB. Environ 60% du volume total de ces transferts proviennent des États-Unis, soit un milliard et demi de dollars américains, contre cinq cent soixante-six millions de dollars américains de la République dominicaine, cent quarante-neuf millions de dollars américains de la France et cent quarante-quatre millions de dollars américains du Canada.

Il convient de noter qu'en dix ans, entre 2007 et 2016, les transferts d'argent effectués depuis les États-Unis ont augmenté de 85,6%, atteignant des valeurs plus élevées, par exemple, que les transactions effectuées dans les pays d'Amérique latine et des Caraïbes, tels que la République dominicaine (62,9%) et la Jamaïque (14,9%). Les transferts effectués depuis les États-Unis deviennent encore plus importants si l'on considère que les montants envoyés par les personnes de la diaspora à leurs familles ont totalisé une augmentation de 51% au cours de la même période. De plus, il existe un impact local concernant l'argent de la diaspora qui est transféré : ce qui importe aux yeux des personnes recevant ces transferts, ce n'est pas tant l'argent envoyé, que l'effet que cela peut avoir sur la vie quotidienne, puisque les transferts d'argent, d'une valeur moyenne de 200 à 300 dollars américains par personne, que chaque haïtien vivant à l'étranger envoie à un parent en Haïti, représentent 60% des revenus du ménage et ravivent les espoirs d'un nouveau projet migratoire pour réaliser le rêve de devenir *dyaspora*.

Si les États-Unis demeurent bien la destination préférée des Haïtiens, la destination de la *wout* a pu changer au cours du parcours migratoire des individus qui ont pris de nouvelles *wout* vers le Chili,<sup>22</sup> pays offrant plus d'opportunités pour certains. En effet, après le Brésil, le Chili est devenu la destination de milliers de jeunes Haïtiens arpentant avec foi et détermination le hall de l'aéroport de Port-au-Prince, munis d'un passeport, d'un billet et d'argent pour s'y rendre. Mais à choisir entre aller au Chili ou repartir au Brésil, l'expression *lage kò* (littéralement, larguer son corps, soit se laisser aller) lancée sur un groupe de WhatsApp révèle avant tout les sens de devenir diaspora à l'étranger, où les savoir-faire et savoir-être entrent dans un jeu de tensions entre savoir manier les valeurs socio-culturelles accumulées de son expérience en tant qu'Haïtien et diaspora et savoir gérer des émotions individuelles et collectives, entre *sonje lakay* (avoir le mal du pays) et espoirs déçus, entre attentes et frustrations (*fristrasyon*).

21 Ces chiffres sont cependant sous-estimés en raison de l'importance de l'immigration irrégulière : certains estiment qu'entre 1 et 2 millions d'Haïtiens vivent aux États-Unis sans document (International Crisis Group, 2007). Les données de l'U.S. Census Bureau de 2010 indiquent que cette population est concentrée, à près de 80%, dans trois états principaux : Floride, New York et Massachusetts. La Floride a le pourcentage le plus élevé d'Haïtiens (48,1%), contre 21,6% dans l'État de New York et 8,3% dans le Massachusetts.

22 Article du journal *Folha de São Paulo* du 08/05/2016.

C'est le cas de Schiller qui, lors d'une visite à l'association *Mawon*, alors que je m'employais à lui expliquer les démarches à suivre pour obtenir la résidence au Brésil, m'a interrompu, comme pour répondre à mon air interrogatif lorsque, feuilletant son passeport, mon regard s'est détenu sur son visa de résidence chilienne valable pour un an:

Madame Mélanie, tu ne peux pas comprendre pourquoi je ne suis pas resté au Chili, comme moi je ne comprends pas pourquoi tu ne vis pas en France avec ta famille. Beaucoup comprennent pas. Mais c'est ma décision. Ce n'était pas *bon* pour moi là-bas (*li te vinn pat bon pou mwen*). Cette décision peut paraître égoïste car j'ai de la famille en Haïti qui attend que je lui envoie le numéro du transfert d'argent, mais je pouvais vraiment plus supporter les conditions de vie là-bas. Et je ne peux pas leur demander de comprendre, ils n'y vivent pas ! Je travaillais dans une plantation de citron avec d'autres dizaines d'Haïtiens. On travaillait dehors, sous la pluie, et il y avait des jours où il faisait vraiment très froid. C'est dur de travailler dans les champs. Tu travailles par tous les temps, tu portes de lourdes charges, et même si tu as un salaire de 450 USD, tu ne vis pas mieux que ça. Ça commençait à pas aller bien pour moi. Je vivais chez un ami, et pour lui aussi ça n'allait pas bien. Mon père habite à Rio de Janeiro, alors j'ai décidé de venir le rejoindre. Même si j'entends dire que le Brésil ce n'est pas mieux que le Chili, au moins, si je dois vivre dans la misère (*pase mizè*), autant être auprès de mes proches. C'est pour ça que je suis venu au Brésil.<sup>23</sup>

À l'instar de Schiller, selon qui ce qui est le mieux pour une personne (*li pi bon mwen*), elle seule peut le mesurer et l'exprimer, certains ont quitté le Chili pour se rendre au Brésil. Ceux qui avaient conservé leur carte de résidence brésilienne, quand elle était encore valide, ont pris un vol direct pour le Brésil. En septembre 2016, Arold s'est engagé sur la *wout Miami*, mais il a été expulsé vers Haïti par les services américains d'immigration en mai 2017. Or, comme beaucoup de ceux qui ont été renvoyés vers leur terre natale, rester en Haïti était sans doute la dernière des options qu'il aurait choisie.

En effet, Arold s'était engagé sur la *wout Miami* sans avoir attendu de conclure les démarches pour obtenir sa résidence brésilienne ; il a quitté le Brésil avec son attestation de demande d'asile comme seul document (provisoire) d'identité au Brésil. Mais depuis le 1<sup>er</sup> janvier 2017, sur décision du gouvernement de Michel Temer, toute personne quittant le territoire avec cette seule attestation en sa possession perd automatiquement le droit à demander un statut de réfugié, ainsi que les droits en découlant (comme le permis de travail, par exemple), et ne pouvait donc plus revenir sur le sol brésilien sans visa. Une réalité que beaucoup d'Haïtiens refoulés des États-Unis ont vécu, se voyant empêchés de *re pran wout la* pour le Brésil. Il est donc important de ne pas réduire la *wout Miami* à un voyage à sens unique qui aurait comme point de départ le Brésil et comme point d'arrivée les États-Unis, faisant de *chache lavi* une forme de *tounen anwon* (tourner en rond) jusqu'à trouver le havre de paix où il fait bon vivre (*ap byen viv*), où il serait possible de vivre une belle vie (*lavi miyò*).

Quand Ti Bab a su qu'Arold, son cousin, avait été renvoyé des États-Unis, il s'est vite employé à le faire revenir à Rio de Janeiro. Il m'a contactée pour que je puisse, via nos actions et nos partenariats au sein de l'association *Mawon*, l'aider à obtenir un visa permanent auprès de l'Ambassade du Brésil à Port-au-Prince. Mais les démarches d'obtention du visa brésilien sont très longues (en moyenne six mois, voire plus) et il était encore incertain, à l'époque, que les Haïtiens ayant obtenu la résidence au Brésil puissent y revenir sans présenter de tampon de sortie du territoire sur leur passeport. Plus d'un an plus tard, en juillet 2018, à son retour à Rio de Janeiro et alors que je l'accompagnais à la Police Fédérale pour qu'il obtienne sa résidence brésilienne,

23 Madam Mélanie, ou ka pa konprann poukisa m pat rete viv Chili, mèm jan m pa ka konprann poukisa se pa Lafrans ou al viv ak fanmi-w. Anpil moun pap konprann. Men se desizyon pa-m. Li te vinn pat bon mwen mèm. Anpil moun ka konprann li tankou yon desizyon pou tèt pa-m sèlman, paske m gen fanmi Ayiti kap tann m voye nimewo transfè a bay yo. Men m pat ka sipòte kondsyon vi lòt bò yo mèm mèm mèm ankò. E m pa ka mande moun lakay mwen konprann, yo pa viv lòt bò a ! M tap travay nan jaden sitron ak yon lòt 10 Ayisyen. Nou tap travay deyò, anba lapli. Gen dè jou li te konn fè anpil fred. Li pa dous travay latè non. Wap travay chak jou, anba soley cho oubyen anba lapli, wap pòte chay, epi mèm si salè 450 dola, ou pa viv pi byen pase sa. Bagay yo te komanse pat bon mwen. M te rete kay yon zanmi, li mèm tou te komanse gen pwoblèm. Papa-m viv Rio de Janeiro, m deside vinn jwenn li. Mèm si m tande Brezil pa miyò pase Chili, si se pou-m pase mizè, pito se bò kot fanmi-m. Se sak fè m vinn Brezil.

Arold m'a raconté qu'il avait opté pour entreprendre le *chimen dekoupe* (littéralement, chemin découpé) par le Chili pour revenir au Brésil y (re)planifier de nouvelles *wout*. Or, à Rio de Janeiro, Arold n'était pas le seul à planifier de nouveaux départs, comme si, depuis le Brésil, la *wout Miami* était devenue un « voyage » (*vwayaj*) légal sur lequel s'engageaient cette fois-ci des femmes enceintes ou des familles accompagnées de leurs enfants en bas âge.

Aussi, de nouveaux départs ou retours vers le Brésil se préparaient en Haïti, réanimant les dynamiques autour de la figure du *raketè*. Marlène m'avait demandé de l'aider dans ses démarches pour demander un visa pour sa sœur car se posait, une nouvelle fois, une grande difficulté : celle de prendre rendez-vous sur le site de l'Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations (O.I.M.).

Si la promulgation de la RN n° 97/2012 en a été un précédent, c'est l'ordonnance du 12/11/2015 disposant sur le visa d'« accueil humanitaire » des Haïtiens – qui vient s'ajouter au droit pour une épouse ou un fils, par exemple, de demander le regroupement familial – qui a créé une filière officielle d'entrée sur le territoire via l'Ambassade du Brésil à Port-au-Prince. Dans le sillage de l'obtention d'un visa permanent pour raisons humanitaires (Vieira 2017), une résolution a amené l'Ambassade brésilienne en Haïti à signer un accord avec l'O.I.M. Le Centre de Réception des Demandes de Visas pour le Brésil (B.V.A.C.), créé le 28 septembre 2015 à Tabarre, en Haïti, a alors commencé à recevoir les Haïtiens souhaitant faire une demande de visa pour raisons humanitaires. Sous l'égide de la RN n° 97/2012, puis sous l'égide de la nouvelle loi n° 13.445/2017, régie par l'arrêté interministériel n° 10 du 6 avril 2018 (publié le 9 avril 2018, modifié une première fois par l'arrêté du 19 novembre 2018, puis une seconde fois par celui du 20 décembre 2019), cet accord entre les deux institutions s'appuie sur la résolution disposant sur la « concession du visa temporaire et de l'autorisation de résidence, à des fins d'accueil humanitaire, pour les citoyens haïtiens et pour les apatrides », et du droit à déposer une demande de regroupement familial. Le centre B.V.A.C. est dès lors devenu le passage obligé, exclusif et officiel, pour les demandes de visa auprès de la section consulaire de l'Ambassade du Brésil à Port-au-Prince.

Jusqu'en juillet 2018, l'O.I.M. recevait dans ses bureaux une cinquantaine de demandes par jour, mais elle a alors décidé, pour permettre à un public plus large d'y avoir accès et garantir le droit de chacun à faire une demande de visa pour le Brésil, que les rendez-vous seraient pris sur son site internet. Donc pour entamer les démarches relatives à la demande de visa pour le Brésil, la personne doit au préalable prendre rendez-vous sur le site de cette organisation. Beaucoup, au Brésil et en Haïti, attendaient ce jour pour pouvoir prendre rendez-vous, car quelques clics permettraient à Pauline et Paul, par exemple, de faire venir leurs deux enfants qu'ils n'avaient pas revus depuis près de trois ans. Or, un jour, en sortant de l'église, le couple avait sollicité mon aide en m'expliquant qu'il lui était presque impossible de prendre ce rendez-vous et que leurs espérances reposaient sur l'aide que j'offrais au sein de l'association *Mawon* et du partenariat avec l'O.I.M. en Haïti:

Madame Mélanie, imagine-toi combien c'est difficile pour nous, les Haïtiens, de prendre rendez-vous sur le site internet. Déjà, on n'a pas d'ordinateur à la maison. Et même si on en avait un, on ne sait pas comment s'en servir. Les jeunes d'aujourd'hui savent utiliser ces machines, mais nous, on est de la vieille génération. Même si on comprend qu'aujourd'hui tout se fait sur internet, ce n'est pas accessible à tout le monde. Tu dois nous aider. On est même allé dans un cybercafé, mais le site est en français et le Brésilien ne comprend pas la langue. Tu dois nous aider. Cela fait presque trois ans que nous n'avons pas vu nos enfants. Ce n'est pas facile, ils nous manquent beaucoup, tu sais. Tu dois nous aider à prendre ce rendez-vous. *Bondye* te le rendra.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Madam Mélanie, ou imagine-w jan sa difisil pou nou Ayisyen pou-n pran randevou sa sou sit entènèt la ? Bon, deja nou pa gen odinatè lakay nou. Epi si nou te gen youn, nou pa konen kijan pou nou itilize-l. Sa se zafè jèn timoun jodia ki al lekòl ki kapab itilize machin sa yo. Men nou mèm, se granmoun nou ye. Epi mèm si nou konprann tout bagay yo fèt sou entènèt jounen jodia, se pa tout moun ki ka gen akse. Ou dwe ede nou. Nou te ale nan yon cyber café, men sit la anfranse li ye, Brezilyen pa pale franse non. Ou dwe ede nou. Sa pral fè twa zan nou poko wè timoun yo. Bagay yo pa fasil, nou sonje yo anpil. Fòk ou ede nou pran randevou sa yo. *Bondye* ap remèt ou li.

Mais tous n'avaient pas la chance d'avoir un contact (*kontak*) pour leur faciliter la prise de rendez-vous sur le site. Cette réalité a réanimé les dynamiques autour du *raketè*, éléments constitutifs de la mobilité haïtienne (Montinard 2019: 206-224). En effet, des milliers de personnes, en Haïti et au Brésil, attendaient impatiemment l'ouverture du site de l'O.I.M. pour pouvoir faire venir un proche, mais une barrière a surgi qui en a empêché plus d'un de réaliser l'opération. De fait, le système avait été complexifié pour éviter les tentatives de piratage du site et il exigeait dorénavant l'enregistrement de la personne avec son email personnel. Si j'en comprenais la démarche, je m'interrogeais davantage sur l'accessibilité de la procédure au sein de la communauté haïtienne, du moins celle vivant à Rio de Janeiro. J'imaginai mal comment un Haïtien, à l'instar de Paul et Pauline qui m'avaient confié leurs difficultés informatiques réussirait, seul, à prendre rendez-vous sur le site : il lui aurait d'abord fallu créer un email, puis se rendre sur le site de l'O.I.M./B.V.A.C. où il devrait rechercher, sans doute pendant de longues minutes et aux prises avec un français institutionnel, le lien pour accéder à la prise de rendez-vous. Ensuite, il devrait utiliser ses connaissances de base en anglais pour s'enregistrer, puis revenir vers sa boîte e-mail afin d'y confirmer son enregistrement en cliquant sur un lien qui lui permettrait de revenir sur le site où il devrait solliciter son rendez-vous, en informant son numéro de passeport, sa date de naissance (selon le modèle américain, encore fallait-il y penser !, c'est-à-dire année/mois/jour) et choisir une date où il y aurait des rendez-vous disponibles. Quel parcours du combattant ! Ce labyrinthe de clics où il fallait maîtriser plusieurs langues en a découragé plus d'un qui, se voyant alors contraint d'en déléguer la tâche à une autre personne, en espérant qu'elle puisse réussir à effectuer l'opération, a alors souvent fait appel à des *raketè* exigeant jusqu'à 300 USD pour leurs frais de services.

De plus, les premiers jours d'ouverture du site, les possibilités de prise de rendez-vous étaient rares. Le portail de l'O.I.M. a été confronté à des tentatives de piratage et au très grand nombre d'accès qui ralentissaient sa vitesse et entravaient la prise de rendez-vous. Cela a provoqué l'irritation de *raketè* qui se sont alors employés à divulguer autant de messages que de vidéos sur les réseaux sociaux, mécanismes de communication reconnus chez eux, pour dénoncer l'inaccessibilité du site. En effet, un groupe a pris l'initiative d'organiser une petite manifestation de quelques jours devant les bureaux de l'O.I.M./B.V.A.C. aux sons des *rara*, élément constitutif de la revendication et de la violence en Haïti (Kivland 2017a et 2017b), comme pour faire pression (*fè presyon*) face au fait qu'ils ne pouvaient répondre aux demandes de leurs clients qui s'impatientaient de recevoir la confirmation du rendez-vous pour leurs proches qu'ils attendaient au Brésil, confusion (*konfizyon*) qui a provoqué la fermeture des bureaux de l'organisation durant quelques jours. Le mouvement organisé par les *raketè* s'est rapidement essoufflé, laissant place aux plus grandes manifestations que le pays a vécu pendant les premières semaines de février de 2019, bien que les revendications sur les réseaux sociaux perdurent jusqu'à aujourd'hui, révélant les frustrations (*fristrasyon*) qui, comme le définit Neiburg (2019), sont:

Synonymes de vie sans perspective, d'une situation sans issue, mais également d'une menace, d'une demande d'aide, d'un signal lancé à la frontière de l'explosion et du désordre (*dezòd*). Se dire frustré ou annoncer que les autres sont ou peuvent être frustrés sont des tentatives de stabilisation des relations dans des contextes d'interaction incertains, de relations glissantes (*relasyon oubyen sityasyon glise*) [...] Décrire les sentiments de frustrations, c'est également renvoyer à la fois à un diagnostic et à une recherche de réparation, une déclaration non passive, la revendication de la restitution d'une perspective de future, de *lavi miyò*.

Aussi, les *wout* empruntées aussi bien pour quitter le Brésil que pour y retourner montrent que les stratégies de franchissement des frontières, physiques, symboliques ou technologiques, ont presque toujours recours aux *raketè*, élément constitutif de la mobilité haïtienne, profondément ancré dans les réseaux et les pratiques culturelles. Bien que ces intermédiaires puissent renvoyer, pour certains, à des entreprises criminelles, voire violentes, parfois assimilées à celles des coyotes, facilitant l'organisation d'un voyage illégal, s'insérant alors dans les discours autour du trafic et de la traite des personnes, les ambiguïtés autour des formes que peuvent

prendre les *raketè* prennent leurs sens en ce qu'ils représentent également une alternative aux procédures légales de plus en plus rigides, comme une chance d'accéder à de nouvelles *wout* et d'en ouvrir. Aussi, cette vision criminaliste a entravé une perception plus fine de la complexité du *raketè* dans les dynamiques d'(im)mobilité. Dans certains contextes par exemple, ces intermédiaires permettent la mobilité des personnes, le passage d'une frontière, l'obtention d'un document, de billets d'avion, d'informations, qu'ils agissent en tant qu'individus (*kontak, m konn moun, m gen moun*) ou en tant qu'institutions (*ajans* ou *ajans vwayaj*) (Montinard 2019: 205-210). Ce sont donc des termes cruciaux pour une meilleure compréhension de la dynamique de la mobilité haïtienne, à partir d'Haïti ou de l'étranger.

Les ambiguïtés autour de la figure des intermédiaires, et en particulier des *raketè*, se révèlent dans les relations complexes que les individus et les familles peuvent entretenir avec eux, qui sont parfois un ami, un voisin, un membre de la famille, un sujet moins proche indiqué par quelqu'un, un représentant d'une autorité publique ou de la société civile, entre autres. Cette multiplicité de relations entre les intermédiaires et les migrants soulève des questions de loyauté, d'obligation, de réputation et de secret, qui vont bien au-delà d'une simple relation de marché où les gens paient pour un service.

## Conclusion

A partir d'une ethnographie des expériences des personnes en circulation, cet article a décrit et analysé les dynamiques de mobilité articulées en réseaux par les récits des personnes qui quittent ou ont quitté Haïti en quête d'une vie meilleure. La mobilité de ceux qui partent peut contribuer à l'immobilité de ceux qui restent et *vice versa*, en particulier lorsque ceux qui s'engagent sur les *wout* participent aux transferts d'argent pour le maintien de ceux qui restent, ou bien encore quand ceux qui restent ou vivent à l'étranger participent au financement de ceux qui partent et s'engagent sur de nouvelles *wout*. Explorer les *wout* sur lesquelles les personnes s'engagent, c'est parler de la recherche d'une vie pleine, c'est évoquer les mécanismes et les stratégies individuelles et collectives chaque fois réinventés et développés au sein de réseaux et d'espaces où créativité, espoirs et incertitudes se côtoient, créant parfois de fortes tensions et frustrations (*fristrasyon*). Ces stratégies et mécanismes définissent les dynamiques de la mobilité, obligeant alors à (re)penser les territoires, les relations et les personnes.

Même si les États-Unis demeurent bien la destination préférée des Haïtiens, la *wout* d'une personne ne se résume pas toujours à un lieu de passage ou d'arrivée et ne signifie pas pour autant l'abandon d'une route antérieure, car si certains ont quitté Rio de Janeiro pour prendre la *wout Miami*, ils ont fini par revenir au Brésil. De même, alors qu'entre 2010 à 2014, l'arrivée des Haïtiens au Brésil a été articulée par la *wout* de la Guyane Française (Joseph 2015a), les États-Unis et le Chili devinrent quelques années après les *wout* principales, sans que cela ne signifie pour autant la fin de la *wout* vers le département d'outre-mer français, bien qu'elle ait été beaucoup moins utilisée. Comme l'a montré Handerson Joseph (2017), la mobilité se construit à travers les différentes *wout* qu'ont empruntées les Haïtiens tout au long des deux derniers siècles, alors que d'autres sont apparues ces dernières années. Cependant, l'apparition de nouvelles *wout* ne démobilise pas pour autant les anciennes, car elles sont associées à la catégorie *dyaspora*.

James Clifford (1992, 1997) utilisait la notion de *voyage (travelling)* au sens large pour regrouper à la fois émigrations et déplacements forcés, diasporas et zones frontalières, en insistant sur la notion de *zones de contacts* ou de *borderland* pour définir les frontières. Il est cependant essentiel de comprendre les pratiques et les sens des différentes *wout* (ou *Routes ?* – voir Clifford 1997) sur lesquelles se sont engagées les personnes puisque l'expression *pran wout la* ne signifie pas pour autant abandonner la *wout* antérieure, mais bien la possibilité de *chache* constamment *lavi*, faisant des *wout* une catégorie associée à celle de *dyaspora*. Comme Arold me l'a rappelé, alors qu'il se trouvait à l'aéroport de Rio de Janeiro, assis dans l'avion qui l'amenait à Saint-Domingue:

Rappelle-toi Méla, je te l'ai déjà dit, l'Haïtien est un chercheur. Il cherchera toujours sa route. Moi, j'y vais, je m'envole ! Je dois continuer ma *wout* car je ne suis pas encore arrivé à destination, là où il fera bon vivre selon moi (*kote kap bon mwen pou-m byen viv*).<sup>25</sup>

Car il existe bien une hiérarchie entre les différentes *wout*, physiques ou symboliques, une hiérarchie économique et géopolitique, tant pour les personnes vivant en Haïti que pour les Haïtiens vivant à l'étranger. D'un individu à l'autre, la *wout* peut donc prendre des dimensions différentes et pourra être modifiée tout au long de son processus, ce qui fait que ce n'est pas une catégorie statique, associée à un territoire de façon dichotomique comme s'il existait une nette séparation entre les lieux d'origine et les lieux de destination. Le retour à un territoire connu ou d'origine est le récit de beaucoup d'Haïtiens, s'étant engagés sur des *wout* encombrées d'obstacles et ayant parfois été refoulés alors que d'autres sont devenus diaspora. *Pran wout la* est bien un devenir. Pour reprendre le sens proposé par Biehl et Locke (2017 : 6), la notion de devenir (*becoming*) est un processus « qui organise nos efforts individuels et collectifs, [en insistant] sur le pouvoir plastique des personnes et sur la problématique multi-réelle de vivre à côté, à travers et malgré les effets profondément contraignants des forces sociales, structurelles et matérielles, qui sont elles-mêmes plastiques ».

Aussi, une problématisation ressortant des récits ethnographiques est la relation constante des Haïtiens avec les processus de gouvernance migratoire les plus distincts en vigueur à travers le continent américain. Sur les différentes *wout* physiques parcourues sont (ré)inventés des itinéraires imprévus et des pratiques inhabituelles construits en réaction constante aux tentatives de régulation étatique. Ce contact avec les structures de contrôle apparaît dans le choix d'itinéraires extrêmement dangereux et coûteux, ainsi que dans l'utilisation de services de *raketè*, agents intermédiaires de plus en plus ancrés dans la routine migratoire de différents groupes et individus dans le monde. En effet, dans les récits ethnographiques, des régimes d'(im)mobilité apparaissent : par exemple, les centres de détention pour étrangers et les annonces d'expulsion aux États-Unis (Montinard 2019: 223-233) ; le rôle des agences internationales dans la modulation du contrôle de la population, comme celui de l'O.I.M. en Haïti (*op. cit.* 2019: 297-315) ; les conséquences pratiques des différentes interdictions sur la mobilité des Haïtiens en Amérique centrale ; l'action du gouvernement brésilien pour restreindre la mobilité des personnes demandant le statut de réfugié (comme la mesure adoptée le 01/01/2017 par le gouvernement de Michel Temer - *op. cit.* 2019: 300) ; sans mentionner un ensemble de stratégies des ressortissants haïtiens pour contrer les pratiques de contrôle engendrées par les dispositifs étatiques.

L'anthropologie de la migration transnationale a eu tendance à se concentrer sur les lieux de départ ou de destination, l'émigration et l'immigration (Abdelmalek Sayad 1977). Bien que les réseaux sociaux et les communautés diasporiques aient fait l'objet de recherches approfondies, les intermédiaires, en tant qu'agent crucial au sein des routes migratoires, ont été plus stigmatisés et dénoncés que compris. Cependant, pour reprendre le concept d'E. Wolf (1956), le *raketè* serait une forme de *broker*, d'intermédiaire entre deux cultures (*cultural-broker*), entre légalité et illégalité, entre mobilité et immobilité, entre le monde des contrôles étatiques et les espoirs individuels de *chache lavi* sur les *wout*. Cette image du *raketè*, dont les significations et les pratiques ont été mises en évidence dans ma recherche doctorale (Montinard 2019: 194-210), en tant qu'intermédiaire intégré aux projets migratoires, apparaît dans différents ouvrages historiques sur l'immigration. Si la figure de cet intermédiaire a été associée à celle d'un « homme marginal », type de personnalité qui s'est développé à travers la migration et les relations interculturelles (Parks 1928), l'importance de ces acteurs intermédiaires n'est pas nouvelle (Yannakakis, 2008, pour le Mexique) et leur rôle n'est pas toujours limité géographiquement, comme le montrent les travaux de Madeline Hsu (2000), qui, dans ses études sur le transnationalisme et la

25 Méla, sonje m te di-w sa déjà. Ayisyen se yon chèchè li ye. Lap toujou chache wout li. Mwen mèm, m ale papa ! Map pran vol mwen ! M dwe kontinue wout mwen paske m poko rive kote m vle rive a, kote kap bon mwen pou-m byen viv.

migration entre les États-Unis et le sud de la Chine, entre 1882 et 1943, traite d'un processus ritualisé et similaire au *raketè*, dans lequel les immigrants chinois ont été aidés à mémoriser les détails de « faux noms de famille » afin d'entrer aux États-Unis.

Enfin, quoique *sentiwon* pourrait être traduit littéralement par ceinture en français, ce mot créole renvoie avant tout à l'image de *tounen anwon*. On dira qu'une personne *ap tounen anwon* (tourne en rond) pour dire qu'elle réalise un mouvement circulaire d'un point de départ à ce même point de départ, qu'elle pivote sur elle-même en faisant un cercle, un rond. Au sens figuré, le mouvement physique en soi révèle, au sein de la mobilité haïtienne, les formes que peut prendre *chache lavi* renvoyant à l'image d'un *sentiwon*, d'une *wout* dessinée en forme de cercle où la personne, se voyant *tounen anwon*, sans issue, ne pouvant progresser, se voit obligée à retourner au point de départ. Elle s'est engagée sur la *wout*, elle a tenté d'avancer, de progresser, d'atteindre son rêve, mais en vain. Car *chache lavi*, c'est aussi bien vivre (*byen viv*) dans le nouveau pays de résidence et cela prend donc les formes d'une recherche d'une vie meilleure, d'une quête pour réaliser son rêve de devenir un jour *dyaspora*, où les stratégies individuelles et collectives sont sans cesse réinventées et repensées aux détours de nouvelles *wout*.

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# Travellers of the Caribbean: Positioning Brasília in Haitian migration routes through Latin America

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## Abstract

This paper examines how Haitian migration connecting Haiti to Brasília is enacted through Latin America. The empirical data come from an *ethnographic study* of Haitians in Brasília. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with 34 migrants to reconstruct their mobilities. We explore how the Haitians' historical practice of living on the move has enabled them to deal with border controls and develop tactics to circulate through several Latin America countries, including Brazil. We argue that their migration to the Brazilian capital can neither be understood as a linear movement characterized by an established Haiti-Brasília connection nor defined as movement to a place where these migrants attempt to settle down. Rather, we show that the recent presence of Brasília in the mobility of these Haitians has to be understood in the context of a vast dynamic meshwork of places, people and information.

**Key words:** Haitians; mobile people; Brasília; Latin America.

# Viajantes do Caribe: Situando Brasília nas rotas migratórias haitianas pela América Latina

## Resumo

Este artigo examina como a mobilidade haitiana para Brasília é produzida através da América Latina. Os dados provêm de um estudo etnográfico realizado com haitianos em Brasília. No total, foram entrevistados 34 haitianos através de entrevistas semi-estruturadas conduzidas individualmente e em grupo focal, com o intuito de reconstruir as trajetórias migratórias. Exploramos como a prática histórica dos haitianos de viver em movimento tem lhes permitido lidar com controles de fronteiras, bem como desenvolver táticas para circular por distintos países da América Latina, incluindo o Brasil. Argumentamos que a migração haitiana para Brasília não pode ser entendida como um movimento linear, caracterizada por uma conexão estabelecida entre o Haiti e o Brasil e nem definida como uma migração assinalada por fixação definitiva. Em vez disso, mostramos que a recente presença de Brasília nas rotas migratórias produzidas pelo grupo investigado deve ser entendida no contexto de uma intensa mobilidade conectando lugares, pessoas e informações.

**Palavras-chave:** Haitianos; mobilidade humana; Brasília; América Latina.

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*The line is an object to  
play with - Gego*

## **Introduction**

This article examines how Haitian mobility that connects Haiti to Brazil is produced. It responds to recent calls among scholars for migration studies to go beyond perspectives that focus solely on the alleged beginning and end points of a given migration movement (Papadopolous et al., 2008; Khosravi, 2010; Dias, 2019), and to consider the continuous shifts in places that may occur during the process (Schrooten et al., 2015; Dias, 2016, 2019). By tracking individual itineraries of Haitians who migrated to Brasilia but not directly from Haiti, we draw attention to the migration journeys of a group of people whose biographies are marked by the various places, peoples and types of information that link their movements through the American continent. To accurately examine these migration routes and reveal their complexity, this article considers three empirical questions: What people and places are involved with Haitian migration to Brasilia? Did this movement through Latin America establish any predominant migration routes connecting Haiti to Brasilia? Can Brasilia be understood as an end point?

To answer these questions and reveal how Haitian mobility is performed, this paper is organized into four main sections. First, we explore the features behind the migration of Haitians. Our focus here is to show how these migrants have historically travelled from Haiti to different places across the globe, to what extent these itineraries have enabled a constant circulation of people, goods and information within this Caribbean country, and the role played recently by Brazil in Haitian migration. The second section examines the empirical data to present Brasilia's position in Haitian mobility. Our respondents reveal the production of two main Haitian migration routes – *the Pacific Corridor* and *the Air Corridor* – through which Haitians access the Brazilian capital. The third section explores our findings supported by a critical review of the literature on mobility that focuses on places and migration. We argue that the mobility performed by Haitians must be understood through a dynamic meshwork of places, people and information that stretches throughout South America. Rather than a simple journey from Haiti to Brasília, the mobility involves a multiplicity of potential trajectories, which are often unstable and may be accompanied by changes in position. Thus, it forms a complex concatenation of destinations and status. Our final considerations affirm that Brasília cannot be considered as the end point of these two routes, but as a temporary place, like many others in Latin America, for these Haitians who see themselves to be engaged in ongoing mobility.

The empirical analysis for this article is based on two ethnographic studies; the first was conducted in 2014 and 2015 in Brasília<sup>1</sup>, and the second between 2013 and 2016 along Brazil's Amazonian borders<sup>2</sup>. Both locations play an important role in Haitian migration to Brazil. Brasília is one of the Brazilian cities where Haitians have a large and growing presence, while Brazilian cities on the Amazonian border serve as ports-of-entry for Haitian migrants, including our respondents (Silva, 2013, 2016; Gomes de Castro and Fernandes, 2014; Contiguiba, 2013, 2019; Magalhães, 2016, Handerson, 2015b)<sup>3</sup>. In addition to reconstructing the journeys produced by the Haitians and the places involved in them, the research conducted in-depth interviews with 34 adults (20 males and 14 females) who had been living in Brasilia for more than five years, and two focus group discussions to discuss sensitive topics such as border crossing (Madriz, 2000; Fontana and Frey, 1994)<sup>4</sup>. Most of our respondents were young adults in their twenties or thirties who had left families and children in Haiti to find a better life in Brazil or elsewhere. Some of them are high school graduates, while others hold *bachelor's degrees*. By the time of our research, they were living in affordable places in the outskirts of Brasília; some were looking for jobs, while others worked in menial jobs such as cleaning, construction or catering.

### Brazil's position in Haitian international mobility

Since the 1990s, Haitian migration has become the theme of numerous studies of modern transnational migration (Glick Schiller and Fouron, 1997; Handerson, 2015a). The literature has strongly argued that this massive ongoing international mobility has been fed mainly by coups d'état, economic crises and recent earthquakes in Haiti. The United States, Canada, France, Guyana, the Bahamas and Dominican Republic were some of the main countries that Haitians migrated to (Glick Schiller and Fouron, 1997; see also Audebert, 2012). The new Ministry of Haitians living abroad (MHAVE) revealed that

about 4 to 5 million Haitians are spread around the world, in most of the mentioned countries. This represents half the population of Haiti, estimated at 10,413,211 in 2013 by the Institut Haïtien de Statistique et d'Informatique (IHSI). Among those abroad, 300,000 annually visit Haiti, particularly in the festive seasons and holidays (Handerson, 2015b: 52).

Since 2010, Brazil has featured strongly in Haitian international mobility (Silva, 2013; Oliveira, 2015; Gomes de Castro and Fernandes, 2014). Antônio Tadeu de Oliveira (2015) stresses that three main factors, among others, have decisively contributed to the prominence of Brazil in this mobility: 1) beginning in 2004, Brazil had a presence in Haitian territory, as leader of a UN peacekeeping force known as the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti - MINUSTAH (French acronym), whose general aim was to help restore the rule of law and public safety in the country; 2) the Brazilian government has promoted international campaigns that present Brazil as a hospitable country with solid economic growth; and 3) a resurgence in the closing of borders in countries such as France and the US, in addition to hostilities Haitians suffered in the Dominican Republic.

1 This study is part of the project "A inserção dos imigrantes haitianos na estrutura produtiva do Distrito Federal" conducted at the Universidade de Brasília (UnB), and supported by the Conselho Nacional de Pesquisa (CNPq).

2 We use the findings from the project "Entre o Haiti e o Brasil: trajetórias da imigração Haitiana na Amazônia" realized at the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM), and supported by the INCT, Instituto Brasil Plural.

3 Brazil is a federal republic, consisting of 26 states, each with its own capital, and the Federal District where the capital Brasília is located.

4 We use the notion of journey and routes to explore how migration is a negotiation, in which actions and skills are important links between the migrants and the social spaces through which they move. This manuscript contributes to migration and border studies by going beyond a perspective focused exclusively on migration policies. It questions to what degree the fact that borders have proliferated and discriminately filtered migrants can be understood without empirical data focused on the daily actions of these mobile people. "Indeed migrants deal with and struggle against border regimes, but they are not powerless social actors. [...] migrants are important social actors and a key to understanding how migration takes place through border regimes. Migrants employ cunning tactics to reinvent their journey in negotiation with institutions and structures of power, which manage and delimit their movement with targets and threats" (Dias, 2016: 12). In this context, this paper explores migration as a process of skilled maneuvers developed through practical knowledge and exchanges of life experiences by Haitians as they journeyed towards Brasília.

These three main factors have boosted the interest in seeking job opportunities, documentation and, therefore, a better life in this South American country. As a result, it is estimated that around 95,500 Haitians with different types of visas – humanitarian, temporary or for long-term work – were living in Brazil in 2015 (Obmigra, 2018).<sup>5</sup> Among them, 142 were residing in Brasília (Sismigra, 2020).

However, an important body of literature on Haitian migration draws attention to the fact that Haitian migration cannot be understood as just an automatic response to economic, political or environmental turmoil. Hypermobility (Iorio and Peixoto, 2011) is observed in Haitian migration even before the economic perspective, which strongly guides considerable part of the literature. Haiti has historically been a country that has established strong connections to different destinations in America and other continents (Plummer, 1984; Davies, 2010; Casey, 2012). According to Kassoum Dieme (2017) and Matthew Casey (2012), Haitian society has been marked by constant circulation of people, especially since the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century. Dieme (2017), for instance, highlights that in that period migrants from the Middle East appeared in search of political refuge, and there was a constant movement of Haitians abroad. Haitian elites were often educated in France for instance. “Individuals also moved between Haiti and the early communities of Haitian-Americans in United States cities like Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, New Orleans, Charleston, Savannah, and others” (Casey, 2012:39). Haiti was also a migration destination from Europe and the Americas. Casey argues that this participation by Haiti in the circulation of goods, people, and ideas across the Atlantic created especially strong linkages with other places.

In the early decades of Haitian independence, Haitian leaders Henry Christophe and Jean-Pierre Boyer supported attempts to bring African-Americans from the United States to Haiti. Despite many failed colonization projects, approximately “13,000 African Americans made the journey to Haiti between 1824 and 1827” though most eventually returned. Movements also occurred independently of these well-known colonization projects. Before slavery was abolished in Puerto Rico, runaway slaves sought to reach Haiti by “stealing small boats or fishing vessels or hiring themselves out as sailors.” Individuals from Europe, the Middle East, and other parts of the Americas arrived in Haiti as well (Casey, 2012:40).

Even when borders were enforced in the twentieth century and migration became strictly controlled, Haitians still acted on their own aspirations and exerted some degree of control over their migration. Studies of current Haitian migration to Brazil argue that this intense practice of international circulation is very present among research respondents (Silva 2013, 2015; Handerson, 2015b). Therefore, in addition to being driven by economic and environmental turmoil, the migration of Haitians to Brazil can also be understood as part of a historical process of international migration, which began in this Caribbean country in the nineteenth century.

Empirical studies have shown that Haitians do not necessarily migrate directly from Haiti to Brazil. They tend to pass first through other countries, where they live temporarily. Silva (2013), for example, who studied Haitians in Amazon state, found that many Haitians had previously migrated to the Dominican Republic, where they lived briefly, or for a few years, which “indicates that some had used this country as a stop on the way to Brazil. Since 2013, Haitians coming from Venezuela have also increased, perhaps due to the encouragement of family members or compatriots already in Brazil” (2013: 8). Nonetheless, we emphasize that the ongoing political crisis in Venezuela has also driven the movement of many Haitians living there. For many Haitians, the practice of leaving their homes for Brazil or any other country is

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<sup>5</sup> The numbers presented represent the midpoint of estimates of the size of the Haitian population in Brazil. Accurate numbers are difficult to come by, particularly because many of these migrants cross the border without Federal Police knowledge or having their data registered by the National Immigration Council (CNIg). According to Fernandes and Faria (2017), Haitians are, in general, a group composed by young adults (in their early 30s) and males (71%). Nonetheless, they call attention to the fact that female presence has been increasing in recent years.

not an abandonment of their country but a tactic to improve their social and economic position there. This yearning for improvement drives migrants to establish a logic of “constant alertness” in search of new opportunities.

In his ethnographic work on Haitian migrants in Brazil, Suriname and French Guiana, Handerson (2015a) draws attention to the term *diaspora* utilized among his respondents. According to Handerson, in these countries and in the United States, France, Canada and other Caribbean countries, the term is used by Haitians to describe compatriots who reside abroad, but will go back temporarily to Haiti and then abroad again.

There is no *diaspora* without a temporary return. From the point of view of the ethnographer, it is not a return but a new arrival. This observation has to be examined through the categories and words used by the natives themselves. My respondents did not use the creole word *tounen*, which means the *new arrival* of the *diaspora* subject, but the words *diaspora rive: diaspora arrived*, or *diaspora vini: diaspora came*, from the perspective of those who stayed. The travelers use the expression “Diaspora pral vizite Ayiti”, “Diaspora is going to visit Haiti” or “Diaspora ap desann Ayiti”, literally: “Diaspora is going down to Haiti” (Handerson, 2015a: 354).

Although temporary, the literature emphasizes that these returns are a fundamental part of Haitian circularity in countries of both the Global North and Global South. And that is also present in our findings.

This article supports the literature that suggests that mobility is a historical and a social practice among Haitians, which allows newcomers to build ‘transnational social fields’ (Glick Schiller and Fouron, 1997). We recognize the dramatic political, social and environmental crises that drive Haitians from their country. However, shedding light on the mobility produced by our respondents has allowed us to understand migration as an unpredictable movement.

## Positioning Brasília in the Haitian routes

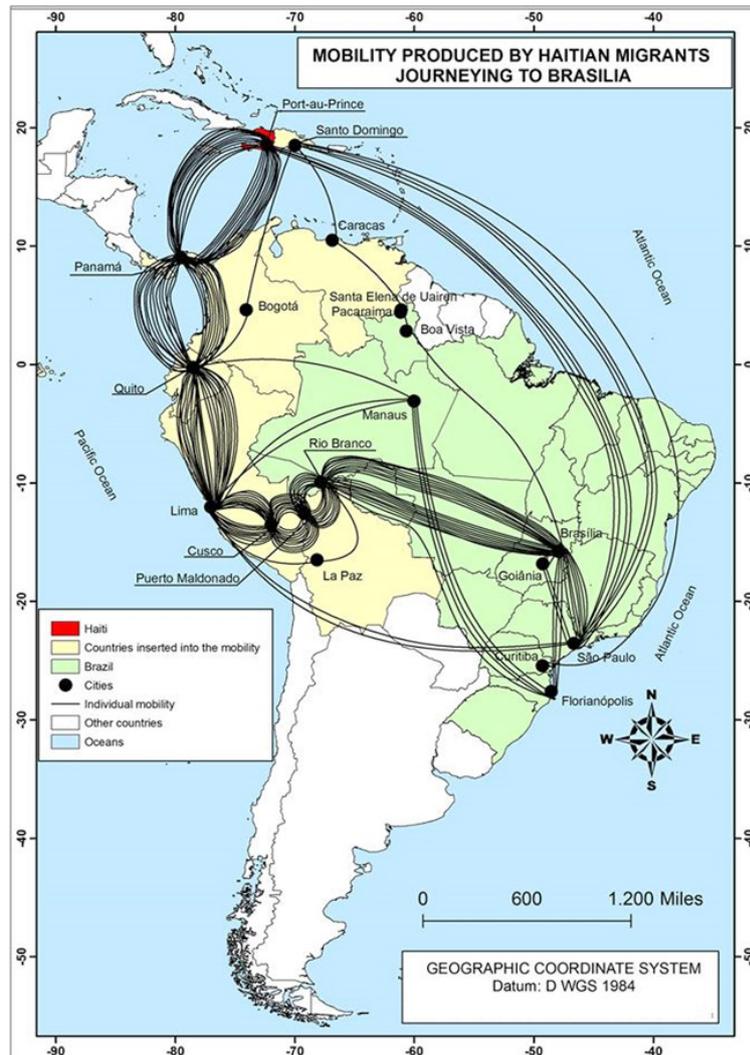
“Everyone who comes to Brazil must contact coyotes” (Wesley, a respondent)

The itineraries presented by the 34 respondents in this study reveal the cities or countries in Latin America accessed by Haitians before arriving in Brasília. We identify two main routes Haitians used to reach Brasília (see Map 1)<sup>6</sup>. The lines on the map indicate the movement of each respondent. We call the first migration route *the Air Corridor*, and the other *the Pacific Corridor*.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> We would like to thank the geographer Dr. Luiz Andrei Gonçalves Pereira, who designed the map.

<sup>7</sup> We are aware that these two routes are not the only ones produced by Haitians in Brazil. Nonetheless, these are the routes presented by our 34 respondents in Brasília. Thus, in this paper we focus on them.

Map 1



The first route is shorter in distance and is mainly an air route connecting Port-au-Prince or Santo Domingo<sup>8</sup> to the city of São Paulo, where the Haitians who use it first land in Brazilian territory. The second initially uses air connections between Panama City and the Andes, mainly through Quito, Ecuador and then passes through Peru before crossing the Brazilian border. This seemed to be the route most utilized by the Haitians in Brasília. The study found that both routes are forged with the service of *coyotes*<sup>9</sup>, a term defined by the respondents<sup>10</sup>, which starts in Haiti<sup>11</sup>. Daniel, one of the respondents, recalls that although relatives and friends living abroad strongly advise a person wanting to migrate not to contact border crossers who smuggle people across borders, travel agents still force them to pay for the services of coyotes. He says “the travel agency warns that the trip will not work. I must travel with coyotes. What are you going do? You have to contact and be bonded to a coyote.”

8 In these two Caribbean capitals, the Brazilian embassy issued humanitarian visas that allow air travel to Brazil.

9 These forms of entry suggest that the more border controls increase, the more border crossers become the main options used to cross them, especially when there are urgent issues in an immigrant’s life, such as a family reunion. Migrants cannot wait for the dynamics imposed by the bureaucracy of the receiving countries.

10 According to Handerson (2015a), Haitians distinguish in Haitian Creole between two types of border people who plan clandestine migration routes, and the distinction seems to be based on trust. Ajans (agents) are those who work in a travel agency, and are even recognized by the Haitian state. Therefore, they are seen as reliable professionals among those who want to migrate. Raketés (dealers), on the other hand, are unreliable. They may sell their services and then disappear or leave migrants at any time during a journey.

11 During the interviews, we managed to obtain information about the economic resources our respondents used to begin their journeys. Some said that the money came from selling properties - land, houses or even cattle. Others said that relatives and friends living abroad had lent them money.

## The Air Corridor

The first migration route identified in this paper is the one from Port-au-Prince or Santo Domingo to the city of São Paulo, which is essentially an air connection between Haiti or the Dominican Republic to Brazil. The findings revealed that this route was considered by our respondents as the “official way to depart” as those who used it needed a humanitarian visa issued by the Brazilian government in Port-au-Prince to board a plane. Our respondents considered this the best way to reach Brazilian territory and then continue on to Brasília. After all, as Bertha explained, they “arrive holding the right visa requested by the Brazilian authorities.” Therefore, leaving Haiti for São Paulo with a humanitarian visa allows them to obtain a *Registro Nacional de Estrangeiro* (RNE)<sup>12</sup> issued by the Federal Police and then a *Carteira de Identidade Estrangeira* (CIE)<sup>13</sup>. These documents allow Haitians to apply for a work permit<sup>14</sup>.

However, the respondents mentioned that the bureaucracy and the low number of visas issued daily by the Brazilian Consulate made this air route hard to access. It is time-consuming to apply for this visa from the Brazilian consulate in Port-au-Prince. Moreover, the interviews suggest that due to the high cost, most Haitians who leave the country this way have good financial resources. According to Roger, the “Haitian government charges a high price to copy our documents needed for a visa application. There is also a strong market for this document. It’s not easy. Sometimes the price can vary between two hundred dollars and two thousand dollars....” Eltius and Wesley, two young Haitians who migrated via this route, explain that those who take the air route also become dependent on coyotes<sup>15</sup> who are able to speed up the issue of visas for their clients. Wesley explains:

Coyotes have contacts with people inside the [Brazilian] embassy. Let me tell you what they do. If you are alone, they [embassy officials] will not talk to you because the coyote has already given them money. This means that the coyote has to intermediate the negotiation.

Jocelyne adds that some coyotes also have contacts with people working at airports to make it easier for travellers to board a plane. As a result, she explains, this makes the connection more expensive and less used by most Haitians to get into Brazil. They prefer to go through less controlled border crossings, which are located in places along the migration route known as the Pacific Corridor. According to Eltius, flights from Hispaniola Island to Panama are the best strategy for Haitians to save money and time. He recalls that

people tended to be stopped by immigration at Port-au-Prince before leaving for Brazil. We could not easily leave the country. We had to find an alternative route. It meant that people started exploring Panama. It was safer. [...] I know many Haitians who came straight from Haiti, not passing through these countries [located in South America], but as soon as they set foot in Immigration [border control] at Port-au-Prince airport they started wasting money.

In this mobility performed by Haitians, some places played key roles. The most frequently mentioned countries in this route are the Dominican Republic, Panama, Ecuador and Peru.

<sup>12</sup> The National Foreign Registry.

<sup>13</sup> This is an ID card for foreign citizens living in Brazil.

<sup>14</sup> We highlight that arriving in São Paulo by airport is not the only way found by Haitians to obtain this type of visa, the RNE and the CIE. In fact, the literature clearly emphasizes that crossing the Brazilian border by terrestrial routes – as we explore below – also enables access to the RNE and the CIE (Gomes de Castro and Fernandes, 2014; Silva, 2015; Magalhães, 2016). However, in this manuscript, we only focus on the option found in our case study.

<sup>15</sup> We presume that Eltius and Wesley mean an *Ajan*.

## The Pacific Corridor

As with the previous migration route, Eltius notes how the entire journey was organized by coyotes, in Haiti. From there they were able to contact others who facilitate border crossings across Ecuador and Peru to enable mobility through these Pacific countries. According to Eltius, the Haitian coyotes work jointly with travel agencies. “When the coyote says R\$ 1,500 it means that he will buy a ticket for \$1,000 from the agency. Do you understand?” In the same vein, Daniel explains that “it is the coyote who has to take the person to the travel agency. Otherwise, the travel agent will say that there are no flight tickets.”

So, from Port-au-Prince or Santo Domingo, a flight gets them to the American Continent. In fact, this Pacific route (*Panama City – Quito – Peru*) was accessed by 25 of the 34 Haitians we interviewed in Brasilia. These Latin American countries serve as a corridor that leads the migrants through South America. This particular route “goes through Central and South American countries that do not require a visa to cross a Brazilian border in the states of Amazonas or Acre, where it would be easier to enter” (Silva, 2013:5). A common factor they share is that the porosities at their border controls facilitate the mobility of Haitians. Panama offers visitors visas so that Haitians can use the document to leave the island of Hispaniola on their way to South America. It also has direct flights to Ecuador, where a new regional migration system connecting Ecuador, Peru and Brazil eases the journey. “This emerging South-South migration route is part of a larger Haitian migration system that connects Latin America to North America and the Caribbean” (Audebert, 2017:56). Ecuadorian immigration policy allows effective entry into South America, while in Peru our respondents use skilled local coyotes contacted by Haitian coyotes<sup>16</sup> to make the final connection to Brazil.<sup>17</sup>

## Panama City – Quito – Peru

The findings suggested that the availability of connecting flights from Panama City’s Tocumen International Airport to different South American countries was the main reason Haitians passed through it on their long migration. It serves as a port-of-entry linking Hispaniola Island to many South American cities, including Quito. None of the respondents remained in Panama City but took flights to the Ecuadorian capital. According to the respondents, the Panamanian airport was the best option for getting into the continent without drawing attention to themselves since they could travel to South America with simply a visitor visa.

Ecuador, on the other hand, was not considered as just a place of passage; a few respondents said that they actually lived in the country for a while before continuing their migration<sup>18</sup>. Denolds, for instance, lived and worked in the Ecuadorian capital for four months. However, after realizing that many compatriots were continuing their journey to Brazil, he also decided to do that.

there were a lot of Haitians living there. Most of them are just moving through, but others stay, I also stayed for a while. Then I said to myself, I am also going to Brazil....everybody is going. There must be something good over there [Brazil]. Then I worked and saved some money and came.

<sup>16</sup> We understand that in the case of this terrestrial route, Eltius is referring to *Raketès*.

<sup>17</sup> The introduction of a visa waiver for Caribbean and Latin American nationals by the Ecuadorian government, in 2008, sparked a boom in Haitian migration. Since then, “[t]he regularization of Haitian immigrants and their spouses and children following the earthquake, via Executive Decree No. 248 of February 2010 (non-immigrant visa 12-XI), led to a second, more substantial, migration wave after 2010” (Audebert, 2017: 65). Peru, in a similar vein, allowed the entry of nearly 3,000 Haitians holding visitor visas between 2010 and 2012. As a result, both Andean countries have become a transit territory on route to other destinations farther south, including Brazil.

<sup>18</sup> In July 2008 Ecuador opened its doors to foreign migrants and asylum seekers, dropping all visa requirements and opening the floodgates to thousands of Haitians who swept into Ecuador and over the border into Colombia.

According to the respondents, economic opportunities and friendships encourage Haitians to continue their journey to Brazil. The solution they found was to make contact in Peru with border crossers who arrange a connection between Ecuador and Brazil. These subjects use their practical knowledge of the Peruvian and Brazilian border controls and explore taxi services between the countries to send migrants across the borders.<sup>19</sup> Wesley says that the price of the border crossing can vary between R\$ 1,000 and R\$ 2,500, and that includes a bogus visa to facilitate mobility through Peru. “There was a coyote who charged me R\$1,000 for a five-year visa. He actually attached it to my passport. When I saw that I immediately removed it. The page almost ripped...”

As noted by Gilbert and other respondents, the journey from Ecuador to Peru and from there to Brazil is made by bus, and it can take between 9 and 22 days. Gilbert recalls that after landing in Quito he got a bus to the Peruvian border, “then another bus to Lima, then Puerto Maldonado...each region that I arrived in, I had to take another bus, and finally a taxi to get into Acre. I did not have documents, and without a visa I could not get a flight...I did not have money either. Travelling by bus is not cheap though.” He also recalls that Puerto Maldonado was “a poor place where we had to negotiate the last stage with taxi drivers to get into Brazil”. His journey from Ecuador to Peru and Brazil took 13 days.

The main ports-of-entry into Brazilian territory on this migration route are the cities of Brasileia then Rio Branco in the state of Acre, and Tabatinga and Manaus in Amazonas state. Among the respondents in this study, three Haitians came via the capital of Amazonia state, Manaus, while the routes through Rio Branco and Brasileia were taken by 17. Acre state, in particular is the place Haitians must pass through to apply for refugee status. Once it is granted, they are eligible for a work permit and a taxpayer ID number (CPF) that allows them to conduct formal economic transactions. Without these documents, their chances of becoming part of Brazilian society are very much reduced<sup>20</sup>.

From Acre, the local government provided buses that enable Haitians to leave this state and continue their journey into Brazilian territory. Respondents explained that they took buses to cities in Goiás, São Paulo and Santa Catarina states before arriving in Brasília, while others’ took more straightforward trips.

## Is Brasília the end of the journey?

There are Brazilians who always ask ‘Why do you come to Brazil? (in the sense of ‘why did you choose Brazil?’). Haitians come to Brazil because it is difficult to travel from Haiti to another country, and you realize that there are Haitians coming here [Brasilia] because it is easy to enter. I cannot neglect my country, you know, I came here to spend some time and apply for a visa for a better country than Brazil.

The response above was given during an interview with Gilbert who had been living in Brasilia since 2014. In fact, it was not very different from others heard among the group interviewed. Although we cannot affirm that Brasília serves as a temporary destination for most Haitian migrants there, we understand that most of our respondents see it that way. They expressed a common feeling and hope that they would be in Brasilia temporarily. Most of the respondents arrived in the Brazilian capital between 2012 and 2014 through the two migration routes described above. However, they did not consider Brasilia their final destination.

<sup>19</sup> According to Kassoum Dieme (2017), land routes tend to cost more than air travel. In other words, they are more profitable for coyotes. Based on data from the Brazilian Intelligence Agency - ABIN, published by the Brazilian newspaper O Estado de S. Paulo in 2015, Dieme reveals that coyotes profited US\$ 60 million from Haitian migration.

<sup>20</sup> In Acre, Haitians can be issued a document certifying their request for refugee status and their registration at the Ministry of Labour, and can be vaccinated against tropical diseases. Moreover, Silva (2013) reveals that Brasília is a compulsory stop, “because the Federal Police has its office in the neighboring city of Epitaciolândia. The Haitians must go to that office and request the refugee protocol” (Silva, 2013: 5).

They indicated that Brazilian cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, or countries such as the United States, France and Holland could be the next destination in their ongoing movement.

Raoul, for example, did not plan to settle down in Brasilia. The United States was his main goal. He compared the average salary in Brazil with what he could make in dollars and emphasized that the difference was considerable. He says, in Brazil “I make around 250 dollars. Then I have the rent, bills, and send some money to my family. Do you think that is enough?” So, after living in the Dominican Republic, Venezuela and Roraima, Brasilia was not the last stop for this young Haitian whose son lived in Port-au-Prince. “I do have plans to move to the United States...and in the future I want to gather my family anywhere. It could be in Brazil, the United States, Venezuela, Haiti...anywhere”. In the same vein, Raymond explains that after living in Manaus and Santa Catarina he decided to follow a friend who was living in Brasilia. That was three years ago. But Raymond does not see himself staying in Brasilia. For him, the chance to live in a French-speaking country could be a great opportunity. “I am thinking about living in another country... [...] but I am still evaluating the challenges of applying for a visa. [...] I am considering France.” Raymond is a Haitian whose family is spread out in the Dominican Republic, the United States, Canada, and France.

Other respondents also have relatives and friends living outside of Haiti. According to them, this creates an opportunity to keep moving to other places in search of better living conditions. Vanel comments that after living in the Bahamas he returned to Haiti and from there travelled to São Paulo and then to Brasilia. He has lived in Brasilia for almost three years, but the difficulty in finding a well-paying job has forced him to consider leaving the city. “My wife and daughter are living in the United States. There it is better, but I did not manage to get a visa [...] I would move from Brasilia to Santa Catarina where I have a friend or then to Parana.[...] My son is moving here, to Brazil.” The accounts of Vanel, Raoul and Raymond reveal how their relatives and friends are widely spread through different countries and Brazilian cities. However, they also show the strength and depth of contact and exchange of information among them, and how this supports their mobility beyond Brasilia.

By imagining and then drawing lines to trace the mobility produced by these actors, and entangling them in migratory routes, we can glimpse the momentary cartography produced by these actors. This exercise expresses a meshwork that spreads through the South American continent. It composes a social fabric that involves people - knowledge, mobility tactics, negotiations - across nodes - cities and borders. However, the lines do not necessarily begin in Haiti or end in Brasília. It is a living, moving and changing map. It adjusts according to the needs of its actors and the reinforcement of border controls. As Handerson (2015) interprets, in his study about the Diaspora, a departure is not always the first step out; other trips may have already taken place. Furthermore, as our empirical study reveals, Brasília should also not be considered the end point. New places can suddenly take part in this meshwork and, thus, unexpected connections emerge. Brasilia is one point in this vast web.

### **Considering our findings within the literature on routes and journeys**

Traditional migration-related research has strongly focused on the beginning and so-called end points of migrant journeys, paying specific attention to the decision-making process before departure, integration in the destination countries and maintenance of transnational contacts (Fitzgerald, 2009; Piore, 1980). With the exception of some early contributions to circular migration (Hugo, 1982; Prothero and Chapman, 1985), stepwise migration (Conway, 1980; Riddell and Harvey, 1972), and more recently a transnational approach to migration (Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013; Faist, 2000), most migration researchers have followed a rather

“rooted” and static notion of migration, seeing it as a unidirectional movement whereby migrants “uproot themselves, leave behind home and country, and face the painful process of incorporation into a different society and culture”(Glick Schiller et al.,1992:48).

In the 1990s, discourses on globalization and cosmopolitanism began to question the previous neglect of border-crossing movements. ‘Mobility’ became a keyword of the social sciences, delineating a new domain of debates, approaches and methodologies that sought to understand contemporary processes of movement (Adey, 2014; Cresswell, 2006; Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013; Urry, 2007). Embedded in David Harvey’s theoretical concept of ‘Time-Space compression’ (1990), which suggests that spatial and temporal distances have been condensed by the technologies of communication, travel, and economics, studies on mobility accepted the idea that structural changes to the global economy have produced a new dynamic mobility in the world. New communication systems, including systems of mobility, have intensified social relations on a global scale so that “distances between places and peoples again seem to be dramatically reducing” (Urry, 2003:2) overcoming spatial barriers. Within this scholarship, globalization was promoted as normality, even to the extent that the hydraulic metaphors of ‘flows’, ‘fluidity’ and references to ‘scapes’ almost monopolized discussions of new forms of global mobility (Rockefeller, 2011; Salazar, 2013). These discourses led to a celebration of mobility as a characteristic of the modern globalized world (Appadurai, 1990 Ong, 1999).

However, over the last decade, a number of scholars have questioned the dominance of the concept of ‘flow’ by foregrounding cases that seem better described by other concept-metaphors. They argue that, in the globalization perspective, mobility is mistakenly summarized as a generic movement and that individual experiences and attached meanings of travellers through this movement are discarded (Cresswell, 2006; Knowles, 2011; Lindquist, 2008). These scholars affirm that the abstract concept of ‘flows’ does not address the particularities of different mobilities. The “content of the line between them would remain unexplored. The cumulative effects of these movements are also what remain taken for granted in more recent social theory where movement is coded as *travel*, *nomadism*, *routes* or *lines of flight*” (Cresswell, 2006:2).

In an attempt to overcome the use of hydraulic metaphors to define contemporary mobility, a range of scholars have paid more attention to practices of mobility as experienced and described by travellers themselves (Ingold, 2007, 2011a, 2011b; Cresswell, 2006; Knowles, 2011; Dias, 2016, 2019). Within this scholarship, movement is rarely just movement; it carries with it the burden of meaning and experience lived and produced in spaces. “Here, movement becomes mobility” (Cresswell, 2006:6). They thus argue that mobility is a subjective practice that involves space and negotiation. “To move is to do something. Moving involves making a choice within, or despite, the constraints of society and geography” (Cresswell and Merriman, 2011:5). As a result, terms such as *travel-and-dwell* (Knowles, 2011), *traveller* (Ingold, 2011b) and *border choreography* (Dias, 2016) have appeared in recent studies on mobility. They share the idea that mobility is an embodied practice of how we experience the world.

The conceptual framework developed within mobility studies can enrich our understanding of the non-linear dynamics that constitute Haitian mobility through Latin America and of the experiences of these travellers and their hypermobility. In the following sections, we discuss two aspects that are at the core of our empirical analysis. First, is the understanding that there is no difference between place and space. There are only spaces where inhabitants cross along paths that lead from place to place. “Places, then, are delineated by movement, not by the outer limits to movement” (Ingold, 2011a: 34). In that sense, lives are led *through*, *from*, *to* and *around* and not *across* space, and place is not just about location but also histories. Tim Ingold suggests conceptualizing spaces through the mobility of people in tangled and complex itineraries that compose their lives at many different levels of social connection.

Ingold's idea of *meshwork* (2007, 2011a, 2011b) thus becomes an effective tool for analysing this relationship between people and space through migration mobility. Ingold (2007) argues that a traveller is his or her own existential movement; s/he is connected to the *social meshwork* registering his/her biography along the paths that link spaces. His approach affirms that this mobility of inhabitants connects places by bringing them into a network of lines through which people carry on their everyday lives. He says, to be "a place, every somewhere must lie on one or several paths of movements to and from places elsewhere. Life is lived, I reasoned, along paths, not just in places, and paths are lines of a sort" (2007:2). Bound together by the paths of travellers, places exist as nodes in a matrix of movement. Borrowing Lefebvre's definition of meshwork, Ingold (2011a) defines mobility

[not as] a network of point-to-point connections but a tangled mesh of interwoven and complex knotted strands. Every strand is a way of life, and every knot a place. Indeed the mesh is something like a net in its original sense of an openwork fabric of interlaced or knotted cords (2011a:37).

This study, therefore, explores how Haitians execute their migration by negotiating their movement through places – including borders in Latin America– with different purposes and logic. Rather than seeing the mobility of Haitians to Brasilia as a rectilinear flow of people, we argue that these migrants "bump awkwardly along, creating pathways as they go; they grate against each other; they dodge, stop and go, negotiate obstacles, back-track and move off in new directions propelled by different intersecting logics" (Knowles, 2011: 174).

Recognizing this, the second important aspect of our analysis, drawn from the literature on mobility, is the fact that migrants design routes to find the weaknesses of border security. The work of Dimitris Papadopoulos et al. (2008) presents insight into how migrant routes are produced to literally escape from regimes of control imposed by states. Even before 11 September 2001, a broad security discourse explicitly linked migration control issues to the military to improve control over foreign borders. However, migrants have still designed alternative paths and porosities through the border controls (Papadopoulos et al., 2008; Dias, 2016, 2019; Riosmena and Massey, 2012). As a result, migration does not always follow a direct route from the home society to the host society. In many cases on the Aegean Sea analysed by Papadopoulos et al. (2008), migrants had to use routes that connect several places to circumvent border controls and reach their final destination. Therefore, it is essential to examine the *in-between*, and the negotiations involving border controls, people, knowledge, skills and struggle present within the routes. In this context, borders as places play a major role in the migration mobility performed by our respondents. A border "is a dimensional part of mobility which reveals journeys as well as human actions. As a result, it gives sense to the itineraries that connect mobility to the body, a meaning derived from a particular spatial perspective of living in that space" (Dias, 2016:36)

These migration routes produce what Suvendrini Perera define as "geographies of actions" (2009). So, unlike the modern map which "slowly disengaged itself from the itineraries that were the conditions of its possibility", understanding the itineraries of migrants is an exercise, which gives forms of "a memorandum prescribing actions". Our respondents along with border crossers and other Haitians, who compose their migration meshwork, are capable of establishing routes that connect places in a vast migration system through South America. These routes are produced by successful itineraries that manage to evade border controls by not taking the official paths that connect countries (Khosravi, 2010; Dias, 2016). Travellers, therefore, have the power to decide how to align the particularities of the course. Thus it can be created and rapidly erased, confounding the rationality behind the map and its official monitored paths. These non-linear motions, therefore, shape routes that challenge new borders practices, contest sovereignties and cause "new geographies" to appear (Perera, 2009:73). In line with this body of literature, we argue that the mobility produced by Haitians on

their way to Brasília is characterized by complex itineraries that involve a considerable number of people and various places. It results from constant journeying that successfully finds a way to penetrate the porosities in the external and internal border controls.

By analysing each individual migration journey of the research respondents, we draw attention to the fact that the Haitians' mobility includes several places before they arrive in Brasília. While in some interviews we could identify in more detail the names of cities and the role of the migrant networks in these places, in others, the respondents did not provide much information about the places where they were living and why they were there. Instead they only mentioned the names of the countries they passed through. Thus we had to work with different layers – cities and countries – to compose the mobility produced by these migrants, even though the interviews provided good findings. Most of our respondents did not migrate directly from Haiti to the Brazilian capital. They first passed through different countries in Latin America. We can assume, therefore, that

[m]igration as a whole is a tactical mobility through a set of social relationships in an environment where distinct layers interplay in different levels of connections. Migrants, therefore, are connected to a social fabric, recording their biography through the routes involved in their mobility (Dias, 2019:75).

Jocelyne, a 52-year-old female migrant, stresses that the considerable number of places she accessed in South America alone is related to the fact that “Haitians are used to travelling”. She said they are used to moving from country to country or from city to city in search of good living conditions. “We leave Haiti in search of better conditions that can be found in other places. If not, we move to other places. But we always return to Haiti”, Jocelyne concludes. And that search includes not only jobs, but also the weather and even a better environment for raising children.

Moreover, the respondents also revealed that a considerable number of family members and acquaintances, in general, are actually already living abroad. The Dominican Republic was cited as the most explored country among our respondents. Of the 34 interviewed, 23 had lived in the capital of the Dominican Republic before arriving in Brasília. Frantz, for instance, says that he lived there “for six years, but always in comings and goings. I stayed [in Santo Domingo] between six months and one year, then I returned to Haiti. After a while, I went back to the Dominican Republic.” As he reported, this neighbouring country was chosen because it could provide “better living conditions” for his family back in Haiti. So the temporary mobility between these places gave Frantz the chance to keep in touch with his homeland. In the same vein, Roger says that the distance between his town in Haiti and Santo Domingo could be easily covered by bus. “I was used to doing that...entering and leaving Haiti...I arrived in the Dominican Republic, then went back to Haiti. [...] By bus, [from] the capital of the Dominican Republic to Haiti takes only four or five hours.” After six years of living this temporary mobility across Hispaniola Island, Frantz decided to move from the Dominican Republic to South America in search of better living conditions. Living under “constant alertness”, he recalls that, not having much money, travelling by bus was the best option to cover most of his journey. “I flew to Panamá, Ecuador, then Peru. Then another country...I lived for a short period in each state that I arrived in. After a while, I got on a bus and moved to the next one. At the moment I am here [in Brasília]”

Frantz was not the only Haitian whose migration journey included temporary stays in different Latin America countries. Other respondents had also lived briefly in other cities before Brasília; in Colombia, Venezuela, Bolivia, the Bahamas, Panama and Ecuador. Once in Brazil. Some mentioned that they stayed in São Paulo, Manaus and Rio Branco before coming to Brasília. So the findings indicate that none of the respondents' mobility was characterized by a linear movement with clear departure or arrival places. Moreover, the cities where these travellers lived temporarily encouraged their mobility to another place. Working temporarily, saving money, and establishing or reinforcing migration networks allowed these travellers to continue their journeys

through Latin America. This was the case with Raoul, 34, who explained how he reached Brazil through the Venezuelan border. Raoul said that Haitians who live in Venezuela take advantage of crossing the border to obtain a Refugee Visa in Brazilian territory.

Silva (2013:5) notes that Haitians “believe that the request for refugee status would be an indisputable justification for remaining in the country. Since Brazil is signatory to conventions about refugees and is known for its tradition of giving them shelter, this request could not be denied<sup>21</sup>”. However, in Raoul’s case, he opted for a tourist visa. Otherwise the “federal police would not allow me to circulate between both countries.” So he explains how he went to “the Brazilian Embassy in Venezuela and applied for a [visitor’s] visa to enter Brazilian territory. That was in April 2014. After getting it, I [Raoul] went to Boa Vista, Roraima, and stayed for twenty days.” Raoul explained that he moved between Venezuela and Roraima for a few months due to his ‘transnational business’, which was not revealed in the interview. After this period, he decided to continue his journey into Brazilian territory. So, instead of settling down, Haitians are encouraged by opportunities found in the place of arrival to keep moving to other destinations. If the movement does not work as planned, they return and evaluate new alternatives.

In this sense, this manuscript and its map revealed how Haitian migration to Brasilia represents movement within a complex meshwork that connects Haiti and the Brazilian capital to different places in Latin America. Rather than following a linear trajectory from their country of origin to a desired destination, the majority of Haitians passed through certain places before arriving in Brasilia. Their stay in other Latin American countries ranged from a few weeks or months to years. There were various reasons for this ongoing mobility. Although some respondents suggests that Haitians are genuine travellers, the narratives collected in the fieldwork showed that this ongoing mobility is often unintended and a phase, which might end, depending on the circumstances, which could be related to work, but also financial or matrimonial matters.

## Final considerations

The historical practice of living on the move has enabled Haitians to deal with border controls and circulate through various countries around the globe, including those in Latin America. In this context, since the 2010s, Brazil has become a major destination. São Paulo, Florianopolis, Curitiba and more recently Brasilia have been among the cities most sought by Haitians. To explore how Haitian mobility connecting Haiti to Brasilia occurs, this paper looked at 34 different itineraries traveled by Haitians living in the Brazilian capital. Three empirical questions assisted the examination. In answering the first empirical question, this paper has argued that Haitian mobility to Brasilia is not a direct, straight-forward journey. It is rather an open movement improvised by choices, financial sources, border barriers and constant negotiation with coyotes, government border agents and other migrants. Various places are therefore involved in the migration not as arenas of fixed rootedness, but as flexible spaces that have also been transformed and shaped through the intricate, repeated, and habitual movements of migrants. We define this performance as a tactical interaction between migrants and places – an interaction that reveals a set of social relationships in people’s lives through places which, rather than being inert and passive, are constantly transformed by social actions and are thus able to connect and disconnect in self-selected rhythms with distinct localities in a non-linear spatial logic.

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<sup>21</sup> We believe that there is a misunderstanding here. It is apparently caused by the fact that when Haitians began to arrive in Brazil (after the earthquake in 2010), entry under terms of the Foreigners’ Statute (Law 6815/1980) were limited and not applicable to their case. It, thus forced them to request refugee visas, based on Law 9474/1997. That became the best possibility to regularize their stay in Brazil. In 2012, this changed with CNIg’s Resolutions no. 97 and 102, which created a specific regularization for Haitians. However, due to the casuistic character of the resolution, there was no documentary structure related to this rule. Thus, the Brazilian authorities granted Haitians the documents that were used in case of refuge. Therefore, we assume this practice probably led Haitians to define themselves as refugees. It is worthy to mention that the content of this resolution has been constantly renewed, and today the Ministerial Ordinance covers it (Jarochinski Silva, 2016).

Mobilities that enable safe connections along a journey tend to be utilized sequences of migrants, producing effective routes. Two particular migration routes were highlighted that lead Haitians to Brasilia: *the Pacific Corridor* and *the Air Corridor*. Along these routes migrants jump from city to city in Latin America before taking the final movement: passing through Brazilian border controls at either São Paulo or Rio Branco before continuing the journey to Brasilia. *The Pacific Corridor*, the most common route, is a tactical movement that exploits the connections between particular localities and takes advantage of different transportation systems that can enter Brazil through more accessible routes at Acre and Amazonas. It is a route that costs these Haitian migrants more money and time, but it also guarantees a better connection between Haiti and Brazil, than Guarulhos International Airport in São Paulo.

This article has also revealed that Brasilia is not seen as the last stop by most of our respondents. It rather acts as a node in a constantly changing migration meshwork of Latin American cities and countries, border crossers and acquaintances that enables these travellers to be constantly moving and opening new frontiers. These findings are supported by evidence that in 2016 Haitians were turning to Chile as a better migration option (Sant’anna and Prado 2016). Because Brazil is undergoing a strong economic recession and political instability, we are now witnessing another changing geography in Haitian migration. New places are being inserted into Haitian migratory mobility, revealing how dynamic and open to engaging different places it is.

Finally, it can be asserted that Haiti is the core around which all these movements circulate. Despite the fact that there are factors that make Haiti a difficult country to live in and these migrants have ambitions to stay on the move, they still recognize their affective connections to the country. Rose, a female respondent, stressed “Haiti is my home” and she makes sporadic visits there. Living with temporary mobility, for Haitians means that the travellers cannot cut their bonds with Haiti. Although they acknowledged in the interviews that they might not return for good, at some point they would visit their homeland. “I lost my interest in the Dominican Republic, but not in Haiti. I want to go there. Not to live, to spend my life there; I want to go to visit my family and then return here”, says David, a Haitian who had lived in the Dominican Republic almost his entire life, and had been in Brasilia since 2012. There is no such ongoing movement without a temporary return.

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# Notes on a Rastafari Yard-Space in Urban Ethiopia

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## Abstract

The significance of the *yard* or household in social reproduction within the diasporic Caribbean is the focus of this essay. I outline how a Rastafari yard-space is shaped through household production and family formation among diasporic Caribbean peoples within intercultural households and families. This discussion is foregrounded in Rastafari migration or “repatriation” from the Caribbean to the symbolic land grant in Ethiopia. Two intercultural households will be compared: one located in a local Ethiopian neighbourhood in the city of Shashamane and one in the predominantly Rastafari *Jamaica Safar* or Jamaica neighbourhood of Shashamane. Primarily drawing on my ethnographic observations, this discussion will situate Rastafari positionalities in terms of social, spatial and subjective articulations of inclusion and exclusion, adding to a discussion of the culture concept in the anthropology of the Caribbean.

**Key words:** Caribbean, family, household, place, social reproduction.

# Notas sobre a casa rastafári na Etiópia urbana

## Resumo

O significado da casa na reprodução social no Caribe diaspórico é o foco deste artigo. Eu exploro como uma casa rastafári é moldado através da produção da casa e da formação da família entre povos diaspóricos caribenhos em um contexto intercultural. Tendo como pano de fundo a migração rastafári ou “repatriação” do Caribe à Etiópia, por meio de uma concessão simbólica de terras, dois grupos domésticos interculturais são comparados: um localizado em um bairro etíope na cidade de Shashamane e outro na vizinhança predominantemente rastafári de *Jamaica Safar*, ou Bairro Jamaica, na mesma cidade. Baseada sobretudo em observações etnográficas, esta discussão irá situar as posições rastafári em termos de articulações sociais, espaciais e subjetivas de inclusão e exclusão, contribuindo para a importante discussão sobre o conceito de cultura na antropologia do Caribe.

**Palavras-chave:** Caribe, família, espaço, casa, reprodução social.

# Notes on a Rastafari Yard-Space in Urban Ethiopia<sup>1</sup>

Shelene Gomes

## Emplacement and Embodiment

There is rich scholarship on the socio-spatial and temporal aspects of reproduction and personhood in the anthropology of the Caribbean. In one of these studies of the Afro-Caribbean *yard* or house and household in the colonial West Indies, Sidney Mintz states, “to relate the concrete, material character of the house and the yard to the activities which go in and around them” is essential in examining social reproduction (Mintz 1989: 231).<sup>2</sup> My goal in this essay is to outline the Rastafari yard-space in urban Ethiopia. I emphasise the continued importance of the family and household in social reproduction among diasporic Caribbean peoples.<sup>3</sup> I concur with a more recent position by Barry Chevannes that in the postcolonial Caribbean, yard or “yaad... is a central reference point of self-identification among African-Caribbeans...as the summary of memory, life and hope” (Chevannes 2001: 129-130). Accordingly, historical, material and ideological contexts matter.

In this ethnographic case of self-identified black, Caribbean Rastafari in the Ethiopian city of Shashamane, the notion of repatriation is central to understanding the development of kinship and social relations between Rastafari and local Ethiopians. For Rastafari, Ethiopia is the spiritual and ancestral homeland to which they have “returned.” As such, they call themselves “repatriates” rather than “migrants,” an emic description to which I adhere. In this paper I build on descriptions of the yard to intercultural interactions, conflicts over land and space, as well as a gendered division of labour to discuss continuities and changes in the Caribbean yard.

I demonstrate the socio-cultural dynamics that go into identifying one space as “Rasta” and another as “Ethiopian.”<sup>4</sup> To do this I discuss two households in Shashamane, one of Brother John and Sister Adina in central Shashamane where they live amidst local Ethiopian neighbours, and the second of Brother Matthew and Sister Tirunesh in the predominantly Rastafari *Jamaica Safar* (Jamaica neighbourhood).<sup>5</sup> Although located in different parts of Shashamane, these two households were similar in many respects. Both were coded as “intercultural.” They consisted of a Rastafari repatriated father, a Christian local Ethiopian mother, and children born and raised in Ethiopia. But one difference, and the one that I concentrate on in this essay, is that one household was a Rastafari “yard” and the other an Ethiopian “beit.” As I explain, cultural and material factors shape this differentiation, which involve religion, language, food, family organisation as well as house-building materials, layout, and the garden.

1 Portions of this paper have been presented at the International Conference of Ethiopian Studies and the Caribbean Studies Association conference. I wish to thank the anonymous reviewers and the editors for their comments as well as Jeffrey Hoff for proof reading.

2 “Yard” is a colloquial term used in the West Indies to refer to a house and its surrounding area, and not only to the outdoor area around the house. During the colonial period the term “tenement yard” referred to overcrowded housing areas for the enslaved population. Later, it referred to poor urban areas where multiple families shared one physical yard in which certain household activities were completed together, such as cooking and sharing a water source. Yard residents behaved as kin. At present, the word also refers to a private yard.

3 Hereafter I refer to Caribbean peoples as Caribbeans or West Indians.

4 To emphasise these links, I refer to the Rastafari yard as a yard-space in this particular location.

5 When I first mention emic terms or words in Amharic, I use italics. Thereafter, they appear in normal text.

The ethnographic data for this essay comes from my fieldwork in Shashamane in 2008-2009, and repeat visits in 2012-2015. I engaged mainly in participant-observation and conducted unstructured and semi-structured interviews with repatriates, youth, and local relatives. Staying with a Rastafari family, my household consisted of a repatriated Rastafari father, Fyah, who was in his sixties, and his Ethiopian-born children and grandchildren. Fyah's wife, Bernice, who was in her fifties, resided abroad. Their remaining children lived in other areas of Ethiopia. Both Fyah and Bernice were members of the Twelve Tribes Rastafari organisation. I participated in and observed daily household activities such as cooking, cleaning, and weekly trips to the outdoor food market as well as ritual and community events, inclusive of monthly meetings of the Twelve Tribes and Rastafari celebrations.

Given the significance of the yard in social reproduction, I consider how kinship is lived and practised. In line with the long-standing anthropological interest in kinship, I focus on the materiality and meanings of social reproduction in the spaces and places they occur; what Edward Casey calls "being-in-place" (1996: 15). Without relegating place to a secondary status to space, in which the latter is theorised as an entity that exists a priori, I look at the embodied experiences of household members.<sup>6</sup>

I delineate the physical, symbolic, and affective aspects that go into the making of a yard-space. Family organisation and residence type indicate the reproduction of working-class Caribbean and African-Caribbean patterns in this setting. These forms are observable at the same time with everyday instances of cultural hybridity, such as language. Therefore, temporality is another noteworthy factor in the life course of the house, its inhabitants and environment.

I also highlight the role of identity in reproducing social systems and cultural traits, in this instance between Rastafari 'migrants' and 'local' Ethiopians. I engage with ethnography's long-standing concern with emplacing persons, particularly in local situations of power asymmetries where "stasis and purity" (Clifford 1997: 7) have been actively reproduced in emic and etic descriptions. James Clifford's (1997) critique of anthropology's obsession with constructing immobile and sedentary subjects is exemplified in ethnographies of both the geographic and diasporic Caribbean. Considering the history of the modern West Indies in proto-capitalism, transcontinental forced and free movements of labour to the plantation, and twentieth century emigrations from the Caribbean to the Global North, it was more challenging to write such ethnographies about Caribbean cultures.<sup>7</sup> An analysis of household spaces within a Caribbean culture of migration (Fog Olwig 2007; Forde 2011; Horst 2011; Mintz 1989) can add to the ongoing critical debates over cultural production and representation as well as the distinction between biological and fictive kinship. Huon Wardle notes,

an acknowledged feature of Creole kinship is its open-endedness, its inclusivity, and the ability of those who draw on its idioms to stretch and combine the values it entails (Barrow 1996). But, in practice, values may be, and often are, stretched to their elastic limit: for the individual, kinship is frequently a tense balancing and negotiation of near irreconcilables (Wardle 2002: 497).

I attempt to pay attention to Wardle's caution about "balancing and negotiation" in connecting "modes of relatedness" (Forde 2011: 85) to 'fictive' kin to show the reproduction of this elasticity among diasporic Caribbeans. These kinship behaviours are interrelated with other issues such as income, work, and remittances.

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<sup>6</sup> As such, I use place and space interchangeably.

<sup>7</sup> An example of the counter-analysis to the represented fixity of typical ethnographies of 'native' groups (as if such sedentary groups existed) is Janet Carsten's ethnography with residents of a Malay fishing village, Langkawi. This ethnography demonstrated the inter-connections of physical and social mobility. "Although the community can be seen as modelled on the house," Carsten writes, "it is also true that in many respects relations between houses in the wider neighbourhood contrast with those within them. Instead of a sharing of consumption, resources and labour based on principles of hierarchy, houses in the wider community are involved in directly reciprocal exchanges which are conceived as occurring on an equal basis" (1995: 118).

Consequently, I highlight how matters of class, status, religion and cultural identity play out regarding household production and family formation. Kinship is a core concept that helps in this respect, although a more detailed discussion of anthropological debates surrounding kinship would be the subject of another paper.

In the following sections I outline the ideological significance of repatriation for Rastafari with the expansion of kinship that come with both support and conflicts as well as the spatio-temporal characteristics of intercultural households through the examples of the yard and the *beit*.

## **An Introduction to Kinship in the Jamaica Safar**

To provide some historical background to Rastafari repatriation to Ethiopia, this move was guided by a spiritual impetus rather than a more typical economic one. In Rastafari worldview, Ethiopia is *Zion* or heaven, and the ‘West’ — inclusive of the Caribbean — is *Babylon* or hell. His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I, the last monarch of Ethiopia, is a divine figure in Rastafari religion. Repatriation can be contextualised in formal and popular expressions of Pan-Africanism such as Garveyism and Ethiopianism. From the end of the nineteenth century, African Americans and West Indians in the United States, who were not Rastafari, had visited and lived in Ethiopia. A donation of land in Shashamane to be administered by the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF) from Emperor Haile Selassie I in the 1940s-1950s provided the incentive for further physical repatriation to Ethiopia. It was given as a gesture of appreciation for black international opposition to the Italian occupation of Ethiopia in 1935-1941.

Three periods of organised migration to Shashamane occurred in the 1950s, 1970s, and 1990s. Groups of Rastafari funded by organisations, self-funded Rastafari and non-Rastafari members of the EWF migrated to Shashamane with the intention of settling there. The first period consisted of EWF members. The second influx of settlers were Rastafari sent from the Twelve Tribes of Israel organisation in Jamaica in the 1970s. Rastafari from the Theocratic Order of Nyahbinghi, known informally as Nyahbinghi, and the Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress or Bobo Ashanti then arrived for the centenary celebrations of His Majesty’s birth in 1992, and remained. During the years when I lived in Ethiopia, Rastafari from Twelve Tribes in several Caribbean countries visited Shashamane. More recently, self-funded repatriates have arrived. Up to 2018, estimates of the Rastafari population in Shashamane have ranged from 250-1000 (Bonacci 2015a; MacLeod 2014; Beyecha 2018; Soroto 2011).

The “land grant,” as Rastafari call it, is the symbolic centre of global Rastafari imaginings of black autonomy, freedom and well-being as well as moral and financial networks of support. However, following the coup d’état in 1974 which ousted Haile Selassie I, the Ethiopian state no longer recognises this grant. Despite Rastafari repatriation, they have no collective rights to the land. Virtually no repatriates who arrived in the 1950s and 1970s, or their children, hold title deeds for their houses. However, more recent repatriates have purchased houses in Shashamane.<sup>8</sup>

My yard was located in the Jamaica Safar. The neighbours were diverse, consisting of local Ethiopians and Rastafari. I interacted regularly with Brother Matthew and Sister Tirunesh and two of their three children, as well as Brother John, whose business was in the Jamaica Safar, but who resided farther away in *ketema* (the Amharic word for “town” commonly used by English-speaking residents also). My contact with Sister Adina and their children was limited as her social and kin groups were located in *ketema* and abroad, particularly in the United States. I met two of Brother John’s and Sister Adina’s children in their twenties, on different occasions. Between 2012-2015, one of Brother John’s children moved to the United States to join a sibling.

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8 Portions of this section appear in Gomes (2018).

This migration from Ethiopia demonstrated the changing composition of the yard and the extension of cross-border networks that are common to both Rastafari and local Ethiopian families.

In general, with marriage and childbearing between Rastafari repatriates of several nationalities and local Ethiopians of various ethnic affiliations, these two households exemplified the intercultural exchange and social reproduction occurring in the neighbourhood. The integration and hybridity of the 'second generation' also was evidenced by many features and institutions. These included language ability and speech patterns, diet and food tastes as well as value systems in terms of marriage and residence patterns. Regarding speech for instance, in my yard the primary language of communication was Jamaican patois. Amharic was used also between Ethiopian-born children and grandchildren. Their interchangeable use of Amharic, patois and English was observable also in Brother Matthew's and Sister Tirunesh's yard. This scenario of language retention and change presents one example of how bodies, spaces and places in these yards are connected to processes of cultural change and continuity.

I now consider how kinship is lived and how Rastafari cultivate these relationships to ensure social reproduction. Janet Carsten's critique of the anthropological distinction between biological and social kinship is relevant to Rastafari use of "Sister" and "Brother" to address persons "in the faith," as Rastafari say or fellow Rastafari. Recognising that "kinship is constituted out of everyday small acts and events in time" (Carsten 2000: 698), anthropologists have turned to "modes of relatedness" or "cultures of relatedness" to understand how persons constitute multiple relationships socio-spatially over the life course. Maarit Forde (2011) notes that while the nuclear family form was instituted in the colonial Caribbean as an ideal, a large number of mostly working-class Caribbean people live in "extended family households that do not necessarily consist of biological relatives" (Forde 2011: 82). The demarcations of "fictive or artificial kinship to distinguish between biological and imagined or pretended kin relations" (Forde 2011: 85) do not adequately capture the expectations and behaviours of persons across such households.

Such "socially recognized forms of kinship" (Forde 2011: 88) are evident in religious communities and "ritual families." In Forde's study, these function among Spiritual Baptists, Orisha and Revival Zion in Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, St. Vincent, Grenada and New York in the United States. I suggest that such relationships function for Rastafari in Shashamane as well. As Forde summarises, "analytically distinguishing between these relationships and other types of kin relations may not reflect actual lived practices" (2011: 86). For instance, many repatriates in Shashamane have lost contact with their biological relatives in countries of origin and transit. Instead, repatriates communicate regularly with Rastafari in Shashamane, other locations in Ethiopia and in the Global North. As noted previously, the visitors to Rastafari households were themselves also Rastafari, who were not biologically related to repatriates.

For the second generation born in Ethiopia, Rastafari religious communities and transnational networks also are significant, as well as their parents. These youth regularly communicate through social media and mobile phones with Rastafari of the same age range in the Global North, rather than with their relatives in the Caribbean and the diaspora. Many have a vague knowledge of these relatives. At the same time, youth are curious to learn about relatives or 'half-siblings' abroad, in line with "the positive value of 'knowing where you've come from'" (Carsten 2000: 689). This sentiment is attributed not only to the lineage of Ethiopian divinity as embodied in Emperor Haile Selassie I and to understanding Rastafari and Ethiopian histories, but also to 'blood' related families.

Biological ties are significant for Ethiopian-born children, but more specifically between parents and children than with 'extended' relatives such as parents' siblings and cousins. This significance can be seen in parents' financial, moral, and physical labours, which are indispensable for children's well-being and the care of grandchildren. For example, Rastafari parents care for grandchildren as well as financially support

their children. Additionally, typical Caribbean expectations of children caring for elderly parents operate in terms of the reciprocity of care. The expectation is that parents cared for and raised the children, who must then do the same for elderly parents.

Rastafari in Shashamane and abroad function as kin with obligations and expectations of support, just as in Shashamane within Rastafari and local Ethiopian-Rastafari households. The point here is that relationships among Rastafari transnationally and locally as well as 'blood' relatives function together to ensure the reproduction of the Rastafari community in Shashamane.

In the next sections, through micro-level attention to the household, I develop the spatial and temporal issues connected to social reproduction.

## **A Rastafari Yard and an Ethiopian Beit**

There are several types of household composition and a well-established pattern of relationships that is reproduced between repatriated men and local Ethiopian women; the latter is detailed in other work (Bonacci 2015a). For example, Rastafari repatriates co-habit with spouses and/or children or reside alone. Both consanguineous and affinal households can be found in Shashamane. Rastafari there do not make this distinction or differentiate between blood relatives, relatives by marriage or 'fictive' kin. This is one point that emphasises how modes of relatedness among Rastafari in Ethiopia and in the diaspora are lived.

The reproduction of Caribbean-derived traits is also seen when Ethiopian-born youth of Rastafari parents have children, and in their residence and marriage patterns. When repatriates' children have their own children, especially when daughters have children, they usually reside in their parents' house with young children as this facilitates child care. While this is common among Ethiopian-born children, they also engage in varied residence practices including legal marriage with co-residence, "visiting" while living in separate residences (which can include co-parenting) and co-residence without legal marriage.<sup>9</sup> In the life-course and inter-generationally, household composition changes to suit the material and emotional needs of persons and families. For example, Tirunesh's and Matthew's son was in a visiting relationship and co-parented with his girlfriend who lived separately in her family's home. None of John's and Adina's children who lived in Shashamane were married or co-residing with their partners. In another example of an intercultural household consisting of a repatriated father and Ethiopian mother in the Jamaica Safar, the son's local Ethiopian wife lived with him, in his family's home.

Carsten writes with reference to stories from adopted children who are now adults,

Here birth does not imply 'diffuse, enduring solidarity', in Schneider's (1980) terms, emptied as it is of the connection to certainty, longevity, or obligations and rights. Meanwhile, from the point of view of the child adoptive kinship is stripped of the elements of choice or preference which anthropologists generally attribute to friendship or 'fictive kinship'. In trying to establish new relations with birth kin, adopted people must somehow reorder the symbols of kinship. The ways in which they do so do not suggest the heavy reliance on a genetic content of kinship which we might expect. A concern about physical attributes plays a part in motivating searches, but apparently loses significance once reunions have occurred (Carsten 2000: 693).

The yard of Brother Matthew and Sister Tirunesh demonstrates the blurriness of these kinship categories. Their networks include Sister Tirunesh's local 'blood' relatives, fellow Rastafari abroad, Rastafari repatriated 'affines' (son's girlfriend's parents) through their grandchildren as well as other repatriates who live in Shashamane.

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<sup>9</sup> Visiting suggests an ongoing relationship. These are typologies derived from studies of Caribbean marriage and kinship (Smith 1962; Henriques 1949; Clarke 1966).

Brother Matthew, from Jamaica, and Sister Tirunesh, an internal migrant to Shashamane, have raised their three children together over the past twenty-five years. Initially residing in other rented houses in the same Jamaica Safar, they own the current house.<sup>10</sup> Their children are now teenagers and young adults in their twenties and thirties with their own children out of visiting and childbearing relationships<sup>11</sup> — children who claim themselves as Rastafari, like Brother Matthew. Tirunesh was raised in the Orthodox faith and the children have been baptised in the Orthodox Church in Shashamane. While calling themselves Rastafari, the children also identify as both Jamaican and Ethiopian, in contrast to the children of Brother John and Sister Adina who do not identify as Rastafari but primarily as Ethiopian, which I shortly expand on, although these are both intercultural households.

Tirunesh's and Matthew's yard is a spacious one, bordered by a metal fence and concrete blocks, which contains the house and the garden. The type of fencing or boundary, how residents maintain the land surrounding the house, the size of the outdoor yard, the type of flora, the crops in the kitchen garden<sup>12</sup> all matter in whether the house and its inhabitants are coded as 'Rasta' or 'Ethiopian.'<sup>13</sup> These features contribute to the image of a typical Rastafari yard, and the social perception of the yard. In particular, the material used to build the house, its size, and its facilities (including indoor plumbing), are major indicators of a household's finances. This house itself is made of concrete (or of *chika* or mud that may be overlaid with concrete) with designated rooms such as an indoor kitchen, front room with a television for leisure, separate bedrooms and an indoor toilet and bath. There is a similar layout in Brother John's yard, with the addition of an outdoor kitchen.

Considering productive labour as it links to social reproduction is useful. Earning a living in Ethiopia's wage economy often means doing precarious work in formal and informal sectors, but especially in the informal sector. For Rastafari in Shashamane, this chronic uncertainty is experienced by both repatriate women and men. Many households generate income through diverse modes, with the additional contribution of monetary remittances from Rastafari abroad. Work entails self-employment in restaurants, catering and cooking food for sale, wine-making, transportation, sale of ready-made clothing and visitor accommodation through room rentals in repatriate homes. These are the most common types of work. Matthew and Tirunesh, for example, have a licensed small business, rooms to let,<sup>14</sup> and receive remittances. John and Adina similarly have a registered food business. The size, facilities and furnishings in both houses indicate the relative wealth of these families.

The local perception of Rastafari wealth, and Rastafari projection of this façade through items like clothing, shoes and electronics, as compared to perceptions and experiences of local Ethiopian poverty, shapes the image of a Rastafari yard. The Rastafari house, for instance, is envisaged and expected to be made of concrete as opposed to the more common *chika* house or if the latter material is used, at least a sizeable *chika* house with identifiable rooms. Demarcated for the purposes of eating (kitchen), socialising (sitting room), sleeping (bedroom) and hygiene (indoor or outdoor latrine), the house is also expected to be located on a large plot of fenced off land with a concrete wall, instead of the usual thin wooden posts weaved together with a latticed wood outer layer. In reality though, these features are observable only in a few Rastafari houses, such as that of Matthew and Tirunesh.

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10 More accurately, Tirunesh owns the house with the title deed in her name as she is an Ethiopian citizen unlike Matthew. According to Rastafari, in 2017-2018 the Ethiopian government began issuing local identification cards for first, second, and third generation Rastafari who had valid passports. This document comes with the benefits of Ethiopian residence that in principle will make Rastafari eligible for house ownership and small business loans.

11 Childbearing does not necessarily entail a sustained romantic and/or sexual relationship, but the father does recognise paternity and his role, and that of his relatives, in providing for the child.

12 A term commonly used for food that is grown to be eaten in the household, such as vegetables and spices, as compared to non-edible plants.

13 Whether there are workers to cut the grass, plant flowers and vegetables, and tend to it are other considerations.

14 Shashamane has a small local tourist sector, catering to both Rastafari and non-Rastafari visitors from the West.

The fruit trees planted in Tirunesh's and Matthew's yard, of mango and sorrel (hibiscus), are common to the Caribbean landscape, which are replanted in Shashamane. Other crops grown at the yard include potato and peas. Since these also grow well in this region of Ethiopia, they serve as visible connections to the Caribbean and to repatriates' childhood homes in the Caribbean. In my yard, for instance, Fyah asked Rastafari for seeds of a particular breed of mango that had grown around his home in Kingston, Jamaica. These were brought by a Rastafari visitor to Shashamane from Jamaica, supporting Barry Chevannes' point that the yard serves as "metaphor for home" (2001: 129). In planting seeds from his childhood home, Fyah reproduces a sense of his childhood in Jamaica, for his children and grandchildren as well, who themselves have never physically visited Jamaica.

Tim Ingold's emphasis on the inter-connection of nature and society is encapsulated in landscape, where nature is of course socially constructed, and culture also adaptive to the environment. Through his theorisation of taskscape as an "array of activities that weave in and out of one another, variably in harmony and in discord" (Ingold 2000: 17), thinking of body and landscape also meant recognising these "as essentially temporal phenomena" (Ingold 2000: 23) that people inhabit or in which we dwell. In re-conceptualising temporality, Ingold presented a perspective from those who "dwell" in the landscape, both unconsciously and consciously.

As situated within landscapes, houses, then, "have dynamic, processual characteristics encapsulated in the word dwelling" (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995: 1). "Houses are frequently thought of as bodies, sharing with them a common anatomy and a common life history" (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995: 3). The size and facilities in Matthew's and Tirunesh's house have changed with the composition and needs of household members. They have built a well-equipped indoor kitchen, sufficient bedrooms for the children (where grandchildren may sleep also), there is electricity throughout and indoor plumbing for new washrooms. More recently, ensuite bedrooms for visitor accommodation have been constructed adjacent to the main house.

The symbolism of the yard as a tangible, inhabited space in the Zion of Ethiopia underscores its meaning for Rastafari who demonstrate their Rastafari affiliation through other symbols. At the yard of Tirunesh and Matthew, the well-known colours of red, gold and green and images of the Lion of Judah also demarcate this space as Rasta. For instance, a painting of the Lion of Judah figures prominently on a zinc gate or a fence or, in a more understated manner, the outline of the African continent is incorporated into ironwork on house windows. These features depend on residents' personal tastes as well as artistic proclivity and training. Other practises and habits such as language and diet are significant in the identification of households and their residents. The dominant language at Brother Matthew's and Sister Tirunesh's yard is Jamaican patois, and all members of the household, including Sister Tirunesh who learnt it over time, usually communicate in this medium. The children speak both Amharic and patois fluently.

To describe other behaviours and labours at the yard, Sister Tirunesh usually takes on the cooking responsibilities, with Brother Matthew cooking occasionally. In the past, however, Matthew cooked more often, teaching Tirunesh to prepare Caribbean foods. The diet is usually a mixture of popular Ethiopian and Caribbean meals, and those particular to Sister Tirunesh's ethnic group. These meals include rice and peas, stewed beef or ox tail. As a related point, food reflects socio-cultural identity through everyday behaviours. Cooking and eating in the household of Tirunesh and Matthew for example, reinforces a cultural identity as Rastafari for household members, and in particular reflects Matthew's Jamaican tastes cultivated during childhood and adulthood in Kingston. Cooking also signals Sister Tirunesh's incorporation into the Rastafari community. Through food, Rastafari also assert cultural difference to multi-ethnic local Ethiopians, reinforcing the contrastive aspect of ethnic and cultural identity (Barth 1998).

Turning to the house of John and Adina, it is close to the childhood home of Sister Adina surrounded by mainly local Ethiopian neighbours, as noted. John and Adina raised their four children there, two of whom still reside in the spacious house in proximity to Adina's extended family. Sister Adina's family is well-established in Shashamane. With a house that is divided into well-designated rooms, the organisation of space and the size of the house indicate the family's higher class and social status.

An outdoor kitchen signifies the cooking style more common in local Ethiopian homes. In contrast to the yard of Tirunesh and Matthew, diet in Brother John's home usually adhered to local Ethiopian meals of the staple *injera* with beef or vegetarian *wat* (sauce) and rarely popular Caribbean meals, according to Brother John's two children, although their father does know how to cook these foods. Regarding language, Amharic predominates in everyday communication and the children speak negligible patois with a working knowledge of English acquired at school. One of their daughters gave an example of childhood interaction that underscores the use of language in the home. When her father, Brother John, spoke to her in Jamaican patois growing up she understood enough to reply, but to reply in Amharic, and was unable to reciprocate in patois: "When my father talked to me in patois I answer [sic] in Amharic." Although these children know the members of other local Ethiopian-Rastafari households, they have relationships of greater familiarity, intimacy and trust with their mother's family than with any "Jamaican family," as their daughter explained. While Brother John's children self-identify as "Ethiopian," their last name, which is Brother John's Anglo first name identifies them as *faranj* or "foreign."<sup>15</sup>

The household and the socio-spatial environment, as indicated by these factors, shape how John's and Adina's children see themselves as well as their status. As Karen Fog Olwig (2007) notes:

...from the point of view of the logic of social fields, family and kinship as well as places – regarded as the bedrock of social life – therefore do not exist in and of themselves. Rather, they become defined and attain meaning as individuals' lives take social form and place within specific networks of social relations (:12).

In Shashamane, then, Ethiopian-born children in Rastafari-local Ethiopian households self-identify as Rastafari and/or as Ethiopian, depending on socialisation as well as individual sentiments and worldviews. The visible marking of space and social reproduction shape ideas and perceptions. One house is a yard and one is a *beit*. Fog Olwig's position on social fields complements Heather Horst's point that "home is not just a place, but becomes a site for imagining several key relationships" in the lives of occupants (2011: 30). Bourdieu's discussion of the Kabyle house (1970) shows that the symbolic ordering of space becomes intertwined with habitus or, in a simplified meaning, the systemic reproduction of structure, merging spatial and temporal concerns.

As such, the activities and roles of household members over time are crucial to understanding social reproduction. The function of the household cross-culturally in reproduction is evident not only in biological reproduction and as a source of labour for production, but in the sexual division of labour, and value systems around the gendering of place and role differentiation (Boserup 1970; Barriteau 2001; Mies 1982). A Caribbean gendered division of space is observable in Shashamane in both Rastafari and Rastafari-local Ethiopian households whereby the yard or house tends to be a female sphere and the road a male one. Although the yard serves as both private and public on different occasions, it is generally considered a site of domesticity and thus private. It is associated with women's reproductive labour and activities which are devalued economically and socially in the market economy (Mintz 1989; Barrow 1996).

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<sup>15</sup> Naming practises in Ethiopia mean that the father's first name is adopted as the child's surname.

This gendered spatial distinction is generally observable in urban Ethiopia as well, given the cross-societal institutionalisation of patriarchy. The gendered dimension to waged labour in working class urban Ethiopian households sees women and men responsible for earning in the formal and informal economies (Gomes 2017; DeRegt 2010). Based on Konjit Kifetew's country survey conducted at the beginning of the twentieth century regarding gender roles, expectations and attitudes to work in urban and rural locales, "Ethiopian males prefer women who are income-generating. Rural women are expected to help their husbands in farming, animal husbandry, etc. Urban men suggest that their wives should get as much employment as possible in order to support their families" (2006: 127). Most urban and rural Ethiopians in Kifetew's sample indicated that men should take on the breadwinner role in families, demonstrating a shared ideal between the Caribbean and Ethiopian patriarchal societies, although a sizeable percentage said that both husbands and wives should be "considered as breadwinners" (2006: 127): "About 46% of the respondents said the husband should be the main breadwinner, and only 11% thought it should be the wife. But 34% stated that both the husband and the wife should be considered as breadwinners, and 3.9% put such a responsibility on children, too" (Kifetew 2006: 127).

These ideals may be shared cross-culturally, but they do not reflect the actual experiences of many people of modest income, as Kifetew's data shows. This is why class is a significant factor in understanding the interplay of ideal behaviours and lived experiences, particularly within social structures and market economies that are based on this gendered division of labour. There is a history of women's productive labour in the colonial and postcolonial Caribbean as well (for examples see Katzin 1959; Mintz 1989; Freeman 2000; Mohammed 2002; Ho 1993) and also in diasporic Caribbean households in Shashamane. While the gendered distinction between productive and reproductive work persists in both Rastafari, and in Rastafari-local Ethiopian households, women do engage in more regular waged labour outside the yard than men, taking on the breadwinner role that is associated with a patriarchal-derived ideal of masculinity. These socio-economic structures, combined with the need to earn money in situations where men's work does not provide sufficient family or household income, mean that women's labour is persistently undervalued. Therefore, women earn less than men's already low wages, and have less income to contribute to families, although this is necessary income (Barriteau 2001; Ho 1993). There appears to be a significant similarity in gender roles and the gendered division of labour at the household level between Rastafari and local Ethiopians, which warrants further research in multi-ethnic urban Ethiopia.

Factoring in class is critical since productive and reproductive work overlap in poor households. However, in Sister Adina's and Sister Tirunesh's households, sufficient income proscribes their need to earn. Instead, both women focus on domestic, reproductive and care work. Their networks of social relations, particularly with Rastafari 'kin' globally, through their husbands, and with children and relatives in the United States mainly for Adina and John, provide financial support. In both households, although small crops are grown, livelihood activities in the waged economy predominate, and is supplemented by remittances from Rastafari abroad, also demonstrating the transnational dimension to earning a living. I turn now to the broader interconnections of community and yard.

### **Being Rooted: Locating Identities in Time and Space**

In building up an image of the yard-space, issues of identity and symbolic-material linkages feature significantly. The socio-cultural changes and continuities previously described link to Clifford's critique of the rootedness of culture and therefore identity in anthropology. As an identity category and as an everyday expression of belonging, the fluid embodiment of Rastafari, Ethiopian, Jamaican and faranj are imbued with ideas of entitlement, which most clearly emerge in conflicts over the land. From my observations, when local Ethiopians of various ethnicities say "Jamaican" or "Rasta" in everyday conversation, it is culturally juxtaposed

with “Ethiopian” and coded as faranj. Among local Ethiopians too, “Ethiopian” is juxtaposed to a hegemonic Ethiopian identity as “Habesha,” an Amharic term referring to an Abyssinian-derived, northern Ethiopian social and ethnic identity that positions other ethnicities as inferior (Jalata 2009).

From a local Ethiopian perspective, Rastafari are not only faranj but also territorially ‘uprooted’ from their homes in the Caribbean—unable to prove Ethiopian ancestry. Consequently, claims to land, especially land that was historically granted by a deposed Ethiopian emperor, are null. If ‘culture’ is equated with fixity then ‘uprooted’ people are seen as having lost culture: “violated, broken roots signal an ailing cultural identity and a damaged nationality” (Malkki 1995: 15). Within Rastafari worldview, however, Rastafari are historically tied to Ethiopia, and this specific space in Shashamane. Rastafari also actively create home through the yard and its kin networks, thereby ‘rooting’ themselves within present day Ethiopia.

Despite the dispossession, the land grant symbolises dignity, recognition of black and Ethiopian identities and equality for Rastafari globally. This Rastafari historical claim to the land is kept alive by first and second generations in Ethiopia, in everyday interaction at home and at ritual events, and for Rastafari abroad through rites, inclusive of visiting Shashamane and contributing to community, household, and individual survival through remittances. In this moral landscape, the tension between Rastafari and local Ethiopians around the land is noticeable in stories, remarks and anecdotes that circulate in Shashamane. As Giulia Bonacci (2015b) notes, two of the terms given to early (at that time non-Rastafari) Ethiopian World Federation settlers, “sädätäñña färänjoch” and “balabbat,” which mean foreigners and landowners, provide insight into local attitudes, state classifications of repatriates, and social inequality. Used in written sources in 1959, Bonacci argues that the term sädätäñña färänjoch characterised repatriates as “different” from locals and hence faranj, but also different from white European faranjoch (the plural of faranj) who lived in Ethiopia

They were not white but some of their everyday practices were seen as such – or simply as different. They talked English, drove a car, were sometimes dressed in suit, tie and hat, cooked standing, and ate with knives and forks. The term sädätäñña expresses agency and means refugee, immigrant or emigrant... The expression sädätäñña färänj is as uncommon as were the Caribbean settlers. This name identified them as coming from elsewhere like the färänjočč, but they were also perceived as migrants and refugees in Ethiopia where they were planting new roots (Bonacci 2015b: 40-41).

This excerpt demonstrates that the present-day attitude toward black Rastafari as faranj was nuanced in the past. When the first repatriates arrived, local Ethiopians recognised their difference from preceding white and European settlers. However, the ‘migrants’ had a privileged position as recipients of land. In the imperial period, *gult* land tenure practises meant that landowners and labourers were of different strata. In Shashamane, these initial settlers took on the role of landowners or balabbat. In imperial Ethiopia, following the conquest of independent southern territories and incorporation into the Empire, balabbat were usually “chosen from among the local population; they were granted land and administrative responsibility by the Ethiopian central power (Mantel-Niecko 1980, 69). It is only because they were beneficiaries of imperial politics over southern lands that the Caribbean settlers were named balabbat by their neighbors” (Bonacci 2015b: 42). Although this term is no longer used in Ethiopia, particularly following the 1974 revolution and subsequent changes in governance and land tenure, these historical terms indicated the variable status of early non-Rastafari repatriates.

The changing local perceptions of non-Rastafari settlers and Rastafari repatriates around access to and ownership of land manifest in a widely-circulated story in Shashamane, and noted by Erin MacLeod according to which the imperial state granted Rastafari land to spy on Oromo residents either as “punishment” or a form of intimidation (2014: 101). These negative rumours and stories circulate within the Jamaica Safar while at the same time repatriated Rastafari and multi-ethnic locals interact daily. Whether buying food in the local

ketema market, subjected to increasing prices, through intermarriage and childbearing, attending school, or participating in community savings schemes, there is constant communication, support as well as conflict in institutional and everyday spheres among these ‘locals’ and ‘migrants.’

Although many Rastafari have settled in a particular area of Shashamane, hence the name that has spontaneously arisen of “Jamaica Safar,” multi-ethnic Ethiopians and Rastafari of several nationalities live side by side, as mentioned. However, MacLeod (2014) suggests that changing perceptions of social space, and of claims and entitlements to land in Shashamane between local Ethiopians and Rastafari, can be interrogated in terms of Henri Lefebvre’s theory of space as lived and perceived. In twenty-first century Shashamane, local political projects for the development of the city emphasise,

The practical, economical, financial, and developmental side - the perceived space... However, a different maneuver is undertaken by Rastafari. They look outside the time and space of contemporary Shashemene to make an argument...by referencing the granted land by the imperial government and the negotiated maintenance of this land through an agreement with the Dergue [following the 1974 revolution], they [Rastafari] are using what could be called old maps to locate their space (MacLeod 2014: 111-112).

This creates dissensus in how the space is lived between Rastafari and local Ethiopian residents. Although acknowledging the inter-relation between ideological underpinnings and the use of public space in social interaction in Shashamane, MacLeod’s relegation of “old maps” to assess Rastafari imaginative self- and place-making is limited. Rather, as Miriam Kahn writes, “places are complex constructions of social histories, personal and interpersonal experiences, and selective memory” (Kahn 1996: 167). This applies to the wider spaces of the Jamaica Safar, ketema as well as the household.

To end, the impacts of diverse and diverging conceptions of place are observable in the changing status of Rastafari and initial repatriates as foreigners, landowners, refugees and Ethiopians, with the development of kin relations as well as in conflicts with kin and neighbours. These behaviours indicate that issues of social reproduction, kinship and cultural change are also pertinent.

In this discussion of the making of a Rastafari yard in Shashamane, I have attempted to highlight how Rastafari emplace themselves on an everyday basis, and how the social identities of Rastafari or Ethiopian are useful inter-connected strands to consider. I have outlined the features of a yard-space following the migration or repatriation of Rastafari from the Caribbean to Ethiopia for spiritual and moral reasons. This Rastafari settlement on the historic land grant has led to the establishment of intercultural households in the multicultural Jamaica Safar. With examples from two intercultural Rastafari-local Ethiopian households, these notes have highlighted the factors deployed in categorising a yard versus a beit, even while recognising the similarities between these households, such as a sexual division of labour. One factor is the location of the yard and the shaping of the space, with others inclusive of language, religion, diet and family organisation. The inter-changeable use of Amharic, patois and English in Brother Matthew’s and Sister Tirunesh’s yard, for example, took a different form in Brother John’s and Sister Adina’s household. Diet and cooking in each home also differed and are noteworthy features in delineating individual and social identities. In short, these two households showed processes of intercultural exchange and social reproduction taking place in the wider neighbourhood.

The symbolism of the land grant for Rastafari globally and cultural-material issues that shape the yard-space, resonate with how place is sensed and the house itself is experienced and made by different actors. The house and neighbourhood continue to be important loci of socialisation as well as individual attitudes, thereby extending the discussion of kinship and relatedness to those with whom we live and build relationships, which has been a feature of Caribbean kinship. These behaviours are interrelated with tangible material concerns of

work, generating income and receiving remittances, which reinforce the transnational dimension to Caribbean cultures. Class, status, religion and cultural identity are integral to understanding household production and family formation. In focussing on diasporic Caribbeans in the Global South, this paper has centred long-standing issues of emplacing peoples and cultures in the anthropology of the Caribbean.

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# Materiality, affection, personhood: on sacrifice in the worship of the goddess Kali in Guyana

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## **Abstract**

This paper describes the ritual procedures associated with animal sacrifice in the worship of the Hindu goddess Kali in Guyana, formerly British Guiana. Animal sacrifice is explored through questions relating to materiality, personhood and the mutual permeability of persons and objects. The aim is to advance an interpretation based on native conceptions regarding the potential effects of the exchange and circulation of substances between devotees of the goddess Kali, Hindu deities, and ritual artefacts.

**Key words:** Sacrifice; Worship of the goddess Kali; Guyana; Materiality; Personhood.

# Materialidade, afetação e pessoalidade: sobre o sacrifício no culto à deusa Kali na Guiana

## Resumo

O texto descreve procedimentos rituais associados ao sacrifício de animais no culto à deusa hindu Kali na Guiana, antiga Guiana Inglesa. O sacrifício de animais é pensado à luz de questões relativas à materialidade, a pessoalidade e à permeabilidade de pessoas e objetos umas às outras. Busca-se avançar uma interpretação centrada nas concepções nativas sobre os potenciais efeitos da troca e da circulação de substâncias entre devotos da deusa Kali, divindades hindus. e artefatos rituais.

**Palavras-chave:** Sacrifício; Culto à Kali; Guiana; Materialidade; Pessoalidade.

# Materiality, affection, personhood: on sacrifice in the worship of the goddess Kali in Guyana<sup>1</sup>

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In this article I describe sacrificial ritual acts in the worship of the Hindu goddess Kali in Guyana, formerly British Guiana. I present a specific case in order to highlight the non-material elements involved in the manipulation of ritual artefacts, which can be affected by the transmission of the states of being of spiritual entities, bodily substances and what is called by my interlocutors of *affection(s)*<sup>2</sup> of human and non-human persons. Far from taking sacrifice as a self-contained act or reducing it to a modality of reciprocal relations between humans and divinities, I seek to show how divinities, humans, animals and ritual artefacts are permeable to each other.

The text is an exploratory attempt to incorporate anthropological approaches produced on other ethnographic regions into the core discussions of Caribbean scholarship, especially with regard to the religious practices of Indo-Caribbean populations. I begin by presenting some basic elements of Kali worship in Guyana. Next, I describe in more detail events that occurred at one religious festival. Finally, I foreground issues relating to materiality, substance and personhood.

## Kali worship and the sacrifice of animals

Transplanted to Guyana by Indians who moved to the country as indentured labourers between 1838-1917, in the aftermath of the abolition of black slavery in the British Caribbean in 1834,<sup>3</sup> *Kali worship*, or *Kali Puja*, is characterized by healing practices to cure diseases with a physical and spiritual origin. Each week, Hindu deities (*deotas*) manifest themselves in the bodies of religious experts in order to heal people, occasions on which they reveal, through verbal acts, the causes of the *problems* afflicting *devotees*, as well as to prescribe the acts of *devotion* to be performed by those consulting them.

Through distinct practices of devotion to the deities, men and women seek to cure themselves of diseases and misfortunes, improve their lives, including materially, and obtain blessings, such as begetting a child. The rites of Kali worship are called *pujas*: that is, the manifestations of belief and submission to the Hindu deities through prayers and offerings. Eventually, *works* are performed by priests and other members of the temple in the houses of devotees, normally to counterbalance the effects of the actions of spirits and other malign beings, or those of witchcraft.

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2 Use of italics in this article indicates native terms.

3 Almost 240,000 Indians migrated between 1838-1917 to what was then British Guiana. For more details on Indian indentured labour, see: Bahadur 2014; Connolly 2019; Laurence 1994; Look Lai 1993; Smith 1959; Tinker 1993 [1974].

In the temple where I conducted most of my observations, Blairmont,<sup>4</sup> seventeen Hindu divinities are worshipped, six of whom manifest in humans. The culminating point of the weekly rites of Kali worship precisely involves the invocation of gods and goddesses in the bodies of certain religious specialists called *marlos*. Marlos are men and women whose bodies serve as vehicles for the revelations and therapeutic treatments performed by divinities. Manifestations of these deities are not uniform since they unfold at specific *levels*: more or less *full, deep or pure*. In reality, the *shakti* (power) of the deotas is never fully propagated since human bodies can *stand* only a small fraction of this power. But gradations do exist: someone *impure* is incapable of *standing* a manifestation and only through *training* is it possible to *develop* it.

Kali devotees are mostly descendants of Indians living in impoverished rural areas of Guyana's Atlantic coastal region who self-identify as Hindus. Participation and attendance in the rites are not limited to Hindus, though. Muslims, Christians and Afro-Guyanese people also take part, as well as *sanatanists*, that is, members of *Sanatan Dharma*, a Hindu tradition self-proclaimed as orthodox, Brahmin and Northern Indian in origin.<sup>5</sup> This aspect is important since Kali worship tends to be associated exclusively with the so-called *Madrasi*, descendants of Southern Indians.<sup>6</sup> The reasons for the association between Kali worship and the Madrasi are complex. Suffice to say that in their efforts to develop Hinduism in an asymmetric colonial setting<sup>7</sup> founded on Christian values, members of Sanatan Dharma sought to legitimize their religion by dissociating themselves from practices deemed morally suspect, such as possession and animal sacrifice, attributing them to the Madrasi (see, among others, Khan 2004; McNeal 2011; Stephanides & Singh 2000; Vertovec 1996; Younger 2010).

Whatever the case, any person, irrespective of origin or religious affiliation, may visit Kali temples, although consultations with deities and presence in the pujas depends above all on the strict observance of *fasting*. In other words, to attend a temple, the person must spend the previous three days avoiding sexual relations, the ingestion of foods of animal origin, or the consumption of recreational drugs and alcoholic drinks. Menstruating women<sup>8</sup> cannot accompany the rites, nor those who have had contact with new-borns or the recently deceased. In their day-to-day lives, humans are in relation with impure persons, substances and beings. Consequently, they must adhere to certain indispensable prescriptions if they are to enter into contact with the deities, keeping themselves immune to the *affectations* arising from diverse kinds of *impurity*. I return to this point below. Divine power also produces effects in persons, sometimes negative, especially at moments considered critical and dangerous, such as the sacrifice of animals.

Dialogues about animal sacrifice are extremely common among Kali worshippers for a series of reasons, including the concern, especially among priests, to ensure that sacrifices are conducted *correctly*. Put otherwise, sacrificial practices must conform to the precepts of sacred Hindu writings. This emphasis is partly a response to the stigmatization of Kali worship in Guyana, which is normally associated with witchcraft, the devil and the evil. Such stigmas are not exclusive to Christians. Many Sanatanists see Kali worship as a distorted version of Hinduism, precisely because of practices like animal sacrifice, which, they argue, contravene the Hindu principle of non-violence.

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4 I conducted ten months of intensive fieldwork in Guyana between 2010-2012, which resulted in my dissertation in social anthropology (Mello 2014). In 2018 I undertook brief visits to the country. My observations were concentrated on one temple, Blairmont, and I interacted mostly with its members – especially, but not exclusively, young and middle-age men. The data analysed in this article were gathered between September 2011 and February 2012, a period in which my fieldwork was focused primarily on the Blairmont temple. Among other things, I not only observed the preparations for religious feasts, but also took an active part in them, including the Big Puja.

5 During the indenture system, labourers from India embarked from the ports of Calcutta (Kolkata) in the north of the country and Madras (Chennai) in the south. More than 85% of the hired workers who disembarked in Guyana came from the north of the subcontinent (Look Lai 1993; Smith 1959).

6 Southern Indian Hindu traditions in the Caribbean were continuously shaped through exchanges with other Hindu practices of North Indian origin. Besides Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, Indian Southern Traditions are still vibrant in Suriname, Guadalupe, and Martinique.

7 Guyana gained its independence from the United Kingdom in 1966.

8 Menstruation does not entirely preclude the presence of women in the temple, so long as they have no contact with altars, ritual objects or cooking utensils. Even so, the presence of women in this state is potentially dangerous, especially at critical moments like sacrifice.

My interlocutors not only cite diverse Hindu scriptures in which animal sacrifice is mentioned, they also stress that some divine *forms* need to be nourished with *life* and *blood* to realize their *work*. *Form* is a central concept in Hinduism as a whole (see Brubaker 1978; Eck 1998) and for Hindus from different traditions in Guyana. Essentially, just one God exists, a Primordial being who manifests itself in different forms. For my interlocutors, over history, this Being, Kali, assumed these distinct forms in response to the specific needs of the humans and gods. This is why there are so many divinities, which are ultimately forms of this one Supreme Being, simultaneously different and equal to the latter – hence the phrase recurrently expressed by Hindus in Guyana: *all the divinities are the same*.<sup>9</sup>

This principle is actualized in a differentiating mode depending on which divinity is involved. For example, the god Khal Bhairo is defined as a *dark form* of the god Shiva. Khal Bhairo is not singular and can assume diverse forms: dark, ferocious, voracious, perverse, or, conversely, amenable. All the divinities possess both terrible and benign forms, but some of them, like Khal Bhairo, are thought to be closer to one of these poles, characterized either by their disruptive, implacable and ferocious behaviour, or, on the contrary, by their docile temperament, as in the case of the goddess Lakshmi. Khal Bhairo may sometimes assume a benign form and Lakshmi a malign form, while certain divinities tend to manifest in specific forms whose main attributes encompass others.

In the ritual context, this means that the more generic attributes of each deota determine which items should be offered, which problems a divinity can resolve and with which beings she relates. The goddess Mariamma, for example, though ferocious and vengeful, is simultaneously benign, associated with healing, including pestilent and contagious diseases. For this and other reasons, goat sacrifices should be made to Mariamma, both to honour her deeds and because of the goddess's need to be nourished in order to *bear* the impurities of sick and weak bodies. On the other hand, Mariamma does not *deal* with everything. Sicknesses caused by spells and spirits are cured by Kateri, a dark form of Mariamma capable of subjugating malign beings and removing the *nastiest* impurities from human bodies. For this very reason, Kateri consumes alcohol and smokes cigarettes during the pujas because of the permanent contract with impurities, consuming *intoxicating* substances precisely to become less immune to them. Khal Bhairo, in turn, is a central figure in mythic battles against demons and is Mariamma's guardian, repelling any threat to her well-being. As essentially a warrior god, Khal Bhairo must be constantly *fed* with goats and cockerels.

Another deity central to Kali worship, including its mythology, is Bhadra Kali. It is told that thousands of years ago the demon Raktabija was graced with a boon from the god Shiva: each time a drop of his blood hit the soil, another Raktabija would emerge. Imbued with this power, the demon rebelled against the gods and tried to subjugate them. The latter tried to fight back, but each injury inflicted on the demon generated more demons until finally an uncountable number of Raktabijas had emerged. Alarmed, the gods first turned to the warrior goddess Durga, whose ferocious drive made the situation even worse, since the slaughter she unleashed generated thousands more demons. Enraged, Bhadra Kali emerged from her, a terrible form of the (already) ferocious Durga. Bhadra Kali, possessing diverse weapons, also had another talent: she could prevent Raktabija's blood from striking the soil, sucking up each drop produced by the latter's mortal wounds. As the battle unfolded, the goddess supplanted countless demons. In this way, Bhadra Kali acquired the taste for blood and began to destroy other things and beings, including the benign. The universe was once again in danger, this time due to Bhadra Kali. Mad with rage, the goddess destroyed everything and everyone. Only after Shiva, her consort, placed himself at her feet, as though he was one of her victims, did Bhadra Kali come to her senses and cease her destruction.

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9 As Eck remarked: "Hindu thought is most distinctive for its refusal to make the one and the many into opposites. For most, the manyness of the divine is not superseded by oneness. Rather, the two are held simultaneously and are inextricably related" (Eck 1998: 28).

Popular image of Bhadra Kali



I cannot analyse this myth in close detail here. However, I highlight the fact that the potentially intoxicating effect of blood is clear in this myth. Blood is imbued with qualities that indicate what Carsten (2013) calls an “excess of potentiality,” associated in Blairmont with impurity, vitality, instability and danger. Raktabija, the demon who put the very existence of the universe in jeopardy, self-reproduces with the drops of blood that spill on the ground. The emergence of more and more Raktabijas eventually leads to the engendering of a terrible divine form, Bhadra Kali, who subjugates her enemies and becomes enraptured with death, uncontrollable, relentless, thirsting for blood. Not by chance, in the Blairmont temple Bhadra Kali does not receive any pujas. She has no altar and is never invoked, although she manifests sometimes in people during rites. Her temperament, as potent as it is unstable, is inherently dangerous. Invoking her would imply continuous offerings and demand training for her to manifest in people’s bodies – an exercise not just risky but futile since no human can *stand* the power of Bhadra Kali for very long in their body.

While the reflections and comments surrounding animal sacrifices are partly provoked in response to stigmas and criticisms of outsiders, not everything can be reduced to the mobilization of discourses and knowledge to legitimize religious practices considered morally suspect by others. In scenarios in which notions of purity, orthodoxy, correctness and authenticity are mobilized, the legitimization of religious practices (see Khan 2004) and mythic themes are fundamental since they foreground reflections on the potential effects arising from the ingestion, exchange and circulation of substances.

The incidence of sacrifices relates to mythic themes, to the possible effects of the torrents of blood. Indeed, some divinities drink the blood of sacrificed animals via their human vehicles. In videos distributed on platforms like YouTube it is not unusual to find scenes in which Kali worshippers in Guyana, when manifesting a deity, seize the heads or even the dismembered bodies of goats in order to slurp their blood. Signals emitted by divinities during the manifestation give proof of this connection: Bhadra Kali, specifically, sticks out her tongue when she manifests, which expresses her desire for blood. Put otherwise, some deities are nourished by blood, extracting this substance and renewing some of their power through it.

During my research I never witnessed this kind of scene, since temple assistants do not allow the deities’ manifestations any access to the recently sacrificed animals. Such vigilance is constant, especially in religious festivals, occasions where shakti is disseminated with greater intensity. Consequently, in the two major annual religious festivals, the *Small Puja* and the *Big Puja*, dozens of men join hands and form a circle between the sacrifice officiants and worshippers, preventing any divine frenzy. Normally, a standardized explanation is given for the circle: the objective is to protect the audience since the risk of injury is always present.

The circle certainly aims to safeguard the physical integrity of the audience, while it also avoids the occurrence of acts and gestures labelled wild and primitive by the Sanatanists.<sup>10</sup> In any event, for members of Blairmont, the sacrifices demand precautions and special care. After all, with the consummation of the sacrifices, the divine manifestations burst out more strongly, impelling their human vehicles towards the animals, and amid all this commotion, extremely sharp objects are wielded with force.

Sacrifice is a critical moment, providing leeway for unforeseen and potentially harmful effects. Not by chance, in the conversation with my interlocutors or in the dialogues between peers, the notion of *affection* is frequently enunciated. As we shall see below, subsequently illustrated through the reconstruction of a specific case, animal sacrifice is just one of the transactional modalities between humans and deities, although it channels extremely potent forces and energies. I turn now to a more detailed description of the practices that precede, and involve, animal sacrifices, highlighting the manipulation of ritual objects.

### Caring for animals, manipulating objects and powers

In Kali worship, animal sacrifice is essentially necessary in five different circumstances: to increase the efficacy of a healing treatment and/or as part of someone's devotion; to give thanks for some blessing; to follow, or revive, a family tradition (a *home* or *family puja*); during religious festivals; and to propitiate *the masters of the land*, that is, Dutch spirits.<sup>11</sup> I shall not explore all these ritual modalities in detail here. I simply call attention to the fact that sacrifices conducted outside the temple are considered different to those realized inside, both in terms of their intended purposes – animals are not sacrificed for spirits in the temple, for instance – and in terms of their potential effects. Concerning the last point, it should be emphasized that temples are *pure* spaces where, ideally, all the frequenters have abstained. Private spaces, on the other hand, are necessarily *contaminated*, given the circulation of several persons, objects, and foodstuff. Although abstinence should be followed for some days prior to performing ritual work in a domestic context, houses are permanently impure spaces, especially those inhabited by malign beings – something commonplace in the country, in fact.

The sacrifices are consummated inside the temple during the weekly Sunday service and in festivals for specific divinities, namely Sangani, Munispren, Mariamma and Khal Bhairo. The goddess Kateri is offered chickens, which are not killed, however, but released after the ritual.<sup>12</sup> People whose worship demands the offering of *life*, as people say, schedule the date of the sacrifice in conversation with the priest. Except for specific occasions, notably *vegetarian* deity festivals and the annual celebration of ancestors (*Pitri-Paksha*), sacrifices in principle can be consummated on any day of the *religious service*. Sacrifices are not made for trivial motives, my interlocutors emphasized, but in response to divine prescriptions and to assist someone with problems and/or wishing to give thanks for past blessings granted by divinities.

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<sup>10</sup> When I met Penny, one of the *killer-men* of Blairmont, in the first months of my research in 2010, he told me that Blairmont was not a *sweet temple*, that is, a temple in which only vegetarian offerings were made. In his definition, Blairmont was a *root temple*, which followed the teachings of the *Old Indians*. Blairmont was a *pure* place, according to him, because *nasty things* were not allowed, such as letting the manifestations consume blood or pouring blood in the altars.

<sup>11</sup> Spirits of the Dutch, the first European settlers of the country. Vengeful, cheaters, self-interested, false and dangerous, these spirits are considered by residents of the country's coastal region to be the true *masters of the land*, or *boundary masters*, possessing prerogatives over the places where they lived in the past, and affecting, malevolently, the life of contemporary Guyanese residing in these areas, above all in locations where sugar plantations once existed or still exist. See Mello (2020) and Williams (1990).

<sup>12</sup> In the so-called *night works*, however, performed in the area outside the temple, black roosters are sacrificed for Kateri. Like Sangani, to whom roosters are also offered in this area, Kateri deals with malignant beings. The night works are also performed for (even) darker forms of Kateri and Sangani.

Sacrifices are not one-way. The divinities, by means of the *murtis*,<sup>13</sup> sculptured forms of the deities, consume the spiritual matter of all offerings placed on their altars. The *leftovers* of the offered items become sacred, infused with divine power, *shakti*. At the end of the weekly rituals, *prasad*, blessed food, is ingested by people who incorporate part of the divine power into themselves, *energizing*, *strengthening* and *purifying* their bodies and their internal dispositions. Since *prasad* is always consumed, the worshippers absorb the divine essence itself into their bodily persons (Nabokov 2000: 9). In sum, sharing foods and being fed by the *murtis* amounts to a combination of worship and mutual feeding (see Carsten 2000: 22).

Khal Bhairo's Altar. November 2010. Photo by the author



The spiritual matter of sacrificed animals is also consumed by divinities through the *murtis*. The leftovers, equally energized and blessed, must be ingested by those who offer animals to the gods. In the Small Puja and the Big Puja, all people taking part in the rites must consume the sacrificed cockerels and goats on the day after the conclusion of the festivals. On these occasions, offerings are made by the benefitting temple in the name of all the ritual participants.<sup>14</sup>

Animals to be sacrificed are carefully chosen. They should have a specific colouring – black for Sangani, white for Munispren, and so on – be presentable and not possess any physical defects. Goats and roosters must remain in the temple for at least one night, eating the temple's purer grain. Extra care is taken during the Big Puja, preparations for which last several days. The animals, especially goats, are not only personally selected by priests, they must also remain inside the temple for as long as possible. Tied to wooden posts for much of the day, on release the goats are supervised to stop them wandering into scrubland and injuring themselves.

<sup>13</sup> Murtis are not just representations of divinities or inert objects, but instances of the distribution of divine personhood. The first step of the weekly rite in Kali temples consists precisely of the so-called *opening of eyes* – that is, the invocation of divinities in order for their spiritual forms to *install themselves* in the *murtis* during the pujas (Mello 2018).

<sup>14</sup> After consummation of the sacrifices, the heads of the animals remain for some minutes in front of the temples of the divinities to which they have been consecrated. Afterwards, they are discarded in a stream. The carcasses are taken to a room further away in order to remove the skins of the cockerels and goats. The person responsible for this process is not the sacrificer and should not have had contact with any stage of the ritual. The meat must be cooked outside the temple by a cook who is also subject to restricted access to certain stages of the ritual.

In the interstices of relations marked by hierarchies,<sup>15</sup> therefore, there is also space for entangled relations of care and attention between animals and humans (see Govindrajan 2015).<sup>16</sup>

Caring for animals cultivates the care for divinities. Like the offerings of garlands whose flowers should be resplendent, or fruits which should show no signs of putrefaction, goats and poultry must be in an adequate, suitable and respectable condition – in sum, *proper*. Then the divinities must *accept* the offering. *Acceptance* is connected to divine recognition both of the adequateness of what is offered and of the *sincerity* of the worship of the devotee or the officiant of the sacrifice. Moreover, it is the animal itself that signals this acceptance in the instant before the consummation of the sacrifice. In other words, sacrifice is only effectively consummated after the acceptance of the deotas, expressed by the animal trembling, three times, after copious amounts of water are poured over its head and body. The trembling does not guarantee *acceptance*, however, since the sacrificer must decapitate the animal with a single blow.<sup>17</sup> Shortly below, I present a case in which these factors come to the fore. Before this account, though, I shall quickly describe the care, use and handling of one of the most important sacrificial objects: the machete.

This type of knife, one of the most common work instruments in Guyana, is used to perform everything from simple tasks, like clearing weeds and opening coconuts, to harvesting sugar cane and working in the rice paddies. There are five machetes available to members of Blairmont for sundry uses: cutting grass, slicing, husking and splitting coconuts, chopping down bamboo, opening tins, dicing food, cutting up fabrics and so on. Two machetes are used exclusively for consummating sacrifices, placed on Sundays on the altars of the gods Khal Bhairo and Sangani. Before their utilization, at least three diagonal lines of red (*sindoor*) powder and turmeric (*dye*) powder are sprinkled on the blades. These are medicinal substances used to ward off afflictions and impurities. At the moment of sacrifice, this object is manipulated by distinct beings. Firstly, a priest takes the machete from the altar and powders *sindoor* and *dye* on the blade, circling it three times around a pan filled with embers to which a sheen of plant resin has been applied moments earlier. The machete is held out to the divine manifestation, which sprinkles water and all the powders onto the machete. Next, the divinity sprinkles the sacrificer himself – who kneels to show submission and receive the blessing – and then rubs the powders on his arms, as well as making a mark with *baboot* (a dung-based resin) on his forehead. The machete is handed by the divinity to the sacrificer, who circles it three times around the pan. A lemon, previously stuck on the tip of the machete, is divided into four pieces and its juice squeezed towards the four cardinal points by the sacrificer, also in order to repel impurities and afflictions.

Meanwhile, the animals also receive attention. Cockerels are circled three times around the pan as it exhales plant resin, while the pan is circled around the goats. Afterwards, a priest sprinkles the powders over the animal and pours water on its face, waiting for the divinity's acceptance – which, as stated, is not expressed verbally by the manifestation but through the animal's trembling. Finally comes the decapitation. Cockerels are held by an assistant, sufficiently skilled to avoid blood squirting everywhere. Goats, are not held by anyone – unless they are very restless and their rear hooves need to be grabbed. The sacrificer must await the right moment and then, with a single precise blow, decapitate it. The animal's carcass is removed by an assistant while the head is placed in the outside area of the temple, facing the murtis. A candle is lit and an offering of fire made around the head, which remains there for some minutes. In addition, the priest pours water mixed with flowers, neem leaves and the powders into the mouth of the animal. In the conception of the members

<sup>15</sup> The sacrifice is not considered something bad for the animals. On the contrary, they are *blessed* by the deotas and reborn as humans, the highest form of divine creation (according to my interlocutors), in their next existence. It seems no coincidence that debates and interlocutions at Blairmont on the life-death-rebirth cycle tend to surface especially in conversations about animal sacrifice.

<sup>16</sup> Govindrajan explores animal sacrifice in light of recent developments in multispecies ethnographies and the anthropology of life. I would point out that Godfrey Lienhardt (1961) had already described the complex associations, identifications and relations between supernatural beings, cattle and humans, and indeed this was fundamental to understanding sacrifices among the Dinka.

<sup>17</sup> In Martinique too, a successful sacrifice is signalled by execution with one single blow (Desroches 1996: 66).

of Blairmont, while the sacrificer executes the blow, his arm is *guided* by the deota to whom the animals are being given. This is the other signal of acceptance, since any failure in the execution of the sacrifice – that is, the non-decapitation of the goat with a single blow – is seen as a consequence of negative and destabilizing emanations from someone impure.

Goat consecrated before the sacrifice. June 2018. Photo by the author



In sum, it is not only the animal who must be *proper*. Ritual manipulations of objects like the machete aim to repel afflictions and negative influences that can emanate from people's bodies and thoughts. Offerors, officiants and sacrificers must thus keep themselves pure. Hence the importance of adhering to fasting, devoting oneself to the divinities and maintaining one's thoughts *focused* on them, even though the mere presence of someone impure in the temple can *affect* everyone. Commenting on the work of Godfrey Lienhardt, Bloch (1992: 35) remarked that the effect of rituals on "peripheral participants" shows that "the boundary between the body of an individual and the wider group is weaker [...] even though the event might be focused on the central actor (the initiate or the patient), all the others present are not onlookers but co-participants." Following the same line of argument, I emphasize that the boundaries between deities, persons, bodies, ritual objects and animals are not given. Mutually constituted and mutually affected, these boundaries are unstable and enable us to think about issues pertaining to the effects of circulation of substances and internal dispositions between distinct beings. To this end, I present a brief ethnographic vignette.

### **Impregnated machete**

During my field research, four men were alternately responsible for performing sacrifices in Blairmont. Among them, Stumpie frequented the site every week, conducting most of the killings in the Sunday rites. Meanwhile, Eon, who I dealt with more extensively, appeared at the temple only sporadically, usually during the two large annual festivals of Kali worship, the Small Puja and Big Puja, though this intermittent presence did not impede him from exercising his office as a sacrificer. Eon was from a Madrasi family, possessed a robust physical complexion and was about 50 years old, as well as being a cousin of the priest, Bayo. Living more than 100 kilometres from Blairmont, Eon cited the difficulties and costs of travel as the reason for his

absences from the temple. Although the members of Blairmont recognized these obstacles, they considered his absences excessive. Consequently, the other sacrificers felt that it was unfair Eon was responsible for the sacrifices performed precisely on the most important dates of the annual religious calendar. On the other hand, nobody denied his experience and skill in killing.

As had occurred at the large annual festival, the Big Puja, in 2011, at the 2012 festival Eon arrived at Blairmont on Tuesday, three days before the start of the ceremony, which takes place from Friday to Sunday. As soon as he entered the locale, Eon spread out his mattress, mosquito net and bedding in the temple of the god of sacrifice, and guardian of the goddess Mariamma, Khal Bhairo, sleeping there every night so as to remain close to the god. Over the course of the week, Eon helped with diverse preparations, but since he had little intimacy with the temple's more diligent members, he mostly talked with young people, with myself and with Guyanese arriving from New York especially for the occasion. At night, when the pace of work was less intense, Eon would dress put on, after bathing, in a new t-shirt with the symbol of Superman and would wander through the temple, telling jokes (poorly received) and trying to initiate conversations (normally without much success). Before sleeping, he meticulously sharpened a new machete (cutlass), acquired by himself especially for the festival.

The three days of the Big Puja<sup>18</sup> of 2012 were somewhat inauspicious for Eon. On the Saturday, he was unable to decapitate one of the goats with a single blow. On the Sunday, he failed twice, consecutively, in sacrifices for the gods Sangani and Munispren – on one of these occasions, he had to chop three times to separate the animal's head from its body. As observed earlier, sacrifices not consummated with a single blow are inauspicious, signalling the discontent of the divinities. Already on the Saturday evening I had heard speculation as to the causes of the unsuccessful sacrifices: Eon's own errors. On the Sunday, after two further consecutive failures, the negative verdicts gained in strength: Eon was openly criticized by dozens of people. His behaviours were scrutinized, events gone back over and reasons for the failures ventured, always in an accusatory tone, explicitly or implicitly. Among the reasons mentioned for the unsuccessful sacrifices, I highlight:

Eon did not fast properly for twenty-one days.

The thoughts and mind of Eon were not *focused* sufficiently on the deities. His character and his personal traits attested to his lack of interest and commitment to the religious functions.

Eon was not a true devotee of the goddess. His lack of presence at the temple reflected his lack of *devotion*.

Instead of using the temple's machetes, Eon choose to handle a new one, which was not sharp enough (his own fault) and which had been brought from an impure place, his home.

To be precise, Eon was subject to a flood of criticism. The summary above captures just a small number of the reproaches and accusations directed at him, although some elements of these comments were recurring. Various people attributed Eon's lack of success to his age, flaws in his character, his exhibitionism (frequently recalling the Superman t-shirt worn during the week), his supposedly unruly life, the fact that he was not a truly religious man, his *connections* (that is, his kinship with the priest), the latter's leniency in not removing him from his ritual post, and so on. The coup de grâce came from Mariamma herself, manifested in Bayo, the priest and his cousin. As usual, at the end of the festival the goddess convoked the crowd in order to share her view of the festival. Below I reconstruct the goddess's monologue with Eon, based on a few sparse notes taken on my mobile phone:

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<sup>18</sup> The Big Puja is also known as *Karagam Puja*, in reference to the sacred vases made especially for the occasion. These are carried in procession through the village where a temple is located in order to absorb, incorporate and remove impurities from people, families, houses and lands throughout the region.

**Mariamamma:** You certainly know why I'm calling you. You didn't do the right thing and you failed not only with me, but with your brothers. Do you know how important is the sacrifice in my Puja? I couldn't accept all the goats. You never come to my temple, and you don't hear my priest. He told you to come to my temple more often. But you didn't I understand that you cannot here always, but if you were a true devotee of mine these things would never happen. Many of my children do not come here every weekend. But still, they are with me, in their thoughts and feelings. Are you a real devotee? I don't think so. Am I part of your life? Didn't I bless you many times? If you were always thinking of me, I would be in your side, I would guide you, but how can I do that if you do not focus on me? If you don't have a correct life. You affected my entire puja. That's your own and exclusive fault. You know that. I'm not leaving you, I can give you new chances. But you have to earn my confidence. Now, leave and go in peace. Think about your deeds.

The viewpoint of the goddess, conveyed through Eon's cousin, validated and consolidated the criticisms already formulated earlier by other people.<sup>19</sup> Eon just listened to everything with a resigned air – further proof, in some people's eyes, that he had done something wrong. Among the various criticisms, one element was highlighted by various people: Eon *affected* the smooth functioning of the festival. And moreover the machete itself. Among other opinions, I present three, sufficiently illustrative for the purposes of this article:

Eon didn't fast properly. He affected the machete. Instead of using the temple's machete, he brought a new one from home. He's responsible for all the disgraces that felt upon us.

(Comment of a priest to other devotees)

Eon caused these disgraces. He affected the machete, the sacrifice, everything, and he offended the goddess. That's why she didn't accept the goats.

(Comment of a devotee, in dialogue with me)

He put his feelings on things. His thoughts and behaviours affected the things that he touched.

(Comment of a devotee, during a conversation with another women)

Over the course of the Big Puja, Eon had no problems decapitating another fifteen cockerels, along with another five goats, but his blows missed on three occasions. Retrospectively, his conduct and the contact with the altars and the machete became the explanatory cause of his errors. The blows did not follow the expected trajectory because they had been affected, impregnated with the effects of conducts, gestures, feelings, affects and thoughts. Furthermore, precisely because of Eon, the deotas caused the trajectory of the cut to deviate, manifesting their discontent. If responsibility for the failures in the sacrifices ultimately fell on a single individual, this was precisely because the boundaries between material objects, humans and divinities are porous.

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<sup>19</sup> Ideally, when a person manifests a divinity, he or she falls unconscious, retaining no memory of the actions performed (or the words pronounced) by the divinities during the manifestation. It is in this sense that divinities act as oracles since they verbally express *revelations* through human vehicles. Elsewhere I have described at length the relationships between oracular revelations, the occurrence of manifestation, and doubts associated with them (Mello 2020).

The remains of the goat's garland. June 2018. Photo by the author.



### **Materiality, affection, personhood**

“The ambit of action of the sacrifice is especially noteworthy,” Mauss and Hubert (1964 [1899]: 16-17) emphasized, because it produces a “double effect, one on the object for which it is offered and upon which it is desired to act, the other on the moral person who, desires and instigates that effect.” Although these authors reduced the unity of sacrifice to a procedure through which communication is established between the worlds of the sacred and profane, projecting a universalism open to contestation (see de Heusch 1985; Panagiotopoulos 2018),<sup>20</sup> their emphasis on the irradiations – or more precisely, the effects – of sacrificial acts is worth retaining. As Robbins (2017) has suggested, Mauss and Hubert’s essay anticipates recent anthropological debates on the practices of religious mediation. Given that, in diverse contexts, deities become present through distinct types of mediating acts (verbal utterances, objects handled at rituals, musical and bodily performances and so on), mediation establishes both approximations and distances between the divine and the mundane, comprising something essential in religious life and social life as a whole. Ultimately, relations of prestation and counterprestation are bound up with the problem of presence.

In Kali worship, divinities are present in murtis and other artefacts, on altars and in the bodies of religious specialists, distributing their power (shakti) within a particular ambience. The manipulation and consecration of objects like the machete show the importance of paying attention to materiality in the mediation practices between humans and divinities. Daniel Miller (2002) highlights the fact that in many contexts material objects are conceived less through their attributes and more through the place they occupy in an exchange or a ritual. Consequently, the “implications of artefacts” can alter simply through the introduction of these artefacts in a new order. The machete brought by Eon from his home can be thought of precisely in these terms, since, compared to others, he possessed an ephemeral relationship with the temple, with the altar of Khal Bhairo and with the purposes of its use. Although the blades of the temple’s machetes show clear signs of wear, their constant use in the temple makes them comparatively more effective, imbued with greater force, so to speak.

<sup>20</sup> Other critical points in Mauss and Hubert’s work include the prominence of Vedic sacrifice in their conceptual schema, understood through Judeo-Christian canons (Bloch 1992: 28-29), and the presence of evolutionist precepts in their analytic schema (de Heusch 1985: 15).

Well before the ‘material turn’ in anthropology, and in the anthropology of religion in particular (Hazard 2013), Evans-Pritchard (1956) had already called attention to the fact that among the Nuer, spears – both those used in warfare and those used for fishing – were far more than a tool, amounting to true parts and extensions of persons.<sup>21</sup> Following the path indicated by Evans-Pritchard, we could ask apropos the case being studied here: machetes are extensions of whom, exactly? Deities, the officiant of the sacrifice, or both? Considering that the gods and goddesses guide the course of the blows struck by the sacrificer and the latter utilizes an object kept on the altar of a god associated with the sacrifice, the machetes can also be conceived as an extension of the deities, their manifestations and the murtis, since the artefactual bodies of the divinities are distributed during the rites, permeating the people all around.

In his already classic reformulation of how art objects, images, icons and the like should be treated as persons in the context of an anthropological theory of art – that is, as sources and targets of social agency – Gell (1998) argues against both aesthetic and symbolist approaches. Proposing a new anthropological theory of art instead, inspired by other existing anthropological theories, in diverse passages of *Art and Agency* Gell makes use of reflections on the notion of the person – evident in his diverse references to Marcel Mauss, Roy Wagner and Marilyn Strathern, as well as to monographs on exchange systems like kula and studies of Hinduism, especially those relating to idolatry. In fact, the diverse formulas and schemas set out in the initial chapters of his work are nuanced by the analysis of abundant ethnographic material (Cesarino 2017; Mello 2018), including on topics relating to ‘religion.’

As Gell remarks, the attention paid to idolatry and volt sorcery, for example, aims to desacralize the attitude of an aesthetic, almost religious, veneration of art works, as well as foment a desacralization of the concept of the individual. The ideas implicit to the concept of the individual not only result in dichotomies, they also permeate theoretical propositions relating to art – as in the supposition that artistic creation depends above all on individual genius. Thus, it is indispensable to return to debates relating to the person, paying sufficient attention, following Mauss, to the limits and boundaries of persons, questioning the premise that individuals are clearly identifiable, self-contained and delimited. For Gell, diverse ethnographic instances suggest that persons are not confined to specific sociotemporal coordinates, but are distributed in ambiances, objects, minds, bodies and material traces.

Not without reason, Gell’s inquiries into agency have elicited criticisms of his emphasis on material objects in detriment to an analysis of the flows of materials (Ingold 2011) and of his supposed incapacity to revise more deeply Western understandings of persons and things in considering material objects as secondary agents (Henare et al. 2007; Leach 2007). In part, this is due to the limitations inherent to Gell’s posthumous work, including the absence of a more explicit debate on the notion of the person in India, which is indeed somewhat surprising given the author conducted fieldwork on the subcontinent. On the other hand, the ethnographic material analysed and presented by Gell concerning the physical fragments decoupled from distributed persons, as in the case of volt sorcery, and the forms of tactile contact established by the exchange of gazes between Hindu idols and worshippers (see also Babb 1981; Eck 1998; Mello 2018), offer us interesting clues to think about a topic seldom explored either by Gell or by diverse studies on material objects, materialities and materials: the circulation and distribution of substances between agents who transact.

Along these lines, Marriott’s work (1976) on the processes of transferring essences and bodily substances between human and non-human persons seems to me fundamental. The author proposes that Hindu society (and Indian society as a whole) developed a transactional thought characterized by explicit and institutional preoccupations with the given and the received in the universes of kinship, work and religion.

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<sup>21</sup> de Heusch (1985: 6-15) convincingly argues that in *Nuer Religion* Evans-Pritchard inserts a series of semantic alterations into his translations of native vocabulary to the point of distorting elements of his research in order to adapt it to the parameters of Judeo-Christian theology.

From the Western viewpoint, Hindu thought is especially oriented towards biological substantialism and hierarchical classification. Hindu's systematic particularism and monism, however, need to be explored beyond the Western philosophical burdens of universalism, dualism and individualism, since the Indian notions point to conceptions about the divisibility of persons.

Hindu thought concerning transactions differs from Western sociological and psychological thought since it does not presume the separability of actors from their actions. In Indian modes of thought, what happens between actors is connected to the processes of mixture and separation happening between them, meaning that their particular natures are conceived as the causes and outcomes of particular actions. Codes of action or conduct, in turn, are conceived to be naturally incorporated into the actors and substantialized in the things that flow and pass between them. The separability of the actions of agents into code and substance, a typically Western premise, is absent from Hindu thought. Code and substance are inseparable in this case, hence the author's use of the notion of code-substance or substance-code. Citing Marriott:

Persons – single actors – are not thought in South Asia to be ‘individual,’ that is, indivisible, bounded units [...] Instead, it appears that persons are generally thought by South Asians to be ‘dividual’ or divisible. To exist, dividual persons absorb heterogeneous material influences. They must also give out from themselves particles of their own coded substances – essences, residues, or other active influences – that may then reproduce in others something of the nature of the persons in whom they have originated. Persons engage in transfers of bodily substance-codes through parentage, through marriage, and through services and other kinds of interpersonal contacts. They transfer coded food substances by way of trade, payments, alms, feasts or other prestations. Persons also cannot help exchanging certain other coded influences that are thought of as subtler, but still substantial and powerful forms, such as perceived words, ideas, appearances, and so forth. Dividual persons, who must exchange in such ways, are therefore always composites of the substance-codes that they take in (Marriott 1976:111).

It is essential to stress that although Marriott refers to human persons in this excerpt, he suggests that virtually the same happens with other categories of beings like deities. The author also cites ethnographies that emphasize how men and gods are conceived in rural areas of India as mutually continuous, not separated by distinctions like sacred and profane, spirit and matter.

In summary, for Marriott the transformations that occur within actors also involve transactions between parts of actors, while transactions between actors can lead to transformations of these actors. Transformations and transactions, however, must be understood as part of a single process. In transactions, actors and their actions change constantly through recombinations of their parts. Actors and their interactions are never separate from each other; they change together, including because the circulations and combinations of particles of the codes-substances are occurring continuously.

Marriott's analysis contains a series of problems, being somewhat formalist and presuming a dichotomy, as though substances were immutable and permanent in the West and inherently fluid and transformative in India or South Asia (see Busby 1997; Carsten 2000; Nabokov 2000). Nevertheless, I believe that his conceptualization provides space for thinking about the permeability of persons to bodily substances originating from other persons (Daniel 1984). As Pina Cabral (2018; 2019) has recently noted, differently to theoretical models centred on the modes through which individual entities form part of something without losing their essence and individuality, the concept of dividual points to the constitutive character of mutual participations in which things and beings can be related without necessarily possessing clearly defined limits, even when they share some kind of essence. In sum, “dividuality and its related concept of partibility involve a questioning of the very processes of generating of the entities that enter into a relation. Therefore, the person is seen in terms of a dynamic of constant emergence, not as a naturally given entity existing once and for all” (Pina-Cabral 2018: 438).

Pina-Cabral's references to dividuality and partibility take into account the analytic transpositions of the concept formulated by Marriott (1976) to the Melanesian context, the ethnographic region to which the concept is normally linked thanks to the impact of the work of Strathern (1988).<sup>22</sup> My intention in turning back to Marriott to think about certain dimensions of Kali worship in Guyana neither proceeds in this direction, nor attempts to establish continuities between India and Guyana taking the Hindu religious sphere as a metonym for 'Indo-Caribbean culture.'<sup>23</sup> It is not a question, therefore, of postulating essences but of testing the possibilities for incorporating into Caribbean scholarship perspectives produced elsewhere and, principally, for re-evaluating major themes of this production in light of native categories.

It would be necessary to investigate in more detail the reasons why some clues offered by ethnographic studies conducted in India have attracted little interest among Caribbean scholars (see, however, Khan 1994 and Jayaram 2006), including those scholars undertaking research among Indo-Caribbean populations. This can be partly explained, I would suggest, by the fact that the heterogeneity, complexity and historicity of the Caribbean prevented, from very early on, the application of the conceptual devices of compartmentalization, encompassment and framing to the realities of Caribbean collectives. Thus, no gatekeeping concept, like honour and shame in the Mediterranean or hierarchy in India (see Trouillot 1992),<sup>24</sup> was able to take root in the Caribbean.

Linked to this fact, and following Trouillot's argument concerning the profoundly historical character of the Caribbean, the processes of migration, integration with receiving societies, and asymmetries of power during and after the indentured labour system, as well as interethnic contacts especially with Afro-Caribbean populations, had a considerable impact on central institutions originating from India, including the caste system.<sup>25</sup> In other words, the migration from India to the Caribbean and the living conditions in the plantations weakened notions relating to ritual purity. Taboos and avoidances lost some of their force since members of distinct castes and groups from diverse origins now lived side-by-side (Bisnauth 2000; Jayawardena 1966; Look Lai 1993; Laurence 1994; Moore 1977; Munasinghe 2001; Smith & Jayawardena 1996 [1967]). As the years passed, the identification of Indo-Guyanese people with specific castes faded and was continually condemned for promoting distinctions (allegedly) given by birth. Among my interlocutors, a person's moral quality is evaluated by his or her acts, including by the willingness to live in an egalitarian form with others, and not so much by inherited attributes.

While the emphasis on the changes to institutions central on the Indian subcontinent seems to me sound, an emphasis solely on those processes of transformation occurring at a macro-analytic scale – that is, the outcomes of broader historical processes – can lose sight of local perceptions of mixtures and heterogeneities.

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22 Strathern recognizes the originality of Marriott's work and her own debt to it. In her work, the concept of dividual acquires other dimensions, including as a result of the important debate with Wagner's notion of fractality (1991). For an interesting analysis of the differences in the notions of the person in Southern India and Melanesia, see Busby (1997).

23 Symptomatically, the first publications based on ethnographic studies with Caribbean populations, which emerged in the 1960s and 70s (Horowitz 1963; Horowitz & Klass, 1961; Klass 1961; Schwartz 1965; Singer & Araneta 1967; Rauf 1974) were primarily concerned with showing how Indo-Caribbean religious practices and identities, especially Hindu, were, and continued to be, fundamental to the perpetuation of the cultural distinctiveness of these groups (see Vertovec 1991).

24 To cite the author: "Gatekeeping concepts are so-called 'native' traits mystified by theory in ways that bound the object of study. They act as theoretical simplifiers to restore the ethnographic present and project of timeless culture. Gatekeeping has never been successful in the Caribbean. Here, heterogeneity and historicity opened up new vistas, deflecting energies from theoretical simplification" (Trouillot 1992: 22).

25 As Jayaram (2006) notes, investigations into caste among diasporic Hindu communities have frequently been phrased in terms like retention and change. In general, the existence of an ideal type of caste system is postulated and a categorical response is sought concerning the maintenance, or not, of this system outside India. Khan (1994: 246) had already highlighted this issue previously, as well as demonstrating that although caste, as a structuring element of hierarchies, is not present in Trinidad, the notion of *jhutta* – food or drink polluted by being partially consumed by a person – is an important dimension of the Indo-Trinidadian cultural repertoire, deriving its diverse meanings from notions of pollution associated with caste identities.

Khan (2004) seems particularly interested in this when, in her study of Trinidad and Tobago, she focuses on what she calls “metaphors of mixture”: practices, discourses and events in which the foundational theme of mixture, especially interethnic, is communicated through analogies, metonymies, images and demands articulated by means of terms like purity, impurity, orthodoxy, heterodoxy and authenticity.

Khan focuses especially on the disputes over the legitimization of religious practices and knowledge in asymmetric power contexts. For this reason, the author does not predefine what is religion but rather scrutinizes the understandings, conceptions and native categories of religion. In the case under discussion here, the stigmatization of Kali worship in Guyana forms the backdrop to a series of discourses on sacrifice. Two points should be emphasized, though. Firstly, the foundation myths of Kali worship are not just responses to disputes for power, nor raw material for attempts to legitimize practices considered morally suspect. At a microscopic level – and this is the second point I wish to bring forth – the circulation of substances like blood, a fundamental vector of connections between persons with a distinct ontological status (Carsten 2013), the distribution of divine forces and powers in the rituals, and the permeability of human and non-human persons are all of fundamental importance to worshippers of Kali since they generate diverse effects.

In holding Eon responsible for the failures in the sacrifices, members of Blairmont temple did much more than search for a scapegoat (with apologies for the pun). Initial accusations, which soon became rubberstamped verdicts, including due to the view expressed by the manifestation of the goddess Mariamma, were consistent with the premise that, rigorously speaking, no being, or object, is separate from other beings or objects. Far from being a singular and unitary event, animal sacrifice forms part of a heterogenous set of practices. Sacrifice, therefore, deserves ethnographic attention because its simple occurrence is a central trope for examining a highly diverse set of practices (see Mayblin & Course 2014).<sup>26</sup>

In the case of Kali worship, then, it is indispensable to situate sacrifice within practices of animal care, the handling of ritual artefacts, and diverse other relations between deities and humans. It is notable that the machete utilized by Eon absorbed substances, feelings and emotional states from the sacrificer. When people sought to explain the failure of three sacrifices, Eon’s quality of devotion and purity of intention were the target of diverse remarks. The sacrificial act involved intentionality, the sacrificer’s self. Similarly to the case studied by Samanta (1994), his body – and consequently the body of the goats – can be conceived as a site of transformations in perspectives, states of consciousness, attitudes and moral essences. Sacrifice thus assumes a specific configuration in each situation, irreducible to the presupposition that two or more separate and self-contained entities transact. On the contrary, the boundaries between different entities are not only not given, they can produce transformations via the channelling and flow of vital forces. Humans, deities, animals and material objects participate in each other through mutual and complex chains of permeability.

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<sup>26</sup> Mayblin & Course (2014: 313-314) suggest that analyses of sacrifice should not be limited to the domain of ritual and may include studies of autobiographical narratives of personal suffering, or as a quality in political activism, for instance. I am aware that an emphasis on rituals can imply artificial separations between ‘ritual’ and ‘mundane,’ ‘religious’ and ‘secular.’ I emphasize, though, that my research focused on a specific temple, developing into other spheres of life of those people with whom I lived more intensely. Although I deliberately did not set out to centre my research on villages, I believe that questions relating to the exchange of substances, pollution and commensality are fundamental to Indo-Guyanese everyday life.

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Caribbean Routes: Ethnographic Experiences,  
Theoretical Challenges, and the Production of Knowledge

# How to listen to an Afro-Caribbean landscape

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## Abstract

Using my 14-month ethnographic research at Old Bank, in the Caribbean coast of Panama, I seek to map how the domains I knew of this village were shaped by the multisensory relationships I established with my interlocutors and the spaces in which they lived, circled, and projected their voices. In dialogue with the Caribbean literature, I show how the locally established contrasts between before and today, as well as the existence of the distinct neighborhoods of the village, expressed the historical process of space occupation, based on the use, inheritance and collective ownership of family land. Finally, connect Ingold's argument about landscape with ethnographic data, underlining how Old Bank's time and space are created through the relationship between human beings and God.

**Keywords:** Landscape; Family Land; Afro-Caribbean; Panama.

# Como escutar uma paisagem afro-caribenha

## Resumo

Com base em pesquisa etnográfica de 14 meses em Old Bank, na costa caribenha do Panamá, busco mapear como os domínios que conheci desta vila foram moldados pelas relações multissensoriais que estabeleci com meus interlocutores e com os espaços em que eles viviam, circulavam e projetavam seus gritos (*sháut*). Em diálogo com a literatura caribenha, mostro como os contrastes localmente estabelecidos entre “antigamente e hoje, assim como a existência dos distintos bairros da vila eram expressões do processo histórico de ocupação do espaço, fundado no uso, herança e posse coletiva da “terra familiar”. Por fim, traço uma ponte a argumentação de Ingold sobre paisagem e a análise etnográfica, sublinhando como a formação dos tempos e espaços de Old Bank se dá a partir das relações dos seres humanos entre si e também com Deus.

**Palavras-chave:** Paisagem; Terra familiar; Afro-Caribenhos; Panamá.

# How to listen to an Afro-Caribbean landscape

Claudia Fioretti Bongianino

Gaia was in Panama City visiting her daughter and going to the doctor's when her son, Army, was telling me about the small, one-bedroom apartment built right below her house, which was let out to "people like you" (*pipl láik iú*, in the local idiom<sup>1</sup>) – meaning, in this case, people like *me*.

It is very central, with this front porch, where you can sit and talk to people who pass by Main Street. If you decide to rent the apartment, you can move in as soon as next week, when my mother comes back from her trip. God first!

I decided to accept his offer that same day, and even if there was no way of knowing it at the time, I would end up living there for most of the 14 months I spent doing fieldwork in Old Bank. Nor could I know then how much and exactly what I would learn in the process. Taking my interaction with Gaia as a starting point, in this article I map the ways people in the village speak of spatial and temporal dimensions, building relations in which God is always evoked as a participant. In the first section, I focus on the expression "people like you" and describe, on the one hand, how Gaia, her close kinspeople and I were seen in Old Bank, and on the other, what we saw and heard from her house. Moreover, I will make evident how the domains I got to know in Old Bank were molded by multisensorial relations that I established with my interlocutors, in the spaces within which they dwelled, circulated and from which they projected their "shouts" (*sháut*). In the second section of the article, I recall the first conversations I had with Gaia, underscoring the unexpected answers I received to questions about the history of the village and its families.

These answers Gaia provided are explored in the final sections of the article. In dialogue with the reflections of Edith Clarke (1999 [1057]) and Jean Besson (2002) on land and family in the Caribbean, I show how the existence of distinct neighborhoods in the village expresses the historical process of occupying the land, which is based on usage, inheritance, and collective ownership of "family land" (*fámili lánd*). I then analyse the locally established contrasts between "first time and today" (*fârst táim an tudíe*), which are manifest in the spatial configurations of the village, in particular in the diametrical opposition between the location of the Methodist Church and the graveyard in the village. Finally, the last section links Tim Ingold's (1993) arguments on "landscape" with the way that relationships among human beings themselves, and also between human beings and God, together form the times and spaces of Old Bank.

## The village, the house, and the shouts

When Army told me about the room below Gaia's house that she rented for people like *me*, he added that it was one of the local buildings leased to people who intended to reside "in Old Bank" (*pan Uól Bánk*) for months. That is how I learned the name of the Panamanian village I was living in: Old Bank, in English, the literal translation my interlocutors used for Uol Bánk, the village's name in the local language. When I say I only learned the name at that moment, it is because in Spanish, the official language of the country, the village is called Bastimentos, and it is described as a place of some 1.3 Km<sup>2</sup>, 738 inhabitants and 193 houses (INEC 2009-2010). Situated on the Atlantic coast of Panama, around 30 Km from the border with Costa Rica, and entrenched in the northwest corner of Bastimentos Island, the village of Old Bank faces west to the powerful waves of the Atlantic Ocean, and south to the calm waters of Almirante Bay.

<sup>1</sup> The local idiom is called Guari-Guari, and does not have a standardized oral or written form. I have thus adopted an informal phonetic approach in transcriptions. For linguistic details, see: Snow 2007; H. Reid 2013; Spragg 1973; Justavino 1975; Brereton 1992; Aceto 1995.

These same waters bathe the archipelago of Bocas del Toro and the homonymous region that extends, from the archipelago, a few kilometers into the continental Panama.

Old Bank could only be reached by boat, after a plane trip that ended at the regional capital (traveling from Panama's or Costa Rica's capital), which my interlocutors called Bocas Town (again, their literal English translation for the local name, *Buocas Taun*, that was officially called Pueblo de Isla Colón, in Spanish) and was located in the neighboring island of Colón. Another way to arrive at the regional capital was by taking a bus trip from Panama's or Costa Rica's capital to the neighboring port of Almirante, in continental Panama. In November 2013, it was the bus option from Panama's capital to Almirante, followed by two boat trips, first to Bocas Town and finally to Old Bank, which got me there. During this last boat trip, my gaze was drawn to the exuberant landscape, which presented all of the characteristics one would expect from the famous tourist destination known as the "Panamanian Caribbean" (Guerrón-Montero 2006: 633): emerald waters; white sandy beaches with crystal-clear water; dazzling forests of palm trees, banana trees and other tropical species. In the midst of all this, there emerged, here and there, houses built on stilts carved into the ocean or on land, clustered along the slope.

In style of most local houses, Gaia's had been built on stilts dug into the land. This formed a wooden structure which served as a foundation for the house, made of wooden walls and a zinc roof – materials which allowed sounds to easily propagate through rooms and homes. Located on the second floor, the house was accessible by a side stairway, which led to a veranda that took up the whole façade, leading to the entrance. The interior was, in principle, empty, though it could later be closed in with cement walls, such as those that made up the apartment I was living in.

According to Arny, the specific piece of "land" (*land/ tierra*)<sup>2</sup> I was living in measured some 480m<sup>2</sup> (20 x 24), but it included his mother's house (128 m<sup>2</sup>, 8m by 16m), the surrounding yard (52 m<sup>2</sup>) and the two simple hotels, built on stilts dug into the water so as to take in the best views of the bay (each hotel with 150 m<sup>2</sup>, 6m by 25 m). In the village, this was the average size of plots occupied by more than one house belonging to different members of the same family. Most houses were similar to Gaia's in size and frequently had apartments constructed below them. The main difference, though, was that most houses and apartments built in a family's plot were usually occupied by kinspeople, not by tourist developments – such as hotels and apartments rented out to people like *me*. Unlike Gaia's yard, others also typically lacked the two water tanks that stored the village's water. These were not only expensive in themselves, they also had high maintenance costs, much of it because of piping (around US\$ 1000 per tank, plus piping installation, while the village's water costed was around U\$ 10 per month).

Most yards contained fruit trees or small gardens, intended for domestic consumption, and some families also had "forest gardens" (*fárm pán di bush* or *finca en el monte*)<sup>3</sup>, occupying areas that spanned between one and five hectares in the forests surrounding the village or in nearby islands. As I will describe shortly, Gaia had such a "forest garden" in the past, but no longer owned them. In time I came to realize that the differences between Gaia's house and those of most villagers were both symptom and cause of the relations they established among themselves. Gaia and her kinspeople were among the wealthiest villagers, owned most of the tourist developments in the village, and lived in some of the largest houses, decorated with more furniture than average homes. Like other villagers who also differentiate themselves socioeconomically, they had a critical

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2 My interlocutors use the native term "land" (*land/ tierra*), rather than "piece of land" or "plot". This seems to me to be related to the fact that, for them, land is not immediately quantifiable, established by limits or borders, juridically titled, or something that can be bought or sold. However, in order to make the text more coherent, I have translated their native term as "piece of land" or "plot". The differences between these conceptions of land will be explored throughout the article.

3 The native concept of "*fárm pán di bush* or *finca en el monte*" refers to a piece of land in the forest where a person usually does not build a house, but grows vegetables and fruits in the midst of the forest vegetation. Such pieces of land do not have explicit borders, neither are they completely cleared of existing vegetation before the person plants his or her garden. Therefore, I chose to translate it as "forest garden".

stance regarding local habits, and Gaia's grandchildren tended not to play with other children and teenagers, especially because they studied in Bocas Town. Many of the villagers saw this as an intentional effort made by the family to distinguish themselves from others, in relation to whom they purportedly felt superior. Many thus preferred to keep their distance from Gaia and her relatives.

At the same time, however, many of these differences made it easier for me to get close to her. Gaia, after all, owned an apartment for people like *me*: foreign, White, with greater spending power than most of the local population, interested in residing in the village yet used to certain comforts that were not available to all villagers, such as a water tank, piping systems, and running water all day long. Gaia's apartment was also perfect for people like *me*, an expression that included another important aspect. In Old Bank I was seen as a single woman, since I lived alone, even though I wore a ring and claimed to be married. I was also seen as a young woman, not necessarily because of my age, but because I did not have children, which is usually the watershed between youth and womanhood. For this reason, I wanted to live in a room close to (or inside) the house of a woman, with whom I could interact more freely, without having to worry about possible harassment, abuse or gossip.

Since Gaia and I lived in the same building, even if in different homes, we would inevitably keep track of each other's activities, sometimes by sight, but mostly by listening – a sense that, in Old Bank, seems to be more preeminent than the others. I would daily hear her voice and footsteps, as well as those of people who visited her home – much as she, no doubt, heard what went on in my apartment. We also heard shouts of the neighbors, calling each other from within their homes or from the outside. Analogously, we would hear those who passed by on the street and shouted: “Gaia!”, to call her. Or those who merely shouted “Good Morning Gaia!”, upon seeing her door open, and passed on by.

With time, similar shouts began to characterize my interaction with my host and with other people who attended her household. Before meeting them, I became acquainted with their voices as they shouted after Gaia, and spoke with her. Crossing the tenuous boundaries that separated my apartment, the house of my host, the yard or the street, their voices found their way to me.

Auditive contact does not end there: gradually, these and other people started to direct their voices to me. They would greet me when they passed by my apartment and saw the door ajar, or when they met me at the front porch, stopping for quick conversations. Timidly, I began to do the same when I passed close to their houses, and those of other people who I gradually came to know in Old Bank.

I thus noticed that one of the essential aspects of the houses in Old Bank was the importance of the external space, that is the verandas, porches, yards and adjacent streets. All of these open spaces appeared to be inserted into the local concept of the “home” (*huom*), a fact that became particularly evident when adults, before going out and leaving the children alone, would ask a child to “not leave the home”, which, however, meant that they could stay in areas adjacent to the residence, including the yards of neighboring houses and the streets. These open spaces were furthermore locales in which most of the socialization took place, particularly with those who lived in other houses, but also, often, with those how lived in the same home.

In this context, the act of calling after someone at a distance with a shout (*sháut*) was noteworthy not only for being frequent, but also as one of the central elements of socialization in the village. Indeed, a visit began by shouting out the name of person from outside her home, and receiving a reply shouted back, rather than by banging on someone's (open or closed) door or approaching it directly and looking inside the house with no warning. The act of shouting corresponded, above all, to a quotidian way of relating to people, greeting them when passing by their homes, and to maintain brief, but important, social interactions.

Shouts imposed themselves on the soundscape of the village, which was not, by any stretch, otherwise silent. Except for some very hot afternoons and during the dawn, the place was infused by the shouts of people and the music that blasted from the village's speakers. The presence of surrounding people was thus constantly

perceived by hearing them, even before it was possible, for example, to smell the food they were preparing or to see them. In particular, this preponderance of hearing forced me to reflect on the fact that it seemed to be the sound (of voices and music), and not the proximity of bodies, that physically brought people together in an auditive copresence. Indeed, while hearing emerged as the central sense, touch seemed to be marginal, with actual contact between bodies being quite rare. Fortunately, I was quickly taken in by the shouts, which gradually brought me closer to people with whom I interacted periodically, when they passed by my house, or when I passed by theirs, or simply when we ran into each other in the village and called out each other's names before we greeted. And it is interesting that the first person I became close to through these shout-mediated encounters was precisely Gaia – and not her son, for example, who I met first, but whose shouts I did not encounter as often as hers.

### Speaking about families, histories, places

On the day I moved into Gaia's apartment, she came down the stairway that lead to her home and, upon seeing my door open, shouted out my name. When I went out into the porch, I saw her, roughly seventy years of age, carrying in her hands a dish covered in aluminum foil. "I cooked *ráis an bin* and brought it for you to try the food from here. I hope you like it. It's rice cooked with beans and coconut milk!" I asked her if she had already had lunch or if we could eat together, and she invited me to eat in her home. A few days later, seeing Gaia on her veranda, I shouted out her name and she invited me to go up and sit with her. On both occasions, I tried to carry out one of the semi-structured interviews that I had prepared before leaving for the field: "Gaia, can you help me with the research I am doing here about the history of Old Bank and its families? I'd like to start by hearing a bit about the history of your family".

My family? I don't know much, but my paternal great-grandmother told me that her husband was Black and came from Jamaica. I did not know him and can't remember his name. But his surname was Jones, like my father's and my own. He died before I was born and I only knew my great-grandmother, his wife, who told me about him. She was White and had straight hair. I don't remember her surname. She was White Indigenous (*Uait Indígena*), from Blue Fields in Nicaragua.

When Gaia's great-grandfather arrived in Old Bank, the area that today makes up Nicaragua was part of Colombia, as was Panama and the islands of San Andrés and Providencia – the latter two are still parts of Colombia. My hostess referred to this period in time as being "first time", but she did not know much about it – that is, about the land of origin of her grandparents, their ethno-racial identity, their life outside of Old Bank, or the reasons that brought them there – except for an economic dimension: the presence of the Banana Industry. Her grandfather had been hired to work with bananas, having probably moved between the different plantations associated with the industry along the Atlantic Coast of Central America, between the present-day territories of Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama – just like many Afro-Caribbean people had done between the 1800s and 1900s (cf. Putnam 2002, 2013).

Her paternal and maternal great-grandparents were the oldest ancestors that she knew anything about. She learned of them either because she actually met them, or because she heard stories told by people she knew, especially her grandmothers or parents. These stories centered on the Banana Industry, but contained a further economic marker that attracted "Black Caribbean" people to Old Bank – the construction of the Panama Canal. Since she descended from these Caribbean migrants, Gaia identified as Afro-Caribbean and extended this classification to all of the villagers. Although she also recognized that her grandmother was "White Indigenous" from Nicaragua, it was the Black ancestry of her other grandparents, from Jamaica and San Andrés, that she underscored when accessing the native ethno-racial concepts of "Black Caribbean" or

“White Indigenous”. And these concepts were more closely tied to the ways the villagers experienced skin color in interpersonal relations (leading them to define it as black or white), than to a purely ethnic ancestry or identity (such as Afro-Caribbean).

In the answer Gaia gave me, she was furthermore careful to note the fact that her ancestors had married people they met while moving through different places, before finally settling in Old Bank.

My father said that his father and grandfather – my grandfather and great-grandfather – had many lands [here in the village and its surroundings]. They bred cattle, planted bananas and sold them to the Banana Industry, which exported and sold them. [...] My great-grandfather had a lot of money and land. These were on neighboring islands as well as here, where he owned all the land in Mégl Bánk. A man whose surname was Taylor owned the lands that stretch from the bridge on ô Yánda until Dág Wúd, as well as the rest of the lands in Old Bank. In Dôn di Crik I think it was a Davies. When they arrived in Old Bank, there was no one here it seems, not even Indigenous people, so the two occupied the land and, little by little, gave parts of it to those who arrived later, allowing them to build their own houses and to plant on unused land. For example, when [...] the Evans arrived, the Taylors gave them land to live on and to cultivate on the Evans Hill.

“So the first families of the village were the Taylors, the Joneses and the Davies, followed by the Thomases and the Evans?”, I asked:

Yes, the members of these five families married with one another and with people from outside, who arrived later on, including the Chinese, Ngobe Indigenous people, and European White people. These families are still the largest in the village, along with the Lorchiney, the Johnsons, the Martins. But we are all one family here. As we say, *uí dé al fámili, bót uí no liv al láik fámili*.

That afternoon, as I spoke to Gaia on the veranda of her house, I took detailed notes, but was lost in the maze of the surnames she referred to, as well as the names of different places in the village and the range of local terms, with which I was not yet familiarized. “*Ui dé al fámili?*”, I repeated, making an effort to ensure that I had correctly jotted it down in my notebook, and also to practice the local language, which I had not yet learnt. “Yes, we are all family, but we don’t all live like family” (*nosotros somos todos familia, pero no vivimos todos como familia*). My hostess reformulated what she said in Spanish, as if that phrase, once translated, were self-explanatory.

Gaia and the other villagers often acted this way. In general, they spoke as if I were as acquainted as they were with the fact that all of them in Old Bank “were family”, or with the differences between “first time” and “today”. They seemed to suppose that, like them, I knew people with the surnames they mentioned, and had walked through all of the neighborhoods of the village. How was I to deal with what my interlocutors took for granted, but which, for me, still needed to be grasped?

## **We are all [one] family**

Trying to situate myself in the midst of the information that was being transmitted to me in bulk, but which remained somewhat unclear, I sought to sketch images – maps and genealogies – that would help me to understand narratives like Gaia’s. She at once connected the history of the village and of one of its families, and also these two stories with the arrival of Black ancestors from the Caribbean, of Whites from European countries (or from their American and Caribbean colonies), and of Amerindians from Central America. Furthermore, the stories established associations between the occupation of land and the distribution of this same land through interpersonal relations that existed between the ancestors. Alongside these correlations, the differences between the various neighborhoods of the village, as well as between the surnames, were likewise emphasized.

Limits were thus drawn between kinspeople and pieces of land, which were, at the same time, attenuated by the claims that, in Old Bank, “we are all family”, despite the fact that not everyone “lived like family”.

I stated showing to the people I interviewed the maps of the village I managed to find and asked them to draw others, while addressing questions to them about neighborhoods and people they knew who lived in each one. At the same time, I asked them to list their kinspeople in generational order and to tell me about their children, then about their parents and their parents’ children and grandchildren (that is, Ego’s brothers and nephews). I then moved on to paternal grandparents and their children and grandchildren (uncles and cousins of Ego), later doing the same for maternal grandparents and other known ascendant kin. I asked these questions to Gaia and to nine other women. In 2015, I carried out an analogous, but more succinct, exercise, by helping to create the school census and asking residents about the surnames of their grandparents.

Significantly, the genealogy of the people with whom I spoke was always marked by the same kind of historical event: the time their first matrilineal and/or patrilineal ancestor arrived in Old Bank. These ancestors – or in a more analytical formulation, these founding ancestors – were the most distant ascendant kinspeople who interviewees had knowledge of, most being described as Black people from the Caribbean. Others, however, were described as White Indigenous (*Uait Indígena*) from Nicaragua, White Europeans from the United Kingdom, Ngobe Indigenous people and Chinese. The eight interviewees had invariably learned of these people through stories narrated by their grandmothers, although on some occasions such stories were also told by their grandfathers or parents. Furthermore, each one had, as one of their ancestors, someone with the same surname as the founding ancestors mentioned by Gaia – that is, five men whose surnames were Jones, Taylor, Davies, Evans or Thomas. All of them thus traced their descent from at least one of these five founding ancestors, and, through this link, they explained their self-identification as Afro-Caribbean, and also justified the claim, common throughout the village, that “we are all [one] family”.

The common reference made by my interviewees to either European, Ngobe Indigenous people or Chinese ancestors was explained to me as being a feature of post-1920 migrations, and therefore to events that occurred after the arrival of the Afro-Caribbean founding ancestors – which occurred, during the construction of the Panama Canal in 1914. The presence of the Ngobe and Chinese in Old Bank was linked to the Banana Industry, which had its heyday in 1930 (Bourgeois 1985), while other foreigners mostly arrived with the development of the tourist industry in the village and in the Boca del Toro region, which took place during the 1990s and 2000s (Clairborne 2010; Spalding 2011).

Informal school census data and genealogies provided me with valuable demographic data on the village, but they also brought to light some unexpected information. My interlocutors would often interrupt their list of kinspeople, suddenly changing the subject. Or, rather, they foregrounded another theme – the matter of land – that at first seemed to me unconnected to genealogy and to my questions about the history of the village and its families.

Once, a woman whose surname is Davies told me: “Before marrying me, my husband lived in one of the bays of Bastimentos Island. He had many plots, but they were sold by the people who had asked my family to live in the land that belonged to him”. On another occasions, an interviewee whose surname was Edwards made an analogous comment:

My grandfather had many plots which were stolen. I have a document from 1905 which proves that the land belonged to my grandfather, and it should therefore belong to my family. Others went to court with more recent documents declaring that the land was theirs, and that I had lost the right to it. The older documents should have greater value, not the other way around. People make fake documents and buy employees to win over plots in court, and we lose what used to be ours. Many of the plots I used to have were stolen by people who then sold them without having documents and “today” those who bought it have a document.

Another interlocutor stressed this point: “Today, with tourism, some relatives started to sell parts of our “family land” without permission. It was “family land”; they couldn’t sell it without authorization. This is theft!”. Faced with this fact, some of the women I interviewed (as well as other villagers, of both sexes) had gone to court to claim land which, in their words, had been “stolen”. Nonetheless, most said that they would rather leave things as they are, arguing, rather generically, that they preferred to “avoid fights and problems”. Only two offered a more precise justification: “To avoid *obeá*, witchcraft”.

In a manner I had not predicted, the matter of land pervaded my conversations on history and family as something, at once, constitutive and disruptive of local relations, providing a reason as to why people would often follow the claim that “we are all family” with the caveat “but not all of us live like family”. By speaking of the temporality of “first time”, local residents effectively emphasized that founding ancestors had distributed part of their land to those who arrived afterwards. Relations between families were hence mediated by gifts of land, creating and straightening the ties between them. However, the ownership of land was not established by rigid criteria, thus increasing conflicts, accusations of theft, fights, and problems that eroded the relations between kinspeople, and which could result in much-maligned witchcraft accusations.

The women I spoke to explained that the pieces of land in the village did not correspond to individual properties, but to collective ones. In other words, they were described as “family land”. This sort of collective ownership of land shows remarkable similarities to the Caribbean logic of Family Land<sup>4</sup>, described in Edith Clarke’s (1999 [1957]) pioneering study of Jamaican kinship, and investigated further in other analyses of collective land ownership in the Black Caribbean (cf. Mintz 1974; Besson 1984; Trouillot 1992; Olwig 1999; Carnegie 1987; Crichlow 1994). According to Clarke, in its primary meaning, the Family Land was a piece of land received by the ancestor or ancestress, following emancipation from slavery, having been gifted to them by their former “lord”. In Old Bank, though, “family land” was freely occupied by the first founding ancestors, whose surnames were Jones, Taylor and Davies. Later, it was distributed to the founding ancestors of the families that arrived later, with surnames such as Evans, Thomas, etc.

Yet, much like Caribbean institution of Family Land, the logic of use, inheritance and ownership of land in Old Bank, known “family land”, stipulated that land could also be entrusted to a kinsperson (officially an owner of the land). At any rate, it belonged to the family and could not be alienated. “Family land” was transmitted as inheritance to descendants of both sex that were linked (by blood or surname), through the maternal or paternal side, to the ancestor who originally occupied or received the plot. More specifically, everyone who had the same surname or the same blood as the ancestor were inheritors, and, as Gaia taught me, blood was transmitted to children by the mother *and* the father, while the surname could be transmitted by one *or* the other *or* both. Ultimately, no one was entitled to sell “family land”, since, to do so, they would need the unanimous consent of all descending and ascending relatives (by blood or surname), which is practically impossible since even those relatives who were yet to be born and those who died would have to acquiesce.

As Clarke (1999 [1957]) notes in her consideration of inheritance of Family Land, the collectivity which is referred to by the term “family” included all those who were alive, even those who lived far away and had not settled on the land for a long time, since they might always return to it, cultivate it and, eventually, build a house on it. The only two conditions were that there was still room to do so and that the person who wanted to do so was in real need. This “family” collectivity also included all of the past and future generations, even adopted children or those born out of wedlock. However, this “family” collectivity did not include husbands and wives of the descendants of the ancestors, nor children they may have had with other partners. In other words, it included all descendant relatives (by maternal or paternal blood or surname), but no affinal relatives.

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<sup>4</sup> Family Land, in capitals, refers to the widespread Caribbean concept, as discussed by authors such as Clarke (1999 [1957]) and others, while “family land”, in quotations, refers a native concept used by the villages of Old Bank.

Jean Besson (2002: 281-291) took Clarke's analysis further and described the Caribbean family as a group that is defined, precisely, by the ownership of Family Land. The author thus departed from analyses that defined these groups by exclusive criteria, such as consanguinity, alliance or filiation, according to which they would compose a closed unit. Instead, Besson proposed a conception of the family focused on the control of the gradual swelling of the group through conjugal relations, since, in the logic of Family Land, only sons and daughters - not partners - were incorporated into the inheritance group. In this way, she introduced a concept that was open to time and space, since, by the logic of Family Land, sons and daughters continued to be heirs, even if they lived far away, did not occupy the land for a long time, were dead or yet to be born.

In the 1950s, Edith Clarke (1999 [1957]) had already drawn attention to the fact that this type of ownership, inheritance and use of Family Land was not static. There were, according to her, continuous internal and external pressures acting either to strengthen it or to modify it. At once, it created cohesion - keeping kinspeople together and preserving their mutual sense of responsibility and interdependence - and it also produced conflicts - linked, in specific, to controversies over individual or collective ownership of land, its alienability and inalienability. In Clarke's (1999 [1957]) view, they were shown to become exacerbated by national legislation, according to which an heir was only the first-born, legitimate male son, with full rights over the land, entitled to sell it, if he so wished.

In Old Bank, these pressures are evident in the local opposition between two temporalities: "first time" and "today". The first temporality is characterized by the existence of an apparent harmony to social relations, founded on the distribution of land according to the logic of "family land". The latter, in turn, is marked by conflicts, fights, problems and witchcraft. This opposition between "first time" and "today" emerged not only in genealogies, but also in informal conversations, and expresses the same kind of exacerbation caused by national legislation predicted by Clarke (1999 [1957]), and, in the case of Old Bank, also by tourism, among other critical factors detailed below.

### **We don't live like [one] family**

One of the people who always shouted out my name when passing in front of my apartment was Mr Gabriel, who was 80 years old and enjoyed telling me stories about his life, as well as the histories of the village and its families.

Many people think that Afro-Caribbeans arrived in Panama during the construction of the Canal, and later because of the Banana Industry. This is the history we learn in school. But there were Black Caribbeans here in the Bocas del Toro region long before this. They worked on the construction of railways here in Panama and Costa Rica, around the 1850s, more or less. It was only around 1930, 1950, that the Ngobe Indigenous people (*Indígenas*) began to arrive. They are not native to Bocas del Toro, they came from the [Panamanian] continent, first to work in the Banana Industry, and later to work in small businesses for tourists. Now they are the majority of inhabitants of Bastimentos Island. It is only here in Old Bank that we Blacks are still a majority.

According to Gabriel, there have been tourists in Old Bank since he was a child, but they were few, and people did not work in tourism like they did "today". When he was young, he also worked as a boatman, not taking tourists on trips - like boatmen would do during my fieldwork -, but, rather, transporting bananas and workers of the Chiriqui Land Company. This company was a subsidiary of the United Fruit Company, which continued to operate in the Bocas del Toro region "today" under the name of Chiquita Brands International.

His words echoed those of Gaia and other villagers, not only by making use of the same opposition between "first time" and "today", but also because it enacted the same economic markers - although Gabriel added another element, the construction of railways in Panama and Costa Rica. The information I was thus provided

with was similar to that contained in the available literature on Bocas del Toro, according to which the current population of the region was mostly composed of people of Afro-Caribbean ancestry – that is, they were native to Panama and descended from free, Protestant Black people who came from the English Caribbean.

Referred to in the English-language literature as *West Indians*, these Black Caribbeans were hired during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to work in a number of British, French and North American endeavors in Central America (Newton 1984; Gutiérrez 1984), including: the construction of inter-oceanic railways in Costa Rica and Panama between 1850 and 1855 (Marín-Araya 2006); the construction of the Panama Canal between 1880 and 1914 (Maloney 1989; Lowe de Goodin 1999); and, finally, the operations of the United Fruit Company in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and Colombia, beginning in the 1880s (Bourgeois 1985; Stephens *et al.* 1987). Having been employed in these different activities, often working in more than one of them during their lives, many of these Black Caribbeans did not return to their native lands. On the contrary, they and their descendants established themselves in the Panamanian region of Bocas del Toro (C. Reid *et al.* 1980; Spalding 2011; Howard 2014), and in other places, mostly in the Panamanian regions of Panamá and Colón (Westerman 1980), in the neighboring Costa Rican region of Limón (Duncan 1972; Bryce-Laporte 1973; Lefever 1992; Putnam 2002), and in other American and Caribbean territories (Coelho 2002 [1948]; E. Gordon 1998; Putnam 2013).

According to my interlocutors, the construction of the highway linking Panama City to the port of Almirante, and from there to Costa Rica, during the 1950s, moved the transportation of bananas, as well as other goods and people, to an overland route (that is, through Central America) rather than by sea, radically changing countless aspects of local dynamics. Up until that point, most of the commerce in the Bocas del Toro region was carried out in the surrounding Caribbean ports, which are precisely the places where most of the ancestors of the local families had come from. Furthermore, the Chiriqui Land Company started to hire workers who lived in the proximity of the highway, and terminated the daily ferry that connected the port of Almirante to Old Bank.

Almost all men of the village lost their jobs, and the economic crisis became a political crisis. Bastimentos, which has been an independent region, with its own seat of government, became subordinated to the governor of Bocas del Toro and the administrative agencies situated in Bocas Town (in Colón Island) and Changuinola (in the mainland). Later, with the development of tourism in Bocas Town in the 2000s and the construction of an airport which became a hub for visitors, all boats transporting passengers to the region started to pass by Colón Island. Bocas town hence became the capital of the region, an obligatory stopover for anyone from Old Bank who wanted to go to the Panamanian continent, or anywhere else really, unless one had a private boat.

Tourism was always stressed as being among the most important markers in local historical narratives, and it was frequently related to the matter of land. One of the people I most often talked about this issue was a friend that, despite having no official role, was one of the main informal leaders in Old Bank, owner of the largest hotel in the village. For ten years, along with a group of coresidents, he had fought in court against the construction of a luxury resort on the island, some 2 km from the village.

According to him, the creation of the resort was linked to the development of tourism in the region following the earthquake of 1991. Since the tragedy was televised and transmitted to different countries, the beauty of Bocas del Toro gained world renown, boosting the local tourism industry. Since then, and particularly after the 2000s, the local population began to sell their lands to developers for a pittance. In different ways, some villagers – such as the friend of mine I quoted above – began to go into business once they realized that the land had acquired financial value as a result of the influx of tourists. They sold only a part of their lands, mostly those that were farthest from the village and were used as “forest gardens”. The money they made from this sale was used to transform their homes, and other buildings they may own, into simple hotels and some began to construct buildings to this end. Following the lead of these pioneers, other people followed the same route, like Gaia’s sons and many other villagers.

In agreement with the genealogical characterizations of the women I interviewed, this informal leader of Old Bank made explicit the fact that much of the land that was sold - or on which buildings for tourism were built - were not individual properties, but “family land” owned collectively. He said that, at inheritance, the land was traditionally divided between the sons and daughters, and a part of it – usually the part with the “family house” (*fámili huôs*), that is, the house where these sons and daughters had spent their youth – remained in collective ownership, so that it might be used by those who needed it. Even the land that was divided between the sons and daughters, or used only by some of them, nonetheless remained collectively owned. No one had a right to sell their land without the consent of their brothers. For this reason, sales became subject to disputes, since the tourist developments that multiplied the commercial value of the lands continued to grow.

The recurrent theme of the “family lands” was also stressed by my friend Hanna.

“First time”, everyone in the village lived together, and they were generous, always sharing their surplus. We all “lived like family”! But not “today”. Things changed when my brother sold the land that had belonged to my father. At the time, the government didn’t sell land like they do “today”. It only gave rights in usufruct, not the title to the land. The right of usufruct was my father’s, and after he died it passed on to me. It was a “family land”, my brother couldn’t have sold it.

And, she continued,

My brother was the son of my mother only. She had him with another man, after my father died, and they lived in Almirante. When my brother moved to Old Bank and asked me if he could build his house there, I let him live on the land, but he sold it without telling me anything, or speaking to my brothers. These new neighbors were strangers to us, and they brought an end to the unity of the past. “Today”, we no longer “live all like family”.

While establishing the classic contrast between “first time” and “today”, taking the sale of “family land” as a watershed, Hanna specifically referred to a change in national legislation concerning land ownership. This was not the first time I had heard comments regarding national legislation. Speaking to a man who was around sixty years of age, whose son lived in Panama City, and who therefore rented out his home in Old Bank to foreigners, I was told that legislation changed around 2005, when it became necessary to buy and document the land. Previously, one only had to ask the owner for permission to build a house, or, if the land was unoccupied, to ask the local government. No payments were required, and no titles were given. However, when I asked civil servants in Bocas Town, the capital of the Bocas del Toro region, they informed me that legislation regarding the purchase of land had not itself changed. What had changed was people’s relation to it.

According to these civil servants, the national legislation always required some form of payment to title plots and buy them (Panama 2009 and 1962). Formerly, however, people did not need to produce official documents that backed their claims, because they were not contested on these bases. Any contestation followed the logic of *fámili lánd*. People established themselves on their land after asking the government, or whoever lived previously on it, for permission, or else they inherited it. In the latter case, they would often have the appropriate documents proving their ownership, but these would be in the name of the first kinsperson who registered it, losing its validity by not being subsequently updated.

According to civil servants, it was only with tourist developments, though, that the existing national legislation became preeminent in the lives of the local population. Land prices went up in the market, which led people to dispute ownership, not only among each other, but also with foreigners who wanted to buy pieces of land and non-resident kinspeople interested in selling, rather than settling on them. It thus became necessary to title land and to buy it, in order to preclude others from doing so, thereby acquiring legal rights over the disputed land. Indeed, as pointed out both by my interlocutors and the literature on Bocas del Toro (Thampy 2013), instances of land disappropriation became common, particularly concerning the plots where

Indigenous Ngobebe people live, even if they had lived on the plots for years<sup>5</sup>. Likewise, there were instances of non-residents returning to claim their rights over “family land” that they had recently titled, but that had long been gifted to others in usufruct by a deceased relative.

In Hanna’s speech, as in that of other interlocutors, “today” is a temporality marked by the concomitant processes of the sale of “family lands”, the decline of the Banana Industry in the region<sup>6</sup>, and the development of tourism. According to her, by the conjunction of these temporal markers, most men went to work as boatmen for tourists, and only a few continued to work in the port of Almirante for Chiquita Brands International. At the same time, another parcel of residents, including men and women, were employed in restaurants and hotels for tourists, as kitchen or cleaning staff, or in other client services for tourists. Others still went into personal business ventures for tourists, offering boat rides, cooking at home to sell to locals and foreigners, renting rooms for tourists, and so forth. Finally, there were those who received government benefits. Almost no one, however, earned more than minimum wage (approximately US 400.00 per month), paid out in bi-weekly tranches. Regardless of the source of income, the money received by the local population tended to be used up in a few days, in part because Old Bank is an expensive village by Panamanian standards, mostly due to tourism – I would myself spend an average of US\$500,00 per month on rent and food, and I lived alone, while most locals were the sole providers for households of five people on average. For the rest of the time, the villagers managed without money, consuming what they planted or what was left over. They also received food from friends, kinspeople and neighbors, since they were used to sharing food, particularly when they cooked in abundance, or for a special occasion.

It should be recalled, however, that Hanna stressed that the habit of sharing food with friends, neighbors and kinspeople was typical of the “first time” temporality. It was associated with the very dynamics of “family land”: people were neighbors because they were related and/or friends, that is, because they had received from or conceded to others permission to live on the land, to build a house on it and/or to plant a garden. This was the case not only for each plot of “family land” but also for Old Bank as a whole. As my friend stated, “everyone in the village lived united and was generous, always sharing surplus. We all “lived like family”!”. Hanna thus implicitly defined what “living like family” meant, understanding it as pattern of relationships based on reciprocal care, on generosity and on sharing: “Today we no longer live like family”, she lamented.

On a first hearing, these words made me think that changes had occurred either by the loss of land to speculation, or by the appearance of foreign people, or, still, by a view of migration and mobility as processes that are disruptive of social relations. However, this initial impression did not correspond to what my interlocutors experienced. On many occasions they pointed out that there always had been tourists in Old Bank – even though only a few ventured that far in the old days – and that contact with people from other places was a constant aspect of the history of the village and its local families. Their own founding ancestors had been foreigners, and many of them had married people of Ngobebe, Chinese, Latin, Panamanian and White descent. Furthermore, the vast majority of villagers had lived elsewhere for a while, or had travelled to different villages and cities to study, work, go to the doctor’s or visit kinspeople. Everyone I spoke to during my fieldwork had at least one relative (son, brothers and sisters, parents, grandparents, uncles, or cousins of either sex) who resided somewhere else and returned periodically to visit and to rekindle ties with those who had remained in the village.

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5 The matter is complex and warrants a further comment. These plots in which the Indigenous Ngobebe people lived in the region of Bocas del Toro were the same plots claimed as “family land” by Afro-Caribbeans. They were therefore not ancestral Indigenous Lands, since, as I mentioned earlier, the Ngobebe were not native to the Bocas del Toro region. They migrated during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, coming from other lands in continental Panama, which had been recognized by the Panamanian government and demarcated as Ngobebe Indigenous Lands.

6 This decline was partly due to the construction of the highway, which reduced the Banana Industry’s activity in all port (as mentioned above), and was also due to the fact that the company underwent mechanization and needed less employees.

Taking this set of elements into account, even if the sale of “family lands” was linked to the end of an economic cycle (bound up with the Banana Industry) and the start of another (based on tourism), what seemed to be in play was a demographic, economic, and even moral crisis. Indeed, insofar as “first time” was described as a period of wealth, when compared to the losses of “today”, it was equally a time of scarcity – for example, of street pavements, electricity, and foodstuff which is consumed in abundance in the temporality of “today”, such as chicken. Furthermore, when speaking of this temporal process, people not only lamented the loss of their land for its economic value – and hence its financial value, but also its potential for agriculture and animal husbandry in a capitalist perspective or in a subsistence and barter economy – they also described this loss as a “theft” (adding a moral value), either because of tourist entrepreneurs which bought the land at very low prices, or because of people who used subterfuges to appropriate the land, such as producing fake documents, or selling land that they were only entitled to live on. The people I spoke to seemed to condemn the sale of land in itself, since this kind of action established relations of vicinage through commercial transactions, rather than through personal ties based on “family land”. They thus emphasized historical changes that entailed changing economic, kinship and neighborhood relationships. Yet such relationships were not limited to those established between human beings only.

## **We [don't] live with God**

You want to know the history of this place? My grandmother used to tell me stories of Miss Abi. [...] Before she arrived, there were Black witches (*blák obeamán*) living in the extremes of Bastimentos Island. They were the first inhabitants of this place, and they came directly from Africa, having never been enslaved. They knew how to make witchcraft (*obeá*) and control the spirits of the dead. They fought amongst themselves and sent spirits to kill each other's relatives. The victims were buried where the village now stands. First time this was a graveyard, but Miss Abi brought the word of God, which put an end to witchcraft and to the rivalry between these first families. They were baptized in the Methodist Church that was built where this graveyard would be and all of them started to live with God.

Yet again, I received an unexpected answer to my insistent questions about the history of the village and its local families. This time it came from a local young man, some eighteen years of age, who did not usually go to Church, but learned from his grandmother stories of Miss Abi, a Black Methodist missionary who arrived in Old Bank in 1814. Others had already told me that the Methodist Church would celebrate its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2014, and that it was the oldest religious institution in the village, followed by the Adventist Church (the only other on that had an actual church building in the village). However, I had never heard that story of Black African witches, nor of a Black missionary who brought the word of God.

In this story, God and Black people who had lived and died in the island (witches and Christians) were all referred to as autonomous agents, who were accountable for actions and relations that had concrete effects on living human beings and the spaces they inhabited. Witches knew how to control the spirits of the dead (which, although active, do not appear to have had autonomous agency) and they sent these spirits to kill each other's relatives. In 1814, however, Miss Abi changed all this: she brought the word of God and built the Methodist Church where the graveyard used to be, and where the village would later be erected. The word of God thus put an end to witchcraft and rivalry between the first families, which were baptized and started to “live with God” (*liv uid Gád*). These changes were materialized in space: the Methodist Church built on one of the highest points, and, on another high point, in the extreme east of the village, was the current graveyard, almost in the forest.

My curiosity was piqued by this, and I began to ask other people about this missionary. A woman whose surname was Davies and who had been baptized into the Methodist Church, attending services since she was a child, told me she also heard stories of Miss Abi, or Mother Abel (Mis Aby, Mis Abee), as she was called in the historical text kept by the pastor (Araúz Monfarte 2007). Although she did not know many details about this missionary, or about the people of the village in 1814, she knew the consequences that the missionary's visit left throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This is what Mrs Davies told me:

My grandmother told me that when she was young the people of Old Bank would spend the weekend in Church: they went to the Seventh-Day Adventist Church on Saturday, and to the Methodist Church on Sundays. The Adventist Church has also been here for a long time, at least since 1902. Our Methodist and Adventist church buildings were the first in Panama! In the days of my grandmother things were not like "today", when those who go to one church don't go to the other, and most people only think of God when they have a problem. In the old days it was not like this, and everyone in Old Bank lived with God!

As both oral narratives and the historical record of the Methodist Church make clear, both the Methodist and the Adventist messages were taken to Old Bank by missionaries coming from the Caribbean. Both established church buildings in Old Bank before expanding to the surrounding islands and the Panamanian continent, as well as Costa Rica. Although the literature has tended to overlook this fact, it attests to the importance of Old Bank in the Bocas del Toro region, the village seemingly providing a bridge between the Caribbean and Central America in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Although the Adventist Church arrived in Old Bank nearly a century after the Methodist Church, there was no specific story concerning its missionaries, much as there were no stories associated with missionaries from other Protestant Christian denominations that later visited the village (the Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, who went weekly to the village during my fieldwork). All that was said of the Adventist missionaries is that they were two men, John Eccles and John Hocking, both described as being White, and having died in the village in 1902, as registered in their tombstones, conserved in the gardens of the current Adventist church building. It was thus known that the institution had been present in the village since 1902, even if the church building had closed around 1950 and then re-opened, in the same place where it had been founded, only in 2008. The reason why it had been closed for some fifty years was unanimous: conflicts involving land inheritance, or course.

Some of the aspects of the story of Miss Abi, in contrast, drew my attention more. First, the stories of Miss Abi offered clues of the existence of a Black community in Bocas del Toro in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. There are few historical records of Bocas del Toro before the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when North American economic developments began to affect the region. According to these records, throughout Central America the Spanish Empire was concentrated in the Pacific coast, and, up until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, did not effectively colonize the Atlantic coast, which was disputed by a number of actors. Among these were small native Indigenous groups – in the Bocas del Toro and southern Costa Rica these were the Teribe – who, after the Spanish invasion led by Christopher Columbus in 1500, migrated to the interior of the continent to escape death and enslavement in the periodic ambushes they suffered from European seamen (particularly British, Dutch and French pirates) and sailors of the Miskito commercial empire (Stephens et al. 1987). The Miskito are made up of more than thirty native groups from the Atlantic coast and the current territories of Honduras and Nicaragua, and their history is similar to that of the Garifuna. They are of Amerindian and Black descent, having incorporated, during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, the descendants of Africans who either survived shipwrecks (possibly after rebelling while they were being transported in slave ships) or fled slavery in the continent (Cwik 2014).

Historiography tells us that Bocas del Toro had remained uninhabited after the Teribe left in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, right up until the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. During this time, Methodist missionaries and British colonists arrived in the archipelago (C. Reid 1980). They brought to the archipelago their families, their plantations, and

the enslaved population that worked on them, because of the high taxes charged by the British Crown, which at the time controlled the islands of San Andres and Providencia, where they were established (Stephens et al. 1987). Shortly after arrival, these colonists emancipated the enslaved population – probably because they did not have a European contingent large enough to deter escapes or control revolts. This population formed autonomous communities, like Old Bank, based on an agricultural and fishing subsistence economy, and on waged work after the establishment of the Banana Industry in the region. This attracted others to the village (Afro-Caribbeans, mostly from the Jamaica), along with Panamanian-Latinos, Ngobe Indigenous people, Chinese and other foreigners (Guerrón-Montero 2006).

Yet the information I obtained in the field concerning Miss Abi provide information which complements history, and suggests the following possibility for future study. Before the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Old Bank was already a settlement made up mostly of Blacks who had survived shipwrecks or fled enslavement – much like the people of African descent incorporated by the Garifuna and the Miskito. We might also suppose that the history of these three groups of Blacks from the Central American Caribbean were not unfolding in parallel to each other, but rather cut across one another, due to the similarities of their languages (Central American English Creoles), their funerary rites (nightly vigil culminating on the ninth night), their relationships with the slave economy (they do not recognize descent from enslaved people) and with North American imperialism (they flowed between the same economic initiatives established in Central America between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries). Since these histories and hypotheses are beyond the scope of this article, I invite other authors to explore other ways in which ethnography can contribute to the historiography and archaeology of Old Bank, and other places.

Many of the people who spoke to me of the Methodist missionary took this fact as a temporal marker through which a further contrast between “first time” and “today” was established. This contrast foregrounded a sort of origin myth of the village of Old Bank, delimiting three moments in time. Two of them were marked by temporalities prior to the sale of “family land” – that is, they were earlier than the temporalities of “first time” and “today”. The third, finally, was contemporary to the sale of the land.

The first of these moments was before the arrival of Miss Abi, and was characterized by witchcraft, fights and deaths: during this time, the whole area of the village was a graveyard. Returning to the discussion of the previous section, the way people lived during this time (and the way they live in the present) was the opposite of the relational pattern summed up in “living like family”. There is a rupture between the first and the second period caused by the arrival of Miss Abi, who brought with her the word of God: thenceforth people began to “live with God”.

The narratives did not transmit detailed information about the missionary. No one in Old Bank recognized her as an ancestor, nor was she mentioned as a friend of the ancestors of any of the families in Old Bank – perhaps because her stay there had preceded her arrival by some one hundred years. In turn, the people that she encountered in Old Bank, described as Black witches, were not recognized as ancestors to contemporary families. In this way, these narratives have no direct connections to people who exist in the present.

In the narratives concerning the period after the passage of Miss Abi, the relations of living people with the narrated facts was changed by the passing of the years. The village of Old Bank already existed and corresponded to the place described by the grandfathers, starting with the first ancestor to leave the Caribbean and arrive at the village. To a degree, this time coincided with the heyday of the Banana Industry (between 1870 and 1960), during which the village reached its economic and moral boom, characterized by an assiduous Christianity, in which everyone “lived with God”, by harmonious and generous practices of conviviality exercised on “family land”, when everyone “lived like family”.

This second period, following local narratives, was interrupted by a moral decadence, which thus began the third time, “today”, when people no longer live in harmony, God is no longer important, people only think of him when they have a problem, and people do not attend mass like they used to. As such, this third temporality is an inversion of the second. In the second period, emphasis is placed on the positive ruptures caused by an approximation to God, while in the third emphasis is placed on negative changes resulting from a distancing from God. Echoing the temporality of “today” described in the above section, this third time is characterized by a moral crisis linked to the sale of “family land” and the fact that people no longer “live like family”. At the same time, it was associated with a distance from God and the fact that people no longer “lived with God”. What appeared to be emphasized were historical changes linked to tourism and national legislation, and also those that implied changing relations between people and God, which, in turn, resulted in historical transformations. It was not simply a matter of changes in relations between human beings themselves, but also in relations between human and non-human beings - such as deities and spirits of the dead.

Thus, the two contrasts established in the histories of Old Bank between “first time” and “today” had different, but not unrelated, phenomena as their watershed: on the one hand, the sale of “family land” (connected to tourism and national legislation); on the other, a distancing from God. Analyzing these two contrasts, I noticed that both of them pointed to two moral crises (themselves present in both the past and the present) which, in their difference, were conjugated and formulated, respectively, in terms of not “living like family” and not “living with God”. In other words, these two contrasts suggested that relations between human beings themselves were distinct, but not unrelated, to those established between human beings, witches, spirits of the dead and God.

### **Building relations locally**

Tim Ingold (1993) argues that human life corresponds to the temporal process of the constitution of the place in which human beings live. Seeking to overcome the dichotomy between the natural (scientific or objective) and human (cultural or artificial), as well as that between technology and society, he introduces the concept of the “landscape”, defined, precisely, as long-lasting register of and witness to life and the work of past generations. In every generation, as well as across generations, human beings leave something of themselves in the “landscape”, thereby producing and reproducing it. The “landscape” is hence necessarily impregnated with the past and history, that is, with the pattern of activities inherent to a “taskscape”.

The author defines “landscape” as an incorporated form of activities or tasks. As such, “landscape” corresponds to the constant process of generating the forms that compose it. This process is realized by means of the mutual interaction of forms – and not through a process of the inscription of culture on a natural substrate that is previously given. Temporalities, spacialities, materialities, and socialities are produced through dwelling, that is, in the dynamic process of interaction which is always suspended in movement and makes itself present only as task and activity. Ingold thereby draws attention to the fact that a “landscape” can be heard, and not just seen. “Landscape” does not materialize all at once, in the blink of an eye, as when we observe a painting. It is produced processually, and although the eyes may not register the differences between each instance of this process, the ears clearly apprehend the distinctions produced by them – that is, by the tasks and activities that are occurring and by the forms in movement.

It was by hearing, and not just seeing, that I apprehended the spatial and temporal dimensions during 14 months of fieldwork in Old Bank. Stories about families, land, witches, missionaries and God allowed me to understand that relations were maintained between and by human beings themselves – including relations between dead human beings or those described as witches – and the relations among humans, spirits of the dead and God, which composed the times and spaces of the village. Facts which were incorporated into memory,

and those which were not, expressed a local emphasis on personal experience in what concerns obtaining and transmitting knowledge. They thus enabled the paths of experience of my interlocutors to be mapped, revealing which relations were maintained, when, where and with whom. Moreover, they illuminated ways in which ethnography can contribute to historiography and archaeology, retelling the history of Black Central America and conveying the centrality of places such as Old Bank.

It is possible to discern, from the words quoted above, contrasts between “first time” and “today”, which conveyed information on the dynamics of land occupation, use and distribution. These dynamics resonated with a classic theme in the ethnographic literature on other Afro-Caribbean contexts, with the logic of “family land” in Old Bank being analogous to its Caribbean homonym, particularly in what concerns Jamaica, where many of the ancestors of the current inhabitants came from. As Edith Clarke (1999 [1957]) showed, the inheritance of Family Land implied a concept of the family that included all descending relatives (paternal and maternal sons and daughters), but not affinal relatives (male or female spouses), much less sons and daughters that were born only to the (male or female) spouse in another relationship. Jean Besson (2002) took this argument further, describing the family as an open group based on inclusive criteria, since it is defined, precisely, by the ownership of Family Land, focused on the control over the progressive growth of the group through relations of paternal and maternal filiation.

In Old Bank, the family was defined by the ideas and practices inherent to “family land”, which were locally formulated in terms of “living like family”. Significantly, it was because they descended from the same founding ancestors, and inherited their “family land” from them, that my interlocutors claimed that “we are all family”. Furthermore, the moral crisis that characterized the temporality of “today” was associated with the sale of “family land”, since it was during this temporality which national legislation, tourism and other developments affected relationships, people “did not live like family” and “did not live with God”. According to my interlocutors, this resulted less in an impoverishment, than in a moral transformation: a change in the relations of human beings themselves and of human beings with non-human beings, such as God.

In the conversations I had during fieldwork, God emerged gradually, such as in the expression “God first”, uttered by Gaia’s son in the day we met, and by other villagers on other occasions. In the story of Miss Abi, however, God emerged more prominently, alongside references to witches, spirits of the dead and witchcraft, which had themselves appeared, unexpectedly, in narratives about “family land” and the conflicts surrounding it. These references to witchcraft revealed a synonymy between acts of not “living like a family” and not “living with God”, since both implied maintaining family relations (such as those widely diffused in the village “today”) marked by rivalry, fights and problems. Conversely, “living like family” and “living with God” seemed to be equivalent according to the values of “family land”, involving generosity, harmony and the exchange of surplus (of land or food) between people.

Old Bank thus adds a new element to Clarke’s (1999 [1957]) and Besson’s (2002) arguments, since, in this case, the family group is not solely defined by relations among human beings themselves (living and dead), but also among them, spirits of the dead and God. Indeed, the Old Bank “landscape” incorporated the tasks and activities of them all: on the one hand, the activity of witches controlling the spirits of the dead, and the activity of God, who brought an end to witchcraft and rivalry between the first families; on the other, the daily tasks of human beings, whether they do or do not “live like family” and “live with God”.

Thus, in the temporality of “today”, the moral crisis was associated with a distancing from God and the sale of “family land”, as well as with tourism and national legislation. Even if the causes of this distancing were not developed, the counterpoint between “first time” and “today” featured the development of tourism as an aggravating factor in the moral crisis, since it added speculative pressure on lands. As Gaia stressed, in the temporality of “today” there is not as much land as in the ‘first time’. Back then, no one thought of building in the spaces underneath houses. With tourism, however, these spaces were transformed into apartments.

The new specialities of the apartments differed from the dwellings of “first time”, despite the fact that the former were literally attached to the latter. These two specialities, of the house and the apartment, were therefore different but not separate. In this sense, the contrast between “first time” and “today” – which was expressed orally, and could thus be heard more than seen – found a direct, and visible, material expression in the contrast between the specialities of the houses and the apartments. In the midst of this, bridging such contrasts, separations and differences, were the shouts. And, along with them, other oral forms of transmitting knowledge and linking, not only people, but also temporalities and spaces.

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# Partiendo de líneas, llegando a lugares: Notas sobre territorio entre los indígenas de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta en el Caribe colombiano

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## Resumen

Este artículo trata sobre las nociones territoriales entre la gente *i'ku*, grupo indígena del Caribe colombiano. La idea central es discutir la categoría “Línea Negra”, usándola como eje central territorial y, para ello, se parte de una cuestión básica ya descrita en otras ocasiones: la disparidad de las perspectivas gubernamentales e indígenas sobre el territorio. El argumento central conlleva a desestabilizar la idea de que la Línea Negra es un límite en el sentido occidental de la palabra, iluminando otras relaciones en las que los lugares primordiales, o sagrados, son protagonistas.

**Palabras clave:** Territorio; Etnología Caribeña; Lugar; Chamanismo.

# De linhas a lugares: Notas sobre território entre os indígenas da Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta no Caribe colombiano

## Resumo

Este artigo trata das noções territoriais dos I'ku, grupo indígena do Caribe colombiano. A ideia central é discutir a categoria de “Línea Negra”, fazendo dela um eixo central da territorialidade indígena. Para isso, começa-se com uma questão básica já descrita em outras ocasiões: a disparidade das perspectivas do governo e dos indígenas sobre o território. O argumento central leva à desestabilização da ideia de que a Línea Negra é um limite no sentido ocidental do termo, iluminando outras relações nas quais os lugares primordiais, ou sagrados, são protagonistas.

**Palavras-chave:** Território; Etnologia no Caribe; Lugar; Xamanismo.

# From lines to places: Notes about Territory among indigenous people of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in Colombian Caribbean

## Abstract

This paper focuses on the ways that the i'ku people, an indigenous group from the Colombian Caribbean, envisage the territory. The main idea is to discuss the category of “Línea Negra”, making it one of the main territorial axis. For doing so, the paper takes into consideration a basic issue described by other authors: the differences between governmental and indigenous perspectives about what territory is. The main argument seeks to unstabilize the common idea about the “Línea Negra” being a limit in the western sense, enlightening other relations in which the primordial places, also known as sacred places, are the protagonists.

**Key words:** Territory, Caribbean Ethnology, Places, Shamanism.

# Partiendo de líneas, Llegando a lugares: Notas sobre territorio entre los indígenas de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta en el Caribe colombiano

Jose Arenas Gómez

## Determinando un territorio ajeno. A modo de introducción

Altamente criticado por varios sectores colombianos, principalmente por la población y representantes evangélicos, el expresidente Juan Manuel Santos realizó una pose simbólica durante su primer mandato (2010) con representantes de las comunidades indígenas de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, sistema montañoso ubicado en el caribe colombiano. El evento, informado por la prensa nacional, hizo cierto énfasis en el hecho de que los especialistas rituales de aquellas poblaciones realizaron varios rituales con el futuro presidente y su familia. Al final, los indígenas serranos y el presidente llegaron a ciertos acuerdos en los que, principalmente, Santos sería erigido como amigo y protector de las comunidades indígenas de Colombia.

Santos sería posteriormente galardonado con el Premio Nobel de Paz, tras conseguir un acuerdo de entrega, desarme y reincorporación con una de las mayores guerrillas colombianas: las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). Con la presión por el acuerdo de paz, los comentarios de corredor entre funcionarios del gobierno resaltaban la latente posibilidad de que los dineros destinados para las comunidades indígenas del territorio nacional disminuirían radicalmente, para ser destinados ahora a todo el proceso de reincorporación de las personas que desistieran del uso de las armas.

Si tal redistribución fue o no un hecho, no es un elemento que cabe juzgar en este artículo, aunque debo señalar lo siguiente. Entre los años 2014 y 2015 me encontraba adelantando mi trabajo de campo para la tesis de doctorado, explorando la construcción del cuerpo y de la persona en la relación entre los humanos y los no humanos, mediada por ciertos rituales de “ofrenda”, muy comunes entre la gente *i'ku* (también conocidos como *arhuacos*, uno de los cuatro grupos de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta). En ese mismo periodo, les acompañé en la elaboración del Plan de Salvaguarda para su continuidad física y cultural, el cual fue financiado por el gobierno colombiano tras ser compelido por la Corte Constitucional.

La Corte reconocía que las comunidades indígenas de todo el país estaban en inminente peligro, debido a las violencias crónicas e históricas del país. Por tal motivo, le ordena al gobierno el financiamiento para que las comunidades planearan las actividades necesarias para evitar y contrarrestar los impactos de la guerra. Como bien lo describe Valentina Pellegrino (2017; 2019), pese a los esfuerzos de las comunidades y a la inversión estatal en su construcción, dichos planes no contaron con el compromiso interinstitucional para ser correctamente ejecutados. En mi propia experiencia, puedo decir que, tras meses de elaboración y síntesis de los planes, el primer encuentro entre las instituciones gubernamentales y representantes *I'ku* para la concertación de la ejecución del mismo se resumió en una voz unánime entre representantes del gobierno colombiano: “muy interesante el Plan de Salvaguarda, pero no hay dinero para ejecutarlo”.

Pese a ello, tras ocho años de diferentes tipos de tensiones entre los indígenas serranos y el gobierno, Santos sorprendió en su último día como cabeza del gobierno, emitiendo el decreto 1500 (del 6 de agosto de 2018) mediante el cual se reconoce y define el territorio ancestral de los pueblos de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, una de las demandas consignadas en los Planes de Salvaguarda de los grupos serranos. Las críticas por parte de empresarios y demás interesados en la exploración económica de los recursos de la Sierra Nevada no se hicieron esperar, reiterando que, en definitiva, Santos simplemente le había dado razón a la voluntad de las comunidades serranas sin tener en cuenta las “implicaciones para la economía y el desarrollo nacional”.

Un año después de la emisión del decreto, y bajo la tutela de otro gobierno, la Corte Constitucional se dispone a estudiarlo, debido a sus múltiples implicaciones. Entre estas estarían, por un lado, las quejas de empresarios, ganaderos y hacendados, quienes asumen que el decreto en sí mismo llevaría a la paralización de la región; por otro lado, estarían las quejas de los pueblos indígenas quienes, amparados en el decreto, buscan frenar más de un centenar de títulos mineros dentro de su territorio ancestral, otorgados sin la realización de una consulta previa.

El decreto sorprendió, no sólo por haber sido una decisión que aparentemente escuchaba a las comunidades indígenas, sino porque finalmente consideraría, tanto la jurisprudencia internacional y las leyes colombianas que la legitiman dentro del territorio nacional, como las diversas sentencias que la Corte Constitucional de Colombia ha emitido en pro de las comunidades indígenas del país.<sup>1</sup> Este decreto consagraría, al menos potencialmente, un mecanismo definitivo para proteger el territorio de los indígenas serranos que, de forma similar al de otros indígenas del país, han afrontado fuertes tensiones con el narcotráfico, actores armados legales e ilegales, presión por los recursos, etc. Dicha potencialidad radicaría en el hecho de invocar el reconocimiento de la diversidad étnica, el pluralismo jurídico, el derecho indígena a la protección de las “áreas sagradas”, la autonomía de los indígenas dentro de su territorio y la necesidad de la consulta previa, circunscribiendo todo esto dentro del reconocimiento de una territorialidad específica.

Me explico: los principios antes mencionados están contemplados en diferentes leyes, desde el reconocimiento de Colombia como un estado pluriétnico y multicultural en la proclamación de la Constitución Colombiana en 1991. Pese a la potencia de dichos principios, la práctica diaria ilumina que los mismos son violados, limitados o malinterpretados constantemente por diferentes entes estatales; ni qué decir de las iniciativas privadas que visan el lucro, defendiendo una idea de desarrollo basado en actividades extractivas de alto impacto.

Una de las formas clásicas de desconocimiento de estos principios se manifiesta en la forma cómo el Estado define –o mejor, limita– las tierras indígenas, la mayoría de las veces con base en criterios que no responden ni contemplan las necesidades y prácticas sociales de las comunidades. Es justamente en este punto donde me parece interesante la aparición del decreto en mención, pues a pesar de parecer potencialmente una forma de resanar la distancia entre lo que el Estado e indígenas piensan por “territorio”, en última instancia, reproduce las tensiones propias de dos perspectivas que no se concilian.

## **Algunos apuntes sobre las definiciones institucionales**

Desde ya debo señalar que este texto no pretende hacer un análisis del Decreto 1500 ni de su alcance, pues a final de cuentas, éste y sus implicaciones son el resultado de las tensiones entre las lógicas indígenas y las de los gobiernos, en contextos definidos como “multiculturales” (Povinelli, 2002; Zapata, 2010; Horta, 2015; Valderrama, 2016). Lo que quiero abordar es la disparidad en la noción de “territorio”, que fractura, una vez más, el entendimiento entre el Estado y las comunidades indígenas. Como señala Dominique Gallois (2004), existe una disparidad entre dos categorías que comúnmente son pensadas como análogos: tierra y territorio.

<sup>1</sup> El Decreto invoca específicamente las siguientes sentencias de la Corte Constitucional: T-342 de 1994, T-547 de 2010, T-693 de 2011, T-009 de 2013, T-236 de 2012, T-849 de 2011.

El Estado colombiano organiza la presencia indígena por medio del “resguardo”, figura territorial heredada –con otros ropajes– de la época colonial, que define unos límites para que los grupos indígenas vivan con relativa autonomía. Dentro del resguardo, las autoridades indígenas tienen el control por medio del uso de la ley consuetudinaria; y aunque es propiedad colectiva e inembargable, es el Estado el que, de alguna forma, tiene la última palabra sobre el mismo. Parte de esa tensión es palpable cuando dentro del resguardo hay recursos de interés comercial para el gobierno y/o para el sector privado, en cuyo caso el gobierno proclama la propiedad de todo lo que está bajo la superficie del suelo. Asume, así una idea unidimensional del territorio indígena, diferente del real carácter multidimensional con el que los indígenas construyen sus territorialidades. En otras palabras, la figura del resguardo equivale, guardadas las proporciones, a la categoría brasileña de “tierra indígena” que, como ya ha sido señalado en otras oportunidades, corresponde a una mirada de carácter jurídico (cf. Pacheco de Oliveira, 1998 y Gallois, 2004). En el caso colombiano, la figura administrativa del resguardo arrastra consigo, al final, todo su peso colonial: procurar la concentración de las comunidades indígenas en una escala espacial que permitiera su control administrativo e ideológico por parte del poder colonial (Herrera, 2002).

Pese a todo, la búsqueda por delimitar y proteger su territorio ha hecho que muchas comunidades indígenas recurran a la figura del resguardo, que aparece como una tabla de salvación para muchas de ellas. Paradójico por sus implicaciones políticas y por sus raíces coloniales, el resguardo aparece como una ficha clave en el ajedrez de las relaciones políticas interétnicas pues, a través de las transformaciones que ha sufrido, brinda ciertas garantías (siempre relativas e incompletas, claro) para las comunidades.

La lucha indígena por el reconocimiento y la delimitación del resguardo no es para nada incongruente ya que, como señala Luisa Molina (2017) para el caso Mundurukû, adoptar códigos del aparato normativo estatal no hace que los indígenas estén necesariamente sujetos a éstos, sino que es una estrategia que les permite moverse en el entramado de relaciones, tanto hacia el interior del Estado como hacia afuera del mismo. En el caso específico de la Sierra Nevada, tenemos que, tras varios intentos de ocupación y dominio durante los siglos XVIII y XIX, la delimitación de un resguardo fue requerida por la gente *i'ku* durante la primera mitad del siglo XX (Orozco, 1990), para proteger su territorio de las intimidaciones de la colonización.<sup>2</sup>

Gracias a las diferentes presiones de los indígenas y de diversas organizaciones, Colombia definió durante la segunda mitad del siglo XX los límites de los resguardos de los cuatro grupos indígenas que habitan la Sierra Nevada que, como dato “curioso”, se yuxtaponen hoy en día con los límites del Parque Nacional Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. No sobra decir que, a pesar de ser una entidad gubernamental, la administración de Parques Nacionales ha sido ficha clave para la defensa del territorio indígena en la zona, inclusive, frente a las iniciativas de intromisión de otros entes gubernamentales.

Pese a que la definición de los resguardos brindó una protección relativa a los indígenas serranos frente a las presiones externas, una de las mayores tensiones radica en el hecho de que para los serranos los resguardos hacen parte de su territorio, pero no demarcan la totalidad del mismo. Esta diferencia no es sólo acompasada en términos de extensión física de ambos sustratos, sino en términos de las implicaciones filosóficas y metafísicas que le competen. Permítanme tomar una de las ideas seminales de Dominique Gallois (2004:39) al diferenciar entre tierra y territorio, y parafrasearla en términos del contexto que aquí nos ocupa. Podemos decir que si el gobierno, por su perspectiva, piensa el resguardo en términos de un proceso político-jurídico conducido bajo

<sup>2</sup> Hacia 1916 la orden religiosa de los capuchinos se habría asentado definitivamente entre la gente *i'ku*, luego de que líderes indígenas le hubieran pedido al gobierno colombiano el envío de instructores para entrenar a educadores indígenas. La presencia capuchina en la región tiene importantes consecuencias, que no caben ser discutidas aquí (ver Campos, 1976; Schlegelberger, 1995; Bosa, 2014, 2018). Sólo señalo aquí que la orden fue expulsada por los indígenas durante la década de 1980.

su égida (una idea de tierra), la perspectiva de los indígenas serranos, en cambio, es pensar el resguardo de una manera completamente diferente, que remite a procesos de construcción y vivencia en la órbita de lo que denominaríamos – con algún conflicto teórico, es claro – como cultura (una idea de territorio).

En el caso de la gente *i'ku*, cuando se reúnen con otras instituciones y la comunicación es en español, esta tensión es expresada en el uso de las palabras *territorio* y *territorio ancestral*. *Territorio* en ese caso hace referencia directa a lo delimitado actualmente por el resguardo, mientras que *territorio ancestral* comprende mucho más allá de los resguardos, tanto en términos de extensión abarcando las porciones llanas colindantes con la Sierra e, inclusive, porciones de agua del Mar Caribe, como en términos no físicos, lo cual veremos más adelante. Esencializando aquí el discurso de los indígenas serranos, su territorio verdadero, el ancestral, está comprendido dentro de un perímetro cuyo punto central para su trazo sería el pico más alto del sistema serrano; el centro del macizo serrano.

Resulta obvio que el gobierno colombiano se haya rehusado sistemáticamente a la ampliación del resguardo pues, desde su perspectiva, lo que está siendo negociado es extensión de tierra y con ello, el acceso a recursos explotables. Sin embargo, uno de los avances del decreto 1500 es que “redefine el territorio ancestral” para el ámbito legal colombiano en términos más amplios, no limitándose a la extensión física del espacio. A pesar de que el decreto no se traduce exactamente en la expansión del resguardo, sí le da una mayor injerencia a los indígenas sobre las acciones que puedan afectar su territorio, sobre todo en lo que tiene que ver con la entrada de iniciativas extractivas. Ese es sin duda el avance más importante del decreto, y tal vez el que más desafíos supone, principalmente para los indígenas, pues tener la capacidad de negociación y manejo de todas estas presiones implicaría la creación, y manutención, de aparatos burocráticos-institucionales de los cuales carecen; adicionalmente, la organización de los grupos serranos no lidia bien con la centralización, lo que implica aún más desafíos al proceso.

En ese mismo sentido, el avance va en dirección a darle mayor espacio a una categoría indígena serrana que ha sido malinterpretada desde siempre: la Línea Negra. Por ahora, digamos que esta es la frontera que delimita el territorio ancestral de los grupos serranos. En ese sentido, la lucha de los grupos serranos ha sido, por un lado, legitimar su existencia, y por otro, expandir el resguardo hasta ella. Parte de la negativa estatal por hacer legítimas las reivindicaciones de las poblaciones serranas tiene que ver con la vasta extensión del territorio ancestral, que abarca la totalidad de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, un sistema montañoso de base piramidal con 17 mil km<sup>2</sup> de área aproximada que comienza a alzarse en el Caribe Colombiano, llegando a una altura de casi cinco mil metros sobre el nivel del mar. Otra parte importante de su negativa está en consonancia con lo que sucede en otras partes del mundo: los espacios ocupados por indígenas son vistos como fuente de recursos explotables, dentro de un modelo de desarrollo que privilegia las economías extractivas de larga escala. Paralelo a esto, y tal vez como excusa, encontramos la incapacidad institucional para entender y aprehender las categorías territoriales indígenas, así como tantas otras categorías que no encajan dentro del entramado epistemológico propio del funcionamiento estatal.

La primera definición jurídica del Estado Colombiano sobre la Línea Negra fue dada en la década de 1970,<sup>3</sup> especificando que ésta era un límite simbólico, demarcado por la unión de aproximadamente 11 “accidentes geográficos” o “lugares místicos” localizados alrededor de la Sierra. Tras la insistencia indígena, esta definición fue modificada en la década de 1990,<sup>4</sup> contemplando ahora 54 “accidentes geográficos” o “hitos” y adicionando dos elementos fundamentales: el carácter radial de la línea negra como límite; y la importancia de los “accidentes geográficos” como lugares para la realización de “pagamentos”, especie de ofrendas que los indígenas serranos

3 Resolución 002 de 1973.

4 Resolución 837 de 1995.

le hacen a las madres y padres ancestrales, dueños de todo lo que existe en el universo.<sup>5</sup> Por su parte, el Decreto 1500 de 2018 da un paso al frente en tres elementos fundamentales: primero, aumenta el número de lugares o “hitos” a 348; segundo, define el “territorio ancestral” de los grupos serranos en términos del “sistema de espacios sagrados de la Línea Negra”; y tercero, no limita la Línea Negra a una representación simbólica del pensamiento indígena, por lo menos en el papel, aunque en contextos en los que buscan explicar el decreto, los representantes del gobierno enfatizan el carácter simbólico de este límite.

Quiero hacer aquí un pequeño paréntesis: el inventario de los lugares y sus características fue sistematizado por especialistas rituales de las cuatro comunidades, pero ello no significa que estos espacios se agoten en el listado del Decreto. Durante mi estadía en campo tuve la oportunidad de estar ocasionalmente con el equipo de trabajo que adelantó este proceso; y pese a que no tuve la oportunidad de hacer parte de él, pude percibir que muchas de las discusiones del grupo giraban en torno al hecho de tener que dejar puntos importantes sin inventariar, pues su ubicación y características son de conocimiento restringido; su socialización puede traer consecuencias nefastas para el manejo del mundo, según las consideraciones de la gente serrana.

Ahora, el hecho de que los “hitos” o “lugares sagrados” sean listados dentro del decreto va más allá del hecho de que éstos sean los puntos de referencia para trazar la línea negra. En rigor, responde a la forma cómo los no indígenas conciben esa frontera invisible, y al tipo de categorías usadas para traducir y delimitar conceptos ajenos. Veamos, entonces, cómo los indígenas serranos suscriben y transcriben, en el texto final del decreto, una definición más compleja sobre la Línea Negra:

Es la base del territorio ancestral y se traduce en Jaba Seshizha (kogui), Shetana Zhiwa (wiwa) y Seykutukunumaku (arhuaco). La partícula “Shi” (kogui) quiere decir hilo o conexión y se refiere a las conexiones espirituales o energéticas que unen los espacios sagrados tierra, litorales y aguas continentales y marinas del territorio, y todo aspecto de la naturaleza y las personas. «Shi» (kogui) son las venas o “zhiwa” (wiwa) - agua, que interconectan las diferentes dimensiones del territorio ancestral, como venas en el cuerpo. “Se” (kogui), «She» (Wiwa) y “Sey” (arhuaco) es el mundo espiritual en *Aluna*, el espacio negro de los principios antes del amanecer. En este sentido, la Línea Negra es la conexión del mundo material con los principios espirituales del origen de la vida. Es el tejido sagrado del territorio y garantiza el sostenimiento de interrelaciones del territorio, la cultura y la naturaleza que es la base de la vida.

La Línea Negra ha formado parte del territorio ancestral de los cuatro pueblos desde su origen. Por eso, el ordenamiento del territorio de los pueblos Arhuaco, Kogui, Wiwa y Kankuamo se expresa a través de *Shi*, el hilo infinito que nace en el cerro *Kabusankwa*, envuelve toda la Sierra desde arriba hasta abajo, siendo *Seshizha* (Kogui), *Shetana Zhiwa* (Wiwa) y *Seykutukunumaku* (Arhuaco) o lo que se ha denominado la Línea Negra el último círculo al pie de los cerros finales de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, con sus espacios costeros y marinos. En este segundo sentido, la Línea Negra es el último anillo de espacios sagrados que delimita el territorio ancestral de los cuatro pueblos indígenas de la SNSM como principio de protección (Grupos Indígenas de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta en el Decreto 1500 de 2018: 9-10).

Pese a esta poderosa definición, y a que el gobierno de Juan Manuel Santos haya resaltado la importancia de los “lugares sagrados” y de la existencia de una relación sistémica entre ellos, acaba traduciendo y definiendo para sí la Línea Negra tomando como principal inspiración la geometría, en donde una línea es configurada por la “sucesión continua e indefinida de puntos”. Es así que, una vez más, la traducción estatal de los principios territoriales indígenas no consigue lidiar con la multidimensionalidad de estos, reduciendo las definiciones a una serie de preceptos cartesianos. Veamos entonces qué podemos entender de la idea serrana de Línea Negra.

<sup>5</sup> Pese al uso más o menos corriente, en español local y aun en el ámbito académico, de la categoría “pagamento”, la complejidad de esta práctica serrana sobrepasa la idea de pagar una deuda, propia de la palabra usada, estando mucho más vinculada con una forma estructurante de la sociabilidad serrana, atravesada por dos ideas fundamentales: reciprocidad y alimentación (ver Arenas Gómez, 2016 y 2020).

## De lugares y relaciones

Permítanme hacer una aclaración: por indígenas serranos entiendo al conjunto de los cuatro grupos indígenas que habitan en la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, el mayor sistema montañoso litoral del mundo. Estos cuatro grupos son mayormente conocidos como *kággaba* (*kogui*), *wiwa*, *i'ku* (*arhuaco*) y *kankuamo*; y a pesar de hablar lenguas mutuamente ininteligibles, pertenecen a la misma familia lingüística: chibcha (Trillos 1995; 2005). Los grupos se piensan como los hermanos mayores de la humanidad, los primeros humanos creados y, en consecuencia, asumen la posesión de una serie de conocimientos encaminados al manejo del mundo y a la garantía de la continuidad del mismo; dentro de esos conocimientos, que les fueron dejados en el inicio de los tiempos por las madres y padres ancestrales, se encuentra el territorio de cada uno de los cuatro pueblos que, en conjunto, configuran el territorio ancestral serrano. Pese a que este conjunto de conocimientos tiene especificidades y diferencias entre los grupos (y matices claros al interior de los grupos), hacen parte de un conjunto mayor que los engloba y les otorga una lógica de ordenamiento.

Estos cuatro grupos conforman un sistema regional en el cual comparten elementos claves de organización social y apropiación del territorio, un corpus cosmológico y mitológico, así como prácticas ceremoniales. Tienen una jerarquía relativa estructurada de forma casi idéntica entre los cuatro, cuyo lugar preponderante lo ocupa el especialista ritual, mayoritariamente ocupado por hombres. En cada una de las lenguas, estos especialistas rituales tienen el mismo nombre, diferenciándose únicamente por algunos matices en su pronunciación (*mamu*, *mamo*, *mama*); en adelante, usaré la escrita *i'ku* “*mamu*” para referirme a estos especialistas rituales. La preponderancia y autoridad relativa de los *mamu* se basa en el hecho de que son los mediadores entre los diferentes niveles del mundo y los seres con características humanas que residen en ellos, al tiempo que son traductores del conocimiento original o “Ley de Origen” (también conocido como “Ley de la Madre”), fuente unívoca que guía todo cuanto sucede en el mundo.<sup>6</sup>

Los cuatro grupos defienden un mismo origen, reconociendo así ancestros y lugares comunes; estos últimos tienen un peso enorme en la socialidad entre los grupos y al interior de estos, así como en las relaciones interespecíficas, pues es en estos espacios que los *mamu* pueden interactuar y negociar con los dueños del mundo, seres no visibles definidos por la misma relación en los cuatro grupos: estos seres son las madres y padres originales, dueños de todo cuanto existe.

Siguiendo la perspectiva serrana, estas madres y padres ancestrales depositaron todos los conocimientos repartidos en diferentes puntos específicos de la Sierra, no sólo en los puntos que conforman la llamada Línea Negra. Los lectores, intérpretes y replicadores de estos conocimientos son los *mamu*, quienes a través de años de entrenamiento sistemático consiguen “ver” con todos los sentidos, aquello que el resto de personas no consigue percibir.<sup>7</sup> Pero no sólo los conocimientos están inscritos en estos lugares: para acceder a ellos y practicarlos, es necesario obtener el permiso por parte de las madres y padres originales, permiso que debe ser mediado por el *mamu* en los mismos lugares donde el conocimiento está depositado.

6 Para la gente *i'ku*, la ley de origen le da un lugar específico a cada ser y grupo, le otorga una serie de atributos (espacio, conocimiento, procedimientos, capacidades, permisos, saberes etc.) y define cómo debe relacionarse con otros grupos. Esta ley no se limita a los grupos serranos; de hecho, los no indígenas y los seres visibles e invisibles que pueblan el universo también están contemplados dentro de ese principio de ordenamiento, contando con sus propios conjuntos de atributos. Así, la cadena trófica, los principios matrimoniales, los comportamientos de los diferentes seres y los espacios por donde circulan, las capacidades que definen a cada ser (volar, nadar, correr, comer ciertos alimentos), su aspecto, etc., son elementos contenidos en esta ley de origen. En otras palabras, este principio organizativo o ley de origen contempla el qué, cómo, por qué, quién, dónde y cuándo, que definen los límites entre los seres y las relaciones entre éstos, internas y externas. Mal haríamos en asumir que la ley de origen se limita a un conjunto de normas; a pesar de que contiene, de hecho, principios organizativos tales como el orden de la relación entre los diferentes seres (entre humanos, entre humanos y no humanos, y entre no humanos), su sentido trasciende el carácter meramente normativo, dando cuenta de sistemas de conocimiento específicos para cada grupo, así como capacidades específicas, permisos particulares, procedimientos definidos y espacios delimitados para la relación de cada ser y grupo, tanto al interior de sí mismo como en su interacción con los demás.

7 Para tener una idea de los métodos y entrenamiento necesarios para la formación de los especialistas rituales y sus mecanismos de acción, ver los trabajos seminales de Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff (1950; 1976; 1977), Zakik Murillo (1996) y Camilo Arbelaez (1997).

Para que un indígena serrano aprenda y tenga el permiso para construir una casa, por ejemplo, debe ser guiado por el *mamu* y por aquellos que ya saben y tienen permiso. Estas personas le enseñarán la técnica, pero el papel del *mamu* sobresale, pues es quien le llevará a los lugares donde está el conocimiento del manejo de las piedras para hacer la base; le guiará a los lugares donde se encuentra el saber sobre el manejo del barro, y claro, a los lugares donde reside el conocimiento sobre el manejo de las maderas y de la grama para hacer la estructura de la casa y el techo. En cada uno de estos lugares, el *mamu* contará las historias del tiempo del origen que hablan sobre el barro, la piedra, la madera y la grama; hablará sobre la creación original de las casas y de cómo los padres ancestrales reunieron a diferentes seres para construir la primera casa ceremonial masculina: la Sierra. Serán contadas las historias con énfasis en los personajes involucrados y en lo que hicieron y supieron, los conflictos que tuvieron y sus resoluciones; serán contadas las genealogías y las relaciones que tuvieron el barro, el agua, las piedras y la madera en la época en que no sólo tenían la forma actual, sino que también tenían la forma humana.

Estando en el lugar, los *mamu* guiarán a los iniciados para que recojan su pensamiento, embebiéndolo en un conjunto de materiales que varían desde cuentas de collar, a hojas y ramas de plantas o de partes de animales de difícil adquisición. Algodones y semillas están siempre entre los elementos más usados y dependiendo de la necesidad del ritual, no en raras ocasiones se requiere el uso de material orgánico humano como sangre menstrual o las secreciones producidas durante la relación sexual. Cualquier cosa puede ser requerida por el especialista ritual para que actúe como repositorio del pensamiento, lo que puede hacer que un ritual deba ser postergado debido a la dificultad para conseguir un material determinado. Como mostré en otro lugar (Arenas Gómez, 2016; 2020), la referencia serrana al pensamiento es una forma de hablar sobre la fuerza vital de cada ser, un principio de vida presente en todo cuanto existe y que debe estar en circulación continua para garantizar la pervivencia del mundo, siendo ésta el fin último de la vida de los indígenas serranos. Una vez que la fuerza vital de la persona está contenida en los diferentes materiales, éstos serán recogidos por el especialista ritual y sus ayudantes (principalmente aprendices), para ser posteriormente depositado en otros lugares, a modo de alimento para las madres y padres originales, dueños del conocimiento y creadores del agua, barro, piedras, madera y grama.

Si por algún motivo no es posible realizar este proceso en el lugar destinado para tal fin, podrá ser realizado en un alguno de los lugares subsidiarios o secundarios, una serie de lugares satélites vinculados directamente con el lugar principal por medio de una red de interconexiones mutuas. De igual forma, depositar los materiales que poseen la fuerza vital puede, en ocasiones, hacerse en lugares secundarios; aunque dependiendo del tipo de conocimiento y, por ende, de las madres y los padres originales con que se esté lidiando, es posible que sea necesario el desplazamiento hasta lugares lejanos, lo que puede implicar largos viajes en los que el *mamu* debe dejar su familia y sus otras obligaciones de lado.

Este proceso de recoger el pensamiento usando materiales para, posteriormente, depositarlos en lugares determinados con el fin de obtener algún beneficio de las madres y padres originales, es lo que comúnmente se conoce en la etnología serrana como “pagamentos”. En líneas generales, la idea por detrás de esta categoría hispana se basa en el hecho de que todo en el mundo es propiedad de las madres y padres originales, razón por la cual los indígenas serranos deben “pagarles” en retribución.<sup>8</sup> Debo decir que, generalmente, ésta es la primera explicación dada por los mismos indígenas; el problema es que, al ahondar más en las implicaciones del proceso,

8 Dentro del esquema de la creación del mundo serrano, los no indígenas estamos vinculados genealógicamente con los serranos, ocupando el lugar secundario del “hermano menor”. En el origen de los tiempos, los hermanos menores también teníamos nuestro conocimiento, teniendo la capacidad de interactuar con las madres y los padres ancestrales. Sin embargo, como supone la posición del hermano menor en las relaciones de parentesco de los indígenas de la Sierra, no supimos responsabilizarnos de nuestros actos, razón por la cual nuestros hermanos mayores tomaron la decisión de realizar las interacciones con los seres ancestrales a nuestro favor.

la idea de “pago” termina siendo apenas una de las formas que toma esta relación entre los indígenas y los seres ancestrales. En definitiva, es una forma de relación basada en un principio de reciprocidad generalizada (ver Ferro, 1998; 2012), que no sólo define actos de pago por deudas, sino que también estipula un espacio para la reciprocidad entre los indígenas y los seres ancestrales, dueños del mundo.

Si el pago de una falta es retrospectivo, como lo sugiere la idea de “pagamento”, este proceso, que permite actualizar constantemente la reciprocidad con los seres invisibles, es también prospectivo. En última instancia, es un principio de socialidad basado en la reciprocidad, donde se intercambian fuerzas vitales entre los diferentes planos que conforman el mundo, intercambio este que toma la forma de compartir alimentos (Arenas Gómez, 2016; 2020). Por tal motivo, insistir en el uso de la palabra “pagamento” para aludir a este proceso conlleva a desconocer las implicaciones reales del mismo; de hecho, esa palabra es escasamente usada en algunos ámbitos donde los indígenas interactúan con diferentes instituciones, aunque en la mayoría de los casos, prefieren hablar en términos de “trabajos tradicionales” cuando hablan en español. Esto, claro, nos desafía a encontrar categorías que se adecúen mejor a las prácticas indígenas. ¿Cuál sería esta categoría?, ¿ofrendas, tal vez?, o ¿despachos? como lo hace Marisol de la Cadena para el caso andino (2015). Lo cierto es que las palabras usadas por los indígenas serranos para referir a esos “trabajos tradicionales”, por lo menos en el caso de los *I'ku*, *Kogui* y *Wiwa*, hacen énfasis en el acto de alimentar (Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1950; Villegas, 1999 y Arenas Gómez, 2016).

Los indígenas serranos deben acudir a estos lugares para adquirir conocimiento, pero como señalé anteriormente, también para adquirir el permiso de llevar a cabo toda acción relacionada con la puesta en práctica de dicho saber. Esto está relacionado nuevamente con el hecho de que son las madres y los padres originales quienes son los dueños de todo lo que existe, de manera que cuando se come, se cosecha, se extrae material, o cuando se lleva a cabo cualquier actividad, los indígenas (y por extensión, también los no indígenas) están usando cosas que no les pertenecen. Esto genera una especie de deuda con los seres ancestrales que, dependiendo del contexto, puede poner la salud e incluso la vida de la persona o de sus familiares cercanos en riesgo; es allí donde la categoría “pagamento” encaja, siendo la forma por la cual dichas deudas son saldadas. Empero, el uso de las posesiones de los seres ancestrales no necesariamente genera una deuda como tal, y es por ello que los indígenas serranos procuran obtener los permisos necesarios para realizar ciertas actividades. Esto implica que el *mamu* presentará a la persona delante de las madres y padres, que deben dar el permiso. Los padres, reconociendo y validando la persona y la mediación del *mamu*, otorgarán dicho permiso.

Estos permisos pueden variar: permiten realizar un viaje o acceder a una región determinada; permiten a los hombres sembrar la coca (*Erythroxylum coca*), planta fundamental para todas las mediaciones entre los diferentes planos del mundo y que sólo puede ser consumida por los hombres;<sup>9</sup> o a los iniciados, poder fabricar las vasijas de cerámica con las que se realizan diferentes ceremonias en las casas masculinas y femeninas. Los permisos más importantes son aquellos dados a los *mamu* para que realicen las mediaciones entre los diferentes planos del mundo. Puesto que estos permisos son otorgados por los seres ancestrales a través de la mediación de los *mamu* en lugares determinados, podemos entenderlos como el reconocimiento de la relación entre quien recibe el conocimiento-permisos y los seres ancestrales por medio de la mediación de un especialista y, claro, vinculada a un espacio específico. Esta relación es generalmente materializada en algún material como pulseras de hilos de algodón con algunas cuentas o semillas, u otros elementos que fueron preparados durante el proceso ceremonial y que las personas deben mantener resguardados de otras personas.

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9 Una clara excepción es el caso de las mujeres que ocupan el lugar de especialistas rituales. Aunque esta es una labor mayoritariamente masculina, algunas mujeres también lo hacen, en cuyo caso consumen las hojas de la coca cuando precisan interactuar con las madres y padres ancestrales. Según algunas informaciones, en el contexto *Wiwa* la presencia de estas mujeres especialistas rituales es más frecuente. En el caso *i'ku* que conozco más de cerca, hay por lo menos cuatro mujeres que realizan las mediaciones entre los indígenas y los seres ancestrales.

Sin embargo, lo fundamental de estos permisos es que modifican y alteran el cuerpo de su portador refinando sus capacidades. Cualquier persona está en capacidad de sembrar, sin embargo, hay algunos productos, como la coca, que tienen algunas restricciones de género y edad.<sup>10</sup> En principio, cualquier persona podría sembrar coca, y de hecho ésta va a crecer; pero quien la siembra sin tener el permiso se arriesga a que las madres y padres de la planta le reclamen su acción. Ya quien siembra teniendo el permiso obtiene un cultivo más harto y de mejor calidad, puesto que no es sólo la manifestación física de la planta lo que está en juego, sino la sintonía de la fuerza vital de quien plantó con la de la planta y, por ende, con las fuerzas vitales de sus dueños. Pero no sólo otorga eficiencia: el permiso modifica y altera el cuerpo, poniéndolo en relación con lugares y seres específicos, permitiéndole así la incorporación de atributos especiales que le permiten realizar actividades que otras personas no pueden. El permiso protege a la persona, le permite una mayor eficiencia, refina sus capacidades.

Dentro de los linderos de las casas ceremoniales y de los hogares de los *mamu* también se encuentran varios de estos lugares para la comunicación con los seres ancestrales. Si los espacios esparcidos por la Sierra son abiertos para todos los *mamu*, aquellos que se encuentran dentro de los linderos de las casas ceremoniales y de los hogares son de acceso más restricto. En el segundo caso, esta restricción es más clara, ya que generalmente sólo el especialista ritual que vive allí puede hacer uso de dichos espacios, como si de su espacio personal se tratara; un espacio que materializa una relación mucho más específica e íntima entre algunos de los seres originales, sus mensajeros y el *mamu*. En estos espacios se realizan las consultas médicas y se hacen las curaciones respectivas, consultando con las madres y padres ancestrales sobre el motivo de la dolencia –¿tal vez una falta? ¿comió algo indebido? ¿Infidelidad?– y el tratamiento a seguir.

Es muy común entre la gente *i'ku*, por ejemplo, que cuando una pareja se casa y se muda para su nuevo hogar,<sup>11</sup> el especialista ritual encuentre un lugar específico dentro de los linderos del terreno el cual servirá como el espacio al cual la pareja acudirá, ya sea para la realización de algunas actividades específicas solicitadas por el *mamu*, o bien para depositar material que prepararon en diferentes momentos, inclusive, durante la relación sexual.<sup>12</sup> Similar a lo que sucede con los lugares que se encuentran en las casas ceremoniales y en las casas de los *mamu*, los lugares localizados en los linderos de las casas encarnan una conexión más específica y directa entre la pareja y los dueños del mundo.

¿Qué son entonces estos espacios? Aquello a lo que el decreto refiere como “hitos” y “lugares sagrados” se presentan ante nuestros ojos no-indígenas como puntos sobresalientes de una naturaleza ajena a la acción humana. En sus formas más grandiosas se presentan como una montaña, una laguna, un pantanal, una formación rocosa, una cueva, una naciente, o la desembocadura de un río; ya en sus formas menos pomposas se nos presentan como un árbol, un conjunto de piedras o un pequeño afloramiento en el suelo. Sin embargo, para los indígenas, estos espacios no pueden ser pensados en términos de sacralidad; pese a que en el decreto y otros textos “oficiales” la categoría “sagrado” sea usada, dicha definición no encuentra un correlato claro dentro del mundo serrano, toda vez que no existe una separación entre una esfera profana y otra sacra. Cuando los indígenas serranos usan la categoría “sagrado”, siempre lo hacen para referir a algo de suma importancia; una forma de traducir su relación con el tiempo y el espacio del origen; un tiempo que como he mencionado varias veces, está planteado en continuidad –y no en oposición– al tiempo y espacio contemporáneos.

10 En el caso *i'ku* por ejemplo, son los hombres los que deben sembrar la planta y las mujeres son quienes deben cosecharla.

11 Hay una fuerte tendencia a la residencia virilocal post-matrimonial, después de que el nuevo esposo viva y trabaje para el suegro.

12 Varios materiales preparados incluyen algodones embebidos en líquido seminal, saliva y fluidos vaginales. Uno de los actos rituales que permite la mayor concentración de pensamiento-fuerza vital, es la relación sexual. Cuando una pareja debe tener sexo con el fin de preparar material, debe hacerse en una posición específica, y con alto control sobre la forma y el número de veces que el hombre penetra a la mujer.

En líneas generales, por lo menos en el caso *i'ku*, estos lugares podrían ser englobados bajo la categoría *ka' dukwu a'zunin*, en la que *ka' dukwu* es el nombre genérico que reciben los espacios donde el *mamu* consulta a los seres invisibles, y *a'zunin* alude a “algo importante” y a la conexión con lo que no es visible o aparente.<sup>13</sup> Por tal motivo, prefiero referirme a estos lugares como “lugares primordiales”.

Los lugares primordiales son un complejo conformado por elementos que siempre están relacionados con la comunicabilidad: plantas, rocas y agua. Como veremos más adelante, las plantas están relacionadas con la conexión entre los diferentes planos del universo. El agua es un ordenador que vincula y conecta los diferentes lugares de conocimiento (Zapata, 2010; Giraldo, 2014:187), como “venas en el cuerpo” (Decreto 1500 de 2018:10). Las rocas, por su parte, por lo menos aquellas que hacen parte de estos lugares de conocimiento, están relacionadas con la humanidad del origen, del tiempo en que todo era oscuridad, y que fueron petrificadas cuando el sol brilló por primera vez.<sup>14</sup> Por otra parte, estos espacios no forman parte de una naturaleza externa ni se construyen en contraposición a una acción de características humanas. Cada uno de esos espacios es el resultado de la historia, de acontecimientos protagonizados por los diferentes humanos durante el tiempo del origen.

Los lugares primordiales tienen diferentes jerarquías, estando relacionados entre sí en diferentes escalas; algunos de estos lugares son contenidos por otros, como si se tratara de nodos. Por ejemplo, la Sierra es, en sí misma, uno de esos espacios, el mayor y principal en la jerarquía: la Sierra es el “Corazón del Mundo”, como reiteradamente señalan los serranos, puesto que las narrativas del origen señalan que, en el tiempo en que todo era pensamiento y no existía el mundo tangible, fue el primer punto donde el huso de hilar original fue puesto para que, por medio del movimiento en espiral propio del hilar, se creara todo lo visible. En ese sentido, la Sierra es el origen, y contiene todos los conocimientos dejados por las madres y padres ancestrales. Al mismo tiempo, la Sierra contiene muchísimos otros espacios: aquellos que contienen el conocimiento para el manejo de los cultivos en general, por ejemplo, pero también otros en los que fueron depositados los conocimientos sobre plantas particulares; cuevas que contienen el conocimiento sobre el manejo y origen del agua en general, y otras que contienen el conocimiento sobre la lluvia en particular.

Independiente de la jerarquía, estos lugares están interconectados, a todo lo largo del sistema serrano, por redes de relaciones que están íntimamente ligadas a las prácticas propias de los indígenas. Veamos por ejemplo el acto eminentemente masculino de consumir las hojas de coca, una actividad fundamental para los hombres serranos, puesto que permite una de las formas prototípicas de conexión entre ellos y los seres no visibles. “Poporear”, como se le conoce de forma genérica a esta forma de consumo de las hojas de coca, consiste en masticar las hojas tostadas por largos periodos de tiempo, en combinación con la harina resultante de calentar ciertas conchas que obtienen en las playas. Estas conchas pulverizadas son contenidas en pequeños calabazos de cuello delgado y alargado, que en el español local se conocen como “poporos” y que son concebidos como una extensión de la pareja, y por ende, como objetos con atributos femeninos. La extracción de las conchas pulverizadas se hace por medio de cortos y delgados tallos de determinados árboles, que a diferencia del calabazo, manifiestan atributos masculinos. Los hombres ponen en su boca una porción de las conchas pulverizadas usando la rama tallada, en la cual siempre queda algún tipo de residuo de la mezcla de las conchas, las hojas de coca y la saliva. Estos residuos son untados por el hombre en la región superior del poporo, creando así una capa que tiende a crecer con el uso constante.

13 Siguiendo la bibliografía existente sobre los otros grupos de la Sierra, no es un problema decir que en cada uno de ellos existen categorías correlacionadas.

14 Esto no quiere decir que en cada uno de estos lugares encontremos visiblemente estos elementos. Lo que sucede es que, dentro de la compleja cadena de correspondencias y transformaciones, puede haber elementos presentes que, por su relación interna con otros, hagan parte del grupo de las plantas, las piedras o el agua.

El “poporear” es para la gente serrana una manifestación del acto sexual, no sólo porque la rama tallada (masculina) sea introducida constantemente en la calabaza (femenina) por su orificio, sino porque la capa de residuos que va formándose en la boca de la calabaza materializa el pensamiento del hombre y con ello, produce fertilidad, elemento que parece ser el fin último de los grupos serranos. Un proceso análogo entre las mujeres es el tejido de mochilas, en el cual el pensamiento de la tejedora es registrado tras cada puntada y con cada utilización del huso de hilar, produciendo así fertilidad y garantizando el movimiento del universo. De hecho, en el contexto *i'ku*, “poporear” y tejer son definidos por el mismo verbo, “*isun*”, que puede traducirse como escribir o registrar; de forma que tanto el poporo como el tejido, similar a los lugares de conocimiento, son también dispositivos de escritura.

Para poder consumir las hojas de coca, un joven iniciado debe ser guiado por el *mamu* quien, al consultar a los seres invisibles, determinará si él debe o no ir a cada uno de los lugares que contienen los conocimientos relacionados con “poporear”. La gente *i'ku* es enfática en señalar que la forma correcta implica una serie de restricciones y ceremonias, en las que los iniciados deben ser presentados por el *mamu* a cada uno de los dueños de los conocimientos, y los objetos relacionados con el “poporeo” en los diferentes lugares donde estos saberes están consignados. En cada uno de los lugares, el *mamu* deberá hablar sobre las madres y los padres originales, sobre el manejo de las cosas relacionadas con “poporear”, y juntos prepararán los materiales que servirán, conteniendo la fuerza vital de los iniciados, para alimentar a los seres invisibles en cada uno de los lugares.

Este proceso puede implicar meses de largos desplazamientos a lo largo de la Sierra para poder viajar de un lugar a otro. De las montañas que contienen el conocimiento sobre el consumo de la coca a los múltiples espacios que contienen los conocimientos sobre la forma de siembra, cosecha y preparación de la planta. Luego, desplazarse hacia los lugares que contienen el manejo de las calabazas y a los que contienen el conocimiento del manejo de los finos tallos usados para extraer las conchas. También sería necesario desplazarse a las tierras bajas, cerca al mar, donde se encuentran los lugares que contienen el saber sobre las conchas. Esto demarca una interconexión de espacios, historias y prácticas, no sólo delimitados por las narrativas sobre el origen y por las teorías serranas del mundo, sino por la actualización continua de las relaciones entre las personas, los lugares y los dueños de las cosas, al visitar los espacios, alimentar a los seres, narrar los sucesos y aprehender los saberes.

Caminar por la Sierra es, entonces, recorrer senderos que se tejen entre puntos que materializan el pasado y lo articulan con las vivencias contemporáneas de los indígenas serranos; es caminar entre bloques de historias, como si de un banco de datos se tratara, donde algunos se especializan en un tipo de conocimiento, mientras que otros versan sobre saberes más generales. De igual forma lo hacen sus lectores e intérpretes: los *mamu* no pueden abarcar todo el conocimiento, razón por la cual enfocan su *expertise* en algunos temas específicos. Esto deja por sentado dos elementos fundamentales: el primero es que estos espacios no se limitan a aquellos que constituyen la llamada Línea Negra. El segundo es algo que los indígenas serranos dejaron claro en la definición que tuvo cabida en el decreto, y que ha sido subrayado en los espacios académicos en diferentes momentos (Villegas, 1999; Giraldo, 2014): estos espacios se interrelacionan, constituyendo una vasta red que cubre toda la Sierra y que, al mismo tiempo, constituye a la Sierra en todas sus dimensiones.

Además de ser espacios que contienen el conocimiento dejado por los creadores y dueños del mundo, en muchas ocasiones estos lugares también son considerados una manifestación visible de las madres y los padres ancestrales,<sup>15</sup> mientras que en otros momentos, los lugares son descritos como la morada de estos seres. Describir estos lugares primordiales como la morada de los seres no visibles es algo recurrente en la etnología

<sup>15</sup> Este aparece también como un rasgo muy marcado del caso andino, donde montañas, cuevas y lagunas son seres en sí mismos (ver De la Cadena, 2015; Allen, 2015).

amerindia, así como también es recurrente que la relación entre estos lugares sea compleja y jerarquizada. En diferentes contextos etnográficos, algunos lugares son más importantes, por ser las casas ceremoniales de los dueños de los animales, mientras que otros tienen una importancia menor por ser adornos de plumas, bancos rituales o conjuntos de armas.

Un elemento que parece claro a lo largo de los diferentes casos etnográficos es que la heterogeneidad de este tipo de lugares dentro de un mismo contexto es un rasgo generalizado (ver por ejemplo Århem, 1990; Hugh-Jones C., 1979; Hugh-Jones S., 1979; Humphrey, 1995; Rappaport, 2004; Santos-Granero, 2004; Surrallés, 2004; Cayón, 2013; Cayón & Chacón, 2014; Coelho de Sousa, 2018). En el caso serrano, la relación entre estos lugares también está ordenada de forma jerárquica: los más importantes son descritos como la casa de los seres, e inclusive como los seres mismos, siendo lagunas de alta montaña, las montañas más importantes del sistema serrano, o cuevas de difícil acceso. Por su parte, los lugares más locales y con menos importancia no son descritos en términos de la casa de los seres, y menos aún como los seres mismos.

Tenemos entonces que estos lugares de conocimiento difícilmente pueden ser definidos en términos de lugares “naturales”, ya que son el producto de la acción de otras humanidades. Similar a lo evidenciado por Stephen Hugh-Jones (2012) para el caso del noroeste amazónico, estos sitios son también lugares de memoria, que no sólo están relacionados con narrativas míticas sino con curaciones, cantos-música, objetos, etc.; elementos que, en última instancia, movilizan conocimientos (cf. Cayón & Chacón, 2014). Puedo afirmar que, para los indígenas serranos, los lugares primordiales son lugares de conocimiento; así mismo, en ocasiones estos lugares son los seres ancestrales en sí mismos. Siendo espacios de memoria, de conocimiento y de objetificación de los seres, estos espacios deben ser vistos como el resultado directo de la acción de capacidades humanas que no se limitan a nuestra especie.

Estos lugares concentran y hacen visible la historia de la gente de la Sierra y, en ese sentido, son el resultado de una escritura topográfica (Santos-Granero, 2004; Giraldo, 2014), siendo entonces una mezcla de tiempos donde el origen de la vida y la continuidad de lo contemporáneo se hacen una sola cosa, por medio de la interacción constante entre la gente serrana y los seres originales; si los seres originales crearon esos lugares de conocimiento, recontar las historias, nombrar los seres, cantarles, recurrir a ellos para interactuar de forma más o menos cotidiana, restituye y actualiza aquella historia.

Un elemento es transversal a todos los lugares serranos y, de cierta forma, ha estado implícito en lo que he venido trabajando aquí: como bien apuntó Natalia Giraldo (2014:186), estos lugares son dispositivos de comunicación entre los indígenas y los seres ancestrales.<sup>16</sup> Sin embargo, la comunicabilidad entre los indígenas, las madres y los padres originales no está restringida a la mediación de los lugares de conocimiento. Algo que es una constante en el mundo serrano es que la vida de los indígenas está completamente embebida por la presencia de las entidades no visibles, sean éstas los seres originales, o sus mensajeros. En su teoría sobre el universo, la gente serrana describe la existencia de dos esferas: una visible (aquella de lo físico, de lo tangible, correspondiente al mundo de la experiencia de los indígenas y de nosotros, los no indígenas) y otra invisible (aquella de lo que no es tangible, de la existencia de los seres del origen), enfatizando siempre la existencia de una interacción constante entre ambas esferas en pro de la continuidad de la vida.

En ese contexto donde la interacción es constante y, partiendo del hecho de que todo lo que existe es el resultado de la agencia de los seres originales, básicamente cualquier cosa es potencialmente un mensaje de éstos para los humanos de la esfera visible: la aparición de un animal, el canto de un pájaro, los sueños, las contracciones repentinas de los músculos, etc. En principio, toda persona adulta posee elementos básicos

<sup>16</sup> El hecho de que algunos lugares contengan conocimientos y capacidades de agencia es un elemento que ha sido remarcado en la etnología del Noroeste Amazónico (Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1968; Hugh-Jones C., 1979; Hugh-Jones S., 1979; Århem, 1998; Hill, 2002; Vidal, 2002; Wright, 2002; Zucchi, 2002; Cayón, 2013; Cayón & Chacón, 2014), en los estudios con indígenas norteamericanos (Basso, 1988; 1996) y en otros contextos (Osborn, 1985; Fox, 1997; Eves, 1997; Sakai, 1997; Bubandt, 1997). Como elemento transversal, en todos los contextos se resalta la importancia que tiene el “lugar” en cuanto espacio de mediación entre los diferentes componentes de los mundos indígenas.

para poder interpretar los mensajes hasta un cierto punto, existiendo algunos conjuntos básicos de mensajes que tienen una interpretación más o menos estandarizada. Sin embargo, hay otras formas de comunicación y otros mensajes, cuya exégesis sólo puede ser hecha por los *mamu*, no sólo por el hecho de tener acceso a un conjunto mayor de mensajes sino porque también por su capacidad de acceder a una comunicación de doble vía con los seres invisibles. De allí la importancia de su lugar como mediadores entre las dos esferas del mundo.

La misma división, entre una esfera visible y otra invisible, es replicada en la concepción sobre los cuerpos y los objetos, cuya esfera no visible está constituida por una fuerza vital/pensamiento, que es el motor de la vida de todo cuanto existe en ambas esferas del mundo. El hecho de compartir tal elemento vital es, justamente, lo que permite la comunicabilidad entre las dos esferas, aunque esto no signifique que la comunicación tenga siempre el mismo grado o fuerza. Dependiendo del contexto, la comunicación puede ser más menos eficiente o intensa, pero nunca completamente nula. ¿Cuál sería entonces la importancia de los lugares con conocimiento? Estos lugares son espacios donde la comunicación entre las dos esferas es más intensa y efectiva, pues sólo allí es bidireccional, dándole la oportunidad al *mamu* de negociar con los seres originales.

En un interesante ejercicio de traducción, algunas personas *i'ku* describen los lugares primordiales como las oficinas de las madres y los padres originales, es decir, aquellos lugares a los cuales se debe acudir para poder resolver cualquier inquietud o problema. El desafío estaría, continuando con la traducción, en saber a qué oficina ir y por quién preguntar, pues igual que en las grandes ciudades, las oficinas están llenas de gente y hay que saber ante quién debe hacerse la petición. Caso contrario, se hablará con la persona equivocada y aunque esa persona asegure que resolverá el problema, nunca lo hará, pues no tiene injerencia sobre el asunto. Ese es uno de los elementos más delicados de la diplomacia de los *mamu*, quienes deben conocer los lugares, qué seres pueden contactar en ellos y qué solicitudes pueden hacer allí. A veces, un mismo ser puede “trabajar en dos oficinas”, resolviendo cosas diferentes en cada una de ellas.

Ya que la red de lugares es tan grande, esto implica que exista una complementariedad entre los especialistas rituales. Si en tiempos míticos los *mamu* antiguos eran capaces de dominar el conocimiento completo, conociendo todos los lugares, seres y protocolos diplomáticos para interceder a favor de los suyos, el tiempo ha hecho que ese conocimiento se fragmente. Esto no quiere decir que el conocimiento se pierda, lo que sucede es que generación tras generación un especialista ritual divide su saber entre sus aprendices y casi nunca le hereda todo su conocimiento a una sola persona. Así, lo que en una generación dominaba un solo *mamu*, tras dos generaciones ese conocimiento es manejado de forma complementaria por 4 o más sabedores. Si los lugares de conocimiento están conectados en una red de complementariedad, los especialistas rituales también lo están.

## **Conectando los mundos. Algunos apuntes finales**

Partiendo del hecho de que los conocimientos y prácticas de los grupos indígenas de la Sierra son pensados por sus protagonistas como una unidad (complementaria y compleja, mas no homogénea), me permito aquí hacer uso de algunas categorías específicas de la gente *i'ku* para dar una mejor idea de la concepción propia del territorio. Si bien es muy posible que los otros grupos tengan categorías análogas a las que uso aquí, es necesario un estudio detallado en cada uno de los contextos, no necesariamente para confirmar tal hecho sino, mejor, para encontrar elementos que hagan más complejo nuestro entendimiento sobre el territorio para los indígenas serranos.

Digo que es muy posible que las categorías que usaré a continuación tengan sus contrapartes en los otros grupos, por dos motivos. Primero, porque como vimos al principio del texto, los cuatro grupos defienden una idea conjunta de territorio; y segundo, porque esta idea está fundada en las narrativas sobre el origen, narrativas éstas que también son compartidas entre los cuatro grupos.

La gente *i'ku* usa dos categorías cuando se refieren a la idea de territorio: “*ka'gamu*” y “*umunukunu*”. En principio, cualquier persona inquirida diría que son sinónimos pues, a final de cuentas, están en un continuum semántico. Empero, estas dos palabras están atravesadas por matices que le dan a cada una un lugar diferenciado dentro de la teoría *i'ku* del mundo, la cual no necesariamente diferencia entre las nociones de “tierra” y “territorio”: he ahí uno de los nudos que disocian el entendimiento entre la gente serrana y el gobierno.

Encuentro que *ka'gamu* es la palabra más usada cuando lo que se subraya en el discurso es la materialidad de la tierra (*ka*), el componente tangible y sensible, en el que se siembra y se cosecha. Si *ka* hace alusión a su nivel más concreto, *ka'gamu* retoma esa concreción y le agrega a la referencia dos de sus cualidades fundamentales: soportar (servir de base) y alimentar/crear por medio de la fertilidad. La gente *i'ku* señala claramente que lo femenino, en cuanto cualidad que compone a todo lo existente, comparte esa característica de sostener, servir de base y brindar la fertilidad. Esta idea es extendida al papel de las mujeres dentro de la sociedad, quienes como seres femeninos (pero no exclusivamente femeninos), fungen como tierra, dando soporte a cualquier tipo de relación e incorporando la máxima forma de la fertilidad: poder dar a luz una nueva vida, y alimentarla.

La extensión de las cualidades de la tierra hacia las mujeres no es un simple ejercicio metafórico. De la misma forma como aparece entre la gente *i'ku*, ha sido documentado que para los otros grupos serranos, el mundo y todo lo que en él existe está compuesto por una dualidad complementaria que toma diferentes formas, de las cuales la oposición “femenino : masculino” es una de las principales (Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1950, 1977, 1978; Echavarría, 1994; Villegas, 1999; Peñaranda, 2006; Loaiza, 2013). Existe entonces una relación de continuidad entre los diferentes elementos que componen el mundo en la medida que todo está compuesto de esa dualidad. Así, en vez de ser una relación metafórica, las transformaciones y las cadenas de correspondencias entre elementos de órdenes aparentemente diferentes, sugieren una relación metonímica. A continuación, presento algunas de estas relaciones prototípicas):

**femenino : negativo<sup>17</sup> : abajo : descendente : interior : negro : obscuridad : luna : noche :  
izquierdo : origen: lo invisible**



**masculino : positivo : arriba : ascendente : exterior : blanco : luz : sol : día :  
derecha : contemporaneidad : lo tangible**

Este principio, por ejemplo, permite que para la gente de la Sierra exista una relación de continuidad entre entidades de escalas muy diferentes. Una de estas relaciones que más enfatiza la gente serrana crea una correspondencia entre el cosmos y el calabazo que usan los hombres para llevar la harina de las conchas de caracol, usada para consumir las hojas de coca (*jo'buru*). Esta relación encadena otros elementos de la siguiente forma:

**cosmos : Sierra Nevada : montaña : casa ceremonial : cuerpo : telar/tejido : jo'buru.**

<sup>17</sup> Esta relación “negativo : positivo” no debe leerse como categoría moral de valor. Recordemos que son categorías que los indígenas usan para traducir sus propias categorías. Como sugerí en otro lugar (Arenas Gómez, 2016), entiendo que lo negativo hace referencia más a un elemento que es potencialmente riesgoso, por estar más vinculado con el tiempo del origen y con la encarnación de la fertilidad que, como máxima fuerza creadora, puede también ser destructora.

En el mismo esquema de correspondencias, se argumenta que la tierra es la Madre, ser supremo, creadora de todo lo que existe, siendo la expresión máxima de la dualidad constitutiva del mundo. De hecho, algunos grupos iluminan más el lado femenino de la Madre en sus narrativas míticas, como en el caso de la gente *kogui* y *wiwa*, mientras que otros parecen enfatizar más su fase masculina, como en el caso de la gente *i'ku*. Sin embargo, no puedo dejar de resaltar una idea fundamental para la gente serrana: el hecho de que las características tangibles y abstractas del territorio no puedan ser desligadas. Recordemos que el mundo está conformado por dos esferas, una visible o tangible, y otra invisible o abstracta, que está relacionada con el tiempo-espacio del origen. Si volvemos al primer esquema presentado, veremos que estas esferas están contempladas dentro de la cadena de relación como una de las formas de la dualidad constitutiva del mundo serrano. Esta dualidad es complementaria y no es disyuntiva, por lo menos en el caso serrano; debo subrayar entonces que es la continuidad y la mutua constitución lo que relaciona ambas esferas. Por este motivo, no podemos pensar a la Madre como un ser abstracto, o de carácter esotérico, sino como un ser inmanente a todo lo que existe, pudiendo ser tan concreto al potencialmente tomar la forma de una montaña, por ejemplo.

Cuando la gente serrana señala que la Sierra es su territorio, no están limitando su definición a la concreción de lo tangible, descrito por la palabra *ka*; en alto grado, están activando conceptos abstractos como el de dar soporte y alimento, de forma que, en ese nivel, la Sierra es *ka'gamu*, expresado en la frase reiterada "*Ka'gamu niwi Zaku ni*", literalmente, la tierra es nuestra madre. Empero, entiendo que hace falta otro desdoblamiento para entender la idea de territorio defendida por los indígenas serranos. Recuerdo un día en que una de mis amigas, interlocutoras e intérpretes *i'ku*, me inquirió tras reunirnos con un *mamu* importante, por mi insistencia al preguntarle qué era el territorio. "...no entiendo por qué preguntas tanto sobre lo mismo si el *mamu* ya te respondió, el territorio es todo, lo abarca todo... ahí está la respuesta".

¿Cómo entender entonces ese "todo"? Quiero hacer uso de otra categoría *i'ku* para procurar ilustrar cómo entiendo ese todo, ese desdoblamiento que me permite pensar el territorio serrano. Este otro concepto es *umunukunu*, una palabra compuesta, a grandes rasgos, por dos partes *umunu* y *kunu*. *Umunu* hace referencia a un plano o superficie proyectado en el plano horizontal, generalmente descrito como un plato de forma circular que sirve de base o soporte. Mientras que *kunu* es un elemento generalmente proyectado en el plano vertical, que no sólo tiene a *umunu* como base, sino que la atraviesa. *Umunu* es frecuentemente relacionado con lo femenino, con la tierra en su sentido concreto (*ka*) que, como vimos anteriormente, puede tener el sentido de soporte. Por su parte, *kunu* está relacionado con los árboles (*kun*), ramas, bastones y palos, elementos que son considerados masculinos y que sirven como ejes. *Umunukunu* conforma entonces la unión de un plano horizontal (femenino) y de un eje vertical (masculino); la pervivencia de los dos opuestos complementarios constitutivos de la vida. *Umunukunu* toma entonces la forma de un huso de hilar (*kurkunu*), aquel artefacto mediante el cual el ser original comenzó la creación, y que es de uso exclusivamente femenino, pues ellas, al girarlo para hilar la lana, el algodón o el maguey, hacen girar el mundo garantizando así su continuidad. Es frecuente que la gente serrana describa el universo como la superposición de las diferentes capas o niveles, donde viven los diferentes seres no visibles, en cuyo plano central generalmente se encuentra nuestro plano de existencia, el mundo visible (Tayler, 1973; 1997; Zapata, 2010; Arenas Gómez, 2016:110-145;). En dicha descripción, entiendo que nuestro plano de existencia correspondería parcialmente a la idea de *umunu*, de forma que *kunu* se erigiría como el eje vertical que atraviesa todos los planos de existencia del universo, permitiendo así su comunicabilidad.

*Kagamu* e *umunukunu* especifican dos aspectos de una totalidad compleja. De cierta manera manifiestan los aspectos complementarios de toda existencia: el aspecto tangible-visible y el aspecto invisible. A su manera, la gente serrana traza esta relación en términos de tierra y territorio, cuyas definiciones no están necesariamente vinculadas con la acertada explicación de Dominique Gallois que mencioné anteriormente. Si tierra y territorio están en continuidad para los serranos, es porque su forma de pensar la tierra, como manifestación concreta

de principios cosmológicos, históricos y prácticos, no la limita a un proceso jurídico-político ni a un paño de fondo sobre el cual se construye el territorio como forma abstracta. Para los serranos esta división, si es que se puede llamar así, es de otra orden. Ella da cuenta de formas complejas de pensar y hacer, de relacionarse con los seres no humanos y con el conocimiento. Entiendo que estas formas complejas pueden ser pensadas a partir de la idea de las T/tierras (cf. Coelho de Souza, 2017; Molina, 2017; Soares-Pinto, 2017), un recordatorio de la polisemia que evoca dicha categoría, procurando así abrigar tanto los sentidos contenidos como aquellos que le transbordan (Fonseca Lubel & Soares-Pinto, 2017).

Volvamos ahora a la definición que los cuatro grupos serranos dan de Línea Negra en el decreto 1500 de 2018. En la definición, la gente serrana es clara al señalar que la Línea Negra es la base del territorio ancestral, brindándonos además algunos conceptos clave en cada una de sus lenguas. En el caso *i'ku*, el nombre dado es “*seykutukunumaku*”. Podemos dividir la palabra en cuatro partes así: *sey*, *kutu* (*kutu*), *kunu* (*kunu*) y *maku*. ¡Sorpresa, *kunu* aparece de nuevo! En el contexto del decreto, *Sey* es definido como el mundo espiritual que, en suma, hace referencia a la esfera de lo invisible, de lo no tangible y del tiempo-espacio del origen del mundo. *Kutu* designa los pies como partes del cuerpo humano, la base del mismo. *Kunu*, como ya hemos visto, está relacionado con el plano vertical y la conexión entre los diferentes mundos. Ya *maku* puede ser traducido como mayor o importante.

No es difícil ver que *Umunukunu* y *Seykutukunumaku* son dos alusiones a un mismo principio: la conexión con la esfera del origen. Una traducción rápida de *Seykutukunumaku* podría ser la “conexión más importante entre la base y el mundo original”, algo muy diferente a la noción geométrica de línea que sirve de base para las instituciones de gobierno. La Sierra como punto original de la creación del universo encarna no sólo el paso de un mundo invisible a uno tangible, sino que también estipula y exige la conexión entre ambas esferas.

La Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta es para la gente serrana el Corazón del Mundo, es el lugar primordial por excelencia; pero como hemos visto hasta ahora, está constituida por una inmensidad de otros lugares primordiales cuya red de interconexión teje la superficie sensible y abstracta de la Sierra en cuanto tierra y en cuanto territorio: son apenas dos fases de una misma cosa. Debido a las cadenas de transformaciones metonímicas, cada uno de los lugares primordiales replican, en diferentes escalas, el esquema del huso de hilar, siendo cada uno en sí mismo ejes que permiten la comunicabilidad entre los diferentes planos de existencia. Más allá de cualquier relación cartesiana, es la unión de los dos planos lo que realmente es importante aquí, así como el hecho de que *kunu* atraviese y vincule todos los planos o mundos. Esta concepción de mundo va mucho más allá de los dos ejes, expandiéndose no sólo en las tres dimensiones sino también en el tiempo y en el espacio.

Reflexiones recientes de Tim Ingold nos permiten pensar la idea de Línea Negra con un poco más de cuidado. Como el autor señala, los mundos están compuestos de líneas, las cuales conectan, crean, delimitan y, más importante aún, relacionan (Ingold, 2007). En su clasificación sobre los tipos de líneas que podemos encontrar en el universo, Ingold llama la atención sobre el hecho de que las líneas no están limitadas a contrapartidas físicas-tangibles, pues éstas también están constituidas por movimientos, viajes, conexiones abstractas, historias, etc. En otras palabras, experiencias que no se limitan a la acción humana de nuestra especie, sino que incluyen también las agencias de lo que ahora llamamos “no humanos”. La Línea Negra puede fácilmente encajarse en esta definición, una línea invisible<sup>18</sup> pero no imaginaria. De hecho, el autor es claro al señalar que procurar diferenciar entre estas líneas invisibles y las visibles sería algo engañoso pues, en muchas ocasiones, aquellas líneas que consideramos “reales” no siempre pueden ser determinadas sin equívoco (Ingold, 2007:50).

<sup>18</sup> Una traducción libre de la categoría “Gostly Lines”.

Volvamos entonces a la relación entre la Línea Negra y los lugares primordiales. Como he mencionado hasta aquí, la Sierra contiene muchísimos de estos lugares a lo largo de toda su extensión, desde los puntos sumergidos en el mar Caribe hasta aquellos presentes en las nieves perpetuas del glaciar. Mostré también que todos estos puntos están relacionados e interconectados en diferentes grados, creando así una vasta extensión de líneas que, a modo de mapa, pueden ser leídos parcialmente por los diferentes especialistas rituales. De hecho, debo anotar que uno de los principios de complementariedad propios de la relación entre los diferentes *mamu* (Arenas Gómez, 2016) radica en el hecho de que cada uno conoce una pequeña parte de ese vasto mapa. La totalidad del mismo es aprehendida entonces mediante la conjunción de los diferentes conocimientos.

De esa forma, la conexión entre los lugares primordiales que se encuentran en la base de la Sierra es una de las tantas líneas que conectan los diferentes puntos. Líneas que, siguiendo nuevamente a Ingold, no son trazos (*traces*) sino filamentos (*threads*), los cuales pueden estar enmarañados con otros tantos o colgados de diferentes puntos. Estas líneas no son secundarias o posteriores a una base física que les sirva de superficie para poder ser trazadas (Ingold, 2007:41); para el pensamiento serrano, estas madejas fueron constituidas por las acciones, movimientos, experiencias e historias de los seres invisibles para, posteriormente, darle existencia a la esfera visible-tangible del mundo.

¿Cuál sería entonces la idea de límite implicada en la Línea Negra? Reitero que no puede reducirse a “la unión simbólica” de los lugares primordiales que se encuentran en la base de la Sierra. Los lugares primordiales están organizados en niveles jerárquicos y, entre ellos, los picos nevados o *Chundwa* configuran el lugar más poderoso. En su fase abstracta e invisible, *Chundwa* es también la morada de los muertos, el punto de regreso a la esfera de lo invisible de aquellos quienes dejan el mundo tangible. Al ser ese también el punto donde el huso de hilar fue clavado para crear el mundo, es el lugar primordial más importante y poderoso de todos, aquel donde la historia comienza y, de cierta forma, termina, para luego continuar siguiendo un camino en espiral que tiende a volver al mismo lugar, pero en un punto diferente. El poder de este lugar se va diluyendo a través de la vasta red de lugares primordiales, hasta llegar al punto máximo de su alcance. Así las cosas, en cuanto límite, la Línea Negra es hasta donde llega la fuerza creadora de *Chundwa*.

Sería poco procedente separar entre los lugares primordiales y las conexiones que les relacionan, o en otras palabras, diferenciar entre puntos y líneas (cf. Ingold, 2007). Como ha sido descrito en diversas ocasiones, los lugares sagrados son compendios que materializan relaciones entre sujetos y personas, entre humanos y no humanos (Andrello, 2012; Cayón, 2013; Cayón & Chacón, 2014; Coelho de Souza, 2017; 2018; Hugh-Jones S., 2012). De forma análoga a lo propuesto por Ingold (2007:89) ellos denotan un momento de estabilización, que no es lo mismo que una cualidad estática. Estos espacios pueden ser pensados entonces como las estabilizaciones o singularizaciones de aquellos movimientos o líneas que les conectan, del flujo de relaciones que les constituyen. Si en el título de este trabajo dejé la impresión de que partir de las líneas y llegar a lugares hace parte de una sucesión lógica, debo aclarar que mi intención no era esa. Lo que quería evidenciar es el hecho de que hablar de la Línea Negra implica, necesariamente, iluminar los espacios que materializan las relaciones complejas entre humanos y no humanos.

El poder de la Sierra Nevada como corazón del mundo está en la relación y movimiento de las vitalidades de todos y cada uno de los lugares primordiales, no sólo de uno de ellos. Continuando con la figura que nos brinda *umunukunu*, podemos ver que, en una de sus formas, este límite puede ser entendido como *umunu*, pero siempre y cuando se entienda su relación con *kunu*, esto es, su relación con los demás lugares primordiales que conforman la Sierra –y por medio de ellos, con el tiempo y el espacio del origen, y de lo no visible–. La Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta es entonces un lugar primordial magnificado, que se reproduce a sí mismo, a diferentes escalas, en cada uno de los lugares primordiales. Siendo así, la Sierra es mucho más que el conjunto de lugares primordiales que en ella se encuentran; pero sin ellos, su existencia como territorio no es posible.

El territorio serrano es definido por la presencia de planos no visibles que están vinculados con seres de agencia humana, con conocimientos y atributos, con las narrativas sobre el origen de los tiempos y, de forma fundamental, con los lugares en donde están inscritos los saberes y donde los *mamu* pueden interactuar con las madres y los padres del mundo, actualizando constantemente las relaciones con éstos y con los lugares. Entiendo entonces que el territorio lo es todo, pues delimita el espacio tangible e intangible en el cual la sociabilidad indígena serrana puede continuar.

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# (Extra)ordinary *help*: untold stories on disaster and generosity in Grand'Anse, Haiti

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## Abstract

The article situates the theme of *help* and generosity by examining responses of communities in Grand'Anse province to the 2010 disaster in Haiti. This emblematic case reveals how oft-unmentioned familial and community mechanisms that go beyond the reach of state and international institutions were essential to the survival of Haitians, and constituted a highly effective emergency response, despite the scarcity of resources and despair caused by the destruction. Drawing on the literature on humanitarian aid and development, through a processual approach, I suggest that the ways in which Haitian society dealt with the aftermath question the notions of *disaster* and *help*, offering unique guidance about how the problems and challenges presented by critical events might be addressed more effectively.

**Key words:** Disaster; Haiti; generosity; improvisation.

# O (extra)ordinário da ajuda: Histórias não contadas sobre desastre e generosidade na Grand'Anse, Haiti

## Resumo

O artigo descreve o tema da ajuda e da generosidade, examinando a resposta comunitária ao desastre de 2010 na Grand'Anse, Haiti. Este caso emblemático revela como os mecanismos familiares e comunitários que vão além do alcance das instituições estatais e internacionais foram essenciais para a sobrevivência dos haitianos e constituíram uma resposta a emergência altamente eficaz, apesar da escassez de recursos e do desespero causados pela destruição. Com base na literatura sobre ajuda humanitária e desenvolvimento e por meio de uma abordagem processual, sugiro que as maneiras pelas quais a sociedade haitiana lidou com as consequências colocam em questão as noções de desastre e ajuda, oferecendo orientação única sobre como os problemas e desafios apresentados por eventos críticos podem ser tratados com mais eficácia.

**Palavras-chave:** desastre; Haiti; generosidade; improviso.

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## Introduction

After a few months of gathering information about what happened in Grand’Anse, Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, I was convinced of the potency and importance of stories I had heard daily from an eclectic group of informants<sup>1</sup>. The fundamental role played by people in the country’s outlying provinces in the rescue of victims and their survival was unquestionable. I was impressed with the *extraordinary help*<sup>2</sup> found by these survivors in those places where people and entities quickly and efficiently offered them shelter and relief. However, these stories—part of a larger and poorly visible social process—remained almost inaudible compared to reports of the heroic efforts of professional aid workers and the dramatic suffering of disaster victims.

Much of the existing research on Haiti has focused on the profound difficulties and social constraints of the society.<sup>3</sup> Since the earthquake, the media continued this trend with biased coverage of existing contemporary social relations and institutions.<sup>4</sup> Little is known about what happened in provincial towns in the days and months after the earthquake, which were distant from and not the focus of actions of the “international community,” major NGOs, and the Haitian state.

Some anthropological work on the aid industry, focused mainly on aspects of economic logic and power relations, has offered severe critiques of the international aid system (Schuller and Morales 2012, Schuller 2012, Farmer 2011). These critiques often emphasize the complexity of humanitarian endeavors and document the topography of power relations. Despite their obvious importance, these analyses tend to obscure the role and perspective of local actors by focusing on foreign agents.

By specifically examining a community-based response (comprising an assemblage of political and religious authorities, local civil society associations, and individual actors), this study demonstrates how these overlooked communities and local actors played a crucial role in disaster management, and became a refuge for thousands of survivors. Through narratives about the disaster from those who lived through it, and by exploring the dynamics and problems involved in a context of disaster and crisis from a different perspective, this article aims to contribute to the broader anthropological literature on humanitarian aid and disaster response.

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1 The study on which this article is based was conducted between 2012 and 2015. The ethnographic data were taken from my Master’s Dissertation “O (*extra*) ordinário da ajuda: Histórias não contadas sobre desastre e generosidade na Grand’Anse, Haiti” (Bersani 2015). The research was financially supported by FAPESP. I would like to thank Omar Ribeiro Thomaz for the generosity and the guidance provided during this work. A first draft of this paper was presented at the Latin American Studies Association in May 2015 as part of the panel *Eating Together: Food, Materiality, and Sociability in Rural Caribbean*. I would like to thank Erica Caple James, Jean-Philippe Belleau, Bette Gebrian, Rodrigo Bulamah and Karen Richman for their critical readings and valuable contributions. I would also like to thank the two anonymous reviewers from Vibrant for their helpful remarks and Jeffrey Hoff for the english review.

2 When referring to “help” in italics, I am pointing to the variety of meanings the term can imply, as it is used to talk about mutual assistance, cooperation, and reciprocal sharing. As an interactive phenomenon and an analytical category, I am also differentiating this practice from that which is carried out by the international aid system.

3 See Trouillot (1990) for a critique of the notion of Haiti’s “exceptionalism” and its consequences.

4 According to Schuller and Morales (2012: 2), “throughout the earthquake affected region, the first emergency response came from people themselves... Unfortunately, this wasn’t the story that broadcast into people’s living rooms across the world. CNN reported the earthquake nonstop for more than a week, capturing the most horrific scenes. It was presented as hell on earth.”

I suggest that crises disrupt ordinary everyday life, and are thus important “time markers,” but are paradoxically embedded in a temporal structure of daily experience. The relationship between *crisis* and *improvisation* reveals the complexity of social life in which change, crises, ruptures, and instability combine with notions of permanence, integration, and balance.<sup>5</sup>

It is important to draw on the concept of “disaster”, within the context of longstanding social processes related to repetitive crises, to understand how Haitian society, despite the scarcity of resources and despair caused by the destruction, dealt with the aftermath of the earthquake. More specifically, the use of a processual approach questions the notion of “help” and aids understanding how people actively involved both in giving and receiving it conceived their own experiences around this concept.

This study investigates collective strategies and modes of *help* based on a moral economy that mobilized a large variety of organizational structures. More broadly, it explores how this approach contrasts with both the utilitarian and altruistic frameworks. Furthermore, focusing on the perspective of the Haitians themselves about mutual assistance, solidarity, cooperation, and the different ways the concept of “help” (or *èd* in Haitian Creole) is shaped by their experiences, I examine how in this context, the actions taken to help others may, in fact, not have even been perceived as *extraordinary* acts.

## The event

Life seems back to normal after decades of turbulence. Young laughing girls hang out in the streets late at night. Crime has stepped back... It is so quiet that some are already worried. We are not used to such a long lull in Port-au-Prince. For this young man with his face half hidden by a straw hat, an imminent danger lurks. One wonders what it might be, since we have already seen it all: the hereditary dictatorships, military coups, recurrent hurricanes and blindfold kidnappings (Laferrière, Dany. *Déjà La Vie*, “Tout bouge autour de moi”. 2010:16).<sup>6</sup>

On January 12, 2010 a dramatic and inexorable event struck the most populated region of Haiti. Port-au-Prince, Pétionville, Léogâne, Petit Goâve, Grand-Goâve, and Jacmel were among the cities most devastated by the unexpected and violent earthquake. Aftershocks continued to shake the country’s southwest for days. Within seconds, communication and transportation systems ceased working and electrical grids were severely damaged. Homes, hospitals, schools, and countless other buildings collapsed. According to official estimates some 230,000 people died, over 300,000 were injured, 1.3 million displaced, and 1.5 million left homeless. The cemeteries were quickly overcrowded, and within a few days 80,000 bodies had been buried in mass graves. Thousands more were burned or buried by relatives on their own private land.<sup>7</sup>

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5 Several authors have addressed the issue of temporality in relation to critical events. This subject will be dealt with more deeply later in this work. As references see, for example, Das (1995), Bessin, Bidard and Grossetti (2010) and Bensa and Fassin (2002). More specifically on the notion of crisis in Haiti, see Greg Beckett (2019).

6 Author’s translation from the original text in French: “La vie semble reprendre son cours normal après des décennies de turbulence. Des jeunes filles rieuses se promènent dans les rues, tard le soir. Le banditisme aurait reculé d’un pas... C’est si calme que certains s’inquiètent déjà. On n’a pas l’habitude d’une si longue accalmie à Port-au-Prince. Pour ce jeune homme au visage à moitié caché par un chapeau de paille, un danger imminent nous guette. On se demande ce que cela peut être, puisqu’on a déjà tout connu : les dictatures héréditaires, les coups d’État militaires, les cyclones à répétition et les kidnappings à l’aveuglette.” (Laferrière 2010: 16)

7 All data regarding the number of victims are government estimates released shortly after the earthquake without any effort to identify bodies buried in mass graves.

Within Port-au-Prince – the political, institutional and economic center of the country – the losses were incalculable. Thousands of buildings were destroyed or seriously damaged, including some of the most important cultural and governmental buildings in the capital. The presidential palace, parliament building, ministries, the *Notre-Dame de Port-au-Prince*, the Holy Trinity church, the main prison, and all of the city’s hospitals were devastated. Universities and schools had to cease all of their activities during the aftermath and recovery. It is estimated that 10% of the city’s population died.<sup>8</sup>

Photos of the disaster spread quickly over the Internet and on news media. International coverage of the tragedy was non-stop, and numerous countries pledged support in the form of funds, equipment, food, medicine, rescue operations, medical teams, and engineers. Major international institutions staged a real “humanitarian show.” As Mark Schuller noted, “Haiti’s earthquake thrust the international aid system, particularly NGOs, into the public spotlight” (2012: 6). Despite the media focus on the international response, international aid was often ineffective in reaching the most afflicted (Schuller 2012, Podur 2012, Thomaz 2010, 2011). As Beverly Bell affirmed, “in Haiti, the disaster aid was an aid disaster” (2013: 77).

Medicine, food, blankets, and water arrived at the airport, but remained there rather than being distributed to Haitians in need.<sup>9</sup> Aid workers trained in emergency response were sent to the scene but could not work because of alleged violence in the streets. Instead, they stayed at the airport awaiting implementation of a plan that would guarantee their security. As portrayed in Raoul Peck’s documentary, *Assistance Mortelle* (2013), the primary cause of the ineffectiveness of the humanitarian intervention was the distance between the international organizations and Haitian civil society. Due to the superficiality of this relationship, already existing efficient distribution channels were not utilized.<sup>10</sup>

Exposure of these problems sparked a discourse critical of the humanitarian response not only among aid workers and journalists (Katz 2013), but also among anthropologists who entered the debate. Due to the huge aid apparatus that became engaged in the days following the quake, particularly in Port-au-Prince, it was hard to ignore the abuses, inequalities, failures, and injustices committed in the name of aid and assistance. A range of critical analyses has appeared focusing on the aid system and its political partiality. In an effort to reveal “how power operates, and the roles our development aid and agencies administering that aid play in transforming local civic life” (Schuller 2012: 8), analyses focused on the international apparatus. Haitians were consistently viewed only as victims either of the earthquake, or of the well-intentioned organizations. Analysis of the role of foreign agents (governments, companies, and others) is clearly important but has tended to obscure the important role of local actors. I argue that national agents played a central role in the emergency response, and were not just victims.

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8 It is estimated that the Port au Prince region had a population of 2 to 3 million people at the time of the 2010 disaster. However, as noted before, since the last population census was taken in Haiti in 2003, the demographics are not accurate.

9 According to Justin Podur, “the U.S. military took over the Port-au-Prince airport on January 13 and immediately gave priority to its own military flights, turning away World Food Program flights, medical supplies from Doctors Without Borders, including an inflatable surgical hospital on January 16” (2012: 139). The BBC correspondent in Port au Prince, Mathew Price, also reported that there was “little sign that humanitarian aid was leaving the airport in the Haitian capital.” [http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2010/01/100114\\_haiti\\_ajuda\\_vale\\_np.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2010/01/100114_haiti_ajuda_vale_np.shtml), accessed on June 23rd, 2011.

10 Thomaz (2010, 2011) observed that the basis for this superficiality was a relationship between international aid workers and Haitians marked by ignorance and fear. He argued that foreigners often have minimal contact with the population and local culture, mostly depending on brokers of one form or another. They can rarely speak or understand Creole, the only language spoken and understood effectively by all Haitians. Ignorance and fear form the basis of a relationship that keeps Haitians apart from the decision-making process regulated by the international organizations. There was no interest in establishing more effective communication with the population. The only interest they had was to give orders or directions that would lead the locals to “development.” This divide was easily observed by the widespread feeling of contempt that Haitians demonstrated towards the MINUSTAH (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti) soldiers in the country between 2004 and 2017, for example. Demonstrations calling for MINUSTAH’s departure were widely supported during my stay in 2013.

Given the inadequacy of the “aid industry” (Escobar 1996), and despite the scarcity of resources and the despair caused by the destruction, Haitians organized themselves to distribute food and water, and any money left in their pockets without hesitation. Amidst natural chaos and institutional breakdown, there was still a place for *help* since the lack of state leadership did not prevent the organization of the population (Bell 2013). Through so-called traditional institutions and informal markets, these civilian sectors were the only entities capable of responding to the disaster with the necessary immediacy.<sup>11</sup>

The media often reported on the lack of security and control, focusing on the disorder, fear, and looting. The tragic experience of those days was summarized in reports that spoke only of violence, as the world watched scenes of widespread chaos in astonishment. News reports blamed the fragile Haitian state apparatus for the obstacles to mobilizing an adequate aid response.<sup>12</sup> Some even affirmed that the country’s culture and the widespread practice of *Vodou* had a role in causing the tragedy.<sup>13</sup>

In the days following the quake, thousands of people—usually wealthier individuals with passports and visas—managed to leave the country to stay with relatives or friends in the Dominican Republic, the United States, Canada, or France. Some 600,000 others also left the capital region for provincial cities, seeking asylum at relatives’ or friends’ homes. Those individuals in the provinces—who once depended on remittances from family members working in the capital—offered great *help* to survivors despite their own struggles and difficult living situations.

## The Response

After the earthquake struck, some 500,000 people left Port-au-Prince to seek refuge in the provincial cities. They departed for the peasant areas with empty hands, without any money or state or NGO aid. The peasants welcomed all these people, gave them places to sleep, food, and all kinds of aid... There has been no evaluation of the amount of money, sacrifice, and infinite solidarity that the peasants paid out. (Chenet 2012: 99)

Amidst the ongoing aftershocks in the days following the earthquake, survivors traveled throughout the country in search of assistance. The Grand’Anse department received the second highest number of refugees (see Figure 1).

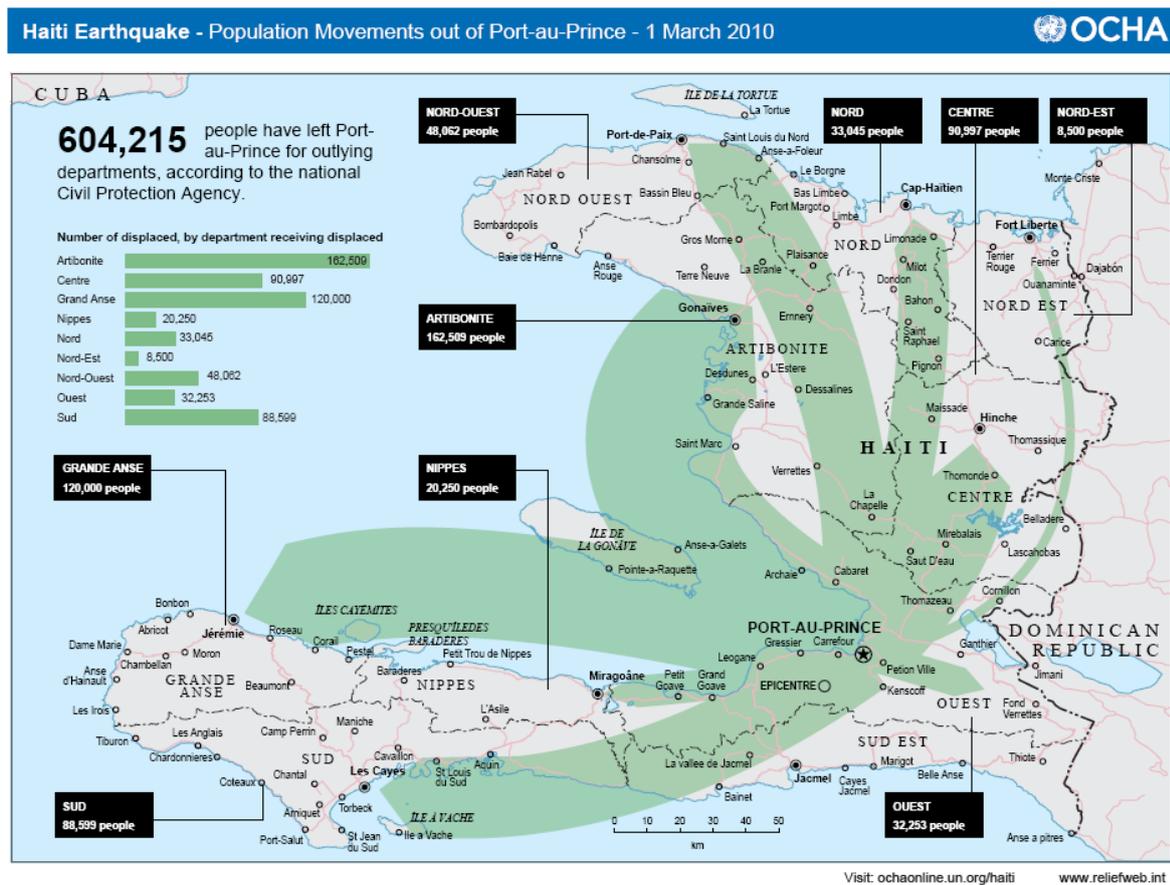
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<sup>11</sup> It is important to highlight that the term informal should not only be understood as a category defined in opposition to the formal state sphere. Considering the complexity of informal activities and their relations with other social spheres—which have their own set of rules and norms—informality should not be associated with the idea of an unruly and illegal space.

<sup>12</sup> Throughout the country’s history, the Haitian state has largely failed, if we consider the idea of modern state. However, the state’s limited capacity to provide basic social services related to social welfare does not indicate a complete absence of the state’s presence.

<sup>13</sup> In her essay “From Slave Revolt to a Blood Pact with Satan: The Evangelical Rewriting of Haitian History,” Elizabeth McAlister discussed the implicit questions raised when on the day immediately after the earthquake, television evangelist Pat Robertson, while hosting his new talk show *The 700 Club*, on the Christian Broadcast Network, said that the earthquake could be best understood by a little-known event that “people might not want to talk about,” Haitians were cursed, he said, because they long ago “swore a pact to the devil” (2012: 203). Another more polite version of this argument can be found in David Brooks’ article “The Underlying Tragedy” published January 14, 2010 in the *New York Times*. He accuses Haiti of having “progress-resistant cultural influences,” including “the influence of the voodoo religion.” In both examples, to some extent Haitians themselves are blamed for having caused the tragedy.

**Figure 1:** Population Movements out of Port-au-Prince (Source: OCHA – 1 March 2010).



In the town of Jérémie, the provincial capital, the response began a few hours after the first news of the earthquake. Tremors were felt in all 12 *communes* but caused little overt physical damage. Some public buildings had cracks, including the Saint-Louis church in downtown Jérémie, the Jehovah’s Witnesses church and the Catholic Church of Corail. According to information collected by local authorities and reported by the Department of Risk Management and Disaster Coordination in Grand’Anse (DGCA/GRD), the earthquake caused 9 deaths and left 15 injured in Grand’Anse.

Despite the limited initial physical impact in the region, most everyone in Grand’Anse was affected in some way. In contrast to the bureaucratic categorization that only considered the region of Port-au-Prince to be affected, residents of Grand’Anse can also be considered direct or indirect victims of the tragedy. Most families had at least one member living, studying, or working in Port-au-Prince at the time of the earthquake. Even among those few who did not have close family members in Port-au-Prince, there was still much concern about friends living there. The stress in the immediate aftermath was aggravated by the lack of communication, given that facilities and antennas of telephone companies were damaged. The few people who did receive calls would communicate news to others as soon as possible through local radio stations, which played a crucial role in communication and community mobilization.

Debris and large stones blocked the road between Port-au-Prince and Grand’Anse, preventing the passage of cars, especially in Léogane and Petit-Goâve. Mass transportation and private cars could not pass. Boat service was suspended indefinitely. Rumors spread about the risk of a tsunami, adding to the fear of an already shaken public. Public institutions were completely paralyzed because of the destruction of state buildings in the capital and a lack of communication between the different levels of government.

Despite the barriers and lack of resources, civilians in Jérémie organized, devised, and executed strategies to rescue survivors in Port-au-Prince and offer them asylum in Grand'Anse. The former president of the Civil Society Association of Grand'Anse (Société Civile Organisée de la Grand'Anse - SOCOGA), François Cheyner Dépeine, along with other members of the association, called a meeting with a variety of individuals and institutions from several sectors of society. This meeting was held on January 17, 2010 at the city's Catholic diocesan offices, with the participation of local NGOs and civil society organizations, including CARE, CARITAS, the Haitian Health Foundation, Médecins du Monde; priests and other religious leaders; deans of colleges and technical and professional schools; as well as heads of public offices such as the Department of Public Safety and the Ministry of Women's Protection. Together, they created a *Comité d'Urgence* (an emergency committee) to join forces and face the challenges.

The first task of the *Comité* was to convince the owner of the *Trois Rivières* boat to make trips to rescue survivors in Port-au-Prince. It was agreed that the passengers would not be charged for transport. Several fundraisers were organized to purchase the required fuel. These *marathons* were run by local radio DJs who asked people for donations of food, clothing, and money. The *Trois Rivières* completed its first trip after the earthquake on January 25, arriving in Jérémie at 3:30pm with 3,200 people on board. Many other trips were made in the following days, and it is estimated that by January 27, over 80,750 people safely arrived to the Grand'Anse and were registered by the committee and municipal authorities.<sup>14</sup>

Upon reaching the wharf in Jérémie, earthquake survivors were greeted by employees of various organizations, citizen volunteers, and members of the *Comité d'Urgence*. After an initial screening, injured people were identified and those in need of immediate help were directly referred to the *Hospital Saint Antoine*. Pregnant women were sent to the *Hospital Centre L'espoir* (the Haitian Health Foundation's maternity clinic). Many people arrived with serious injuries that had not been treated in Port-au-Prince. The role of youth, especially nursing students because of their expertise, was crucial at this moment and should be highlighted. Food, clothes and water were distributed immediately. Trucks and buses were made available by their owners to bring the newcomers as close as possible to their destination communities.

The migration from Port-au-Prince to Grand'Anse lasted several months. Those who didn't have the chance to make the crossing aboard the *Trois Rivières* went by foot, truck, or small sailboat, and many people used a combination of these modes of transportation. They often made their way to their hometowns without being able to communicate ahead, sometimes showing up unannounced in the middle of the night. Relatives, friends, or volunteers shared their modest homes to accommodate them. Remarkably, it was not necessary to erect tent cities or create refugee camps. When survivors arrived, locals greeted them with astonishing generosity, provided them food, and took responsibility for their needs.

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<sup>14</sup> According to the official report sent by the Emergency Committee on January 28th, 2010.

## The Refuge

**Figure 2:** Political and Administrative Map of Haiti (Source: Nations Online Project, accessed in 2013)



The department of Grand’Anse, which means Great Bay in English, occupies the northern part of Haiti’s southern peninsula (see Figure 2), and was only officially established in 1962, when it was separated from the Sud department.<sup>15</sup> In 2003, the new department of Nippes was formed out of a portion of Grand’Anse. Grand’Anse now has 12 municipalities (*communes*),<sup>16</sup> in three *arrondissements*: Anse d’Hainault, Corail, and Jérémie. With a population of approximately 446,000 inhabitants,<sup>17</sup> this mountainous region contains some of the country’s last remaining heavily forested areas.

When, in early February 2013, I left Port-au-Prince for Jérémie, these were some of the few things I knew about the place where I would spend the next four months, the largest city and capital of Grand’Anse, with about 35,000 inhabitants.<sup>18</sup> I took a bus that was supposed to depart at 8am accompanied by a Haitian friend who insisted that I should not travel alone. He was going to Jérémie to visit his family, including his sick father, who died shortly after our arrival. After two hours of waiting and several unexpected mishaps we began a long and arduous

<sup>15</sup> The area was first named by the French in 1673 in reference to the large opening offered by the bay (Dorimain 1978: 10).

<sup>16</sup> The 12 municipalities (*communes*), including 9 on the coast, in the department of Grand’Anse are: Jérémie, Abricots, Bonbon, Chambellan and Moron (district of Jérémie); Corail, Beaumont, Pestel and Roseaux (district of Corail); Anse-d’Hainault, Dame-Marie and Les Irois (district of Anse-d’Hainault). According to the administrative organization of the country, the municipalities are further divided internally by rural sections (*sections rurales*), which are composed of villages or neighborhoods. The smallest administrative unit is called an *abitasyon*, and roughly correspond to colonial holdings or topographical landmarks.

<sup>17</sup> “Since Haiti’s last census was in 2003, demographic data is not considered accurate. Quantitative analyses are based on inaccurate estimates and projections made in 2009 and 2012 by IHSI - *Institut Haïtien de Statistique et D’informatique*.

<sup>18</sup> March 2009, *Institut Haïtien de Statistique et D’informatique* – IHSI.

journey.<sup>19</sup> It took 12 hours to travel the 180 miles on the only road connecting Grand'Anse to the country's capital. Excited by the challenges of ethnographic fieldwork, I finally arrived at the location I had chosen to be my "field", a place that served as a refuge for more than 200,000 Haitians after the earthquake in 2010.<sup>20</sup>

The bus traveled down the road spewing white dust while dodging and narrowly avoiding obstacles, to which the driver and passengers reacted nonchalantly. As we rattled down the crooked road, which was paved only as far as Les Cayes (the capital of the South department), the landscape slowly changed. Rugged white cliffs gave way to splendid green vegetation that stretched endlessly before us as we climbed slowly through the mountains. We were now in Grand'Anse.

The bus proceeded along the edges of the cliffs, and the increasingly obvious risk contrasted with the calm of the river running through the valleys below. One of the four rivers that crisscross the peninsula<sup>21</sup> shares its name with the department itself. It is still used to transport products and goods from rural areas to the city on market days, on bamboo rafts called "piperettes". These rivers are also used for personal hygiene, irrigation, drinking water, and washing clothes and vehicles. Before reaching the sign that announced our arrival with the words "Welcome to Jérémie" in both French and Haitian Creole, it was necessary to cross three more steel and concrete bridges.<sup>22</sup>

One can also reach the Grand'Anse on an expensive daily flight from Port-au-Prince that takes only 50 minutes, or by a 12-hour boat trip that may take days depending on the weather and the condition of the boat. Travel between the "communes" (municipalities) and towns within the department is even more difficult. Many areas are almost impossible to access by car due to the lack of paved roads on the steep hillsides, as well as impassable rivers. Many people must travel by foot. It is evident that the forests and woodlands here have been preserved from the devastation that ravaged other parts of the country over the last two decades. Much of this preservation can be attributed to the lack of access that makes Grand'Anse one of the most geographically rugged and remote regions of Haiti.<sup>23</sup>

These geographic and topographic features suggest separateness and isolation but do not constitute insurmountable barriers to access and communication in a globally interconnected world. People routinely react creatively and dynamically when confronting these geographic barriers, to avoid stagnation. Anthropologists commonly observe social and economic processes that connect even the most isolated regions with a wider world. However, the peculiar spatial experience of Grand'Anse and Jérémie associate them to a neglect, remoteness, and distance that should be carefully reconsidered. To remain sensitive to the role of spaces and their effects on lived experience and people's worldview is not the same as adopting a deterministic approach that simplistically characterizes locally lived existence.

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19 The bus in which we should have made the trip had to be replaced because it was in an accident, but this justification did not convince some passengers who protested and refused to embark. According to these passengers, the first bus, in better condition, was being used to serve tourists who were going to the carnival in the city of Jacmel.

20 In March 2010, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - (OCHA) released a map illustrating this population shift to other departments in the country (see Figure 1). An estimated 162,000 migrants left for the Artibonite department, and 120,000 for Grand'Anse - around 20,000 of whom went to Jérémie. However, this illustration is based on estimates provided by the Haitian government, relying solely on officially reported data. Thus, it vastly underestimates the actual number of migrants since it does not include the many people who traveled by boats, buses, trucks, or who even walked.

21 <sup>19</sup>The Voldrogue, Grand'Anse, Guinaudée, and Roseaux rivers.

22 <sup>20</sup>The bridge that crosses the Grand'Anse River in Jérémie was built in the 1940s during the administration of President Dumarsais Estimé to replace an old metal drawbridge built by Doret that had been completely destroyed during a large flood in 1935 (Cavé 2010). Until 1987, when a development project funded by France for the construction of bridges began, rivers were crossed only on foot or by car, and were often impassible during the rainy season.

23 The ecological crisis of the past two decades in Haiti was largely caused by economic embargos that made vegetable charcoal the only energy source available to most Haitians. This led to a process of deforestation that has worsened, leaving more than 98 percent of the country deforested (Hunter 1996-97: 609) and negatively impacting the population's food security. Although Grand'Anse is one of the last areas to maintain substantial forest reserves, such as Macaya National Park, deforestation is increasing at an alarming rate, mostly to supply demand for charcoal. The Port of Jérémie (Waf Jérémie) ships thousands of bags of charcoal per week to Port-au-Prince and other regions of the country. Haiti's deforestation began during its colonization, which created a destructive plantation system that exhausted the soil through excessive sugarcane harvesting. Large areas of forests were overtaken by new settlements and exhausted by the export of valuable lumber to Europe. This destruction continued after Haiti's independence as a result of a wide variety of agricultural and industrial pursuits, and by the Haitian people's search for fuel. See Dubois (2012: 4, 20), Smith (2001: 70), Faber (1993) and Tarter (2015) for more details.

By emphasizing processes and practices of “place making”, Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson argue that “all associations of place, people, and culture are social and historical creations to be explained, not given natural facts” (1997: 4). To better understand the processes through which a specific space achieves a distinctive identity as a place, one must focus on how this perception of locality was discursively and historically constructed (Low 2009). From this perspective, the idea of isolation associated with the region and considered by this work is not taken as a given fact, but is instead considered a complex and contingent result of ongoing historical and political processes.

During the nineteenth century, international trade was very important in Jérémie. Ships carrying indigo, coffee, cocoa, sisal, and rum left the harbor, which was opened in 1807, for a variety of global markets.<sup>24</sup> During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Jérémie had consulates representing the governments of Brazil, Germany, France, the United States and the Dominican Republic (Gebrian 1993). The town had a very active social scene and was known as the city of poets, artists, and philosophers.<sup>25</sup> It was reputed for its intellectual residents who went not to Port-au-Prince, but to Paris for their studies. Jérémie came to be called the “Paris d’Haiti” (the Paris of Haiti), and its culture and architectural style were compared to that of the French capital according to the biographic writings of Rose Marie Perrier (1993: 51).

During the second half of the twentieth century however, the city’s distinction declined and its connections to the “rest of the world” weakened (Perrier 1993, Cavé 2010, Alcindor 2011). Direct trade with other countries was suspended in 1950 as steamboats replaced sailboats, and the city’s pier was unsuitable to accommodate these new vessels (Gebrian 1993). Soon after, then President François Duvalier banned foreign ships from docking in any Haitian port other than Port-au-Prince.

The resulting decline in trade intensified deterioration of Jérémie’s physical structures. The few factories were closed, and their owners abandoned the region. Another important event was the massacre of 27 *mulâtres*<sup>26</sup> from two families who were members of the economic and cultural elite of Jérémie, an act instigated by the Duvalier government in 1964.<sup>27</sup> The tragedy, known as the “*Vêpres jérémiennes*,” marked Haitian history and is often associated to the region’s decline, as many of the more educated residents subsequently left Jérémie for the United States and Europe (Gebrian 1993: 77).

Narratives about the region often alluded to a feeling of desolation, emptiness, and abandonment that characterized the provinces at the time, and have significantly informed Grand’Anse’s identity until today. In the first few days after my arrival in Haiti, while I was still in Port-au-Prince, Haitians consistently expressed surprise when I said I would be moving to Jérémie. They promptly revealed concern with my intent to conduct research in the region. Most thought it a strange choice precisely because of its remoteness. This widespread sentiment towards Grand’Anse became increasingly evident.

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24 <sup>24</sup>The region also has a special connection with Jamaica (about 160 miles away). The short distance by sea between the two coasts facilitated a British invasion in September 1793. British forces from Jamaica occupied parts of the western and southern provinces of Saint Domingue for five years. Remnants of old forts are still found in Marfranc, 30 minutes from Jérémie (Gebrian 1993: 76).

25 Included among the most famous were Alexandre Dumas and Émile Roumer.

26 *Mulâtre* is the term use for those born to one white and one black parent, or to two mulatto parents. Racial prejudices that privileged light-skinned Haitians, benefitted them with an extraordinary position of strength.

27 <sup>26</sup> Although the event is widely known due to the extreme brutality, it is rarely discussed and is usually treated as “taboo.” This silence leaves many questions, and it is difficult to find accurate information in written sources. During my research, references to the massacre were rare, and apart from Chassagne’s (1977) record, most of them are accompanied by an attempt to justify the crime by referring to the alleged discrimination practiced by the *mulâtres* against black people. This practice of removing *mulâtre* elites from power was promoted by the *noirisme*, especially during the 1930s and 40s. For more on *noirisme*, see Dash (1981), Hurbon (1993), Midy (1993), and Smith (2004, 2009).

On a political level, it is also well known that politicians in Port-au-Prince do not distribute resources equitably, so they rarely reach outlying areas of the country.<sup>28</sup> The anthropologist Jennie M. Smith, who also conducted fieldwork in, described the region as being “more neglected than most other departments in terms of infrastructure” (2001: 13). Public services for the population are almost nonexistent. Electricity, water and septic systems are privileges of an elite minority, state offices, headquarters of international organizations, or Christian missions. Local politicians often establish residence in the national capital, and return only sporadically to Grand’Anse to communicate with constituents.

Much of the resources and products that currently supply the city are transported from the mountainous areas in the interior of the department on the backs of mules, or on the heads of rural farmers (*peyizan*) who walk on unpaved roads that deteriorate each rainy season. Every Friday, after a week of anxious waiting and anticipation, a boat laden with products and passengers arrives from Port-au-Prince. Jérémie’s port (*Wàf*) becomes a large open-air market where people finally gain access to manufactured or imported goods. It is the only day of the week they can cook with cheese, for example, one of many scarce commodities in a city where there is no steady supply of electricity for refrigeration.

Interestingly, the tale of the founding of Jérémie provides a lucid metaphor that is helpful in illustrating the multiple dimensions of its “isolation.” It is said that in 1756, fishermen living just east of Jérémie (in a small settlement called *Vieux-Bourg*) moved west for protection from storms and hurricanes. They settled in an area that was already the home of a fisherman named Jérémi, and therefore named it *Trou Jérémie*, or in English, “Jérémie’s hole” (Dorimain 1978:13, Perrier 1993:47, Saint Mercy 1982 [1797]). Originally, the name of the city kept the word *trou* which means “hole” in both French and Haitian Creole. While “hole” refers to the idea of confinement, a lack of horizon, an empty space, solitude, and remoteness, it is also in a hole where one can hide from danger and find shelter, asylum, protection, and security.

The boundary between these two aspects of isolation is not always clear, and their arrangements are shaped by the experience of actors who deal with the multiple facets of this “isolation” on a daily basis. When I first arrived in Grand’Anse, I did not know that it was one of the most important sites for the practice of *marronage*<sup>29</sup> during the revolution that led to the country’s independence in 1804. Plymouth and Macaya, two famous leaders who organized the struggle against the colonialists in the West, took refuge in the high mountains of Grand’Anse (Dorimain 1978), which now bear their names.<sup>30</sup> There, the persecuted were able to evade danger. In 2010, thousands of earthquake survivors fled to these very same mountains, all in search of what we might call a safe place, or a refuge.

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28 During the US occupation (1915-1934), a development model was established that led to urbanization and concentration of resources in Port-au-Prince. Tax revenue was centralized in Port-au-Prince without being redistributed to the provinces. The consequences of this period are felt to this day and help understand the ever-increasing flow of people who migrated to the capital (Alcindor 2011).

29 <sup>18</sup>Marronage refers to an organized way to escape from slave labor and plantation life, which allowed groups of slaves to flee with the assistance of other fugitive slaves. *Mawon* is the word in Haitian Creole for “runaway slave,” originally from the Spanish word *Cimarron* that means “living on mountaintops.” African slaves who fled to remote mountainous areas of Haiti were called *mawon*, where they formed cohesive communities that practiced small-scale agriculture and hunting. See also Debbash, 1961, 1962.

30 Pic Macaya is 7,700 feet in altitude, and the second tallest mountain in Haiti.

## *Yonn ede lòt*

The specific condition of this region and its strong connection with the experience of isolation led to the establishment of well-articulated mutual assistance networks, which are extremely active and capable of mobilizing multiple actors in different sectors of Haitian society. This social dynamic made possible the organization of an immediate and extremely efficient response within the context of insecurity and crisis. This complex web of relationships not only allowed accommodating survivors, but was also responsible for the organization of production and circulation networks that were decisive to ensuring food and other supplies to the communities.

The *help* performed as an emergency response employed various strategies of labor and resource sharing that figured already as daily practices used by the communities to cope with hardship. During my stay in Grand'Anse, I witnessed how the longstanding tradition of *yonn ede lòt* (Haitian creole for one helping the other) was intricately intertwined to daily routines. People regularly called upon each other and came to assist one another. Houses rarely consist of only nuclear family members, but often host a variety of extended family and non-kin. Neighbors, in this context, are deeply involved in a gift dynamic, which inserts them into a network of benefits and obligations. The subject and object of *help* exercises what we could call a tyranny of affection.

It is important to note that when I refer to the Haitian expression *Yonn ede lòt*, I am referring to a myriad of practices that are not exclusive to the rural universe. They must not be considered through a simple and minimalist perspective in which the Haitian peasantry appears to be idealized and romanticized, representing a past that remains isolated, untouched, and pure.

Within this dichotomous scheme, close to a Rousseauian logic model, Haiti's rural universe is often described as a representation of the past, while the city embodies the future. The tension between country and city—although understood in various manners - is indeed a fundamental myth of modern social thought. This has eventually polarized dominant concepts between two main alternatives: the rural universe—replete with traditions, harmony, morality, and dignity; and urban reality—cramped by crowds and the crush of the individual. In contrast to this approach, Sidney Mintz' works were essential to refuting an urban-rural polarity, emphasizing the connections established between these spaces in a continuous process of transformation.

The prioritization of collective labor can be seen in a variety of groups that organized to share labor, especially in rural areas. The most popular collective labor arrangements in Grand'Anse are called *eskwad*,<sup>31</sup> but there are a variety of more complex arrangements, generally referred to as *konbit* or *kòve*,<sup>32</sup> which have been studied and described extensively by anthropologists. In her book *When the Hands Are Many*, Jennie M. Smith (2001) richly describes the collective practices of agricultural labor along with grass-roots organization and cooperative traditions, helping us to understand the extensive, already existing Haitian commitment to sharing labor and resources that goes well beyond pragmatic interests.

Smith describes the ways peasants in Grand'Anse work together and share resources. Evoking Bourdieu's notion of "habitus", she notes: "More deep-seated than an ethical principle, *yonn ede lòt*... is an embodied understanding of how one must dispose oneself vis-à-vis others" (2001: 75). The *help* offered as an emergency response in Grand'Anse was extraordinary in that the province received and accommodated more than 200,000 people, and was to some extent even more efficient than the development and humanitarian aid apparatuses. At the same time, the strategies and practices performed by civilians and households to help the survivors after the quake were completely ordinary from their own perspective, since interdependence, cooperation, and reciprocal sharing are fundamental to their day-to-day tasks.

<sup>31</sup> Small groups of neighbors and kin who agree to work in one another's fields for a few hours, several days a week. Money is generally not involved in these labor exchanges.

<sup>32</sup> For a detailed description of the *konbit* and *kòve* practices in Grand'Anse, see Smith (2001: 83-88). For a broader discussion, see also Lundahl (1983); Herskovitz (2007 [1937]); Mintz (1961) and Bulamah (2013).

People are inextricably interconnected, and therefore dependent on one another. Common expressions like “Yon sèl dwèt pa manje kalalou” (one finger on its own can’t eat stew), or “Men anpil chay pa lou” (many hands lighten the load) illustrate well this fundamental aspect of Haitian social life in which mutual support is also a survival strategy. This framework shows us how Haitians consider mutual assistance to be an ordinary practice of sharing connected to the exercise of citizenship and broader forms of belonging, in contrast to the framework applied by the humanitarian aid system. Evidently, these relational obligations are not free from constraints, and can often pose a threat to an individual. Although they are often associated with the principles of blessing and care, they can also cause suffering and discomfort, and are even related to (and do not exclude) witchcraft practices and magical threats.

The reorganization of the Haitian population following the tragedy in 2010 gave rise to new challenges that needed to be solved to ensure the maintenance of order and the survival of the displaced. The story I tell here evokes Mauss’s notion of “gift” (1991) since it appears to be an exchange based on a general sense of belonging that is not reduced to market principles or utilitarian calculations. *The Gift* does not evoke generosity in a religious sense, as illustrated by the image of the Good Samaritan, since it is not completely altruistic.<sup>33</sup>

Through their generosity, people earn distinction and respectability. Despite of that, self-interest does not determine the relationship upon which it is based, especially considering belief in the value of social ties. These social ties are established through relationships of mutual trust among members of a community who commit to a cycle of gifts. This is only achieved through a balance between spontaneity and obligation, between freedom and responsibility. As I mentioned, these relational obligations are not free from constraints, and can also be the cause of suffering. The polar opposition of self-interest and altruism is not a useful framework here since it poses a false dichotomy. Thus, the voluntary characteristic, apparently free and volitional, is actually obligatory and self-interested at the same time.

Power is also diluted here since those offering *help* also feel they are victims, and thus they act with a feeling of shared responsibility. The strength of the social tie rests in the fact that it is more than a junction of particular interests. *The Gift* (Mauss 1991) is not only derived from the relationship, but constitutes the relationship itself. Giving is not just contingent upon preexisting relationships or confirming social ties, but is also an ongoing process in which these relationships are forged.

As Bell (2013: 51-52) suggests, the community-based *help* that was mobilized in response to the earthquake was characterized primarily by three elements:

First, no one ultimately has more than she or he started with, but the sharing allows each to do more with meager resources than would otherwise be possible. Second, unlike micro-credit, which demands interest (sometimes for program costs and sometimes for profit), in these systems no one takes any fees or makes money off anyone else. Third, the exchanges are based in human relationship and trust.

I did not directly witness the events immediately following the earthquake, as I arrived in Haiti three years after the catastrophe. Likewise, my impressions were not based on my own subjective personal experience of the event. From the beginning, my information came through narratives about the disaster told by those who lived through it. My sources were the memories<sup>34</sup> of those who experienced the disaster, and the devastating effects it caused that continue to manifest and evolve over time. When asking others about their experiences for

33 Here I am referring to the idea of “Agape,” where the gift is situated in a scheme of specific action: one of love, as described by Boltanski (1990). The voluntary aspect of love, according to the notion of “Agape,” is characterized by the idea of giving to the other without an expectation of reciprocity. Particularly interesting is the work published in *La Revue du M.A.U.S.S* from 1981 onwards by a group of French intellectuals. See the number 32, “*L’amour des autres: Care, compassion et humanitaire*” (2008).

34 There is a wide and interesting discussion about memory, available in a specialized anthropological literature that problematizes this element as a source for reconstructing and analyzing events. Although not used in this text, this discussion is extremely relevant to this study that seeks to value and give relevance to local perspectives. For more details on this discussion see, for example Halbwachs (1990), Bosi (1979) and Pollak (1986).

the purpose of my research, I often felt an overwhelming sense of embarrassment, because I was asking about memories that are often too painful to be relived. At the same time, I found myself quite perplexed because I was expecting to hear dark emotional stories about trauma and suffering, but instead encountered individuals who did not understand suffering, hardship, and sacrifice as elements of an extraordinary condition.

Antoine's family, the third I visited in Carcasse, a coastal community at the southern tip of the peninsula, took in ten people, including children and grandchildren, in a small three-room house for two years. The household came to total eighteen residents in a small dwelling during this period, and they sustained themselves from the garden next to the house and Antoine's fishing. In Sasye, a small community in the Jérémie mountainous region, I met Ti Frè's family, which included himself and two children living in a house with two rooms. The family hosted twenty-four people, of whom only five were close relatives. These earthquake survivors arrived only a week after the disaster without any prior notice and stayed for a whole year. Ti Frè, a farmer, was the main provider for all 24 people.

I scoured the three *arrondissements* of the department, talking to host families that received people displaced by the earthquake, collecting their stories. Even in the most remote corners, one could find objective examples of community solidarity. Convinced of the considerable constraints those humble families faced to offer help to the new arrivals, I always asked the same question: "how did you perform such a feat?" And every time, from each family interviewed, I heard a variation of the same answer, given without any fanfare: "*Nou te degaje n.*" The expression in Haitian Creole for "we managed to do it." Looking for the best way to express this idea in English, I came across the expression "we fended for ourselves." This also carries an interesting connotation since it has the meaning of care and doing the best possible despite limitations.

The consequences of the tragedy, especially the redistribution of the Haitian population, led to difficulties that have been largely addressed by a unique social dynamic through which reconfigured networks of relationships both between country and city, and beyond Haiti's borders, maintained order and the survival of victims. Among the institutions that were essential to the survival of Haitians after the disaster are, for example, family relations, fosterage or folk adoption, neighborhood relations, and friendship.<sup>35</sup> Often unmentioned, these mechanisms, which go beyond the reach of state institutions and sophisticated international resources, have been extremely effective.

### **Final remarks: About *disaster* and *help***

In scientific terms, an earthquake is a phenomenon of sudden and transient vibration of the earth's surface as a result of the underground movement of tectonic plates. This movement is caused by the rapid release of large amounts of energy in the form of seismic waves. These "natural disasters" occur at the boundaries between tectonic plates or faults between two boulders. We know that the island of Santo Domingo is an active earthquake zone because it is located exactly over a fault system called the Enriquillo-Plantain Garden fault zone. On January 12, 2010, a "natural disaster" shook Haiti, thus proving the real dangers of this phenomenon.

The term "natural disaster" evokes a scientific discourse that links the event to its natural causes and emphasizes the idea of danger. This line of thinking often fails to understand the process by which the event continues to expand temporally (Revet 2018). Thus, the term "post-earthquake" should not suggest that a particular moment was surpassed, but rather should refer to a period that seems to drag on until the present.

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<sup>35</sup> The centrality of family relations, integrated to friendship and neighborhood relations, is examined in classic works on this country, such as Herskovits (1937), Bastien (1951), Métraux (1951) and Mintz (1971), and also in more recent studies, such as Lowenthal (1987), Marcelin (1988), Woodson (1990), Bulamah (2013) and Dalmaso (2009, 2018). In 1928, Jean Price-Mars also wrote beautifully about the Haitian rural family.

Considering only the events of January 12, 2010 in the vicinity of Port-au-Prince, the event is set exclusively in a temporally and spatially restricted framework. It is located at a fixed point in the past through the idea of a unique, uniform and linear time (Agamben 2005).

There is a trace of exceptionality that characterizes the event and gives it a sense of disjunction, an interruption of the normal flow of time and everyday experience. Even if the disaster is considered an historical event of deep and dramatic rupture, the phenomena triggered by it should not be considered individually, since they are closely related to long-term social processes. The procedural approach advocated by Sorokin (1942) suggests grasping the concept of “disaster” as a type of *crisis* that occurs in a *social time* – which is not just chronological, and involves cultural, political, economic, and subjective dimensions. A catastrophe is thus considered within the broader framework of a socio-historical process, and therefore not merely as natural, but as a socially constructed phenomenon.

Susanna Hoffman and Anthony Oliver-Smith (2001) also describe the concept of “disaster” as something that extends temporally, and includes the immediate facts (the accident itself) and their consequences within the same process. A *critical event* (Das 1995) does not end at the time of its occurrence but endures necessarily through language and memory. In the same way, the victims’ experiences of pain and suffering cannot be objectified and contained within a defined territory (Camargo da Silva 2005).

Recognition of the extended character of a disaster is important for understanding the mechanisms used by Haitian society after the earthquake despite the scarcity of resources and the despair caused by the destruction. Critical events disrupt ordinary everyday life, represent a “breakdown,” and configure an important “time marker,” but remain paradoxically embedded in the temporal structure of social relations and become assimilated into the experience of daily life.

When inquiring about the impacts of the earthquake, I came across a complex web of situations that linked this event to others. In 2010, two other tragic events severely affected the Grand’Anse region: Hurricane Tomas and a cholera epidemic, with the first case recorded in November.<sup>36</sup> It was therefore impossible to understand the data available without considering it within a process that involved a succession of catastrophes, a “routine of ruptures” (James 2010). Historically, notions of violence and insecurity have permeated the everyday life of the Haitian people for decades. In the economic and political spheres, we also find an environment of uncertainty that combines various experiences of corruption and exploitation.<sup>37</sup>

In this context, the very idea of “ordinary life” must be questioned; social life is not composed of a daily repetition of procedures. The organization of time follows a distinct course. The vast majority of the Haitian population does not have a regular source of income, which makes the activities of waking up, eating, going to work, returning home and sleeping, not routinized activities. Each day is a new battleground where people fight to survive and to ensure the livelihood of those around them.

In a context marked by structural uncertainty, precariousness, and deep transformations, Haitians have always had to seek shortcuts and improvise to overcome numerous difficulties and obstacles. There is an important relationship between *crisis* and *improvisation* (Trajano Filho 2008) that involves the complexity of social life in which change, conflict, and instability constantly intertwine with permanence, integration,

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<sup>36</sup> Haiti had no previously recorded cases of cholera before 2010, when it “was in fact introduced by Nepali MINUSTAH soldiers at the Mirebalais base who had their waste dumped into the Artibonite River by contractors. At the time, Nepal was fighting a severe outbreak of cholera. The strain of cholera matched those found in Nepal, and the Haitian cases were all downstream of the dump sites on the Artibonite River” (Podur 2012: 140).

<sup>37</sup> The state, unable to enforce the law and ensure the rights of the population, along with external stakeholders who arouse suspicion even when acting for humanitarian purposes, play an important role in establishing this insecure environment. James defines insecurity as a phenomenon that “incorporates political and criminal violence, economic instability, environmental vulnerability, and long histories of corruption and predation on the part of Haitian and foreign interveners” (2010: 22).

and balance. Agents play an active role in the game when “managing” or “fending for themselves” (*degaje*), looking for the best ways of life, wherever they are. By doing this, they use the available repertoire and articulate creative schemes, which, however, do not operate in a vacuum.

In this sense, deeply rooted forms of solidarity and strategies that foment cooperation played a major role in ensuring the maintenance of order and survival of the victims. The techniques adopted articulated traditional institutions and practices that form a safety net in uncertain times, mitigating vulnerability. These social networks are more flexible than formal associations and respond more promptly and efficiently to the demands of the people when official institutions break down (Lourenço-Lindel 2001). Particularly relevant were the affective relations of consanguinity and alliances. The uniqueness of the Haitian social dynamic, which has procedurally embedded some practices of the *lakou* institution,<sup>38</sup> was responsible for the organization of food production and distribution networks, which were decisive during this time. This dynamic is also associated with the incorporation of a particular meaning of the term “family” and “extended family” that involves a wider and more comprehensive understanding of the concepts of “aggregate”, “fosterage”, and “neighborhood,” all of them fundamental relations of mutuality and moral engagement that played a key role after the disaster. In this context, neighbors who had not received survivors would support others who took displaced people into their own homes, by sharing all sorts of resources.

The international aid system articulates a framework driven by a notion of solidarity, which is defined by the idea of victim, employing a logic that reiterates power disparities between the recipients of help, and those who are in a position to offer the help. The *help* that determined the fate of those who went to Grand’Anse after the earthquake goes beyond that framework. Only through an analytic emphasis on process that considers both change and continuity can one understand these modes of *helping*, or networks of reciprocity, that I witnessed in Grand’Anse. The configuration of these reciprocity networks contrasts directly with the more technocratic aid responses defined by the linearity of time and the containment of space (Agier 2008).

The dynamic movement of social actors in shaping networks of mutual help does not stem from a causal chain, but establishes elaborate dialogues informed by past experiences and future expectations. The unspoken *help* that I have analyzed in this work had at its center Haitians themselves as the principal actors, all of whom were also impacted by the earthquake. In this context, this response has fundamental implications for the resilience of these communities, and their capacity to recover from difficult situations. This dynamic reveals the existence of a logic of giving that is not guided by calculations and utilitarian interests, but by a more complex moral economy.

However, such arrangements of *help*, despite the quick mobilization, faced serious limitations due to a lack of resources and economic opportunities in the region. The survivors tended to be housed by families for 6 to 24 months. After this period, the vast majority of them had no alternative other than to return to Port-au-Prince.

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Revised by Jeffrey Hoff

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38 Rémy Bastien (1951) provides a rich description of *lakou* and its objective characteristics (a set of houses, in addition to parcels of land for food production and a space for a cemetery) that are linked to alliance rules, rituals and ceremonies, the transfer of property and succession, in which obligations are still established through a parental authority. A *lakou* is characterized by a principle of social order based on the idea of honor and respect. In this space, harmony is maintained by a constant commitment between individuals and the community that fosters cooperation and a division of labor. Smucker (1983: 112-21) describes the *lakou* as “the essential social unit of peasant society” in parallel with the *habitation*’s importance to the colonial regime. For another detailed discussion of the meaning and significance of the *lakou*, see Woodson (1990: 195-206) and Bulamah (2013).

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# Echoes of Past Revolutions: Architecture, Memory, and Spectral Politics in the Historic Districts of Port-au-Prince

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## **Abstract**

This article explores the life history of Ulrick Rosarion, a Haitian federal prosecutor who built his career during the Duvalier dictatorship. Rosarion lived his entire life in a small house of downtown Port-au-Prince, in a neighborhood formerly inhabited by the Black middle-classes that gained prominence in the political and administrative sphere during the dictatorship (1957-1986). Rosarion was also a writer who produced four books of nationalist poetry. Based on interviews and readings of his literary production, and beyond, through an exploration of architectural forms and material remnants echoing the dictatorship, this paper explores how an idealized version of the dictatorship today haunts the political landscape of Haiti. Moreover, this article argues that the state takes on a sensual form that allows for the diffusion and/or rupture of past ideologies.

**Key words:** materiality; architecture; memory; sensory politics; ideology; Duvalierism, Haiti.

# Ecoss de revoluções passadas: Arquitetura, memória e políticas espectrais nos bairros históricos de Porto-Príncipe

## Resumo

Este artigo analisa a história de vida de Ulrick Rosarion, um juiz federal haitiano que construiu sua carreira durante a ditadura dos Duvalier. Rosarion viveu toda sua vida em uma pequena casa no centro da cidade de Porto-Príncipe, em um quarteirão que foi outrora a morada de membros de uma classe média que ganhou proeminência nas esferas administrativas e políticas da ditadura (1957-1986). Rosarion também escreveu quatro volumes de poesia nacionalista. Baseado em entrevistas e leituras de sua produção literária, além de uma interpretação das formas materiais e arquitetônicas deixadas pelo governo autoritário, este artigo detalha como uma versão idealizada da ditadura assombra hoje a paisagem política haitiana. Por fim, este texto analisa como o Estado assume uma forma sensorial que permite a difusão e/ou a ruptura com ideologias do passado.

**Palavras-chave:** materialidade; arquitetura; memória; política sensorial; ideologia; duvalierismo; Haiti.

# Echoes of Past Revolutions: Architecture, Memory, and Spectral Politics in the Historic Districts of Port-au-Prince

Vincent Joos

“When you look at the trees, you will see in their swaying, the invisible and mystical body of the spirits. When you listen to the wind groaning over the countryside, it will be their voices cursing you.”

Jacques Stephen Alexis, *Les Arbres Musiciens* (1957: 359)

*Alexandre Pétion’s house in downtown Port-au-Prince.*



Photo by Aland Joseph, March 2014

## National Mythologies and Urban Memory

Rue de l’Enterrement is a one-mile paved street that links the largest cemetery of the country to the oldest house in Port-au-Prince, where Alexandre Pétion<sup>1</sup> was born in 1770. The two-story brick building is fissured and boarded up, and its front yard is invaded by derelict cars. A caretaker lives in a small room on the left side of the house and spends most of his time hanging out with the younger men who run a small auto-parts business from the front yard, or with the women who sell dry goods along the fence of the house. As the caretaker explained to me when I visited this house on a hot afternoon of September 2013, the building and surrounding area are key sites of Haitian history that should be better preserved:

<sup>1</sup> Pétion was a revolutionary leader and the first President of the Republic of Haiti from 1807 until his death in 1818.

“Soon after this house was built, there was a terrible earthquake [the 1770 earthquake that completely destroyed Port-au-Prince]. Pétion was a baby when it happened, but during the quake, his nurse was able to run in the house and to save him. So, this house sustained two big earthquakes, it’s a miracle that it’s still standing. Today, it’s infested with bats, but before the 2010 earthquake, it served as the Ministère des Affaires Sociales. It’s listed as a national monument by the state, but it’s now left abandoned.”

As we walked around the house, he showed me a hole that looked like a sewage drain and said:

“Dessalines is buried behind the Saint-Anne church, three blocks away from here. However, he died at the Pont-Rouge, the northern entrance of the city, which is about three kilometers (2 miles) from here. When he arrived at Pont-Rouge in 1806, he was killed by soldiers and dismembered by a mob. A woman named Défilée picked up his remains and put them in a bag. It is said she was crazy, but she was not. She picked up his remains and came back to the downtown cemetery via a tunnel. Well, this hole is the end of the tunnel Défilée used. She came out from there and then asked soldiers to bury Dessalines in the cemetery that used to be next to the Saint-Anne church. So, some people say Dessalines was killed here in this very house. Well, that’s still a debate...”

While mentioning these historical narratives, the caretaker talked about the question of skin color and power in Haiti. He used the settings of the house, its state of decrepitude, to suggest that the government has abandoned the people living in downtown Port-au-Prince, the majority of whom are black Haitians. In this narrative, Pétion, the first president of the Republic of Haiti (1807-1818) betrayed Dessalines, here seen as the egalitarian leader of black Haitians. Like many people, the caretaker believed that racial categories still largely shaped social, political, and economic exclusion in Haiti. What interests me here are not the still powerful legacies of colonial systems of race-based exclusion, which is outside of the scope of this article and has already been well analyzed (Labelle 1978, Trouillot 2012b, Daut 2015, Giaferri-Dombre 2007). Rather, I want to explore the relations between the built environment, the historical narratives its spurs and shapes, and political discourses. This article tracks how politics and social issues are *felt* by people who have been abandoned by the government and international institutions after the devastating 2010 earthquake that took the lives of more than 300,000 Haitians.

The type of conversation I had with the caretaker of Pétion’s house often takes place in the city center, in the neighborhoods adjacent to the National Palace. The statues of national heroes and the national history museum on the Champ de Mars, the main plaza of the capital, along with the institutional buildings and residences of formerly powerful figures that dot these streets, create what sociologist Geneviève Zubrzycki calls a “national sensorium” – a space where visual and material culture embody polyvalent national mythologies that, in turn, shape present understandings of the state functions and capabilities. As Zubrzycki argues, national mythologies are “created, congealed, and disseminated in multiple sites and through manifold sensory media” (2011: 21). In Haiti, Pétion and Dessalines appear in books, plays, radio shows, and oral narratives. Their statues and images are omnipresent in the downtown neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince, and the streets, houses, buildings they once used or inhabited are still haunted with their presence. Their bodily remnants are encased in the same marble tomb at the National Mausoleum, right in the heart of the former colonial city. These multiple and polyvalent presences structure varied patterns of nationalistic discourse and action and “endow [them] with emotional force” (2011: 37).

This article ethnographically tracks these political afterlives in the urban environment in order to understand how people narrate and imagine their political world through the use of both material and immaterial elements. I am especially interested in the figure of dictator François Duvalier who ruled the country from 1957 to 1971, as his presence is forceful in the central neighborhoods of the city. Duvalier used what James Ferguson called “supernatural messianism” where he blended references to Catholicism and Vodou religion to encourage a

cult around his persona. In a famous 1964 propaganda pamphlet entitled “Le Catéchisme de la Révolution,” we read that “Dessalines, Toussaint, Christophe, Pétion, and Estimé are five distinct Chiefs of State who are substantiated in and form only one and the same President in the person of François Duvalier” (Fourcand 1964: 17). In other words, “chiefs of state” do not die, they have various afterlives that allow them to haunt the political landscapes of their nation. Their spectral presence in the political landscape of Haiti can be invoked as agentive forces that structure specific discourses and practices.

Downtown Port-au-Prince used to be, and to some extent remains, the residential area for the small black middle-class that formed the backbone of the first Duvalier dictatorship (1957-1971). François Duvalier’s presence is not acknowledged by any monuments, besides his desecrated grave in the Grand Cimetière. However, in the same area of the city, the state employees’ humble houses, along with the places where Duvalier hid during his internal exile (1954-1956) and the buildings where the violence of his regime was exerted, such as prisons, military barracks, institutional buildings, etc. make the presence of Haiti’s most autocratic leader spectral, yet forceful. Like in the “Catéchisme” written by Jean Fourcand, a notorious intellectual and Duvalier propagandist, state leaders are kept alive by people who write about them or who can assert their presence in a haunted built environment. They, too, are part of a national sensorium, of a fragmented script that enables past ideologies to resurface in modified forms.

In order to describe fragments of the Haitian national sensorium and to describe the agentive presence of Duvalier and of his messianism, I draw on archival materials, conversations I recorded in my field notes, interviews, descriptions of urban landscapes and dwellings to reflect on how the simultaneous presence of powerful male leaders whose names, actions, and ideologies still shape debates about sovereignty and the nature of the Haitian state. In particular, I focus on the house, life history and literary works of Ulrick Rosarion, a judge and poet I met in Rue de l’Enterrement in September 2013. Rosarion gave informal tours of his house and was a well-known and respected writer in Port-au-Prince. He passed away in June 2014, after working for forty-three years in the highest spheres of the Haitian judicial world. His father was a personal friend and ally of François Duvalier who took refuge in the Rosarion’s family house when he felt his life was in danger. In his writings, and in our conversations, Ulrick Rosarion touted François Duvalier as a national hero and often recalled other chiefs of state and revolutionary leaders to describe the political values that animated him and the members of his family. Rosarion’s house on Rue de l’Enterrement and his life were haunted by powerful political leaders and the ideologies, work ethics, and values they left behind. This house, along with Rosarion’s life history and writings, offer an example of the varied and fragmented reconstitution of past ideologies through the interplay of emotional, material, and intellectual elements.

## Ulrick Rosario: Narrating and Living the Revolution(s)

*Ulrick Rosario (Joos, March 2014)*

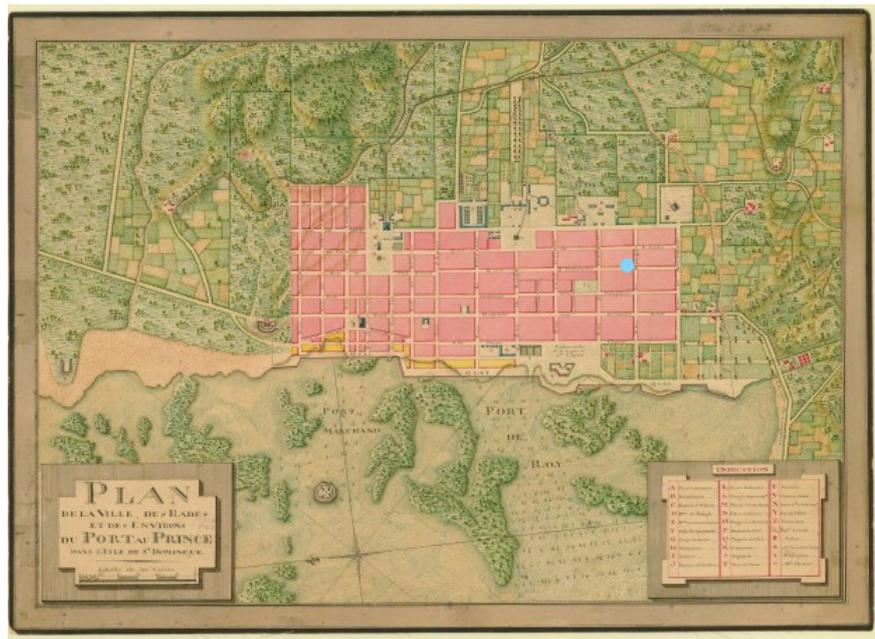


Ulrick Rosario was born in Port-au-Prince on November 11, 1932. He still lived in the same two-story house where he spent his childhood, on Rue de L'Enterrement, when I met him in September 2013. Sitting right in front of the Saint-François hospital, which was being rebuilt at the time, his gray and orange house did not stand out from the rest of the built environment. The house is a two-story timber and concrete shotgun comprising six rooms, an outdoor kitchen and an 8x24 ft. (2.4x7.3m) side courtyard covered by shade trees. This humble shotgun house reflects the middle-class status and the provincial origins of the Rosarions, who came from Les Gonaïves, a city of the Artibonite region, to Port-au-Prince in the 1920s. The façade of the house, however, is peculiar. The front porch is surrounded by a heavy metal fence that anchors the house design in what Haitian architect Albert Mangonès called the “architectural aesthetic of enclosure” that became prevalent in the Duvalier years (Mangonès 1992: 848). In brief, the front entrance of the shotgun, which is traditionally the entry point into the house for visitors, is barricaded, and guests enter the courtyard through a thick metal door opening onto the left gallery of the house.

*Ulrick Rosario's house on Rue de l'Enterrement (Aland Joseph, August 2015)*



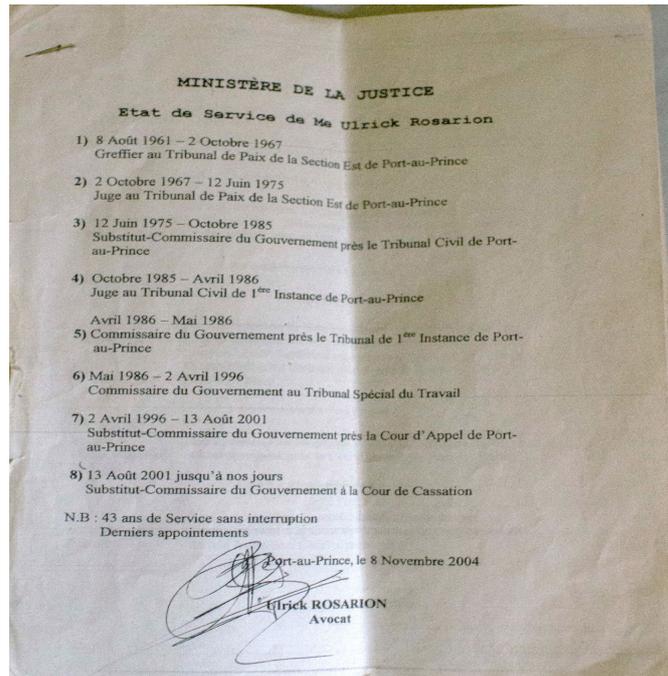
Colonial map of Port-au-Prince. Rosarion's house is located in the former colonial grid (blue dot on map), on Rue de l'Enterrement.



The paint was peeling away and the back walls of the house had been seriously damaged by the 2010 earthquake. The two most spacious upstairs and downstairs rooms, located in the back of the house, were not used for this reason. Besides the heavy protective armature surrounding the house and rendering it secure, almost bulletproof, nothing indicated the house belonged to a family where many men had worked in the highest spheres of the government. It was a house cherished by the people who inhabited it and who liked to speak about its history and functions.

Ulrick Rosarion was eighty-three years old when I met him. He had suffered a stroke in 2004 that impeded his speech and forced him to express himself slowly. Nonetheless, he was an alert man who often referred to some of his writings and documents to make a point. We all called him by his official title: Maître Rosarion, or in Kreyòl, Mèt, which translates as “Your Honor” in English legal language. Mèt Rosarion worked for the state for forty-three years without interruption. His career was launched under François Duvalier’s regime in 1961 and ended soon after the coup that removed Jean-Bertrand Aristide from power in 2004.

*Ulrick Rosarion's Curriculum Vitae (Joos March 2014)*



Léandre Rosarion on the left and his son, Ulrick Rosarion on the right.

Both were lawyers in Port-au-Prince (Joos, March 2014)



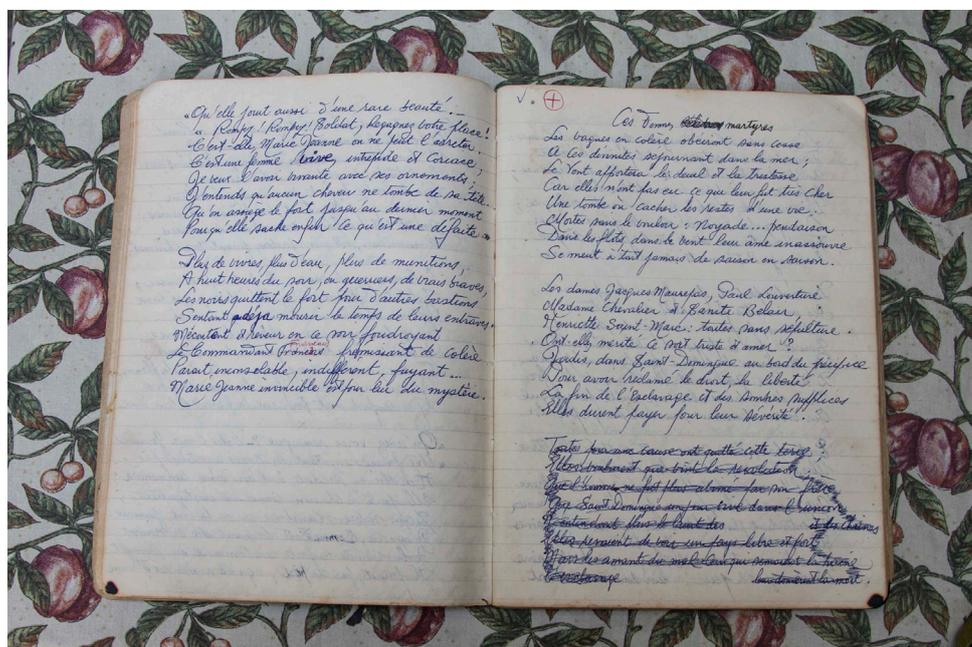
Ulrick Rosarion followed somewhat in the footsteps of his father, who worked in similar positions in his youth, but who took important decision-making positions under the Estimé presidency (1946-1950) and under both Duvaliers. Léandre Rosarion ended his career as a Secretary of Justice in the mid-1970s. His son's longevity in the high spheres of the legislative body is surprising, given the turbulent political landscape before and after 1986. Keeping a position in the Duvalier state was quite challenging, as both dictators never hesitated to oust their major collaborators or to kill them on a whim. Remaining in high administrative positions in the Haitian state was not, and is not, an easy task. Rosarion managed to work for chiefs of state whose affiliations covered a broad spectrum of the Haitian political world. When I asked him about his uninterrupted career, Mèt Rosarion explained:

“Everyone knows I am UN-COR-RUP-TIBLE! All presidents offered me a car and a chauffeur. I never accepted, I never took anything from the state. I always walked to work [Je marchais au travail, Monsieur!] I talked with everyone, I lived a simple life! I like to write, to sit outside and talk with friends. Everyone knows me. I was a righteous judge and a guardian of the rule of law. I am a legalist! A legalist! My knowledge of the law earned me the respect of all presidents.” (Fieldwork notes, March 23, 2014)

Mèt Rosario often stated his devotion to the law and did not like what he deemed to be extra-legal political practices. For instance, he told me that he did not like the Tontons Macoutes—Milice de Volontaires de la Sécurité Nationale, or Militia of National Security Volunteers—precisely because they were supported by the state and yet functioned as a paralegal system of “volunteer militia.” His condemnation was not a moral one, however, even though it is common knowledge that the Macoutes detained, tortured and killed thousands of people without trials. The state and its servants should all be under the rule of law, according to Mèt Rosario, but nothing was ever said about the nature of these laws. I will never fully know to what extent he was complicit in the waves of brutal arrests and mock trials that punctuated the Duvalier eras, and later, during the violent coup years (1991-1994). Nor will I know his margins of choice and his role during the periods of intense political violence that have plagued the country since 1957. From the documentation I found on him, Rosario stands as an ambiguous jurist who both supported and worked against Duvalier, once using anti-communist laws against Christian activists in the early 1980s, once using anti-corruption laws to sue Jean-Claude Duvalier right after his 1986 ousting.

Rosario wrote extensively about Haitian history in French, in the form of metric poetry and theater plays. He published five books from 1970 to 1984 and wrote many unpublished poems about the role of women in Haitian history, great battles against the French, and the life and death of Haitian revolutionary and intellectual figures. Most of his poetry is akin to the French nationalist vein he enjoyed reading.

One of Rosario’s many manuscripts with one of his favorite poems entitled “These Martyr Women”



## Specters of Duvalier

François Duvalier was born in 1907 in Port-au-Prince. His father, a justice of the peace, and his mother, an employee at a bakery, were part of the then-disadvantaged black middle-classes who were barred from positions of power in a state mainly controlled by a wealthy light-skinned elite, referred in Haitian Creole as *milat* (Nicholls 1975). Duvalier grew up during the American occupation of Haiti (1915-1934) and studied medicine in Port-au-Prince and one year at Michigan State University, completing a degree in medicine from the University of Haiti in 1934. As a doctor, he participated in American campaigns for the eradication of tropical diseases and traveled the countryside extensively. From these experiences, several crucial facets of Duvalier emerge. First, he was keenly aware of the resentment a majority of black Haitians nourished against the mulatto elites who were seen, during the Occupation, as the servants of American corporate and state interests. Second, as a student and intellectual, he participated in the indigenous movements of the 1930s that forged new cultural identities by reclaiming their African heritage and that forcefully condemned American interventions in Haitian affairs. Third, as a country doctor who worked for the Americans, he developed ties with the United States while conducting ethnographic studies of Haitian religious life in the provinces. Manipulating the color questions in order to obscure the major class divides between people living in Port-au-Prince and in the provinces, and collaborating with the Americans while professing an intransigent form of nationalism would be the trademarks of his dictatorship.

When nominated Director General of the National Public Health Service in the government of President Dumarsais Estimé in 1946, Duvalier already had a solid reputation as an ideologist, ethnologist, and doctor. He entered the government as a member of the leftist party *Mouvement Ouvrier et Paysan*, while, in the same year, he published a series of black nationalist articles advocating for the need of dictatorial politics in Haiti (Abbott 2011). In brief, Duvalier could navigate a broad spectrum of political values and could appear as a benevolent and paternalistic doctor, an expert and advocate of the Haitian black masses, and a member of the nascent extreme-right that claimed that people of African descent could not operate in a democratic regime. Though his dictatorship would only amount to a self-serving kleptocracy, this polyvalent set of values and his aura of an intellectual close to his people still shape many narratives associated to him. Ulrick Rosarion, like many Duvalierists, picks and chooses fragments of Duvalier's life to eulogize him and to craft narratives that stand as "unofficial, subaltern histories, rather than a nebulous 'midway point' in between myth and history genres" (Rasmussen 2009: 571). Indeed, Rosarion's accounts of the lives of Haitian political figures are not a mix between 'objective' historical research and imagined narratives, but rather interventions made of selected and concealed materials that have the goal of asserting the cultural and political identity of his family. As Michel Rolph Trouillot has famously argued, there is a silencing of history in the making of sources and creation of archives, which is redoubled with the exclusion of certain narratives of the official corpus of histories that constitute the "past" (Trouillot 1990). In a way, Rosarion's poems and plays are an attempt at shedding light on questions of race and class that are silenced in the narratives that frame Duvalier only as a mad leader.

In the many stories Rosarion told about François Duvalier, the narrative of a man hunted by the men of President Paul Magloire was the most recurrent. Rosarion's house was a crucial element of this narrative. After the ousting of Dumarsais Estimé from power by a military junta led by Magloire in 1950, key members of the toppled government either left the country or went into internal exile. By the mid-fifties, Duvalier was the head of the political opposition and carefully prepared his ascent to power. During this two-year period, Duvalier moved incognito in Port-au-Prince, once disguised as a "myopic, moon-faced woman" to reach the house of one of his allies (Abbott 2011: 51). Ulrick Rosarion liked to recall this era, when, as a young man, he witnessed François Duvalier arriving at night in his house. His father, Léandre Rosarion, also worked for the government during the Estimé presidency, and was an early political ally of Duvalier. As Ulrick Rosarion often explained, "the Revolution was plotted in this house!" The first time I visited his house in September 2013, Rosarion showed

me his own bedroom, in which every object seemed tied to his own political and career trajectory. “You see the bed I’m sleeping on? It was offered to my father by François Duvalier, who slept in this very bed when he came to hide in our house. He would also come here during his presidency, at times he felt threatened.” The simple, steel-framed bed was a key part of the informal tours Rosarion sometimes gave to his visitors. This unremarkable object had been moved downstairs after the earthquake, from the upstairs back room where Duvalier used to occupy when hiding in this house. Rosarion took me upstairs a couple of times to show me the exact place where Duvalier slept. This aspect of Rosarion’s narrative perpetuates Duvalier’s own practice of establishing himself as a mysterious and impenetrable figure, especially through a subverted use of Vodou religion. As Paul Christopher Johnson has shown, secretism, or “the active invocation of secrecy as a source of a group’s identity, the promotion of the reputation of special access to restricted knowledge, and the successful performance or staging of such access,” was a key method of Duvalier to maintain himself in power (Johnson 2006:421). By showing visitors Duvalier’s hiding place, Rosarion establishes his family as part of a closed inner circle that had access to a bounded political world and perpetuates Duvalier’s own staged mysticism.

Mèt Rosarion showing the room where Duvalier slept when hiding in his house (Joos, April 2014)



Once Duvalier became president in 1957, the Rosarions, along with former members of the Estimé government, came back to positions of power. Léandre Rosarion worked at the Minister of Justice while his second son, Dr. Bernadin Rosarion became Duvalier’s personal doctor after saving him from a stroke in 1959. Bernadin Rosarion would eventually become prefect of Port-au-Prince and a well-known pillar of the two Duvalier regimes. In April 2007, along with members of the old Duvalierist guard that vows a cult to Papa Doc, Bernadin Rosarion created the Fondation François Duvalier to commemorate the former president’s life and works, and to impose the conditions for the return of his son Jean-Claude to power (Le Nouvelliste 2007). While Mèt Rosarion liked to remember his father Léandre, the name of his brother Bernadin never came up; he is neither present in the rest of the house, nor in photographs or documents.

Léandre and his sons, Bernadin and Ulrick, personify the ascension of the black middle classes to administrative and judicial power. However, it seems that they had very different perceptions of what it meant to be a statesman and a member of the middle class. Ulrick Rosarion led an ascetic life in the modest family home on Rue de L’Enterrement and did not talk publicly in favor of the Duvaliers like his brother flamboyantly did. I also noted that while Mèt Rosarion often talked about the first years of François Duvalier’s regime and

of the rise of a small educated black elite to positions of power, he rarely mentioned Jean-Claude Duvalier, whom he knew well and worked for nonetheless. Mèt Rosario admired his father's generation and in a sense adopted their nationalist aesthetics and ethics.

What Mèt Rosario saw in François Duvalier sheds light on his own ambiguities. He rarely talked about politics, but on a late afternoon in March 2014, my friend Aland Joseph and I had a conversation with him on the subject. Rosario was emotional during our conversation and often placed his right hand in front of his eyes. The following is a fragment of the conversation we had in French, as I reproduced it in my field notes:

*Rosario:* François Duvalier was a revolutionary. He was a hunted man.... He was a doctor who knew the Haitian people well. He was a writer who wrote about Haitian people. We can't like everything in a man. I would have liked for him to build more schools. But he was a great man.... He liked this house. It was like a secret bunker! He was a man of the people [homme du peuple]. And a man of culture and science. Very few men achieved what he did....

*Joos:* Who was your favorite president?

*Rosario:* Dumarsais Estimé....

Mèt Rosario surprised me when he sobbed when stating the name of Estimé. A tear rolled down his cheek, and he took his head in his hands and paused for a long time. He then lit a cigarette and told me: "Estimé voulait l'égalité de tous les Haïtiens dans un état de droit...."<sup>2</sup> When Mèt Rosario talks about François Duvalier, but does not talk about Jean-Claude Duvalier, I sense that his political views have been defined by the qualities he admires in Dumarsais Estimé, who promoted a moderate version of black nationalism. Duvalier indeed posed as a successor of Estimé and proposed a liberal program that was in phase with his predecessor's beliefs. In 1957, he campaigned on a leftist platform while Estimé's widow, Lucienne Heurtelou Estimé, showed up at all the meetings he held (Abbott 2011). He promised investments in agricultural infrastructure, democratic pluralism, trade union rights, a free press, and a new system of wealth redistribution (Ferguson 1987: 38; Lundhal 2002). The Duvalier who seemed in line with the progressive record of Estimé and who vowed to bring back black-middle classes to power is the one Ulrich Rosario admired. Indeed, François Duvalier left behind him a large body of published works and a systematic ideology that seduced a generation of statesmen – the 1946 generation – who only had the chance to realize their potential under the short presidency of Estimé. Lyonel Trouillot, in an incisive article about Jean-Claude Duvalier, states a major difference between the father and son regimes in a reading of their personal trajectories and personal ethics:

Between François Duvalier, doctor coming from the disadvantaged middle classes, hard worker and ascetic to the point of mysticism, cultural ideologist, patient politician who made his career in public administration, who grew roots in particular groups while effectively perverting popular opinion (on questions of color, social injustice, conflicts between the city and the country...), who subdued the armed forces, who raised a body of National Security Volunteers in his own pay, fought against the Vatican and the United States and nullified all Haitian civil and political forces; and Jean-Claude Duvalier, profession: son of a president; political merits: son of a president; social origin: son of a president; way of life: spending money and partying, there seems to be a world of difference.<sup>3</sup> (Trouillot, 2012a, p. 9-10)

2 "Estimé wanted equality for all Haitians under a state of law..."

3 «(...) entre François Duvalier, médecin originaire des classes moyennes défavorisées, bucheur, ascète jusqu'au mysticisme, idéologue culturaliste, politique patient ayant fait carrière dans la fonction publique, posé ses bases dans certains milieux en opérant une perversion efficace de la sensibilité populaire (question de couleur, injustices sociales, contradiction ville campagne...), dompté les forces armées, levé un corps de Volontaires de la Sécurité Nationale à sa solde, bataillé contre le Vatican et les Etats-Unis, réduit à néant toutes les forces politiques et la société civile haïtiennes; et Jean-Claude Duvalier, profession: fils de président; mérite politique: fils de président; origine sociale: fils de président; manière de vivre: dépenses et bamboche, il semble bien avoir un monde.»

François Duvalier is a spectral figure on Rue de l'Enterrement, and especially in the house of Mèt Rosarion. His presence, perceptible in material remnants, such as a fractured tomb in the Grand Cimetière, a small iron-framed bed and papers signed by his hand, is felt even more strongly through a certain asceticism and a precise idea of how the black middle class should behave and think. It is akin to what Gérard Barthélémy named Duvalierism without Duvalier, an ideology based on a return to the values of the early François Duvalier and a refusal of “macoutism,” seen as a totalitarian derivative of the regime (Barthélémy 1989). It would be hard to define what middle class means in today's Haiti; however, the ethos associated with this term powerfully traverses Rue de l'Enterrement. Thus, the spectral aspects of the black middle classes—an ethos of hard work and humility and a good dose of brash nationalism—filter their way into the present. The humble houses of former statesmen and the mythico-histories where François Duvalier's violence, paranoia, and greed are silenced allow for the nostalgia of a “pure” Duvalierism, seen as the “noiriste” philosophy purged of its dictatorial and terrorist aspects, is far from uncommon in Port-au-Prince and resonates through the material traces it left in the city.

## Specters of 1946

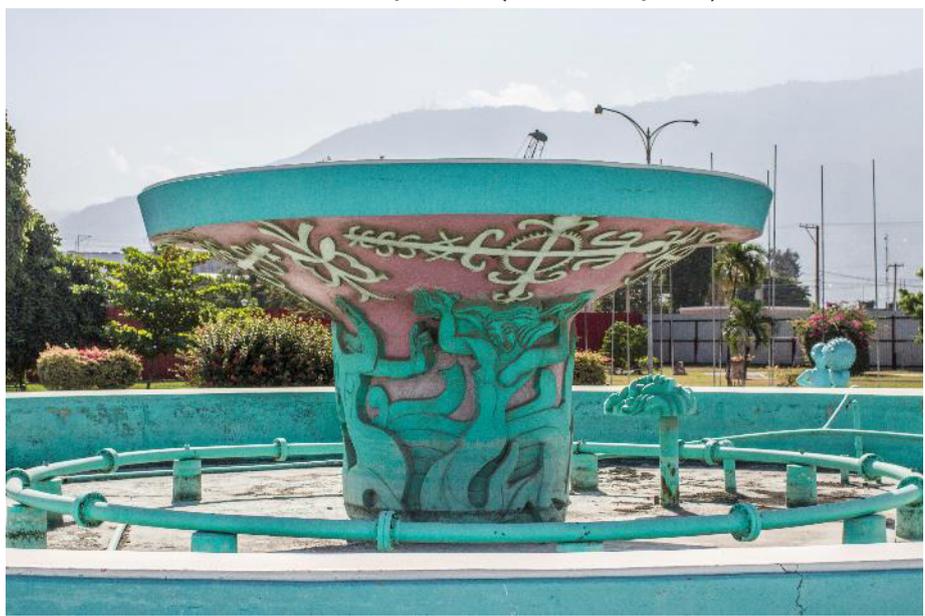
When referring back to Estimé and the 1946 revolution, as he often did, Mèt Rosarion referred to the intellectual and political breakthrough of middle-class, black Haitians who entered the Estimé government after years of exclusion during the American occupation. During his four-year tenure, Estimé supervised large urban planning projects that left their mark on the capital's landscape, by commissioning, for instance “the construction [in Port-au-Prince] of a chic waterfront development along a wide boulevard that included 57 pavilions, plazas, and parks, complete with an artificial lake and a reflecting pool” (Payton 2018: 16). These waterfront constructions, named the Bicentenaire, housed the 1949 International Exposition celebrating the bicentennial of Port-au-Prince. Many of these modernist buildings later became the sieges of state institutions. The 2010 earthquake erased most of the Bicentenaire; however, certain key features of this major urban development still stand today, conjuring the ideals of the 1946 generation.

Between 1915 and 1946, vibrant intellectual movements used Haitian folklore and history to craft a nationalist ideology respectful of Haitian linguistic, cultural and historical specificities. Jean Price-Mars' ethnographic studies, *Ainsi Parla L'Oncle*, were the intellectual compass of this politically diverse generation of intellectuals who saw their first political victory in the election of Sténio Vincent, in 1930, himself heavily influenced by the intellectual nationalism of Price-Mars (Nicholls 1975). In his ethnography, Price-Mars attacked a Haitian political and economic elite he accused of borrowing European values and ways of life. It was a harsh critique of a bourgeoisie lost in what Price-Mars coined “collective bovarism,” namely a form of alienation stemming from European values, lifestyles and ideals held by the elites. Price-Mars called for an acknowledgment of Haitian peasant culture, one that valorized Kreyol, Vodou and the revolutionary history of the country. Anthropologist M.R. Trouillot sees in that movement a cultural revolution, in the sense that, for the first time, vernacular art, practices and religion were the basis of a political and aesthetic program (1986). This “période indigéniste” propelled Haiti in its second independence and offered, to quote historian Millery Polyné, “a rich and organized radical culture that has challenged the structures of political and economic power and influence in Port-au-Prince” (2013: 165). The actors of this cultural revolution – socialists, Marxists, Noiristes – come from different political currents, but nonetheless propose new forms of sovereignty and national identity to Haitians.

After the end of the occupation in 1934, “two intimately woven ideologies” stemming from the nationalist folkloric movement of the 1920s emerged (Nicholls 1975: 662). “L'école des Griots” was an intellectual school founded by François Duvalier, Lorimer Denis and their elder Louis Diaquoi. The school's journal *Les Griots* became the main organ of racial nationalists. The group founded its racial and social thinking on the works

of Price-Mars, considered their “Evangelist”, but used blackness, African origins and Vodou to make claims about the biopsychological nature of the Haitian Geist. Duvalier and Denis, as the main political activists of this group, wrote extensively about a collective personality based on essentialist African attributes, such as docility and savagery, that fully achieved its potential under “a dictatorship which works for order, truth, and the common good,” as stated in a *Les Griots* editorial of 1938 (cited by Dash 1998: 76). This romantic view of Haitian collective sensibilities distorted and simplified the peasantry’s folklore to assert a very urban and class-based notion of black power, and established simplistic racial binaries to circumnavigate questions of class inequality.

La Fontaine Musicale, built in 1949 for the Bicentennial Exposition  
commissioned by Estimé (Joos, January 2014)



François Duvalier, to a lesser extent, would use the urban landscape to assert the noiriste ideology and to make sure that he would be remembered once gone. The statue of the Unknown Maroon of Saint-Domingue, depicting a runaway slave and placed on the Champ de Mars in 1967, allowed Duvalier, for instance, to inscribe his regime in the practice of maroonage. Declaring the defiance and independence of Haiti vis-à-vis major economic power was however purely symbolic, as the regime depended heavily on U.S. funds. Duvalier himself would pretend to be “the last maroon, president for life of the Republic” in the speech he pronounced at the statue’s inauguration. As mentioned above, Duvalier presented himself as the reincarnation of both the early revolutionary heroes Pétion, Christophe, Dessalines, Toussaint, and of president Estimé. All these past chiefs of state are materially present in the capital in the form of statues, but not only these. Pétion and Dessalines are buried together in the National Mausoleum located at the southern tip of the Champ de Mars, while Dumarsais Estimé’s remains are buried in a mausoleum in the heart of the former Bicentenaire neighborhood. His remains were transferred there in 1968, and the mausoleum inaugurated in 1968 by Duvalier and his guard.

### Writing the Revolution and Practicing Anti-Revolutionary Politics

Downtown Port-au-Prince physically centralizes key material elements that provide tangibility to subaltern histories. The mausoleums and monumental graves of the Grand Cimetière, the state buildings and the Dessalines military barracks, the schools named after revolutionary heroes, the statues and museums, the elaborate villas of past leaders and the modest houses of state employees form an environment that allows for the unfolding of “banal nationalism” where the “existence of the nation is taken for granted” (Zubrzycki 2011: 57; Billig 1995). This banal nationalism also unfolds through political performances, such as the discourses of Duvalier in symbolically charged areas of the city, and cultural performances. The Théâtre National, designed by Albert Mangonès and built for the Bicentenaire celebrations in 1949, was and remains a major center that diffuses national culture. It is there that Ulrick Rosarion’s tragedy, *Les Dernières Heures de Boisrond Tonnerre*, was performed in 1996. As he often stated, his written works and his play were meant to educate the Haitian youth and to make them realize that the 1804 revolution remained unfinished, that the past still had some bearing on Haiti’s future as the promises of freedom and independence were never fully fulfilled. When writing about former Haitian chiefs of states, both François Duvalier and Ulrick Rosarion do more than honor previous leaders. They invoke them “as active interlocutors in ongoing political struggles” (Moffat 2018 180). However, this rhetoric cannot mask the fact that members of the Haitian state and its complacent bureaucrats operated with values that stand in opposition with the revolutionary ideals of 1804.

Rosarion’s poetry sheds light on key facets of his ideology. He published five books of poetry and allowed me to photograph his books and handwritten manuscripts. As Mèt Rosarion explained in March 2014:

“There are two sides to my poetry. A patriotic side. I wanted young people to know our heroes and martyrs. I wrote about women too. I honored their role in Haitian history. They were also heroes. The other side is more personal and sentimental. It talks about love, about life. But Dessalines is the main character of my works. Toussaint, Capois, Boisrond. But mainly, it’s Dessalines and his exploits.”

In *The silence of whispers*, the first section of the book is dedicated to Haitian history and talks extensively about the great battles fought by “belligerent blacks” and their chiefs. His poetry is essentially martial. Images of glorious deaths on the battlefield, of thunder, war, blood, agony and military bravura abound. The poetry of Mèt Rosarion, full of interjections to readers and particularly to an indistinct Haitian youth, should be read in the light of subaltern history of Haiti in relation to France. The historical records of Haiti are located elsewhere, so Rosarion uses popular references and writes vernacular poetry to fill the void in historical texts

and cultural memory. It is a call for remembrance and forms of politics based on a selective nostalgia for heroic times. In one of his poems entitled “Ils nous aimaient tant...” [They loved us so much], we can note a certain despair and a sense of historical and cultural loss, a call to fathers who could be the men of the 1946 generation or the founding fathers of Haiti:

[talking about Toussaint Louverture and Dessalines]  
For fraternity, rights and justice,  
Freedom for all and equality,  
Of death they drank the gloomy chalice.  
Why so many blanks and absurdities  
In the wake of our age?  
What fate guided us among so many wrecks?  
Look at our gardens, our fields, our houses,  
They bear the weight of their cruel absence  
Never our heart will heal (...)  
Have pity upon us from where you are  
For our saddened fields nothing is certain without you  
For in the future may our harvest be better  
Our children happier, and the sun more radiant.  
On us, have pity, Generals.

The poem may describe the situation of the early 1980s, of Baby Doc’s ideologically soft Duvalierism that had lost the memory of the ideals and struggles of Dessalines and Louverture. Written in 1983, at a time when most people in Haiti were dealing with the ecological and economic ravages of Duvalierism, this poem implores the generals to return to the political landscape.

Rosarion wrote about the demise of revolutionary ideals and about the sad state of his country, but nonetheless actively participated in the repressive political apparatus of the Haitian state. While he called for democracy, freedom and justice in his poems, he simultaneously presided over farcical trials. In the early eighties, for instance, Rosarion was involved in a parody of justice. In his “Report on the August 1981 trial and November 1981 appeal of 26 political defendants in Haiti,” lawyer and human rights activist Michael S. Hooper relates the mass arrests that led to the exile of many Haitian journalists and scholars and details a parody of a trial, over which Ulrick Rosarion presided. As Hooper writes:

“On August 25, 1981, twenty-six people were tried and convicted in Haiti for arson and plotting against the internal security of the state (...) The verdict was handed down at 5:00 A.M. Twenty-two of the defendants were sentenced to fifteen years at hard labor and four to one year in prison (...) In political cases particularly, the Haitian justice system offers virtually no protection to the individual who falls out of favor with members of the government. The trial of 26 people in 1981 was in part in response to these criticisms, from human rights groups and others, that no political prisoners are ever brought to trial. It was, in fact, the first political trial in Haiti, since the Duvalier family came to power in 1957. Ironically, this trial, as much as any incident in the last several years, illustrates the extent to which the rule of law has broken down in Haiti.”

This trial was deemed “in accordance with Haitian Law by the U.S. Department of State” and marked a new era in Duvalierism: the growth of judicial powers that gave a legal facade to political terror in order to maintain the Reagan administration’s support, which supplied financial aid to Haiti until 1987. The civilian judicial body, which was severely weakened during the first years of the Duvalier regime to the benefit of a powerful Military Jurisdiction and later of the militias (Trouillot 1990: 151), made a tragic come-back through

a budgetary surge and through the enactment of legal decrees that authorized the possibility of trials where only regime officials, such as Ulrick Rosarion, could speak (Holly 2011). On Tuesday, August 25, 1981, the twenty-six political opponents were led to court in handcuffs and had to walk through double rows of military police armed with Uzi guns, who threatened and ridiculed them. The plaza in front of the Palais de Justice was encircled by Tontons Macoutes, and most of the people sitting in the tribunal were armed and were taking notes on who was attending the trial. The twenty-six defendants were mostly between 20 and 40 years old and members of the hard-working middle class of Haiti (including an accountant, a secretary, a cartoonist, a chauffeur, a zoologist, a tailor, etc.). At the trial, they learned that they were accused of something they never participated in—arson and plotting against state security—and were condemned a few hours later to fifteen years of hard labor. Three people got a one-year prison sentence, which was often similar to the death penalty in those days (Nérée 1988). The Hooper report is chilling and presents a Kafkaesque trial where existing criminal codes and laws were invoked to silence political opponents. With this new form of political repression, the arbitrary and expedited justice of the Macoutes entered the legal sphere of the state, and organized trials that reflected its blind practice of “justice.” In this sense, being a guardian and servant of the law strictly meant to obey the whims of the dictator and his henchmen.

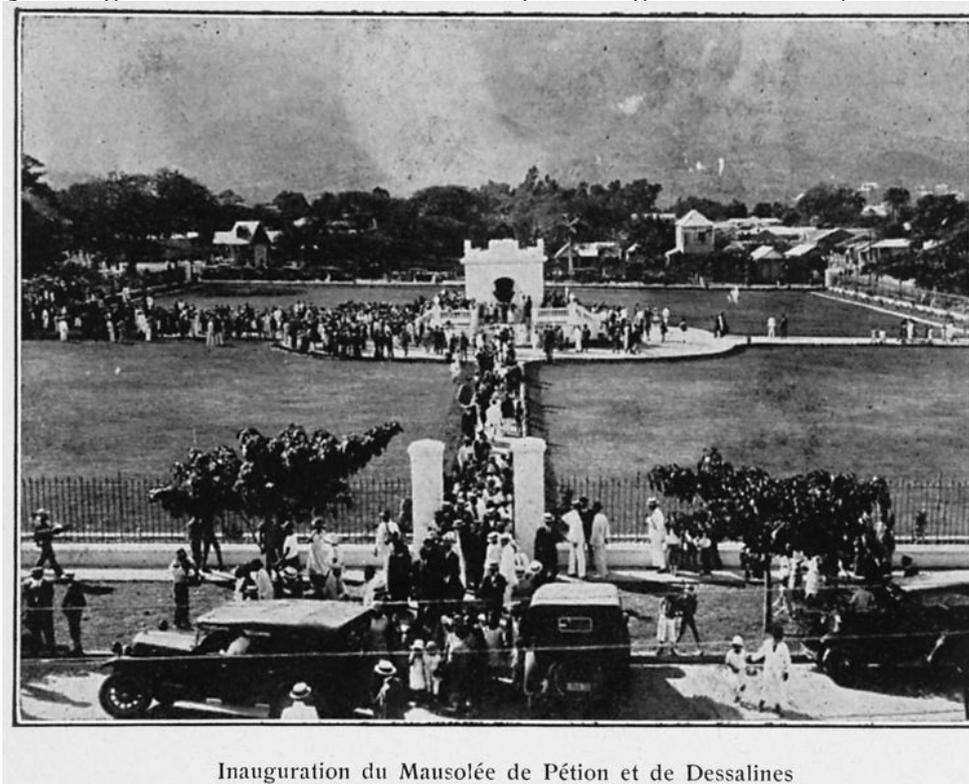
On April 18, 1986, Ulrick Rosarion, then Commissaire du Gouvernement (state prosecutor), issued instructions for the investigation of members of what he referred to as the “Duvalier criminal organization.” He nominated Emmanuel Dutreuil as the main investigative judge. The same year, a case was launched against Luc Desir for crimes that included murder and torture. The corruption case lingered and was reopened in 1999, 2008 and finally in 2011, when Jean-Claude Duvalier came back to Haiti and lived freely in his luxurious residence in Pétion-Ville. Starting in 2008, the case of corruption and bribery was supplemented with charges of crimes against humanity. Several dignitaries of the Duvalier regimes were mentioned in the case. Mèt Rosarion’s brother, Bernadin Rosarion, was accused of participating in financial crimes, crimes against humanity and “acts of corruption, abuse of authority, embezzlements of funds, gang association” (RNDDH 2012: 5). Mèt Rosarion remained only one month in the position of state prosecutor at the Court of First Instance, then he quit this political tribunal in May 1986 to work for the Labor Court. For most of his career, as a friend told me, Mèt Rosarion worked on small cases, since the executive powers bypassed the tribunals for important issues or simple repression. Some documents Mèt showed me detail his day-to-day functions. Mainly, he took care of land litigations, burglaries and thefts or petty crimes. His role in major prosecutions seems to have been sporadic, yet forceful.

I could placate an interpretive grid and state that, like many old guard Duvalierists, Mèt Rosarion condemned a profligate and shapeless state and advocated for the return of Indigéniste/noiriste values. However, he co-presided over the most arbitrary trial of the Duvalier era, which marked a period of intense repression of political dissent through legal means. The Dessalines Mèt Rosarion talks about in his poems is, in this regard, closer to the person of François Duvalier. After all, the Dessalines of Mèt Rosarion speaks French and not Kreyol. He’s the Emperor who speaks from Port-au-Prince and who does not allude to his provincial origins. In a sense, the French-speaking Dessalines of Mèt Rosarion’s French poetry is the revolutionary voice of what we could name a “Class-State,” which was slowly eroded with the abandonment of noiriste and classist politics by Duvalier’s son. In this regard, the poem “Ils nous aimaient tant...”, in which Mèt Rosarion decries the disappearance of the founding fathers from the physical Haitian landscape, tells of a nostalgia for a bygone era where the ideals of the Haitian middle class have been crushed by military repression in 1950.

## The King's Two Bodies

In 1926, Louis Borno, then president of the Republic of Haiti and fervent collaborator of the American occupants, inaugurated the National Mausoleum where the remains of Pétion and Dessalines were reburied. This was a symbolic gesture that sought to show that mulattoes and blacks were reunited under the presidency of Borno and that his own regime followed in the footsteps of these great revolutionary heroes. However, the Haitian state was mainly governed and funded by the Americans. Likewise, in 1968, François Duvalier ordered the reburial of Dumarsais Estimé. A colorful mausoleum was built in the Bicentenaire neighborhood and Estimé's remains were reburied there. When he passed in 1953, while in exile in New York, his opponent Paul Magloire, then president of Haiti, organized state funerals. Estimé's body was exposed at the Bicentenaire in an open casket to signify that noirisme was gone for good, according to historian Matthew Smith (2009: 160). Reburying Estimé was a way to reclaim his legacy at a time when the Duvalier regime became a full-fledged kleptocracy funded by the United States and the state a mere tool for maintaining a small elite in power. As Katherine Verdery has shown, reburials of political leaders allow for identification with their life stories and for a rewriting of history. Words can be put in the mouths of the dead, and even if their ideologies were polyvalent and ambiguous, the dead have a single body and a single name and can "present the illusion of having *only one* significance" (Verdery 1999: 29). Duvalier posed as the heir of Estimé in order to further this illusion of national unity and ideological continuity with the noirisme he professed in his youth. Duvalier, who became president for life in 1964, wanted to establish a dynasty and wanted his regime to outlast him. The Duvalier regime lasted 29 years, and its longevity cannot only be explained by the use of state violence or by foreign interventions that kept the Duvaliers afloat in order to prevent the fall of Haiti into the communist camp. The subaltern histories and their materialization in monuments, graves, and buildings acted as forces naturalizing state politics and rendering a certain idea of the Haitian nation palpable.

1926 Inauguration of the National Mausoleum (credit: Digital Public Library of America)



In *The King's Two Bodies*, Ernest Kantorowicz traces the medieval origins of English state authority in a doctrine that conferred a visible and invisible body to the king. According to this doctrine, two bodies coexist in the person of the king: a mortal “body natural” with physical attributes, and a “body politic” that incarnates at once “the government, the office, and majesty royal” (Lewis 1958: 453.) Also called the “mystic body,” the body politic organically joins the king and his subjects “together as head and members” (Kantorowicz 1957: 316). The mystic body evokes the failures and mortality of the natural body by making the king’s decisions permanent. The king never dies and only passes the kingdom on to another when his natural body passes away. The body politic always survives and goes on to live conjoined with the natural body of the new king. This doctrine of the crown as a double body mainly applies to the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods of English history, but nonetheless sheds light on the perennial nature of the legal systems of secular states and political values everywhere. While doing fieldwork in the streets adjacent to Haiti’s National Palace, I could not help reflecting about the striking similarities between the English kings’ bodies, and the “*corps naturel et corps mystique*” of Emperor Jacques Dessalines, whose remains have been buried in different parts of this administrative and residential neighborhood of Port-au-Prince. Dessalines’ presence, however, extends beyond the legal framing of the crown’s body politic as understood by Kantorowicz.

I encountered the notion of the two bodies of Jean-Jacques Dessalines in 2013, while visiting Dessalines-Ville (called Marchand until 2008) in the Artibonite region. Dessalines-Ville is a small urban center located at the junction of a vast dry plain and of steep hills on which seven military forts built between 1804 and 1806 are perched. Dessalines, who was born there, made this small provincial town the capital of newly independent Haiti in 1804. This was a powerful symbolic gesture, as it bestowed prestige to the nascent Haitian peasantry that made the bulk of the soldiers of the Haitian Indigenous Army during the revolutionary period (1791-1804). Today, this small town, which was once the first Black capital of the Americas, remains a center of political contestation and a major site of Vodou pilgrimages.

When I visited this place for the first time with my friend and field associate Aland Joseph, we met Monsieur Bob, one of the tour guides who brings (mainly local) tourists to the forts. Monsieur Bob also holds the keys of the two *kay spirituel* – spiritual houses – of Dessalines and his wife, Empress Marie-Claire Heureuse Félicité Bonheur (see Figure 2). The *kay spirituel* are 6x6 ft. (1.8x1.8m) houses where Dessalines and his wife had private ceremonies for the *lwa*, the deities of Vodou religion. “When they kneeled down on their knees and *fe ti sevis lwa pa yo* [had a small ceremony for the *lwa*],” as Monsieur Bob explained, “their mystical bodies were leaving their natural bodies. The mystical body is visible too. When Dessalines was assassinated on the Pont-Rouge, his wife saw his mystical body in the *kay spirituel*. She saw him dying. He died with her. She knew he was dead before getting the news from Port-au-Prince.” (Joos, Field Notes September 14, 2013).

The dualistic view of humans, where the body and the soul are separate yet intertwined, and the idea of the soul leaving the body after death traverse a wide range of religions in Haiti. However, the Vodou interpretation of life and afterlife emphasize the presence and agency of multiple spiritual bodies. After his passing, Dessalines became a powerful *lwa* who is generally associated with Loko Atisou, a key mystical figure of the Revolution and one of the most important *lwa* of the Rada family<sup>4</sup> (Jenson 2012: 615; Gaffield 2015: 202). As such, Dessalines is not only a historical actor who is glorified for defeating the French and paving the way to independence, he is also an active spiritual force whose agency extends far beyond the realms of religion. And once again, the most important material proof of his duality that he left behind are two simple worship houses that are today used to convey certain versions of the Dessalianian past.

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4 *Rada lwa* are the deities that act as guardians of principles and moral values.

Left: Kay Spirituel of Claire-Heureuse Dessalines;  
Right: Kay Spirituel of Jean-Jacques Dessalines



As Michael Largey puts it, the myths created around important political figures enable people to experience historical ideas “through metaphors that allow for multiple interpretations in the present” (2006: 69). As such, Dessalines as *lwa* – Ogou Desalin – is “a brave and selfless warrior pitted against the forces of slavery, as well as a gruesome reminder of the peril of attempting to bring about social change in the face of determined resistance” (2006:70). While agreeing with Largey about the political potency of contested historical narratives that emerge through religious practices, I argue that the presence of political leaders who reshaped Haiti is felt beyond the realm of myths and spiritual practices. It is felt in the material traces they left behind, in the places and houses they inhabited, or in the monuments where they are celebrated or desecrated. As Rodrigo Bulamah has shown, this presence of political figures is also felt in the realm of daily life, as ancestors – *zansèt* –, which refers to a native category that refers both to deceased family members and revolutionary heroes (Bulamah 2019). *Zansèt* left a kind of heritage in the form of material remnants that allow, at a ritual level, for the rethinking of relations between places, living and spiritual bodies, and at a quotidian level, for discussions and reinterpretation of history.

While Haitian revolutionary and counter-revolutionary leaders activated telluric political machineries to eliminate opponents or buy allegiances, the vast majority of them also took titles: Emperor, King, President for Life. They used political symbols and spaces—statues, street names, the National Palace, the golden crown of Emperor Soulouque or the many material markers of power that are today displayed in the Museum of National Pantheon in the very heart of the capital—to ensure the legacy of their political practices and ideas. The bodily remains of political leaders, their immaterial presence in the form of a “*corps astral*” (etheric body) or in the form of *Lwa* (Voudou divinities, such as Ogou Dessalines) and their enduring materiality in the form of houses, books, codes of laws, etc. are as important as the *corpus naturale* of the mortal political leader. In the meantime, these ethereal legacies that I have attempted to read in verses of vernacular poetry are carried by the social body that enables what Clifford Geertz names the “inherent sacredness of sovereign power” (Geertz 1983). But understanding the city, country and traces of political power as texts is not enough, and does not render the complexity of polyphonic embodiments of the state.

As anthropologist Uli Linke suggests, the diffuse presence of the state is to be seen in more than its symbolic, discursive or imagined cultural forms. “Political worlds have a visual, tactile, sensory and emotional dimension: the life of the state has a corporal grounding” (Linke 2006: 206). When Mèt Rosarion sobbed while stating the name of his favorite president, there was more than the “effect or symptom of the ideo-symbolic machinations of national discourse” at play. His visible emotions pointed to an ambiguous embodiment of a collective national culture that could not be enclosed in a readable system of political signification. In other words, the state enters our subjective experiences and moves in our bodies in seemingly imperceptible ways. It has an emotional force that has the power to hinder critical visions from arising. It partially enters our gaze and nourishes our anxieties, notably by relying on outward signifiers, such as race and class identification. Through the life story of Mèt Rosarion, I have shown the complexity and plurivocality of revolutionary poetics and ideologies, nationalist feelings and ambiguous positions vis-à-vis realpolitik through the conflicting values at play in one man’s state career and of its material traces. Port-au-Prince cityscape encapsulates political forces that presently haunt the country and that could make a forceful comeback. However, these affective forces, carried through material remnants, symbols, and images, are not linearly structuring political projects, rather they bring the forefront ruptures and ambiguities. As Ananya Roy suggests by borrowing Walter Benjamin’s notion of “dialectics as standstill,” the ruins and remnants of past political projects expose the ruptures and disenchantment contained in a materiality that bears witness to history (Roy 2011). Rather than trapping citizens in a given political project, the sensual state – or national matters – also open the possibility of alternative futures by allowing us to discuss, see and feel ideologies at a standstill.

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# The construction of identity in haitian indigenism and the post-colonial debate

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## Abstract

This article focuses on three moments in the intellectual elucidation of Haitian identity during the time that Haiti was occupied by the United States, from 1915 to 1934. It analyses the intellectual output of writers of Haitian Indigenism, which emerged during this period of crisis and its political developments. The article makes five main points: first, it presents the emergence of Haitian Indigenism; second, it turns to the first manifestation of Haitian intellectuals against the US occupation, considering the so-called 'writers at the margins of Indigenism'; third, it presents the position of authors of the *Revue Indigène*, particularly of Jean Price-Mars; fourth, it analyses the *Revue Les Griots*, concentrating on how François Duvalier makes political use of the racial issue. Finally, through these investigations, the article establishes a dialogue with contemporary authors who discuss the construction of identity within post-colonial debate.

**Key words:** Haitian Indigenism; Haitian identity; Post-colonial thought.

# A construção da identidade no *indigenismo* haitiano e o debate pós-colonial

## Resumo

Este ensaio se volta para compreender três momentos da formulação intelectual da identidade haitiana quando o Haiti foi ocupado pelos Estados Unidos de 1915 a 1934. Para isso, analiso as produções intelectuais dos escritores do indigenismo haitiano que surgiu neste período de crise e seus desdobramentos políticos. O texto possui cinco pontos: no primeiro, apresento o surgimento do indigenismo haitiano, no segundo, me debruço sobre a primeira manifestação dos intelectuais haitianos contra essa ocupação, olhando para os chamados escritores à margem do indigenismo; no terceiro, apresento o posicionamento dos escritores da *Revue Indigène* diante da crise haitiana; centrando-me na figura de Jean Price-Mars, no ponto quatro, analiso a *Revue Les Griots*, olhando para o uso político que François Duvalier faz da questão racial. A partir desse percurso, estabeleço um diálogo com autores contemporâneos que discutem a questão de construção da identidade dentro de um debate pós-colonial.

**Palavras-chave:** Indigenismo haitiano, identidade haitiana, pensamento pós-colonial.

# The construction of identity in haitian indigenism and the post-colonial debate

Frantz Rousseau Déus

## Introduction

Taking periods of crisis to be moments in which sociological, literary, anthropological and artistic reflections emerge, this article aims to present certain aspects of the social theories produced by intellectuals of Haitian Indigenism, an intellectual and artistic movement that emerged when Haiti was engulfed in a crisis that resulted in the country's invasion by the United States in 1915. Considering that Haiti suffered through slavery, colonization and imperialism, and since it has a long history of struggle against domination, national thinkers have sought to extinguish the scars of these institutions which still endure today. This ratifies the importance of both Haiti and the work of its intellectuals in reflections on the (ex-)colonized and the (ex-)colonizers.

Matters of class, race and religion are at the heart of the internal conflicts that had plagued Haiti since its independence. These matters were manifest in dualisms such as that between *nèg anwo* and *nèg anba* (men of the above and men of the below), *nwa* and *milat* (Negro and Mulattoes), *nèg lavil* and *nèg andeyò* (city dweller and "peasant"); vodou practitioner and Catholics; all of which are relics of Colonialism. Realizing the impact of this colonial heritage, Jean Price-Mars, the main exponent of Haitian Indigenism, appealed to the political, economic and, above all, intellectual elites, to overcome these dualisms which feed into social contradictions. He thus proposed the construction of a Haitian identity that respected difference, which would enable a non-hierarchical solution to the internal conflicts that have historically ravaged the country (Price-Mars, 1919; 1928).

The theoretical depth of this intellectual movement, as well as its contradictions, and how it gave rise to new critiques of coloniality and their subsequent developments, have convinced me that it is time to recover Haitian Indigenism, while also asking how its incorporation into theories of colonialism might benefit post-colonial debates. Much has been written on the Haitian Revolution, but this work often ignores interpretations by local intellectuals, particularly of pre-Négritude<sup>1</sup> intellectuals (Jonassaint 2013).

By analysing the Works of Indigenist intellectuals of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, this article focuses on three moments of the intellectual formation of Haitian identity. In this way, I stress not only the power games involved in the construction of an identity, but also how the instrumentalization of certain markers of social identity can be dangerous, and why the struggle for identity-formation must thus always be a critical endeavour, as a safeguard against barbarism. By establishing a relation between Haitian Indigenism and the post-colonial debate on colonization and the construction of identity, centred on the figure of Price-Mars (1928) and Stuart Hall (1995 and 2013), I show that Price-Mars's writings may confer on him the status of post-colonialist theorist *avant la lettre*.

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<sup>1</sup> The complexity of *Négritude* precludes a consideration of it in this article. I would just note that it is one of the Afro-French-Caribbean literary movements that emerged at the start of the 1930s. For a discussion of this movement, see *Bonjour et adieu à la Négritude*, published in 1989 by the Haitian scholar René Depestre.

## 1. The emergence of Haitian Indigenism

Haitian Indigenism (*indigénisme haïtien*), or the Indigenist movement, was a humanist movement with a sociocultural, anthropological and political character that took shape through the invasion of Haiti by the United States of America in 1915. The movement was a reaction to North American imperialism, against physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual colonization, and against racism, and, more specifically, colonial racism (Charles, 1984; Guerrier, 2008).

According to Jean Pierre (2009: 77), the creation of the *Revue Indigène* in 1927 is a key moment for this movement. One year later, with the publication of Jean Price-Mars's *Ainsi parla l'oncle*, the movement underwent a revolution<sup>2</sup>. The importance of the works of Price-Mars have led him to be considered the main theoretician of this movement (Charles, 1984; Fardin, 2009).

I should note that one of the main questions faced by studies of Haitian intellectual history consists in determining when Haitian Indigenism ends<sup>3</sup>. I will weave some considerations on this movement, shining a spotlight on the generation known as the “writers of the *Revue Indigène*”, exploring the question of Haitian identity as it appears in their writings through their proposal for a rupture in the conception of what this Haitian identity might consist of<sup>4</sup>.

Although my analysis emphasizes authors of the *Revue Indigène*, I will also consider intellectuals who had taken a stand against the United States Occupation prior to the creation of the *Revue Indigène*. My aim is to understand how Haitian identity was represented and how the *Revue Indigène* creates a rupture, particularly after publishing Jean Price-Mars in 1928. I will also deal with how Indigenism was interpreted by the authors of the *Revue Les Griots*, centred on the figure of François Duvalier, who later, on coming to power, instrumentalized the racial issue to consolidate his control over the country.

Realizing the dangers of the marginalization of the Haitian people by the Americans, and without turning their backs on the French legacy, the literature produced during and after this period by exponents of the *Revue Indigène* endeavoured to construct a Haitian identity founded on the valuation of culture, local values and African roots, through social education (Price-Mars 1928).

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<sup>2</sup> Price-Mars was a Haitian politician, diplomat and writer. He was a congressman from 1905 to 1908, before occupying diplomatic posts in Paris, Berlin, Washington and Santo Domingo. He was a senator from 1930 to 1935, and a defeated presidential candidate in 1930. In 1941 he founded the *Bureau d'Ethnologie d'Haïti* and the *Institut d'Ethnologie*, during a period in which the Catholic Church was waging an anti-superstition campaign (1939-1942). His commitment to the *monde noir* brought him international fame. With the publication of *Ainsi parla l'Once*, the writer of the *génération de la honte*, the Haitian ‘generation of shame’, came to demonstrate him a measure of respect, calling him *Oncle*, ‘uncle’. In 1956, his eightieth year, he was honoured by Haitian intellectuals and the biggest names in African studies. In that same year, Price-Mars was unanimously elected as the first president of Society of African Culture. He was considered for the Nobel Prize in 1959, and gained a number of prizes and honorary titles. By the time of his death in 1969, Price-Mars had published fifteen essays and numerous articles.

<sup>3</sup> Fardin (2009) is one of the rare critics to classify Indigenism in four stages. The first stage is called “the writers at the margins of the Indigenist Movement”, corresponding to the period from the invasion of Haiti by the United States in 1915 to the creation of the *Revue Indigène* in 1927. This period is characterized by a steep rise in national sentiment, and activism. The second phase extends from 1927 to 1934, the year in which the occupation of Haiti formally ended. The third phase, called *Revue Les Griots* begins with the creation of the eponymous Journal in 1930, and ends in 1940. Finally, the fourth phase is called “rebellious Afro-Indigenists”, spanning the period from 1940 to 1961. Fardin's classification is questionable, most of all because there is little reason to see the emergence of the *Revue Les Griots* as a phase of the movement – the ideals promoted by its representatives, particularly François Duvalier, do not square of those of Price-Mars's Indigenism. Although he based himself on Price-Mars's theories of Indigenism, Duvalier disfigured Price-Mars's ideas to construct a theory of racial essentialism founded on obscurantism that came to be known as *Noirisme* (Jean 2018: 62).

<sup>4</sup> The monthly *Revue Indigène* was launched in 1927, with the stated aim of publishing the work of Indigenist intellectuals. Only six issues were released, the last one dated February 1928. However, despite its short publication run, the ideas promoted by its contributors had an impact of Haitian thought, and influenced generations of writers extending into the present.

Identity, class, religion and “race” are venerable issues in Haitian society, but they gained new contours with the United States Occupation. Social contradictions were manifest soon after Haitian independence<sup>5</sup>. The emergence of the Indigenist Movement, however, opened new avenues for a critique of the nature of these contradictions during that time.

Indigenist analyses reveals how the country’s past extends into the present, since the legacies of slavery and colonization had destroyed, and continued to destroy, social relations in Haiti. They left Haiti in a state of permanent conflict, marginalizing the majority of the Haitian population and reinforcing negative stereotypes of their religious beliefs, cultural practices of African origin, and socioeconomic conditions.

Before Indigenism, there were already Haitian intellectuals who sought to defend Haiti while contributing to a positive image of the Black race. A study of Haitian Indigenism thus leads to an analysis of the social representations produced and conveyed by intellectuals. The works of Anténor Firmin<sup>6</sup> (1885) and Hannibal Price<sup>7</sup> (1898) were sources of inspiration for many of the Indigenist intellectuals, since they already defended a positive image of Black people at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, seeking to (re-)insert them in the modern, post-slavery world, reclaiming the common humanity of all peoples, and fighting for racial equality.

In the same vein, during the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, with the United States Occupation of Haiti (1915-1934), Jean Price-Mars (1919, 1928, 1929), Dantès Louis Bellegarde (1928, 1929, 1937), Stephen Alexis (1933), and others, acted vigorously not only to fight against North American cultural imposition and to construct a positive image of Haiti, but also to construct a Haitian identity that could overcome its internal dualisms.

As I have already noted, internal conflicts of various sorts emerged after independence, leading to the assassination of Jean Jacques Dessalines, the first president of the Black Republic. A chaotic situation began to develop in Haiti, with the persistence of contradictions, conflicts over political power by various social actors, attempts to maintain privileges, to accumulate wealth, and finally with imperialist interventions during the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. During this time, the country went through a crisis of chronic political instability. Between 1911 and 1915, Haiti had six presidents, four of whom only relinquished power in 1915 (Fardin, 2009).

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5 Haiti gained Independence in 1804 through a revolution carried out by an alliance of freemen (Mullattoes) and enslaved people (Blacks) (Hector and Hurbon 2009). After independence, the Mullattoes claimed the wealth of the former colonizers as inheritance, believing themselves to be their children. At the same time, the country came to be governed by a former Black slave, Jean Jacques Dessalines. Although it is impossible to deny a racial element in the political conflicts that culminated in Dessalines’s assassination, the authoritarian character of his government and the dissatisfaction of Haitians of all social classes with a set of political-administrative measures announced by Dessalines led to revolt against his government, and to his assassination on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 1806. Consequently, from 1806 to 1821, the country was divided into two parts: the North, governed by Henry Christophe (1767-1820), known as King Henry, and the South governed by Alexandre Pétion (1770-1818). There is a tendency to sum up the existing social contradictions as a dualism of Black versus Mulatto. Without ignoring that this was a dimension of these contradictions, I believe that they are more complex than this. According to Trouillot (1990: 109), the dominant classes were not exclusively made up of lighter-skinned people; and not all such individuals were a part of this class. In this way, Trouillot (1990: 127) allows that the matter of skin colour is always present within the Haitian state, without, however, emerging as an all-out colour war in public disputes. The political-ideological debates of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century between the liberals, *pouvoir au plus capables* (‘power to the most capable’), and the nationalists, *pouvoir au plus grand nombres* (‘power to the most numerous’), make this dimension explicit. In Trouillot’s formulation, both the categories ‘most capable’ and ‘most numerous’ continued to function as codes of etiquette behind which everyone could perceive the question of skin colour without framing it explicitly.

6 Joseph Anténor Firmin was a journalist, lawyer and an ardent defender of racial quality. He was born into a modest family in Cap-Haïtien in 1850 and died in 1911. He created a journal in his native town, called *Le Messager*. In 1867 he ran for congress, but did not get elected. Firmin was socially, politically and intellectually engaged and active. He was exiled around 1883, went to São Tomé and later to France, where he met the Haitian intellectual Louis Joseph Janvier and became a member of the *Société d’Anthropologie* of Paris in 1884. This was a decisive moment in Firmin’s life, which put him in contact with the predominant conceptions of race. As a result, in 1885 he published *De l’égalité des races humaines: anthropologie positive*.

7 Hannibal Price was born in Jacmel, in southeast Haiti, in 1841. He was a diplomat and a lawyer. Price was voted president of the Haitian Congress in 1876. He was Foreign Minister during the 1890s, and the Haitian ambassador to Washington, where he died in 1893. He was a member of the Pan-African Congress. Hannibal Price authored a number of works, among which the most famous is *De la réhabilitation de la race noire par la République d’Haïti* (posthumous book, published in 1891, in which he provided a critical reply to the British author Spencer St. John who had published, in 1886, *Haïti ou la république noire*).

Seizing this internal political instability, the government of the United States organized the military invasion of Haiti on the afternoon of the 27<sup>th</sup> of July, 1915. This was a painful period in Haiti's history as an independent country, when it became a veritable colony of the United States, a condition that violated the Haitian Constitution (Bellegarde, 1937). Faced with this situation, members of the Indigenist Movement not only fought against the occupation, they also proposed the construction of a national identity founded on popular culture and local values. Thus, Price-Mars (1919, 1928, 1929) attacked a set of prejudices and taboos that predominated in Haitian society, condemning what he called collective Bovarysme – Haitian shame of their African heritage and the association of vodou with witchcraft and superstition.

In opposition to what Jean Price-Mars (1928) called collective Bovarysme, a disdain for one's own culture and values in favour of those coming from the centre (hegemonic western countries), he proposes the motto *soyons nous même le plus complètement possible* (let us be ourselves as completely as possible). Through his position, Price-Mars argued that Haitians, and, more generally, Blacks, must stop being what colonial (particularly French) discourse makes of them, so that they may not only establish their own discourse, but also reclaim their place as subjects that share in universal characteristics. He was thus criticizing a western humanism that infantilizes Africans and Blacks, denying them an outright humanity. As Fanon (2008 [1952]) later realized and criticized, in western culture “to be human is to be white”. This presupposes that only white Europeans are gifted with perfection.

Judith Charles (1984: 51), a scholar of Indigenism, observes that the United States Occupation was a crucial period for Haitian social thought. The intellectuals of the time defined Haitian Indigenism as the search for an identity that emerged from anti-imperialist nationalism in the context of the United States Occupation. Publishing studies such as *La vocation de l'élite* (1919), and *Ainsi parla l'oncle: essais d'ethnographie* (1928), Price-Mars demonstrates the need to turn to popular culture, not just to resist the Occupation, but also to contrast a Haitian identity that takes differences into account. According to Corbisier (1967: 13), when those who are colonized stand up against the assimilation of the values of the colonizer, and reclaims her identity, everything that ashamed her, everything that she saw as a source of humiliation – the beliefs, values and customs – everything that fed into the inferiority complex of the colonized is assumed and rendered positive. The very name of the *Revue Indigène* makes this dimension evident during the United States Occupation<sup>8</sup>.

For a long time in Haiti, *indigène* had been considered a great insult. In light of this, Normil G. Sylvain, who wrote in the first issue of the Journal, claims: “comme on fait une manière d'insulte du mot indigène nous le revendiquons comme le titre, le point de vue de l'indigène” (Since they make the word indigenous an insult, we reclaim it as a title, the point of view of the indigenous) (Sylvain, 1927: 10).

The writings of Price-Mars thus paved the way not only for a positive evaluation of the history of Africa, of vodou religion and African myths of origin, but also for a positive view of popular culture and of those who were excluded, who lived in the hinterlands. At the same time, it questioned the values that were imported from the hegemonic West, particularly from the United States and France. Charles stresses that:

Indigenism can designate what is profoundly Haitian, Indigenism thus becoming synonymous with Haitianism, reflected in their literature, to a way of thinking and feeling that is proper to Haitians, their customs, their values, their beliefs, their cultural life, in brief, everything that is intrinsic to them. (Charles 1984: 7).

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<sup>8</sup> According to Jean (2018) the term *indigène* comes from the Latin *indigena*: *indi* or *endu* (in the interior, from the country) and *gena* (born, gestated). He notes that the term *indigène* can be used in two senses: as an adjective; and as a noun. *Indigène* as a noun refers to those who are native to a country or region, and also to those who have always inhabited a country; and it likewise refers to plants, animals and produce (indigenous plants, indigenous animals, indigenous produce) (DAF, 1932 *apud* Jean, 2018).

Furthermore, Price-Mars expounds on the responsibilities and duties of the elites in the context of the problems that Haiti was facing during that period. In the same vein, Stephen Alexis (1933: 57), in his novel *Le nègre masque*, tries to find a non-hierarchical way out, favouring the union of urban elites and peasants, Blacks and Mulattoes, in a common struggle against the United States Occupation.

### 1.1. Writers at the margins of Indigenism and the Haitian crisis

Intellectuals such as Dantès Bellegarde and Léon Laleau, who spoke out against the Occupation from the start – that is, before the emergence of the *Revue Indigène* – are called writes “at the margins of Indigenism” (Fardin 2009; Charles 1984). By assuming a critical posture to the occupation, Bellegarde displayed a strong commitment to French culture in opposition to the culture of the United States. In *Pour une Haïti heureuse*, the author (Bellegarde, 1928; 1929) reiterates the intimate relations between Haiti and France, stressing that Haitians belonged to Africa by blood and to France by spirit. Bellegarde (1928: 76) writes that “the French blood is mixed in our veins with African blood, and in our lips with the sweet *parler* (speech) of France”. Renouncing France would thus be equivalent to renouncing half of ourselves (Haitians). He stresses that Haiti was an intellectual province of France, and that there is nothing in this position that diminishes the Haitian personality (Bellegarde, 1929: 406). Bellegarde, as well as other authors active prior to the establishment of the *Revue Indigène*, perceived that resistance and struggle against this occupation demanded a conscience of what it means to be Haitian.

Although Bellegarde spoke out against the United States Occupation of Haiti, Price-Mars differs from him on what exactly this identity consists of. Later, however, according to Fardin (2009: 31), following Price-Mars’s recommendation, Bellegarde accepted the importance of Haitian folklore, arguing that its study was required to re-establish the Haitian person. Thus, Bellegarde (1937) points out, in order for the Haitian people to de-alienate, it was first necessary for them to self-conquer – that is, to recognize and reconcile with their African roots.

According to the literary critic Judith Charles, writers, particularly those novelists at the margins of Indigenism, spoke out against white-mania and Black-phobia, also writing against Africophilia. Their stance was in favour of an indigenous literature. Their writings reflect “deplorable spectacles that Haitian society offers and the chasm in which it continues to fall” (Charles 1984: 53). The novel *Le choc* by Léon Laleau, and other novels published in that period, sought to expose the main causes that provoked the United States Occupation, condemning the existing tensions between the elite and the masses, between cultures of African and French origin (Charles 1984).

According to Fardin (2009), the writers at the margins of Indigenism were infatuated with French culture, which was their source of inspiration. However, they recognized the existence of a national culture, precisely because they were national writers. According to Fardin (2009: 33), the difference between the writers at the margins of Indigenism (1915-1927) and those of the *Revue Indigène* (1927-1934) is that the former valued their French origins and did not want to renounce it. In contrast, the intellectuals of the *Revue Indigène* struggled to (re) construct Haitian identity, emphasizing African elements which had been unfairly despised and discriminated against. My main focus is the *Revue Indigène*, because it is in its pages that the debate on the construction of Haitian identity retains a contemporary resonance.

## 1.2. Writers of the *Revue Indigène* during the Haitian crisis

As one of the main thinkers of Haitian Indigenism, Jean Price-Mars criticized the behaviour of the Haitian elite, making evident the grave problems that society was facing. He appealed to the elites to clarify and conduct with dignity the spirit of the population (Price-Mars, 1919: 36). This problem was expressed in the way that Haitians conceived of themselves in this society at that time. Price-Mars (1928) drew the elite's attention to the fact that "the Haitian" is not *un français coloré*, a coloured Frenchman, as many in the society believed. They are Haitians *tout court*, people born in specific socio-historical conditions, who, like all human groupings, internalized in their souls a sociopsychological complex which was responsible for their way of being.

Price-Mars lamented that everything that was *indigène* (language, religion, customs, sentiments, beliefs) was deemed suspicious and in bad taste in the eyes of the Haitian elite and their nostalgia for a lost homeland. He stresses that the word *nègre* (Negro) was usually used in a pejorative sense. Similarly, the word *africain* (African) in Haiti was the most humiliating qualification that an individual could receive. However, this rejection of an African origin was not exclusive to Haiti. Regarding Martinique, Fanon (2008 [1952]) wrote that, "we knew in the past and know still today people who are ashamed to be taken for a Senegalese". Price-Mars (1928: 10) notes that a Haitian would rather be similar to an Eskimo than to an African. On Price-Mars's notion of collective Bovarysme, Parise writes:

The denial of Haitian culture, such as the damning of the Vodou religion and the prohibition of the Crioulo tongue in schools, produced a country with two representations: French and Crioulo, European and African, Catholic and Vodou practitioner, lettered and oral (illiterate), considering that, even today, the majority of the Haitian population is illiterate, spoken and written French being restricted to a minority (Parise 2014: 75).

This aversion to the majority of the Haitian population is linked to how Africa and post-slavery Haiti were represented in European history. In 1866, Spencer St.-John published *Haiti ou république noire*, in which he noted that "the Haitian population tends to lower itself to the state of African tribes, despite the neighbourhood of civilized countries around Haiti" (St.-John 1886: VIII). He further proceeds observing that "the peasant mass of Haitians who live in rural lands, who rarely have contact with civilized peoples, and who have few priests to teach them the true religion, have no authority that can prevent them from participating in barbaric ceremonies of witchcraft"<sup>9</sup>. Despite Spencer's work having been heavily criticized by Haitian authors, such as Hannibal Price in 1898, these criticisms were not enough to dispel the prejudice against peasants and vodou religion.

In 1912 there was a second "anti-superstition campaign"<sup>10</sup> in Haiti, led by the Catholic Church. This campaign involved a repressive attack, spearheaded by the clergy, to combat all religious visions contrary to the Catholic doctrine. Vodou was considered to be a set of superstitions, witchcraft practices, and, therefore, an obstacle to civilization (Clorméus 2012: 154). As Nicholls (1975: 666) reports, this campaign was strongly supported by the State, which, at the time, not only recognized the Catholic religion as the religion of the State, but also distributed presidential pamphlets encouraging the repression of the vodou religion, exterminating practitioners and *ougan* (vodou priests).

<sup>9</sup> Spencer referred to 'vodou', a religion of African origin that was only recognized as a religion in 2003, by presidential decree, signed by president Jean Bertrand Aristide, who was a former priest.

<sup>10</sup> According to Clorméus (2012), the first anti-superstition campaign formally began with the Accord of the 28th of March 1860, when the Catholic clergy was responsible for officially "civilizing" and "moralizing" the Haitian masses through the Gospel. Clorméus (2012: 105, author's emphasis) notes that: "In a report presented to Ministry of Cults in 1861, Father Pascal proposes a set of means for intervention so as to *moralize and civilize the Haitian Republic*, wishing to *abolish the vodou religion*, to put an end to the diabolical reunions that hindered the *spread of the Gospel* and the tranquility of the country. It is the source of conspiracies, and in it the cult of idolatry is still an honour".

In these pamphlets, President Cincinnatus Leconte (1911-1912) drew the attention of the peasants to the harsh penalties for those who practiced vodou, according to the penal code of the time. According to Clorméus (2012), this measure was welcomed by the Haitian elite and many intellectuals at the time, since they saw the prohibition of vodou as a path toward civilization. For these intellectuals, vodou had a negative impact on images of Haiti abroad.

It is in this key that Price-Mars will criticize Haitian historians who dogmatically reproduced these ideas. According to Price-Mars, they become obsessed with false opinions that the Europeans had of African religions, or religions of African origin:

For all authors of General History, for geographers, for travellers, explorers, the first essayists of the history of religions, Africa is the classic land of fetishism. However, it is astounding that, regarding other Blacks, we repeat, based on our Catholic faith, “The Blacks of Africa are witches”; and then, consequently, that those of Santo Domingo are also followers of witchcraft” (Price-Mars, 1929: 91-92).

The author considers that this view of Africa is too superficial and prejudicial. To deconstruct these prejudices, Price-Mars investigated the popular culture, beliefs, and religion of Haiti, that the old enslaved people conserved after four centuries of being transplanted from Africa to the Caribbean. In his view, a consistent investigation of Haitian culture should also take Africa into account:

To study African beliefs is to raise ourselves to the height so as to apprehend the most apparent expression of this imponderable that is the Black soul, and furthermore, to follow the modalities of its eventual transformations, its unconscious survivals in this colossal ethnic transplantation which was Black slavery in the Americas (Price-Mars, 1928: 92).

Jean Price-Mars was convinced that the de-alienation of the Haitian people demanded a new approach, which should defend the “Black race”, Haitian and African culture, and, at the same time, to question the hegemony of Western legacies. In *Une étape de la formation haïtienne*, he underscores that, during the United States Occupation of Haiti, “there was not an intellectual crisis, but a moral crisis. Which is defined by the collapse of the character of the Haitian as a function of the United States Occupation” (Price-Mars 1929: 80). Stephen Alexis (1933) raises a similar point. One of the characters in his novel, *Le nègre masqué*, was a false Negro, who hid her a face behind a mask. This mask, according to the novelist, resulted from her upbringing and the type of society of which she was a part.

Analysing Stephen Alexis’s novel, Judith Charles stresses that the novelist was aware that, for Haitians to attain the authenticity of their being, they first of all needed to accept themselves. However, the Haitian elite, rejecting a set of values and arbitrarily electing another set, always remained strangers to themselves (Charles 1984: 72). Like Price-Mars, Alexis waged a struggle for the spiritual liberation of Haitians. Following the steps of the *Uncle*, the symbolic character used by Price-Mars in his classic book *Ainsi parla l’oncle*, it was through maternal Africa that the Indigenists of the *Revue Indigène* (re)elaborated their identity, standing against cultural assimilation by western values. With the help of Black ethnic groups, national conscience was therefore taken to be an antidote to white racism. And, accepting Blackness *à part entiere*, the Black ideology will be a counterpoint to, and surpass, the dominant white ideology, whether it be North American or from elsewhere (Charles 1984: 77).

In the construction of a Haitian identity which takes into account the analyses of the thinkers of the *Revue Indigène*, the popular beliefs of peasants occupy a central role. For many of the Indigenists associated with the *Revue Indigène*, all popular beliefs are conceived to be phenomena than encompass the psychological and social character of a people. Looking for elements that are amenable to a construction of the Haitian identity, Price-Mars (1928) studies Haitian folklore, following the perspective of William J. Thorns. However, Price-Mars

sustains that, with the development of civilized life, old mannerisms, traditional customs and ceremonies were rejected by the dominant class, and transformed into superstition when conserved by the popular classes. For him, folklore encompasses all of the “culture” of a people that has not been employed in official religion or in the history of its civilization. We can perceive as well that the Indigenism, as a national movement also uses, at its base, European notions. That is, it is a nationalism that also produces itself by selecting European theories, and not only through their abandonment or negation.

In different writings, Price-Mars weaves positive considerations of folklore. In *Étape de l'évolution haïtienne* (1929: 85) he defines “folklore as the science of tradition [...] which provides an aide for other sciences and for the history of religion”. In *Formation ethnique, folk-lore et culture du peuple haïtien* (1956: 42), he defines it as “the sum of beliefs, superstitions, legends, stories, songs, divinations and customs upon which the primitive life of a people rests, and they constitute the scaffolds of a ‘culture’”.

Mindful of the importance of the folklore of a people, Price-Mars also investigates the customs and beliefs of some countries in Africa in a comparative manner, tracing the history of the Sudan, ancient Dahomey, Congo, and so forth, Price-Mars identifies similarities between African and Haitian folklores. Considering religion, mythology, beliefs, and other practices, he highlights the existence of a centre of spiritual representations in Dahomey called *Vodoun*. However, under other names, in other parts of Africa, there were also similar beliefs which shared a base with Haitian vodou. Price-Mars (1928: 56) stresses that “Haitian vodou is a syncretism of beliefs, a compromise between the animism of Dahomey, the Congo, the Sudan, and others”. He notes that Haitian vodou, during its formation, was also influenced by Christianity, particularly by Catholicism.

Colonial prejudices, as we have already observed, weighed increasingly heavily on Africa and on Blacks in general. Against this, Price-Mars (1928) criticized prejudiced and arbitrary views that considered Black Africa to be a place of witchcraft. In contrast, he showed how prejudice makes it difficult to see anything other than superstition in the religious sentiments of Black people, and that the manifestation of their beliefs was not seen to be an act of devotion. Thus those faithful to this religion were accused of all manner of evils, including the immolation of human victims in vodou ceremonies. This view was responsible for much of the violence inflicted on practitioners of this religion. Soon after Independence, in 1804, a number of repressive acts were carried out against vodou, led by the Catholic Church. The Haitian elite took this idea on board and continued to reproduce this very same representation, until it became generalized throughout the country. Price-Mars (1928: 161) lamented this fact:

We certainly do not know of anything more trivial than the belief which makes vodou into a cult of anthropophagy. What is worst is that this is almost the generalized Haitian belief in supernatural disease. These predispositions of the spirit inevitably lead one to consider death to be the result of witchcraft, thus leading individuals to accuse the *vodouisant* (practitioner of vodou) to be a witch. This is the potency that the poor minds of the people of this country dispose in what pertains to the *vodouisant*. Based on these prejudices it is not surprising that foreign journalists who come to this country publish in their newspapers sensationalist chronicles of Haitian barbarism concerning human sacrifices that they never saw, but gathered material for their narratives, which lack both sense and credibility, merely from the naïve beliefs of the country. [...] For about a year, perhaps months, we have been hearing details of a very strange story about people who have been dead for some time and who were found to be alive, in this or that part of the country.

This prejudiced representation was as diffuse among the Haitian elite as among the people, projecting a negative social image, causing the elite, above all, to increasingly ignore and to distance themselves from their African roots.

According to Price-Mars, Portuguese seamen, in their initial contacts with Blacks in West Africa, noticed that the population seemed to adore material objects. They called the spiritual manifestation of Africans a “cult of the fetish”, *culto de feitiço*. The Portuguese word *feitiço* derives from the Latin *factitus*, meaning artificial. Criticizing the interpretation of Portuguese seamen, Price-Mars notes that they only observed a part of the phenomenon, from which they intended to derive everything related to the religiosity and spirituality of Africans. According to him, fetishism is not a religion, and African Blacks do not therefore worship material objects. What they worship is the spirit that they believe to be incarnated in some forms of matter, particularly in great cosmic forces: Sea, Land, Rivers, Forests, etc. Price-Mars (1929: 92) concludes that “animism is the universal religion of Africa”.

Refuting the fetishism attributed to African religions, Price-Mars (1929: 96) stresses that, throughout Africa, even the most primitive people believe in an Être *tout puissant et unique* (all-powerful and unique Being). He compares the moral precepts that exist in Africa with those that Yahweh (God) passed on to Moses on Mount Sinai, claiming that there is no difference between the types of prohibition that guide the lives of believers. That is, both in Christianity and African religions, the individual is forbidden from stealing, killing, committing acts of adultery, etc. The authors of the *Revue Indigène* are central because they attempt to denaturalize the prejudices that weigh on the religion of Black people and, at the same time, draw the attention of Haitian intellectuals that did not want to recognize the role of African values and culture in the construction of Haitian identity.

Following the recommendations of Price-Mars, Bellegarde (1937) draws attention to the conditions in which enslaved people lived in Santo Domingo, underscoring that they worked for 18-hour shifts, in the worst conditions, and did not have the right to organize or even to gather, since they were not treated as full human beings. As stated in article 3 of Jean-Baptiste Colbert’s *Code Noir* of 1685, during slavery:

We Forbid any public exercise of religion that is not Catholic, Apostolic and Roman. That offenders are to be punished as rebels and insurgents by our command. We will forbid all groups to this end, we must declare them conventicles, illegal, and seditious, subject to the same punishments that will be handed out, even against masters who permit it, and who will suffer in relation to their slaves (Colbert, 1685, Art.3).

According to Price-Mars, all religion requires a means of manifestation – a service, congregation, devotion. However, no other religious and cultural manifestation was so watched over as that of the former slaves. As the above passage stresses, the former slaves of Santo Domingo were forced to submit their faith to the Roman Catholic religion, against their desires. This is made explicit in article 2 of the *Code Noir*, which states that “All slaves in our islands will be baptized and educated by the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church”.

The prohibitions and repressions forced Blacks to live in deep dissimulation. But they did not abandon their beliefs. At night, while the masters were asleep, slaves held great meditations. At that moment, they rejected their *défroque* of resignation and recovered their true personality, praying to their true God, who did not spill the blood of enslaved people, and who took no pleasure in the suffering of Blacks (Price-Mars 1929: 100).

As I see it, in the perspectives of Price-Mars and Bellegarde, the context in which those who were enslaved lived had an influence on how they carried out their rites. The fact that they were forbidden from manifesting their faith forced them to use the night, while the masters were sleeping, to pray, meditate, etc. This will ultimately confer upon it the character of a hidden religion – but the context in which it was practiced is needed to explain this dimension. These considerations were not taken into account by historians that studied the vodou religion after slavery, and thus many of them attributed to it a diabolical character, an image which persists today.

Through his considerations of vodou, Price-Mars reveals that it is a religion like any other religion, with its own theology, a system of representation through which African ancestors originally explained natural phenomena. He argues that:

Vodou is a religion, because all of its practitioners believe in the existence of spiritual beings that live somewhere in the universe in close ties with humans, and who dominate their activities. [...] Vodou is a religion because the worship of its gods requires a hierarchical sacerdotal body, a society of faithful, temples, altars, ceremonies, and, finally, an oral tradition which, no doubt, has not reached our days without any alteration, but through the deeds of those who transmitted the essential parts of this worship. [...]. Vodou is a religion because, through a meshwork of legends and the corruption of fables, it can unravel a theology, a system of representation through which our African ancestors originally explained natural phenomena, which remains latent in the anarchic beliefs underlying the hybrid Catholicism of our popular masses (Price-Mars 1928: 32)

After presenting a positive view of vodou, many intellectuals revealed themselves to be favourable to Price-Mars's interpretation. They emphasized his great contribution to elevate vodou to the level of a religion. Lewis Ampidu Clorméus (2012), who researches intellectual and religious discourse on vodou, claims that Price-Mars's greatest achievement was to have developed a scientific approach to vodou that did not offend the Haitian elites. Until the end of the 1920s, many literary writings with scientific pretensions condemned vodou in Haiti, generally describing it as a diabolical feast. Byron (2014), another student of Price-Mars's writings, emphasizes that the great merit of the writings of Price-Mars, particularly *Ainsi parla l'oncle*, lay in his contribution toward dispelling the notion of superstition attributed to the vodou religion, so that it gradually emerged as a marker of Haitian identity. Byron (2014) insists that Price-Mars's goal of constructing a Haitian identity did not aim to promote a Haitian cultural specificity as ontology, but rather to treat it as a process of the political and cultural integration of the social categories that had been excluded from the Haitian nation.

The United States Occupation was the trigger that enabled Haitians to (re)think their ways of acting in the world. As Souffrant (1991: 20) highlights, the Occupation acted as a starting point for Haitian intellectual thought, a review of values and a moment for questioning the existing political and social order. This moment of crisis was decisive for making Indigenist intellectuals conscious of the need to construct a Haitian identity anchored in plurality. The elite, however, was not (and is still not) disposed to forego its privileges. After the end of slavery, this elite claimed the place of the colonizers, trying to reproduce the latter's domination without the need for an occupation, acting in such a way as to prevent the masses from attaining a decent standard of living. To overcome these problems, Price-Mars (1919: 36) proposed a social education which is:

A discipline to which every individual should submit, and which can guide him toward his peers so as to carry out, together, the ideal of peace and reason. Outside this path he will know only violence and inertia of command. I take social education the victory that we must achieve over our disgust of treating with justice and humanity those with whom we are placed in contact by everyday relations: domestics, workers, peasants. Finally, social education is the discipline we must impose on ourselves; the obligation that we should engage ourselves to participate in, be it directly or indirectly, for the creation and maintenance of works that seek to attenuate material or moral misery.

The writings and proposals of Indigenist thinkers, particularly of Price-Mars, Alexis, Bellegarde, make explicit the difficulties in overcoming the legacies of the colonial past. As I have said earlier, since the beginning of the construction of the Haitian nation, conflicts of interest became increasingly frequent and intense. After abolition and independence, the post-slavery elites (Mulattoes and/or Black) revealed themselves to be ever more hostile to the majority of the peasant, working, poor population. Analysing the authors of this *Revue*, we can infer that the political projects of the elites throughout history did not contemplate the social inclusion of the masses. Haitian elites showed no interest in creating opportunities for the majority of Black Haitian peasants, but rather to exploit them and the exclude them, leaving them to die in chronic misery. As Roumain (1944) observed in his novel *Gouverneur de la rosée*, most of the population continued to live in a condition of misery, permanent crises, illiteracy, lack of infrastructure in social means, ecological problems, disease, discrimination, and so forth. These elements were compounded by the sociopolitical instability caused by conflicts of interest

of the most varied natures (“racial”; economic, cultural), which inhibited the construction of a political project that could include this exploited, marginalized mass of people. These factors made the dreams of the Indigenists seem distant, particularly for Jean Price-Mars, who had envisaged the construction of an indivisible nation (Ciarcia 2005: 4). Michel Rolph Trouillot has magisterially synthesized the opposition between the Haitian State and the Haitian nation. According to him, the Haitian State has historically constituted itself in opposition to the nation, because it has always assumed a predatory relation to the people (Trouillot 1990). The Haitian State and its post-slavery elites have sought, and still seek, to maintain, at all costs, the social, economic and cultural structure, with the self-same characteristics of the past.

As the main thinker of Indigenism, the work of Jean Price-Mars occupies an important place in our discussion. Not only did he publish plenty, he also elaborated a specific view of the problems that Haitian society was facing during the United States Occupation. The author faced the problem by proposing that the Haitian elite rethink its way of acting, enabling the integration of the masses by modern life, recognizing and respecting African legacies. It is in this way that a Haitian identity premised on respect for and recognition of the other can be constructed. In what follows, I consider how the work of certain authors of the *Revue Indigène*, particularly Price-Mars, were interpreted by some of the thinkers<sup>11</sup> of the *Revue Les Griots*.

### 1.3. Writers of the *Revue Les Griots* in the Haitian crisis

Many Indigenists agreed in the need to construct a Haitian identity based on a positive evaluation of culture originating in Africa. This is also true of the authors of the *Revue Les Griots*<sup>12</sup>. They admitted that the Haitian people result from a mixture of races from Africa and Europe. According to Viatte (1954: 452), the writers of *Les Griots* emphasized a set of elements that constitute the personal attributes of the Haitian man, of which seven are of African origin: “Super-human fanaticism; melancholy; mysticism; innate sense of ritual; heightened benevolence; compassion when faced with suffering; a naïve and unshakeable faith in God”. On the other hand, they highlighted Latino elements that compose the Haitian personality: “a capacity for literary activity; a taste for discourse; invincible desire for the ideal; enthusiasm”. The Griots thus saw the Haitian as being the convergence of two large branches. Charles (1984: 82) claims that the writers of the *Revue Indigène* sought to re-elaborate the Haitian mentality through the literary arts of the local culture. The *Griots* sought to bring about this reform through education, favouring the teaching of the history of Black Civilization, and Haitian literature, which was not then a part of the national curriculum, unlike French literature which was obligatory. As for the vodou religion, the *Griots* considered it to be a fundamental mark of Haitian identity, through which relations between Haitians and Africans could be established.

With the end of the United States Occupation of Haiti in 1934, the intellectuals of the *Revue Les Griots* revised the proposals of the authors of the *Revue Indigène* to, in their view, adapt them to the needs of the country. Tracing Haitian history, Denis and Duvalier (1948) present the class struggles that occurred in the country, noting that, along with the universal class struggle, Haiti was also the stage for race prejudice which had been instated by the colonizers to justify slavery, and had endured despite efforts at overcoming it. With the historical diagnosis of the writers of the *Revue Les Griots*, they proposed to take on the demands of the popular classes, setting themselves up as their representatives.

<sup>11</sup> In 1967, Price-Mars positioned himself against the writers of the *Revue Les Griots*, qualifying their work as pseudo-scientific (Price-Mars 1967).

<sup>12</sup> The *Revue Les Griots* was created in the 1930s, with some of its main representatives being Louis Diarquoï, Lorimé Denis, François Duvalier (Jean Pierre, 2009).

Later, they developed the *noiriste*<sup>13</sup> ideology, which can be understood as a simplification of the ideas of the writers of the *Revue Indigène*, keeping only the explicitly assumed idea that there existed a historical problem in Haitian society, which is that of skin colour, manifest as a conflict between Blacks and Mulattoes. Later, as they instrumentalized the matter of skin colour, Duvalier preached a sort of reverse racism as a solution. In his writings, Jean-Price Mars did not profess racism, nor did he propose a hierarchical solution to sociocultural conflicts. In order to show how to overcome the dualism between Black and Mulatto, Price-mars did not hesitate in taking his surname as a synthesis of these two ethnic categories, adopting a part of the surname of a Haitian Mulatto intellectual. His surname used to be simply “Mars”, but he adopted “Price” from Hannibal Price, who was the son of an Englishman and a Haitian woman. That is how Jean Mars came to be Jean Price-Mars (Nicholls, 1975). According to Nicholls (1975), this symbolic gesture affirms Price-Mars desire to prove that the Haitian is the synthesis of two racial nuances. For him, Haitians (Mulattoes and Blacks) should come together not only to defend the Haitian nation, but also to fight the prejudicial and arbitrary hierarchies present in the country.

Reiterating their desire to construct a “Haitian identity”, those who adhered to a *noiriste* ideology conveyed some concrete demands: to promote respect for the vodou religion; to value African culture (art, music, literature, history); restructure the educational system; and reduce the influence of the Roman Catholic Church in education. Through the *noiriste* ideology, exploring the contradictions between Black and Mulatto, Duvalier reclaimed the place of Blacks in political power, proposing to exclude the Mulatto elite which had, up until then, monopolized power. Nicholls (1975: 653) states that:

*Noiriste* authors built a political theory based on their psychological, biological and social ideas. They argued that political power should be seized from the hands of a political elite, and that an alliance should be established between the growing Black middle class and the masses. They proceeded to study Haitian history, and perceived that political power was in large part monopolized by the Mulatto bourgeoisie, serving only the interests of the small class.

After a historical analysis of the concentration of political power in the hands of Mulattoes, Denis and Duvalier (1948), in *Le problème des classes à travers l’histoire d’Haïti*, concluded that Blacks should take power from them. Unlike Jean Price-Mars, who had been a defeated presidential candidate in 1930, Duvalier was elected president in 1957.

Duvalier was always in favour of the discriminated masses, and against the anti-vodou campaign. When he gained power, the vodou religion began to enjoy certain liberties. According to Jean Pierre (2009: 91), Duvalier allowed vodou rituals to take place freely, and his sympathy for the religion gained him favour among certain *ougan*. According to Corten (2001: 51-53), he claimed vodou for himself, saying that he was empowered by vodou spirits.

Through the *noiriste* ideology, the Duvalier regime replaced national and class identities by a pretence “racial identity”, and put other forms of identity formation under his control. He established a totalitarian system, persecuting not only some members of the Mulatto elite, but also students, and forcing Black and Mulatto intellectuals and politicians into exile. Later, he waged a ferocious war against Communism. His regime not only subjugated peasants, but also prevented any form of opposition from emerging. To maintain his control, through an alliance with the United States, he created the Tonton Macoute militia<sup>14</sup>, also known

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13 The adjective *noiriste* is composed of the noun noir (Black), and it is tied to *noirisme*, an ideology developed in Haiti during the first half of the 20th Century. In the second half of that century it came to prominence, with François Duvalier as an emblematic figure.

14 A paramilitary group created by the dictator François Duvalier in 1959 under the name of the *Milice Volontaires de la Sécurité Nationale* (MVSN), commonly known by the name *Tonton Macoute*, or “Uncle Gunnysack”. They received direct orders from the dictators François Duvalier, ‘Papa Doc’, and later from his son and successor, Jean-Claude Duvalier, ‘Baby Doc’ (Diederich, 2005).

as the *Volontaires de la Sécurité Nationale*. In *Mémoires d'un leader du tiers monde*, Duvalier writes that the Tonton Macoute had only one soul: Duvalier; that they knew only one chief: Duvalier; and that they fought for only one cause: to keep Duvalier in power (Duvalier 1969 in Hurbon 1987: 19).

According to Hurbon (1987: 20), with Duvalier in power, the political system he instated gradually undermined all ties of family solidarity. He writes that “you can be scared of a brother-in-law, a sister-in-law, a cousin, an uncle, etc; for no one knows who in one’s family has a Tonton Macoute membership card”. He further notes that all of the traditional association in the popular neighbourhoods, in the field, were affected by the power of the Tonton Macoute, who monopolized public and private goods, and who repressed whoever they wanted to, whenever they wanted to.

Along with political power, Duvalier and the Tonton Macoute had religious power. They appropriated the mysticism and witchcraft attributed to the vodou religion to disseminate fear in the population, reigning so completely over the people as to penetrate the collective imaginary. The Duvalier regime operated through systematic violence and repression. The policies he adopted became an obstacle for peasants, preventing them from living a dignified life (Hurbon 1987: 21-22). All of the proposals of the former Indigenist François Duvalier in favour of the masses were nothing but empty words. His time in power brought no benefits for the Black masses he claimed to represent. Through the *noiriste* ideology, Duvalier sought to replace the domination of the Mulatto elite with that of a purported “Black elite” – the Tonton Macoute.

The construction of a Haitian identity, according to the indigenists, must necessarily involve the recognition and promotion of Haitian culture, the Creole language, the Vodou religion and values of African origin. When François Duvalier reached power, the ideals of indigenism, though appropriated by him, were systematically ignored. The proposal for the construction of a Haitian identity that could overcome the internal binarisms, as suggested by Price-Mars, remained far from being achieved. If another demand of Duvalier before being elected was to decrease the power of the Catholic Church in Haitian education, during his long reign (1957-1971) it was found that much of the education continued to be provided by *Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne*. There was hence no reduction of the influence of the Catholic Church.

Upon attaining power, Duvalier limited any sort of critique of his government. The acceptance of Creole as an official language of the country, alongside French, would have to wait for the new Constitution on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 1987. It was also with the new Constitution that Haitians earned the right to organize themselves into associations, to express themselves publicly, and to form political parties (Hurbon 1987).

Theoretically and politically, the thought of the writers of the *Revue Indigène* had significant effects insofar as they offered paths to overcome the crisis of Haitian identity. In a society marked by multiple conflicts, the construction of a Haitian identity, according to Price-Mars, would be a suitable starting point for overcoming internal contradictions.

The fact that the Haitian elites did not want to give up their privileges enabled the radicalization of the political movement through the emergence of *Les Griots*. The election of Duvalier should have been an opportunity to implement policies that furthered the emancipation of the exploited, discriminated and marginalized masses. However, his government was characterized by a contradiction between ideology and political practice. Thus, Duvalier’s *noirisme*, as it was manifested, was perhaps the most perfect expression of what Fanon called “double narcissism”. In his analysis of the dramatic effects of European colonialism on people who lived under this system, Fanon asks us to consider that an understanding of the relations between Blacks and Whites must first tackle the double narcissism that, on the one hand, imprisons Whites in their whiteness, and, on the other, Blacks in their blackness. This process, the author argues, results in a vicious circle in which there are Whites who feel superior, and Blacks who want to show Whites the richness of their thought (Fanon 2008: 26-27).

By defending *noirisme*, the representatives of this ideology were incapable of perceiving that the social problems that existed in Haitian society could not be solved by following a dualistic and hierarchical route. This, to a degree, barred the *noiristes* from understanding that they were part of the same oppressive, discriminatory and racist system. Overcoming social contradictions would thus demand of the *noiristes* that they stepped outside of their blackness, and that Mulattoes stepped outside of their purported whiteness. Their authoritarianism and elitism inhibited any possibility of dialogue to overcome the crisis in the country. Repression was the essence of this regime. An example of this is the assassination of the Socialist author Jacques Stephen Alexis, one of the critics of the pseudo-scientificism of the authors of *Les Griots* and the *noiristes*.

These observations on Indigenism are sufficient for us to realize that it was a complex, contradictory and rich movement. One may ask what we can gain by an article about an old artistic-political movement. Since it is a movement that is not often referenced by the critics of colonialism, and since the social, economic, cultural and political contradictions of their exponents endure into the present, I argue that we can gain a lot by establishing a dialogue with the writings of these authors. They can draw our attention to certain dangers that may crop up during contemporary crises, whether in Haiti or in other countries where the evils of colonialism and slavery continue to operate.

## 2. Price-Mars's Indigenism and post-colonial debates on identity

This article has a panoramic view of how certain intellectuals and politicians dealt with sociopolitical, cultural and economic crises in Haiti during the United States Occupation. I have drawn attention to the matter of identity, showing how it is always at the centre of a game of power. Without theorizing identity itself, as a final reflection, I have established connections between the works of the Indigenists and more contemporary debates on identity.

Although identity is a concept that has been amply discussed, particularly by the social sciences, it still raises debates of various sorts, concerned with explaining the position and affirmation of individuals as sociopolitical and cultural subjects in the social structures of which they are a part.

The conceptualization of identity changes in the same way that the idea itself of identity changes. Although, from the theoretical point of view, there may be elements in the sociocultural realities that can be used to construct types of social identity, the latter can only be apprehended through discourse and the analysis of representations. In *Identités et cultures 2: Politiques des différences*, Hall (2013: 22) stresses that identity is a narrative, a story; something constructed, enunciated, and not something that we find in a particular place. Concerning “Black identity”, Hall claims that it has never been “at our disposal”. It has always been an unstable identity on the political, cultural and psychic levels. Although Hall makes no explicit reference to slavery, I interpret him as saying that the violent exclusion of Blacks from the category of ‘human being’ by European colonizers precluded any sort of prolonged, positive self-affirmation.

Since the slave system was implemented in the American continent, an effective affirmation of Black people as subjects only occurred when Toussaint Louverture<sup>15</sup> defeated the colonizers. Article 3 of the 1801 Constitution, which he promulgated, says: *Il ne peut exister d'esclaves sur ce territoire, la servitude y est à jamais abolie. Tous les hommes y naissent, vivent et meurent libres et Français* (There can be no slaves in this territory, servitude is abolished forever. All men born here live and die Free and French) (1801 Constitution in

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15 The leader of the Haitian Revolution, François Dominique Toussaint Louverture, was born in Saint-Domingue on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 1743 and died on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 1803 in the Prison of Fort de Joux, in France. He fought for the freedom of enslaved Blacks, and was defender of the equality of men. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 1793, he declared: “Je suis dit-il, Toussaint Louverture. Mon nom s'est peut-être fait connaître jusqu'à vous. Je veux que la liberté et l'égalité règnent à Saint-domingue. Je travaille à les faire exister. Unissez-vous à nous, frère et combattez avec nous pour la même cause”. During the prolonged fight for Independence, Toussaint Louverture led enslaved Africans to victory over the European colonizers, abolished slavery and assured the control of the colony by the natives in 1797, governing the island until the 25<sup>th</sup> of August 1802, when he was kidnapped by the French (Périna 1997: 41).

Joseph Janvier 1884: 9). Santo Domingo is thus conceived as the first country in modern times to have proposed not only a reflection on men, in all of their social, economic, and racial complexity, but also of the “big problem of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: the colonial problem” (Césaire, 1960 in Périna, 1997: 37).

By approaching the matter of identity, Hall (1995: 10) offers three conceptions. The first corresponds to an individualistic conception of the subject. That is, identity is concentrated in one person. The subject that prevails in this conception is the Enlightenment subject, usually described as European and male, gifted with reason, conscience and action. The second conception is sociological. Here the identity is formed in the interaction between individual and society. In this conception, the subject possesses an interior self, that is his or her true self, but which is formed and modified in continuous dialogue with external cultural worlds and with the identities they offer. In this conception, identity bridged the interior and the exterior (articulating the public and private worlds) (Hall 1995: 11). In the sociological conception, identity is no longer something unified and fixed, as expected in the Enlightenment conception:

The subject, who previously had experienced a unified and stable identity, now becomes fragmented; composed not of one, but of many identities, some of them contradictory or unresolved. Concomitantly, the identities that composed the landscapes *out there*, and which ensured our subjective conformity to the objective necessities of culture, are being challenged as a result of a structural and institutional change. The process of identification itself, through which we Project ourselves in our cultural identities, has become more open, variable and problematic (Hall 1995: 11 -12).

Analysing this notion of identity, it is evident that negotiation, change and flexibility have become the essence of modern identity. The post-modern subject follows from this. According to Hall, this is the third conception of identity. It thus came to be seen as a “moveable feast: continuously formed and transformed in relation to the manners by which we are represented and treated in the cultural systems that surround us” (Hall, 1995: 12). For the author, it is impossible to exist in a secure, stable, unified and coherent identity. Insofar as the systems of meaning and cultural representation are being multiplied, individuals come to be confronted by a diffuse, confused and fluid multiplicity of possible identities, and they can identify with all of them. Identity can be modified according to how the subject is treated or represented – which means that identification is no longer seen to be automatic, but something that can be gained or lost (Hall 1995: 18).

This flexibility of identity in the modern world is conceived to be a crisis of identity. That is, “identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something supposedly fixed, coherent and stable is shifted by the experience of doubt and uncertainty” (Mercer, 1990 apud Hall, 1995: 9).

As we have shown previously, during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Haiti, a crisis made it possible for the United States, which had long had plans to (re)colonize Haiti, to finally occupy it. Haitian authors, in particular Jean Price-Mars, proposed a notion of identity as a broad category capable of subsuming the differences and diversities that existed in Haitian society. This proved necessary in order to overcome the internal binaries that had facilitated the United States Occupation of Haiti from 1915 to 1934. In Price-Mars’s view, a (re)configuration of Haitian identity premised on dialogue and negotiation would enable the construction of a nation in which sociocultural and racial discrimination, as well as economic inequality, could be annihilated. Difference and diversity would not, therefore, be motives for exclusion, nor for discrimination, because this identity should be constructed from plurality. Even changing his name from Jean Mars to Jean Price-Mars is an example of his personal efforts at overcoming an essentialist identity.

However, the movement itself reveals that the power game, the struggle for maintaining privilege, led the economic and political elite to adopt a position in favour of the United States, which had established a violent occupation of the country, subjugating all citizens, including the elites that hosted them. It seems as if the structural dominance that exists in modern societies inhibits a space for dialogue not only between the

dominated and the dominators, but also among the dominated – precisely because many of the dominated aim to occupy positions of domination, instead of fighting for the end of the colonialist logic of domination and exploitation. Through this domination, those who are in a dominant position seek to silence those that are dominated and, at the same time, to impose on them a representation which they find unfamiliar. This silencing is an act of violence, which makes the dominated a subject that appears to lack a voice. Such violence significantly affects how the identity of the dominated will be constructed, in as much as the dominated is not only denied as a bearer of rights, but also because his existence is monitored by both political acts and the discourses of the dominant. Yet this does not mean that those who are in the position of being dominated are passive, since they are always active in disputes to escape the position of being dominated.

The United States Occupation of Haiti tore open the contradictions of the country, making them clearly visible. It forced certain Haitian thinkers to question how social relations were constituted throughout the country's history, resulting in Haitian Indigenism, which was a movement of resistance and political and ideological negotiation, organized to combat the Occupation, and, at the same time, to (re)construct the Haitian nation. The movement was also important for proposing social theories, not only to solve the sociopolitical, cultural and economic conflicts of Haiti, but also to construct other multiracial, post-slavery and postcolonial societies. In this way, establishing a dialogue between Haitian Indigenism and other traditions of thought that seek to understand and overcome the evils of colonialism can enrich our understanding of the complexity of contemporary sociocultural relations.

Aiming to establish a relation with the post-colonial debate, relying on the synthesis of Sérgio Costa, I identify two founding elements in post-colonial thought: (i) overcoming the dualism or binary by non-hierarchical means within sociopolitical and cultural games; (ii) an interest in explaining the sociocultural traumatism of two sets of conscience, that of the (ex-)colonizer and of the (ex-)colonized (Costa 2006). In the same vein, Achille Mbembe (2006) provides various levels of critique that characterize post-colonial thought. In the first level, we find: (i) the heterogeneity of this thought; (ii) the unfolding of colonial violence inherent to a particular idea of reason; (iii) the projection of a *humanité-à-venir*, which overcomes the inhuman figure of colonialism and racial difference; (iv) deconstruction of the colonial prose, unmasking its power of falsification; (v) combating racism in general, and colonial racism in particular.

A second level of critique questions Western humanism and universalism, forging a path for a *politique de semblable* (a politics of the similar) and a recognition of the other and of difference as a goal. On a third level, post-colonial thought is constituted by *enchevêtrement* and *concaténation* (tangle and concatenation), which postulates identity as something that originates in multiplicity and dispersal. According to the author's analysis, the political force of post-colonial thought resides in the social and historical struggles of colonized societies, particularly their re-reading of the theoretical praxis of liberation movements. Although post-colonial thought is today the preserve of Anglo-Saxon academic institutions, and of intellectuals writing in English, it was inspired by French-speaking intellectuals and it would be significant to widen the debate to include authors from other subaltern regions.

Considering the importance of the above elements for post-colonial thought, and considering the specificities of Haiti (its Revolution, its intellectual debates on colonization, race, identity, sociocultural problems and internal politics, as well as its relation to the wider world), I ask whether the post-colonial debate would not have something to gain by look at Haitian intellectual output. Taking into account Jean Price-Mars's solution for the Haitian crisis in *Ainsi parla l'oncle*, his rejection of a hierarchical solution, his rejection of *noirisme* and the thought of *Les Griots*, his proposal for dialogue and negotiation, his suggestion that we reread the values of those who have traditionally occupied marginal or disadvantaged positions, and his efforts at questioning the values of the dominant – do all these things not make him a candidate for a precursor of post-colonial theory? What would be the effects of the thought of an intellectual like Jean Price-mars in

the reflexive developments of the post-colonial critique? I cannot answer these questions here. However, since there is a hegemony not only of the production of knowledge, but also in the institutionalization of certain theoretical currents; and since coloniality functions in a total form, as Frantz Fanon recognized; and considering that the field of the academy or institutionalized practices, and relations of power, configure the production, circulation and consumption of knowledge – all of this should lead post-colonial authors to be more critical both of their own postures and the dialogues they establish, so as to avoid reproducing the subalternization and/or hegemonization of certain intellectual traditions.

One of the inspiring aspects of the *Revue Indigène* is the will, and the commitment, of Indigenist authors to find and establish dialogue with other intellectuals from subaltern regions, including Latin American countries, the French Antilles, etc. Normil Sylvain raises this point: “*Nous sommes coupables d’ignorer l’Amérique Latine parce que les origines sont semblables et qu’un grand danger commun nous menace*” (We are guilty of ignoring Latin America because the origins are similar, and this is a great danger that threatens us) (Sylvain, 1927: 6). Thus, by agreeing that the countries that suffered the effects of colonization share common problems and latent dangers, these authors understood that a consistent critique of colonization and its effects must integrate subaltern authors from various parts of the globe. Despite the language barrier, this is what the signatories of the *Revue Indigène* did when they proposed that Haitians read Latin American intellectuals, such as San Juana Inês de la Cruz, Amado Nervo, Alfonso Rey, from Mexico; Lugones Enrique Larrela, from Argentina; Monlalvo, an admirer of Garcia Moreno, from Ecuador; Ruben Dario, from Nicaragua; Gonçalves Dias, Castro Alves, Gonçalves Magalhães, Machado de Assis, Ruy Barbosa, from Brazil, and so forth (Sylvain, 1927: 7-8). This would not only enrich the social and literary thought of Haiti, but also allow us to better understand how the legacies of slavery and colonization operate. The advice of these intellectuals continues to be relevant today. By widening the horizons of dialogue, subaltern critiques will become more fruitful.

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# The Black Caribs of Central America: A problem in Three-Way of Acculturation (Ruy Coelho) Presentation

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“The Black Caribs of Central America: a problem in three-way acculturation” (1948), by Brazilian anthropologist Ruy Coelho (1920-1990), is the first systematization of his ethnographic materials. The text also presents a research agenda that the author developed more clearly in his doctoral dissertation, “The Black Carib of Honduras; a study in acculturation” (1955), defended at Northwestern University, under the guidance of the renowned Africanist Melville J. Herskovits (1895-1963). I found the original version of this paper in Coelho’s personal files,<sup>1</sup> during a broader study of his academic training, professional trajectory and intellectual production, focusing on the seven years he lived abroad (in the United States, Honduras, Puerto Rico and France).<sup>2</sup>

I was never be able to determine why or for what type of publication the paper was written. Nevertheless, an indication in its heading *For D 35 - January 5, 1948*, indicates that it was possibly prepared for the interdisciplinary course, “The Psychological Basis of Society and Culture” taught jointly by Melville J. Herskovits (Department of Anthropology), Kimball Young (Department of Sociology) and Bob Seashore (Department of Psychology), at Northwestern University.<sup>3</sup> It is known that the course promoted a “great arena of debates”, to which these professors and their “respective cohorts of assistants and candidates for higher degrees” converged.<sup>4</sup> What is striking is that, in January 1948, Coelho was living in Trujillo, Honduras, where he was conducting his ethnographic fieldwork among the Garifuna (the ethnonym for those currently known as the Black Caribs) between September 1947 and August 1948. I believe that there was some mistake with regard to the date indicated, since the amount of ethnographic data presented would only be possible at an advanced stage of research.

Regarding the theme of this dossier, Ruy Coelho was a pioneer in two ways: in addition to being the **first** Brazilian anthropologist to do fieldwork research in the Caribbean, he was also the **first** anthropologist to study the Garifuna population of Honduras. Until then, the Black Caribs had appeared in reports and records of travelers, missionaries and writers, whose observations were undoubtedly accurate, but who often offered representations made through distorted and prejudiced lenses.<sup>5</sup> As an exception, the well-informed articles by Eduard Conzemius were the first to accurately described aspects of the language, historical background,

1 Part of his personal files are held by the Sociedade Rorschach de São Paulo, located in São Paulo, of which Coelho was one of the founders.

2 This research was conducted while I was a post-doctoral fellow at the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of São Paulo (USP), between 2014 and 2018. Funding was provided by the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP).

3 Cf. Northwestern University Bulletin (1949).

4 Cf. Coelho (1963).

5 Cf. Amaya (2007a).



physical characteristics and the most notable cultural and religious practices of the Black Caribs (or Garifuna, the name he was the first scholar to use ), without, however, placing them in a broader analytical and interpretative framework.<sup>6</sup>

Ruy Galvão de Andrada Coelho was born in the city of São Paulo, on December 21, 1920, in a prominent family.<sup>7</sup> After earning bachelor's degrees in philosophy (1942) and social sciences (1943) at the Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters of the University of São Paulo (FFCL-USP), on September 15, 1945 Coelho embarked to the United States, with scholarships from the Institute of International Education and Northwestern University, to join the Northwestern University graduate program in Evanston, Illinois. In the United States, in addition to attending courses at the Department of Anthropology at Northwestern University, in June 1946 he enrolled at the Rorschach Institute of New York, directed by German psychologist Bruno Klopfer (1900-1971), where he deepened his knowledge of projective psychological tests. Immediately afterwards, he participated in a short-term field research project coordinated by anthropologist Alfred Irving Hallowell (1892-1974) among Ojibwa, from Lac du Flambeau, Wisconsin.<sup>8</sup> The team used current ethnographic techniques and methods, and particularly Rorschach tests and free drawings to obtain information about repercussions, on an individual level, of changes experienced by the group.

As mentioned, between September 1947 and July 1948, with financial support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Coelho worked in Trujillo, researching the acculturative processes that affected the group's socioeconomic organization and belief system. Originally from the island of St. Vincent, in the Lesser Antilles, the Garifuna arrived at the Island of Roatan, on Honduras' northern coast, in April 1797, after being deported by the British navy. They are defined as an autonomous and distinct ethnic group due to specific socio-cultural attributes resulting from the encounter between Africans who escaped, in the first half of the 17th century, from wrecked slave ships in the turbulent waters of the coastal region of St. Vincent; with runaway slaves who fled the plantations of the surrounding islands; and aboriginal Indians who descended from Caribbean-Arawak. In two centuries of contact, during which they resisted successive armed attacks of the French and English, the Garifuna largely assimilated social practices and institutions of the native American populations, and the Caribbean-Arawak language. In the late 18th century, when the British Crown decided to conquer St. Vincent, most of the group's contingent was captured and deported to the Island of Roatan, from where they spread, in a few years, along the entire Honduran coast, and to settlements in Belize, Guatemala and Nicaragua.

It is quite likely that Coelho's decision to travel to Honduras was taken in conjunction with Melville Herskovits. In the second half of the 1920s, Herskovits began a program of studies on the problems of cultural change – or acculturation –, preservation and reinterpretation of African cultural institutions and practices in the New World.<sup>9</sup> He advocated the combination of historical and ethnographic methods to trace ethnic origins, geographical provenience and the cultural specificity of these “survivors”, which he called “Africanisms”. Herskovits was particularly interested in the religious, family, economic, linguistic and artistic dimension of the phenomena of cultural change and retention, and forged or refined an ensemble of concepts including: “cultural focus”, “cultural tenacity”, “reinterpretation”, “socialized ambivalence” and others.

6 Cf. Conzemius (1928; 1930; 1999).

7 His illustrious origins lead us to Joaquim Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva (1763-1838), considered the Patriarch of Independence of Brazil (1822), and Frei Galvão (1739-1822), canonized as a saint by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007.

8 News (1946).

9 Cf. Herskovits (1930; 1937).

Since the early 1940s, he was interested in conducting an in-depth study of the Garifuna people.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Herskovits tried to send one of his students, the African American Hugh Smythe (1913-1977), to Honduras. Nevertheless, his efforts were thwarted by the Honduran government, which did not authorize Smythe's entry and refused to provide him a visa because Article 14 of the country's 1934 Immigration Law, prohibited the entry of Negroes into Honduras' territory.<sup>11</sup>

The title "The Black Caribs of Central America: a problem in three-way acculturation" indicates the central issue faced by Coelho: the apprehension of the successful acculturative process that the group had gone through, to the point that it was possible to state that "even though their culture has a hybrid origin, the degree of unity it has achieved is very impressive". "It is inexact", Coelho asserts, "to talk of syncretism in relation to it; here the acculturative processes produced a true synthesis". In line with Herskovits' research program on the dynamics of cultural change, Coelho retraces the historical path of cultural elements that have stabilized, syncretized and shaped the body of Garifuna traditions.

In Coelho's "sketch", which, as he says, does not "convey the richness of the Black Carib culture", we can find most of the subjects that were explored, with a greater profusion of details and descriptive vividness, than in his dissertation and in articles derived from it. These include: the particularities of the language (its dual origin; gender markings); the prominence of religious life (the main doctrinal concepts; the profusion of supernatural entities; the rites and their officiators); the general principles of social organization (polygamous family organization; the sexual division of labor); and the calendar and mosaic of festivals (both incidental and solemn ones).<sup>12</sup> Were it not for Honduras' turbulent and explosive political situation, caused by the end of the long military dictatorship of the caudillo Tibúrcio Carías Andino (1876-1969), it is likely that Coelho would have remained for a few more months in Trujillo.<sup>13</sup> The article thus highlights one of Coelho's main qualities as an anthropologist: his sagacity and sensitivity in focusing on and describing "cultural themes" that are pivotal to the socio-cultural continuity of the Garifuna's society, which are still considered to be decisive by the Garifuna themselves.<sup>14</sup> It is no coincidence that his pioneering study continues to be influential. Since its translation in the 1980s in Honduras, it has been used as a bibliographic source for the group's poorly documented socio-cultural history of the first half of the twentieth-century. It also offers an ethnographic portrait of great evocative power that is unusually up-to-date. The importance of Coelho's work, since its translation into Spanish by the publisher Editorial Guaymuras in 1981,<sup>15</sup> is indicated by the fact that many of his research themes and explicative principles are considered by contemporary Honduran researchers, especially Garifuna intellectuals, including the most prolific among them, E. Salvador Suazo (1992; 1996; 1997).

With the publication of "The Black Caribs of Central America: a problem in three-way acculturation", we hope to contribute to the centennial celebration of Ruy Coelho's birth. Furthermore, we hope to demonstrate his pioneering presence in the anthropology of the Caribbean, an ethnographic region that, as this dossier attests, is increasingly attracting the interest of Brazilian anthropologists.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Herskovits ([1941]1958). In 1946, in a letter addressed to Douglas Taylor (1901-1979), a diplomat, linguist, and English researcher, resident of the Dominican Republic, who shortly afterwards began fieldwork among the Garifuna in Belize, Herskovits wrote: "The Black Caribs, I may say, have been a group I have wanted to see studied for many years. I even had a field trip all lined up for a young man who was taking his doctorate here. The unbelievable prejudice of the Honduras Government in refusing him a visa, even for research on the ground that he was colored, prevented the realization of this work. I am hoping that it may be possible in the future to get someone among them. They are one of the most strategic areas for study in the whole Afro-American field" (Northwestern University, Africana Manuscript 6 - Box 41 - Folder 44).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Anderson (2008). For the racial legislation and racism on Honduras' northern coast, see: Euraque (2004); Amaya (2007b).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Coelho (1949; 1952a; 1952b; 1961).

<sup>13</sup> For a closer look at the political and social tensions at that period, see Ramassote (2018).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Andrade Coelho (1981).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Andrade Coelho (1981).

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# The Black Caribs of Central America: A problem in Three-Way of Acculturation<sup>1</sup>

(For D 35 – January 5, 1948)

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The Black Caribs of Central America comprise more or less fifty thousand individuals, of mixed African and American Indian descent, living on the Caribbean Coast of the republics of Honduras and Guatemala, and the colony of British Honduras.

This ethnic group originated in the Island of St. Vincent, one of the Lesser Antilles. The first known inhabitants of St. Vincent and other neighbor islands were supposedly called Ygneri, and were extinguished before European settlers came in (Du Tertre, 1667, II, pp. 369-70.) Archeological evidence, though scant and imperfectly analyzed, seems to indicate their culture was related to that of the Arawaks of South America. This may be due to the fact that the Arawaks occupied the islands, fleeing from their traditional enemies, the Caribs. Those, probably pushed by Tupi-Guarani groups, invaded the Antilles by their turn. All Arawak adult males were killed, and the women and children were kept as slaves. These events were contemporaneous with the arrival of Europeans upon the scene.

In the time, the Caribs absorbed many cultural traits from Arawak women. In the language, there came into being the curious phenomenon of dichotomy between feminine (Arawak) forms, and masculine (Carib) ones, which persists even today.

French and English colonizers came to the Antilles during the XIIth century, and divide the islands between them. In St. Vincent and Dominica, they lived side by side, though not always peacefully. Fruitless attempts were made at converting the natives to Christianity, and making slaves out of them. The experience with African slaves in other parts of the New World had been so successful they felt encouraged to try it. Slave ships started calling the ports of the new colonies.

In 1661 and 1675 several Spanish slave ships were wrecked off the coast of St. Vincent, and the Negroes made for the hills and jungles of the center of the island. They were soon joined by runaway slaves from all the islands. At first they were kept in dominance by the Caribs, but soon revolted against their rule, and became free and independent. They had, however, adopted many Indian customs, including the peculiar manner of deforming the head of the infants<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The material for this paper was obtained on a fieldtrip to Honduras, during the years 1947 and 1948, financed by the Social Science Research Council of Northwestern University, and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The author wants to acknowledge his great debts to professor and Mrs. Melville J. Herskovits, and to Mr. Douglas Taylor. Their help made this study possible.

<sup>2</sup> Bryan Edwards, quoting Sir William Young, the first British governor of St. Vincente, informs that our people were originally Mocoos, a nation from the Bight of Benin (Bryan Edwards, 1807, pp. 420-3). Mr. Douglas Taylor, in a letter, identified tentatively these Mocoos as the Efik of Southern Nigeria.

By the close of the century, there were two groups in St. Vincent: the “Red” or “Yellow” Caribs, and the Black Caribs, always at war with each other and with the English and French planters, continuously forming and breaking precarious alliances. In 1719 the “Red” Caribs called the French to their aid and regular troops were sent to Martinique. But the Negroes resisted successfully, and the French, soon discouraged, returned to Martinique. The “Red” Caribs were then attacked by the Black Caribs. Those who were not killed passed into the Black group, or escaped to other islands, or even back to the South American continent.

During the wars between France and England, the French made allies wherever possible, of their one-time enemies, and through such alliance maintained a firm grasp on the Antilles. The Black Caribs, under such an agreement, became increasingly powerful and prosperous. In 1773 they signed a treaty with the British government, and lived in peace for twenty years. They were able then to produce sugar and fruits in their own estates, and, being skillful boatmen, took their merchandise over the rough surf and the rocks and sandbars to the ships anchored off the shore. Du Valle, a brother to the supreme chief, is reported having possessed nine African slaves to work his plantation. (Brian Edwards, II, 1807, pp. 420).

The French Revolution put an end to this golden period. In 1793 Victor Hughes came to the Antilles who was a personal friend of Robespierre. He must have been a man of unusual talents, for, with the help of almost no French troops, he organized popular armies in the islands and waged war on the British. The Black Caribs were eager to join in the fight on the side of their old friends. A fleet was sent from England under the command of Sir Ralph Abercrombie, and the Antilles, one by one, was brought once again under British rule. The situation in St. Vincent, though, was considered delicate, for the English landowners were too few and too weak to be able to dominate the Black Caribs without military help. The decision was taken to deport them *en masse*. This was done in 1797, and they were taken to the island of Roatan in the Bay of Honduras.

England being at war with Spain, Ramon Anguiano, governor of Honduras, imagined the Spanish colony was being invaded. He sent Don Jose Rossi y Ruby with numerous troops to defend the island. The Black Caribs did not oppose resistance, and soon became very friendly with the Spaniards. They were invited to come ashore to the town of Trujillo. From Trujillo they spread all over the Caribbean coast.

From then on the history of the Black Caribs is part of the intricate and complex panorama of Central Americana history. The details of it are not essential to the purpose of this study. In the numerous wars and revolutions in which they took part, they seem to have deserted by fortune, always defeated and constantly on the run. It is obvious that they could not have the opportunity to develop their commerce and acquire wealth, as in St. Vincent in former days. Being born traders, and seafaring people, they took to smuggling, and became very proficient in it.

Even though their culture has a hybrid origin, the degree of unity it achieved is very impressive. It is inexact to talk of syncretism in relation to it; here the acculturative processes produced a true synthesis.

Let us first of all take the language. The Black Caribs speak the Carib-Arawak language of the Island Caribs, with numerous words taken from French and Spanish, and some from English. Traces of an African vocabulary are so tenuous they could be neglected without vitiating the true of the general picture. According to Taylor, however, an African influence is to be looked for to some extent in the phonology; in the syntax, particularly in the way of saying things, such as are to be found in the whole Caribbean area and in all Creole dialects; and in the introduction of grammatical gender into a language which previously had none<sup>3</sup>. It is striking, in the first instance, that those people, who, as far as phenotypic appearance is concerned, are undistinguishable from other New World Negro populations, should speak an American Indian language.

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3 Douglas Taylor, letter dated 18th October, 1947.

Material culture and technology are also almost pure Indian. The principles food-stuffs of the Black Caribs are the cazabe or manioc, and different varieties of bananas and plantains. The cazabe is planted and taken care of by women, who also harvest it, grate it, and prepare the cazabe bread. After peeling and grating, the cazabe is put into the basketry work squeezer, known to them as ruguma (snake), which, under the name of matapi, tipiti, and other, is to be found over large areas of the South American continent. Fish is almost the sole source of proteins. In the cuisine, however, we must note the extensive use of coconut oil, and the preparation of certain dishes, as typical African traits. The agricultural tools in use nowadays are, of course, European; so is the gridiron on which the cassava bread is baked, and the hooks and some other fishing implements.

Religion presents the most complete fusion of Indian, African and European elements. The Black Caribs have adopted the Catholic faith, imposed on them by the European invaders, without altogether renouncing their aboriginal beliefs. But, in their conception of the world, besides God, which is called Bungiu (from the French ‘bon Dieu’) and his phalanxes of angels and saints, there are other equally powerful beings. As the first are worshipped through the intermediary of the white priest, so the latter must have the buyies (medicinemendiviners) to attend to the needs of their cult.

The buyies have, as supernatural assistants, the hiúruha, a term under which are classed some spirits of the dead (generally not of one’s own family), but mainly air, sea, and bush spirits. The hiúruha are protectors of the people at large, but never manifest themselves to laymen. It is easy to track back the hiúruha to the Yurukan of the Mainland, which are to be met everywhere, and not only Carib and Arawak groups; for instance, the Mayan god Huracan (“heart-of-wind”). (Roth, 1912, p. 165).

The main part of the religious system of, however, the gubida, or family dead, cult. This is clearly an African retention ancestor worship, as far as could be ascertained being either completely unknown to American Indian groups, or, where known, rather unimportant.

Though hiúruha and gubida are associated in the chief ceremonies of the ritual, the main concern of every devotee are his own family dead. The gubida are supposed to take the same interest in their families as when they were alive. Now being powerful spirits, they are held to be able to protect their living relations against dangers of all kind, and lend to their descendant’s supernatural help for their earthly enterprises. A man should never neglect his religious duties towards his ancestors (which also include masses said by the priest), lest their wrath should be aroused and their protection over the family withdrawn, leaving him, as well as his wife and children, exposed to all forms of spiritual and physical perils. In the ritual itself, African and American Indian retentions are found completely merged; for instance, side by side with spirit possession, which follows dancing to the sound of drums, we find the use of tobacco smoke for a healing and mystical purposes. The most interesting feature is that worship of African gods was not retained; even their names are unknown. The ritual language of religion is Carib-Arawak, and some archaic terms of those languages familiar only to buyies and their close followers, are even included in their rituals.

The saints and angels of the Catholic church, under the supreme rule of Bungiu, the gubida and hiúruha, are regarded as benevolent protectors. The less pleasant aspect of the worldview comprises various spirits called by the general term of áhari ubau (nightmares of the earth) or anureme uabau (masters of the earth). The cadejo and the timbo, supernatural animals of the order of werewolves, found all over Central America, are clearly European. In other cases, the question of provenience is very much obscured. The agayuma, a river siren, is probably the product of triple cultural convergence; and likewise, the belief in ghosts, here named úfiñeu, and mafia, which Caribs translate by the Spanish word “diablo”, though they are of an impish rather than truly diabolical nature. The buru (formerly buruha from the Spanish “bruja”, witch), a vampire that flies by night in the guise of a bat or an owl, is another instance of three-way convergence. The fusion between Indian and Negro elements gave the ügüriu, appearing generally under the form of a lizard, or, more rarely, as a crab. The ügüriu is a family curse, transmitted by the feminine line.

This malicious spirit must be propitiated with appropriate food offerings and ceremonies, lest it may “enter the head” of women making them insane. It always kills the first-born child of the woman it haunts, and its poisonous breath or licking causes other members of the household to be afflicted with malignant fevers or skin diseases.

Mild skin diseases, like rashes, especially in children, can be caused by the úmeu, whose conception also falls under the category of Indian-Negro acculturation. Úmeus are little creatures no more than two feet high, possessing a human outward appearance, who are said to ride large fish such as the meru, or roam by the fringe of the surf in groups of four. When a large fish is brought into the house, if the proper precautions are neglected, an úmeu may come with it- a striking cultural explanation for allergies, which are hardly better understood among the Black Caribs than in our own culture...The silk-cotton tree is held as sacred both in Africa and America, being the abode of a spirit. This spirit is called peingalíwa or tongalíwa by the Black Caribs. Since the peingalíwa is the supernatural being who is more frequently sought by those wish to establish a pact with him, it is obvious that those who “had firsthand information” were not eager to impart it. Of other supernatural beings, twenty to thirty independent versions which corroborate each other in the highest degree, were recorded; in the present case they were but few and at variance with each other. An old woman stated that once, on her way to Trujillo, after midnight, she was stopped by a tall man with shining eyes, dressed as general. He was very deferential to her, and after inquiring on the whereabouts of a prominent citizen of the town, recompensed her liberally. She is sure it was the peingalíwa on his way to dun a debtor...The account of a cattle herder’s son may also be cited. This man’s father had confessed to him to have once had a pact with an evil spirit, who appeared as a little black man, dressed in a loose hanging garment of green color and a green cap. Other accounts, though differing in certain points, follow this general pattern.

An example of predominantly American Indian retention is found in the stories concerning the sucia, which can be traced back to similar Amazonian legends. The sucia is a feminine demon who assumes the form of a loved or desired woman, a man’s sweetheart or mistress, and leads him astray in the deep jungle. When they are far enough away, she suddenly reveals herself to him in her true appearance and, holding her shriveled breasts in her hands, shout: “Come to me! I am your mother!” At this the man loses his mind and dies of starvation in the forest; or, if he is still able to find his way back, will be a passive, staring idiot until his death.

The list of Black Carib supernatural entities is by no means exhausted, though others do not show identifiable connections. Their great number should not be interpreted as meaning that these people live in terror of the supernatural. It is true that the whole world is conceived as swarming with hostile, cunning beings, who only wait for a momentary slip to pray upon one. But the righteous man, who has consciously discharged his duties toward the Catholic church, his ancestors, and other protective powers, has nothing to fear.

As concerns social organization, an interesting independent family form among Caribs and Africans made for the present Black Carib type. Pre-Colombian Island Caribs had a polygynous family organization, stressing matriliney with preferential cross-cousin marriage. Women were economically independent, to a large extent, for they were the crop raisers, and, except for “felling the garden”, all agricultural work was done by them. They lived in their own huts; the husband used to live for a lunar month in the hut of each wife in succession. He had the obligation of providing the wife with whom he was living with fish, while she would contribute garden produce, and prepare the food for the husband. (Du Tertre, 1667, II, pp. 378-79) Identical institutions prevail in many parts of West Africa, except for the fact that there a husband visits each wife for a period of a week.

Among the Black Caribs, today, vestiges of preferential cross-cousin marriage are to be found only in the language. In spite of the tremendous campaign the Catholic church has been carrying on for centuries, they did not renounce polygamy. As of old, a man has a legal wife (from the Catholic point of view), but he may build a house and “fell gardens” to many more women, who became his damas. It is very rare for a young man to marry his bride at once. The normal thing for young people is become endamado first.

If the relationship thus established proves to be satisfactory to both partners, money may be saved for marriage ceremony and the celebrations which will mark it. The endamado relationship is but little institutionalized. Men obey only the dictates of their fancies in spending days away from their “legal” homes, with one or other of their damas.

Black Caribs are well known in Central America for their love of dancing and rejoicing. On the occasion of wakes, relatives and friends of the deceased go to this house, where they partake of food and hiyú (cassava beer), the more intimate friends being also given a drink or two of rum. People assembled under the cover of sails attached to the roofs of two neighboring houses listen to the stories of some renowned story-teller, never missing the opportunity of making a bawdy comment, or joining heartily in a song. No entertainer in the world can wish for a more responsive and better audience. At wakes, children play games of skill, and there are card tables for gamblers. Young people form circles, inside of which are the drummers and the dancers, who move in rhythm to the drum beats and singing and hand clapping of those who stand around them. All this is believed to delight the dead, and to send him happy and contented on his journey to the ghost realm. If the dead was an adult, the family will hold a novenario (a daily rosary) for nine days, at the end of which another party is held. These who are only slightly familiar with New World cultures will easily recognize the mingling of Catholic and African elements.

Christmas celebrations are colorful and elaborate. Old Iberian autos and pastorelas (mystery plays) are performed in many homes. Groups of wáriní (masked dancers), richly attired go from house to house, dancing for small gifts of money and drinks. Other similar groups are koropatya, wanaragawa, and piamanádi, whose performers go through a traditional ballet with a short plot, involving a persecution, death and resurrection of a central character, with many intervening incidents.

Easter is the occasion of the old play of Christians and Moor, known locally as juego de tiras, dear to the hearts of the Spanish and Portuguese peasants, and maipoli (Maypole), also of the definitive European origin.

This sketch cannot, of course, convey the richness of Black Carib culture. We can but indicate to what degree the usual picture of piece-meal borrowing, generally presented by acculturative situations is not here to be found. We are told Ashanti weavers hold European materials in high value, not because of their patterns, but only for the strength and quality of the thread in them. Those threads are taken apart, and reworked in the native handlooms, according to their own standards of craftsmanship. This simile perhaps reveals best how the culture of the Black Caribs of Central America has achieved the unity it is found today to manifest.

\* The orthography of Garifuna words used in this article has been updated in accord with current norms.

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# Beyond exceptionalism: notes on Michel-Rolph Trouillot's “The odd and the ordinary”

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Originally published in 1990, in the third issue of the journal *Cimarrón: New Perspectives on the Caribbean*, the article by Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1949-2012), **The odd and the ordinary: Haiti, the Caribbean, and the World** was written by the Haitian anthropologist in a paradigmatic moment in the history of his native country and his academic trajectory.<sup>1</sup> Since 1986, after the long and violent period of the Duvalier dictatorship, democratic initiatives took shape and new progressive political debates emerged in Haiti.<sup>2</sup> At this time, Trouillot, who had left Haiti in 1968, precisely because of political persecution, was establishing himself in the North Atlantic as a researcher and university professor.<sup>3</sup> Trouillot taught at Duke University, beginning in 1983, and for the next five years helped create the Caribbean Studies Program there (Woodson & Williams, 2013). Shortly after finishing his Ph.D. in the Atlantic History and Culture Program at Johns Hopkins University in 1985, he became a professor at this institution, where he remained until 1998, when he was hired by the prestigious Department of Anthropology at the University of Chicago, where he taught for the rest of his life.<sup>4</sup>

1 The journal *Cimarrón: New Perspectives on the Caribbean* was created in 1985, linked to the *Association of Caribbean Studies*, at the City University of New York (CUNY). It aimed to fill the gap in US intellectual production on the Caribbean. The editor of the first edition, Basil Wilson, was a member of the John Jay College Department of African American Studies. Since the first issue, the journal has privileged work by Caribbean intellectuals and writers (Goldway, 1986).

2 Jean-Claude Duvalier, *Baby Doc*, was overthrown in 1986 through a joint civil society movement, articulated with the Catholic Church and supported by the Haitian diaspora and various international actors, ending a 29-year regime. Imposed by his father, François Duvalier (1907-1991), *Papa Doc*, a few years after his election in 1957, the Duvalierist dictatorship and its authoritarian mechanisms were also object of Trouillot's sociological, anthropological and historiographical interest. The author developed the theme in the book *Haiti, State against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism*, published in 1990 concomitantly with the article we present here, exerting a strong influence on later works. See, for instance, Dubois (2012), Hector & Hurbon (2009); Andrade (2019).

3 It is important to note that Trouillot belongs to a family of Haitian intellectuals, which, as he writes in the first line of the preface to his book *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995) was particularly interested in history: “I grew up in a family where history sat at the dinner table” (1995, p. 15). His father, Ernest Trouillot (1922-1987), was a lawyer, teacher and even host of a television program about Haitian history. His paternal uncle, Henock Trouillot (1923-1988), was a renowned historian and for many years head of Haiti's National Archives. For more details on Trouillot's biography see: Woodson, (s / d; 2013); Bonilla (2014).

4 Trouillot died in Chicago at age 61 from a brain aneurysm. His obituaries show the extent of his contribution to the social sciences, from Caribbean studies to anthropological theory: Scott (2012); Woodson & Williams (2013); Price (2013); Dubois (2013).



**The odd and the ordinary** is thus part of a series of works published by Trouillot since the 1990s. Not by chance, this was when the author began to reflect more systematically on contemporary Haiti. It followed at least a decade of studies dedicated to understanding the colonial history of Saint Domingue – ranging from important academic articles written in English (Trouillot, 1981, 1982) to an early work published in Haitian Creole, a language that all Haitians speak, which was a pioneering political effort to tell the history of the Haitian Revolution through the prism of historical materialism to a Creole speaking audience (Trouillot, 2012 [1977]). He also conducted important ethnographic fieldwork on the island of Dominica, a study that became his doctoral thesis (Trouillot, 1988). Starting with the publication of *Les Racines Historiques de l'État Duvaliérien* (1986) – which four years later, and with some adaptations, became the classic *Haiti, State Against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism* (1990b) – he offered systematic reflections on Haitian political history, its relationship with the Caribbean and global capitalism, and, ultimately, on Haiti's position in the Western anthropological imaginary.

Without putting aside comparative approaches, it was from these empirical materials that Trouillot developed groundbreaking analyses on post-plantation contexts: from the historical autonomy of the state in post-colonial contexts and the formation of authoritarian rhetoric (Trouillot, 1990b; 1992) to creolization and sociogenesis processes in regions that we can identify today as part of the geography of the African diaspora (Trouillot, 1990a; 2006). Two other studies by the author recently translated into Portuguese are fundamental examples of his work in the 1990s: the article “The Caribbean region: an open frontier in anthropological theory” ([1992] 2018), dedicated to understanding the construction of the Caribbean as an ethnographic region and anthropological object, and the book *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* ([1995] 2016), in which he discusses how the production of history, through both social practices and narratives, is shaped by situated power relations.<sup>5</sup>

Specifically in **The odd and the ordinary**, Trouillot reflected in a manner similar to what Edward Said (1935-2003) had done years earlier with *Orientalism* (1990 [1978]), in which the Palestinian author pointed to the construction of a fictive East by the West as a kind of inverted mirror. Said argued that this Orient is more related to Western epistemological assumptions and imperialist projects than with the Eastern world itself, its diversity and history. In the same direction, Trouillot discussed the dangers of treating Haiti as a historical and sociocultural exception, an interpretation that has its roots in analyses, especially those of foreign intellectuals and travelers, who emphasized the particularities of the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) and the idiosyncratic dimension of the country that it formed. Trouillot draws our attention to the fact that Haiti has been seen as an exceptional place, in opposition to the imperialist West and understood as “[its] longest neocolonial experiment” (1990a: 7). From “the first black republic of the Americas” to “the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere” – phrases often present in history books and news throughout the 20th century – the country is known for its oddness, but can and must also be appreciated for its ordinary dimensions. After all, anthropology teaches us that everyday life and social practices are as relevant as objects of analysis as are major historical events and catastrophes.<sup>6</sup>

The insistence on highlighting supposed Haitian peculiarities also has perverse effects, which both silence the agency of Haitians throughout their history, and minimizes the violent impact of imperialist countries on that history. Moreover, the author revealed how the fiction of Haitian exceptionalism, also produced by Haitian nationalists, gave rise to authoritarian projects of an elite that understood that an exceptional country should be governed in an exceptional way.

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<sup>5</sup> For more details on these works see the introduction of Mello & Brittes (2018) to the translation of Trouillot (2018) and the reviews of *Silencing the Past* by Benevides (1999) and, more recently, by Zuker (2019).

<sup>6</sup> One cannot forget here the earthquake that shook the country in 2010, leaving some 250 thousand dead and more than one million homeless. The earthquake sparked analyses in the media and academic environments that reinforce the argument of Haitian exceptionalism developed by Trouillot more than a decade earlier. In this sense, see, among others, the article by Thomas (2011) on the earthquake and stigmatizing speech about Haiti.

Thus, the widespread image of a Haiti that is so unique that it is strange or incomprehensible, operates, according to Trouillot as a “shield”, which politically isolates the country, preventing its integration into a world “dominated by Christianity, capitalism, and whiteness” (1990a: 7). Thus, Trouillot shows in a number of studies how historical narratives overlap the construction of anthropological images and mechanisms of power that, on different scales, produce inequalities and stigmas. Ending with an invitation to further research, Trouillot anticipates some of the studies that would mark the 2000s and lays the foundations for a comparative project to understand similar historical processes, which still awaits new contributions.

In his following works, the anthropologist developed a critique of anthropology and its colonialist facet. A demon that still haunts us despite constant efforts to exorcise it, we find in Trouillot’s words an important inflection on the possibilities of historicizing social phenomena and the concepts used by historians, philosophers and social scientists. It is not by chance that concepts such as *culture*, *modernity* and *globalization* were provocatively called “North Atlantic universals” by the author (Trouillot, 2003). Through careful critical work with concepts and language throughout his trajectory, Trouillot demonstrated how anthropology could contribute to the renewal of scientific themes, problems and tools.

The republishing of this article, initially prepared for a master class and written amid the turbulence that would lead to the election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, is an effort to emphasize its power and ability to promote new insights about our contemporary global situation far beyond its undeniable historical, political and spatial roots. It is known that, since its publication, this text was passed from hand-to-hand in photocopies, or scanned and disseminated by generous students, which allowed it to cross hemispheres and seas before the advent of digital archives. The article continues to circulate and inspire researchers who dedicate themselves to the articulations between what Mintz (2012) has famously called Caribbean themes and variations, as well as scholars interested in questioning the classic anthropological opposition between particularism and universalism, articulated by Trouillot through the notion of *exceptionalism* (Benedicty-Kokken, Byron, Glover & Schuller, 2016; Bonilla, 2013). Part of a truly critical and engaged work, this text, which was born a classic, now finds a new publication, followed by a translation into Portuguese. We hope that it will circulate more widely and that along with the Portuguese version it joins previous efforts to publicize Trouillot’s work in Portuguese-speaking territories and gains new enthusiastic readers and engaged thinkers.

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# Para além do excepcionalismo: notas sobre “O estranho e o ordinário” de Michel-Rolph Trouillot

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Originalmente publicado em 1990, no terceiro número da revista *Cimarrón*, o artigo de Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1949-2012), **O estranho e o ordinário: o Haiti, o Caribe e o mundo**, que aqui apresentamos, foi escrito pelo antropólogo haitiano em um momento paradigmático tanto para a história de seu país natal quanto para sua trajetória acadêmica.<sup>1</sup> Assistia-se no Haiti, desde 1986, à emergência de iniciativas democráticas e novos debates políticos no campo progressista após o longo e violento período da ditadura duvalierista.<sup>2</sup> Ao mesmo tempo e ao norte do Atlântico, Trouillot, que saíra do país caribenho em 1968, justamente em função de perseguições políticas, se consolidava como pesquisador e professor universitário.<sup>3</sup> O antropólogo lecionou na Universidade Duke, a partir de 1983, onde durante os próximos cinco anos ajudou a criar o Programa de Estudos Caribenhos (Woodson & Williams, 2013). Pouco depois de terminar seu doutorado no Programa de História e Cultura Atlântica da Universidade Johns Hopkins, em 1985, tornou-se professor na mesma instituição, onde permaneceu até 1998, quando se transferiu para a Universidade de Chicago. Ali ensinaria até o fim de sua vida<sup>4</sup>.

1 A revista *Cimarrón - New Perspectives on the Caribbean* foi criada em 1985, vinculada à *Association of Caribbean Studies*, da Universidade da Cidade de Nova Iorque (CUNY). Sua criação teve como intuito preencher lacunas na produção intelectual norte-americana sobre o Caribe. O editor da primeira edição, Basil Wilson, era membro do Departamento de Estudos Afro-Americanos do John Jay College. Desde o primeiro número, a revista privilegiou os trabalhos de intelectuais e escritores caribenhos (Goldway, 1986).

2 Foi a partir de um movimento conjunto da sociedade civil, articulada com a Igreja Católica e recebendo apoio da diáspora haitiana e de parte da comunidade internacional que Jean-Claude Duvalier, o *Baby Doc*, foi deposto em 1986, dando fim a um regime que já durava 29 anos. Instaurada por seu pai, François Duvalier (1907-1991), o *Papa Doc*, alguns anos após sua eleição em 1957, a ditadura duvalierista e seus mecanismos de construção do poder foram também alvo do interesse sociológico, antropológico e historiográfico de Trouillot. O autor desenvolveu o tema no livro *Haiti, State against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism*, publicado em 1990 concomitantemente ao artigo que apresentamos aqui, exercendo grande influência em trabalhos posteriores. Ver, por exemplo, Dubois (2012), Hector & Hurbon (2009); Andrade (2019).

3 É importante ressaltar que Trouillot vem de uma família de intelectuais haitianos, que, como ele mesmo comenta no prefácio de seu livro *Silenciando o passado: poder e a produção da história* (2016), tinha um interesse particular pela história: “cresci numa família que se sentava com a história à mesa de jantar” (2016, p. 15). Seu pai, Ernest Trouillot (1922-1987), foi advogado, professor e chegou a apresentar durante alguns anos um programa de televisão sobre história haitiana. Já seu tio paterno, Henock Trouillot (1923-1988), foi um reconhecido historiador e esteve por muitos anos à frente do Arquivos Nacionais do Haiti. Para mais detalhes da biografia de Trouillot ver: Woodson, (s/d; 2013); Bonilla (2014).

4 Trouillot morreu em Chicago aos 61 anos em função de um aneurisma cerebral. Seus obituários mostram a extensão de sua contribuição para as ciências sociais, especialmente para os estudos caribenhos: Scott (2012); Woodson & Williams (2013); Price (2013); Dubois (2013).

**O estranho e o ordinário** é parte, assim, de uma série de novos trabalhos publicados por Trouillot a partir dos anos 1990. É nesse momento em que, não por acaso, o autor se volta à reflexão sobre o Haiti, após pelo menos uma década de estudos dedicada à compreensão da história colonial de São Domingos – com um amplo espectro de trabalhos que vão de artigos publicados em inglês (Trouillot, 1981, 1982) a um livro pioneiro escrito em crioulo haitiano, cujo objetivo político era contar a história da Revolução Haitiana através do prisma do materialismo histórico além de um importante trabalho de campo etnográfico realizado na ilha de Dominica, estudo que deu origem à sua tese de doutorado (Trouillot, 1988). Iniciado pela publicação, ainda na década de 1980, de *Les Racines Historiques de l'État Duvaliérien* (1986) - trabalho que se tornaria quatro anos depois o clássico *State Against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism* (1990b) - este movimento incluiu reflexões sistemáticas sobre a história política haitiana, sua relação com a região caribenha e o capitalismo global, e, em última instância, sobre a posição do Haiti no imaginário antropológico ocidental. Sem abandonar o horizonte comparativo, foi a partir de materiais empíricos que Trouillot traçou análises bastante atuais sobre contextos pós-*plantation*, pensando tanto na autonomia histórica do Estado em contextos pós-coloniais e na formação de retóricas do poder autoritário (Trouillot, 1990b; 1992) quanto em processos crioulezização e sociogênese em regiões que compõem a geografia da diáspora africana (Trouillot, 1990a; 2006). Dois outros trabalhos do autor recentemente traduzidos para o português são também exemplos fundamentais da produção da década de 1990: o artigo “A região do Caribe: uma fronteira aberta na teoria antropológica” ([1992] 2018), dedicado a compreender a construção do Caribe como região etnográfica e objeto antropológico, e o livro *Silenciando o passado: poder e a produção da história* ([1995] 2016), em que o autor discorre sobre formas de produção da história enquanto práticas sociais e narrativas conformadas por relações de poder situadas.<sup>5</sup>

Especificamente em **O estranho e o ordinário**, Trouillot realiza uma reflexão que se aproxima ao movimento feito por Edward Said (1935-2003) anos antes com seu *Orientalismo* (1990 [1978]), quando aponta para a construção pelo Ocidente de um Oriente às avessas. Espécie de espelho invertido, Said argumenta que esse Oriente diz mais respeito aos pressupostos epistemológicos ocidentais e às suas pretensões imperialistas do que ao próprio mundo oriental, sua diversidade e história. Nessa mesma direção, Trouillot aponta para os perigos de tratar o Haiti como uma exceção histórica e sociocultural, interpretação que teria suas raízes nas análises, especialmente feitas por intelectuais e cronistas estrangeiros, que enfatizam as particularidades da Revolução Haitiana (1791-1804) e da subsequente independência do país (1804). Desde então, chama a atenção Trouillot, o Haiti tem sido visto como local idiossincrático, especialmente por oposição ao Ocidente imperialista, e entendido como “o [seu] mais longo projeto neocolonial” (1990a: 7). De “primeira república negra das Américas” à “nação mais pobre do hemisfério ocidental”, frases frequentemente entoadas pelos livros de história e noticiários ao longo do século XX, o país é marcado por sua estranheza (“the odd”), mas pode e deve também ser apreciado por sua dimensão ordinária (“the ordinary”). Afinal, nos ensina a antropologia que a vida cotidiana e as práticas sociais corriqueiras são tão relevantes como objeto de análise quanto os grandes eventos históricos e as catástrofes.<sup>6</sup>

A insistência em ressaltar as supostas particularidades haitianas tem ainda, nos dirá Trouillot, efeitos perversos, que tanto invisibilizam a agência dos haitianos e haitianas ao longo da sua história, quanto minimizam a violenta contribuição oferecida pelos países imperialistas a essa mesma história. Mais do que isso, o autor revela como a ficção do excepcionalismo haitiano, produzida também por literatos nacionalistas, garantiu as pretensões autoritárias de uma elite que entendia que um país excepcional deveria ser também

<sup>5</sup> Para mais detalhes sobre estes trabalhos ver a introdução de Mello & Pires (2018) à tradução de Trouillot (2018) e as resenhas de *Silenciando o Passado* de Benevides (1999) e, mais recentemente, Zuker (2019).

<sup>6</sup> Não se pode deixar de lembrar aqui do terremoto que em 2010 assolou o país, deixando por volta de 250 mil mortos e mais de um milhão de desabrigados. Sem dúvidas, o terremoto despertou na mídia e no meio acadêmico análises que reforçam o argumento do excepcionalismo haitiano desenvolvido por Trouillot mais de uma década antes da tragédia. Nesse sentido, ver, entre outros, o artigo de Thomaz (2011) sobre o terremoto e os discursos estigmatizantes sobre o Haiti.

governado de forma excepcional. Assim, a difundida imagem de um Haiti, que de tão único se torna estranho ou incompreensível, opera como um “escudo”, perfeito para isolar o país politicamente, afastando-o da integração a um mundo “dominado pelo Cristianismo, pelo capitalismo e pela branquitude” (1990a: 7). Trouillot mostra, assim como o faz em outros trabalhos, o imbricamento entre as narrativas históricas, a construção de imagens antropológicas e os mecanismos de poder que, em diferentes escalas, produzem as desigualdades e os estigmas. Finalizando o texto com um convite a novas pesquisas, Trouillot antecipa parte das investigações que marcariam os anos 2000 e lança as bases de um projeto de compreensão de processos históricos similares ao caso haitiano que ainda aguarda novas contribuições.

Na esteira deste artigo o antropólogo demonstrou ainda, em seus trabalhos da década seguinte, as ambições de um projeto de crítica à antropologia e sua face colonialista. Demônio que sempre ressurgiu apesar dos constantes esforços em exorcizá-lo, encontramos na pena de Trouillot uma importante inflexão assentada nas possibilidades de historicizar fenômenos sociais e os próprios conceitos de que historiadores, filósofos e cientistas sociais lançamos mão. Não por acaso, conceitos como *cultura*, *modernidade* e *globalização*, foram chamados provocativamente por ele de “universais norte-atlânticos” (Trouillot, 2003). Por meio de um atento trabalho crítico com os conceitos, ao longo de toda sua trajetória Trouillot demonstrou como a antropologia pode, de fato, contribuir para a renovação de temas, problemáticas e ferramentas.

A circulação do texto aqui apresentado, inicialmente elaborado como uma aula magna e escrito em meio às turbulências que levariam o Haiti à eleição de Jean-Bertrand Aristide (1953-), diz muito de sua potência e de sua capacidade de dialogar com outros universos, para além de seu inegável enraizamento histórico, político e espacial. Sabe-se que, desde a sua publicação, ele era passado de mão em mão, através de fotocópias grifadas, ou ainda escaneado e difundido por algum estudante generoso, cruzando assim hemisférios e mares antes do advento das digitalizações. O artigo seguiu e segue inspirando pesquisadoras e pesquisadores que pensam articulações globais a partir do que Mintz (2012) chamou de temas e variações caribenhos, bem como estudiosos interessados em questionar a clássica oposição antropológica entre particularismo e universalismo, articulada por Trouillot através da noção de *excepcionalismo* (Bonilla, 2013; Benedicty-Kokken, Byron, Glover & Schuller, 2016). Parte de uma verdadeira obra crítica e engajada, este texto que já nasceu um clássico, encontra agora uma nova publicação, seguida de uma tradução ao português. O intuito é de que ele possa circular de modo mais amplo e que, com a versão em português, se junte aos esforços já realizados para a divulgação do trabalho de Trouillot em territórios lusófonos, ganhando, esperamos, novos leitores e leitoras entusiasmados.

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# The Odd and the Ordinary: Haiti, the Caribbean and the World<sup>1</sup>

Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1949-2012)<sup>1</sup>

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How does one explain Haiti? What is Haiti? Haiti is the eldest daughter of France and Africa. It is a place of beauty, romance, mystery, kindness, humor, selfishness, betrayal, cruelty, bloodshed, hunger and poverty. It is a closed and withdrawn society whose apartness, unlike any other in New World, rejects its European roots”.

Nice passage, isn't it? Well, those of you who know my work may have guessed that I am trying to trick you. These words are not mine. They constitute the very first paragraph of *Written in Blood*, a sensationalist account of Haitian history written by Marine Colonel Robert Heinl and his wife Nancy<sup>2</sup>. I quote this paragraph in lieu of an introduction because it typifies a viewpoint widely shared in Haitian studies, one that I wish to challenge, namely the fiction of Haiti's exceptionalism. Heinl and Heinl start with a question: “How does one explain Haiti?” The question is then set aside for a laundry list of particulars. Then, at the end of the list, the emphasis shifts to Haiti's apartness: Haiti is unique. It is unlike any other country in the New World. And indeed, if we keep reading the next 700 pages, we soon discover that it is unlike any other country – period.

The notion of Haitian exceptionalism permeates both the academic and popular literature on Haiti under different guises and with different degrees of candidness. At first glance, this insistence on Haiti's special status seems to be a simple acknowledgement of the country's admittedly spectacular trajectory. I suggest, however, that there are hidden agendas – intellectual and political – behind this insistence, and that these agendas, rather than genuine interest in the particulars of Haitian history, underpin Haitian exceptionalism.

Haiti is unique. Haiti is different. Haiti is special. At a superficial level, these sayings could simply mean that a particular set of environmental, historical, and social features contribute in varied ways to make Haiti quite different from other places: that Haiti is not Argentina, or Canada, or Germany, or Senegal. I have absolutely no quarrel with such a statement. I can assure you that no one born in Aquín, Gonaïves, or Cité Soleil thinks of them as Buenos Aires, Frankfurt, or Dakar.

But those who insist most often on Haiti's uniqueness do not simply mean that Haiti is easily unique. For each and every society is unique, distinguishable from each and every other society. Indeed, regions within the same country can be distinguishable from other regions. Societies, countries, or regions are historical products and all historical products are unique – by definition and by necessity. And the more we know a place or a person, the more this place or this person appears unique. But we do not keep on repeating it: life is too short for that. To my knowledge, foreign or native writers who write about, say, the Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Bolivia, Thailand, Madagascar, or Gabon – to cite only a few remarkable places – do not go on repeating ad nauseam how quite unique these societies are.

<sup>1</sup> This text was first prepared as the keynote address at a conference on “Haiti in Comparative Perspective”, sponsored by Columbia/The New York University Consortium on Latin American and Caribbean Studies, New York University, New York, 9 February 1990. It is reproduced here with minor modifications. I thank Susan Lowes for valuable editorial suggestions. Editor's note: We have updated the Haitian Creole terms that Trouillot used to follow the contemporary orthography. We have also added the complete reference for one of his works (Trouillot, 1992) that had not yet been published at the time the original version came out. Finally, we would like to thank Michel-Rolph Trouillot's wife, Anne Carine Trouillot, who kindly authorized the republication and translation of this article into Portuguese.

<sup>2</sup> The Heinl lived in Haiti the 1960s, when the Colonel acted as an advisor to François Duvalier's regime. For the introductory passage, see Heinl and Heinl (1978, p. 1).

They assume this uniqueness and proceed from there. So the celebrated uniqueness of Haitian society and culture must mean more than the distinctiveness that characterizes any historical product from any other historical products.

If all historical products are unique, not all of them are distinguishable in the same way. It is quite probable that a particular configuration of circumstances will lead to a historical product of which the uniqueness is dazzling: an individual, a group of individuals, an institution, or a phenomenon that strikes us more than otherwise similar entities. In short, some historical products are more remarkable than others, at least to certain groups of observers. However unique we may all be, it makes sense to insist that Julius Caesar, Napoleon, Shaka the Zulu, Toussaint Louverture, François Duvalier, or Mikhaïl Gorbachev are unique in ways that need to be noticed. It makes sense to insist upon the fact that the Holy See is a unique religious institution. That the French Academy is a unique combination of culture and politics. That German fascism was a unique political movement. That the state of Israel is a unique geopolitical entity. That the United States, Cuba, Brazil, Liberia, Tibet, or the Philippines are quite distinguishable countries, the uniqueness of which both strikes out and needs to be emphasized in the context of their own immediate environment or even perhaps in the context of world history.

In that sense, of course, Haiti seems more unique than many other countries. The list of features that makes it special is long, starting with the history of Saint-Domingue and the Haitian Revolution: first and only successful slave revolution in modern history. First independent country of Americas, and for a long time the only one, where freedom meant freedom for everyone. First and for a long time sole black republic in world history, indeed, the first nonwhite modern state. The most peasant country of the Americas. Largest creole speaking population of the world. And so on. And so on. And so on.

In that sense, of course, Haiti is indeed unique. And if we want to play semantic games, it is not just unique: it is exceptional, the result of a striking convergence of historical particulars. This is the distinctiveness that accounts for Haiti's cultural resilience. This is the distinctiveness that attracts many foreigners – tourists and academics, for good or for bad. This is the distinctiveness that succors Haitian national pride – for good *and* for bad. This is the distinctiveness that Haitian tourism officials have banked on for more than twenty years with the slogan “Vive la différence!”

I have no quarrel with such a view of Haiti's particularisms, even though I may question the use some make of them. For all the reasons I have mentioned, and probably many more, Haiti is in many ways exceptional. I would insist though, that this exceptionalism is only one way to look at Haitian reality. There are much less petulant continuities embedded in this spectacular trajectory. The majority of Haitians live quite ordinary lives. They eat what is for them – and for many others – quite ordinary food. They die quite ordinary deaths from quite ordinary accidents, quite ordinary tortures, quite ordinary diseases. Accidents so ordinary that they could be prevented. Tortures so ordinary that the international press does not even mention them. Diseases so ordinary that they are easily treated almost anywhere else. Exceptional, is it?

Certainly more exceptional than India, Java, Burma, or Ethiopia – which are of course exceptional in their own way. Listen to Blair Niles, the author of *Black Haiti*: “I am familiar with the measured posturing dances of Japan, of India, Java and Burma. I have watched the head-hunting dance of Dyaks of Borneo. That was savage enough; primitive enough...But savage as it was, that too had been in a way sophisticated”. For Blair Niles discovered Haiti and its dances. That, says Niles, “went further back than the hunt [of Borneo]; back to the beginning...” (Niles, 1926, p. 27).

Note that Blair Niles is writing in admiration, in this passage at least. Elsewhere in the book, he heavily criticizes foreigners who denigrate the Haitian people. Further, there is ample evidence throughout the text that Niles made a more genuine effort than many other visitors, both before and after him, to understand Haiti. At any rate, no one can accuse him of disliking Haitians. Quite the opposite: he is attracted to them.

But he is attracted to them the way one can be attracted to a sexual fetish or a taboo. That is, he is attracted to Haiti as deviance. What he likes in Haiti is what he finds aberrant, the reverse image of a world of normalcy. That is not unique. That is not even exceptional. That is weird.

Listen to Professor Heinz Lehman of McGill University talking to student Wade Davis of *Serpent and Rainbow* fame: “Let me relieve you of any further suspense, Mr. Davos. We understand... that you are attracted to unusual places. We propose to send you to the frontier of death” (Davies 1985: 15). Davis is attracted to “unusual” places. Unusual here does not mean unique, and the reference to the frontier of death as well (as the Hollywood version of the book) is there to testify to the nuance. No, unusual here means odd, strange, peculiar, freakish, queer, bizarre. Weird, indeed, don’t you think?

To be sure, Davis is careful not to use these words; but that may be a reflection of the times. Even travel guides and *National Geographic* have learned not to present so-called exotic places in explicitly condescending or derogatory terminology. Further, since the nineteenth century, a Haitian tradition of sharp rebuttal has kept many foreign writers, French and North American in particular, on their guard. Thus, for instance, Davis – of all people! – tries to distance himself from “sensational films and pulp fiction” (1988: 3). The Heinls (one of whom epitomized the worst of U.S. interference in Haitian politics) dedicate their book to Haitian nationalist heroes. It has become stylish for foreign writers to denounce Haiti’s bad press while contributing to it in fact.

In that context, Haitian exceptionalism tends to function at the level of the subtext in most books published outside the country in the second half of this century. While it permeates the entire work, there are very few sentences that actually articulate it, except perhaps on the back cover or in the ad copy (e.g.; Davis, 1985; Abbott, 1989).<sup>3</sup> At times, however, writers – including respected academics – can be less careful, or nonchalant enough for Haitian exceptionalism to appear clearly in the text. One more quote among many: “Haiti, like eighteenth-century Sicily has always been a place apart,” a place with “a penchant for the bizarre and the grotesque” (Rotberg, 1971, pp. 7-8). As the French used to put it, with debonair condescension, “Singulier petit pays”.

I am, of course, bothered by this condescension. But there is more to it. The most important problem with the overemphasis on Haiti’s singularity – even if not phrased in derogatory terms – is both methodological and political. My own intolerance is less toward the narrow-mindedness often implicit in such statements (which, after all say more about their authors than about Haiti) than toward the practical consequences of this narrow-mindedness. When we are being told over and over again that Haiti is unique, bizarre, unnatural, odd, queer, freakish, or grotesque, we are also being told, in varying degrees, that it is unnatural, erratic, and therefore unexplainable. We are being told that Haiti is so special that modes of investigation applicable to other societies are not relevant here.

In her remarkable book, *Haiti and the Great Powers*, Brenda Gayle Plummer criticizes the myth of Haitian exceptionalism and exposes some of its consequences. In Plummer’s view, “The idea that Haiti could fit no paradigm prohibited the development of any but most conservative policies” on the part of international powers, including the United States (Plummer, 1988). One could add that the very same view continues today to influence some policy-makers in the United States, in France or in the Vatican – to cite only three states involved in Haitian affairs. Plummer is much more indulgent than I am, however, toward Haitian politicians and intellectuals, even though she admits that they share some of the blame. In my view, in both cases Haitian exceptionalism acts as a shield.

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<sup>3</sup> Publishers and reviewers are less cautious and more candid than writers themselves. So, Warner Books presents Davis’s *The Serpent and the Rainbow* as a “journey of discovery across the border between life and death, between good and evil”. The back cover of the paperback edition of the same book quotes reviews from the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*: “Exotic and far-reaching... just the way Indiana Jones would tell it... Replete with bizarre details to titillate the curious...” (Davis, 1985).

Though not the privy of non-native writes, the fiction that Haiti escapes analysis and comparison emerged out of the minds of European and North American observers, mostly white males, who wrote about Haiti in the early nineteenth century, at the time when the very existence of a “black” state that had issued from an anticolonial revolution appeared to them as an aberration. For a plethora of writers from James Franklin to Gustave d’Alaux, to Spencer St. John to Robert and Nancy Heinl, Haitian exceptionalism has been a shield that masks the negative contribution of the Western powers to the Haitian situation. Haitian exceptionalism functions as a shield to Haiti’s integration into a world dominated by Christianity, capitalism, and whiteness. The more Haiti appears weird, the easier it is to forget that it represents the longest neocolonial experiment in the history of the West.

Even James Leyburn was guilty of the same sin of omission. In the third chapter of his important book, *The Haitian People*, Leyburn (1941, p. 32) wrote: “if ever a country had an opportunity to start absolutely fresh in choosing its own social institutions, Haiti had that opportunity in 1804... The Haitians might (theoretically, at least) have invented an entire new little world of economic, political, religious, and social life. All paths were open to them”. Leyburn concluded that unfortunately Dessalines’s mental limitations set the Haitians on the road to disaster.

Well, that won’t do. Neither theoretically nor in practice. With one stroke of the pen, Leyburn erases three centuries of direct colonial domination and a century and a half of neocolonialism. And this from an author who remains, in my view, one of the best observers, foreign or Haitian, of Haitian society and culture.

The Haitian side is no more glorious, even though at times it looks better on paper. Indeed, many Haitian intellectuals and politicians continue to repeat the same nonsense, more loudly even than their foreign counterparts. The reality is that fiction is as convenient to the Haitian elites as it is to many foreigners, even though for different reasons.

Before the twentieth century, Haitian writers rarely if ever promoted Haitian singularity in their studies of Haitian reality. In fact, quite the opposite, especially for the early part of the nineteenth century. Indeed, Haitian intellectuals rightly saw the theories of Haitian exceptionalism that were spreading in Europe and North America as implicitly – and often explicitly – racist. In the immediate aftermath of independence, a writer such as Baron de Vastey relied on the universalist principles of the Enlightenment to herald the Haitian Revolution and reject theories associating physical appearance and national character.<sup>4</sup> In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, writers such as Demesvar Delorme, Louis-Joseph Janvier, Anténor Firmin, Edmond Paul, down to Jean Price-Mars and Dantès Bellegarde tried in varying degrees to make sense of Haiti in an international context, and to apply some of the prevalent theories of their times to the Haitian situation. This is particularly true in the social sciences and economics. However much one may now question the economic liberalism of an Edmond Paul, the sociology of Louis-Joseph Janvier, or the ethnology of Jean Price-Mars, these authors did not think that Haiti escaped the paradigms of their times.

But even as these writers quoted famous European thinkers, political practice in Haiti fed on exceptionalism. The Haitian elites acted as if, theories aside, Haiti was exceptional and should therefore be led in an exceptional manner. Thus the politics of a Delorme or a Firmin were not that much different from the illiterate generals who supported or opposed them and may have believed in Haitian exceptionalism. Still, the public and unchallenged assumption, in all intellectual circles, that Haiti was indeed a country like any other limited the damages inflicted by the pragmatic acceptance of practices otherwise deemed unconventional.

With the 1915-1934 U.S. occupation, however, Haitian studies took a sharp turn for the worse with increasing acceptance of theories based on Haiti’s apartness. The occupation had led to a reevaluation of Haitian identity among the elites, including from writers such as Jean Price-Mars. But the ideological malaise of the times also

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<sup>4</sup> At the same time, yet in a more subtle way, Haitian poets and, later, novelists, replied to the negative mythification of Haitians by the West with myth-making writings of their own, a process that continues today (e.g. Dash 1988).

opened the door to a possible questioning of the universals inherited from the Enlightenment. Drawing from Price-Mars but rejecting his Enlightenment heritage, the Griot school in particular – one member of which was François Duvalier – insisted on the particularities of the Haitian *mentalité*.

From the 1930s on, research, political practice and legislation emphasized Haiti's singularity, and indeed helped to increase this singularity with such aberrations as the infamous anti-Communist law of 1969. Among the many reasons cited for forbidding even the belief in Communism, the law notes "the incompatibility of *imported doctrines*, notably Marxism-Leninism, with the social, political, and economic order of Haiti" (cited in Trouillot and Pascal-Trouillot, 1978, p. 445; emphasis added). According to Duvalier, Haiti could draw its ingredients for progress only from its own culture, a culture that is, of course, unique in the almost mystical sense emphasized by the Griot doctrine<sup>6</sup>.

I would be the last to say that Haitian culture is not unique, or that Haiti should not use its cultural resources. The point is that before and during the Duvalier years, the particularities of Haiti were used to shield the Haitian elites. Haiti is unique; therefore, it evades foreign theories, including class analysis. Indeed, it evades all analysis in the strict sense of the term. It also evades comparison. Therefore, we can rule this country in ways that seem to defy the imagination of most foreigners and quite a few Haitians. Haiti is special; thus it deserves custom-made institutions and a custom-made government. The political maneuver is obvious. So is the intellectual fallacy upon which it rests.

It seems to me that we learn much less about Haiti if we read it as an aberration that defies any explanation than if we learn to place it in a comparative framework. One of the most serious limitations of Haitian studies, in Haiti and elsewhere, comes from the propensity of Haitianists, and especially of Haitian-born scholars, to study Haiti and nothing but Haiti. The assumption is that nothing we learn from looking at another society can teach us anything about Haiti, since Haiti is so unique. To be sure, insularism is a feature of Caribbean studies. Jamaicans study Jamaica, Cubans study Cuba, and few foreigners spread their wings over linguistic boundaries within the archipelago. Yet the irony in this case is that Haiti's exceptional history provides so many features that can benefit from the observation of other societies, especially in Latin America and more particularly in the other Antilles.

In the little space remaining, I will only mention a few of the areas where Haitian studies can surely benefit from the light of neighboring cases. I rest on the shoulders of so many colleagues that I cannot mention them all. Nor can I cover all the potential areas for comparative research.

The peasantry is one such area, and an important one. I spent fifteen months doing fieldwork among the peasantry of Dominica, and I believe that I learned much more about the Haitian peasantry during those months than I did during eighteen years in Port-au-Prince. Haiti, like the Windward Islands, like Jamaica, like Puerto Rico or to a lesser extent like Trinidad and Tobago, has a substantial post-plantation peasantry. How do theories of the impact of the plantation economy or on the passage from plantation to peasantry in a context dominated by capitalism (Trouillot, 1988) fit the Haitian case? To my knowledge Alex Dupuy may be the first Haitian scholar to have tackled this question head on.

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5 Because members of the Griot school claimed to be followers of Jean Price-Mars, Price-Mars has passed for a proponent of Haitian exceptionalism, a charge for which I find no justification in his voluminous writings. Price-Mars (1929) certainly did not at the outset reject what he took for science, not even Justin Dévot's unsuccessful tentative effort to introduce positivism in Haiti. Rather, in a move that anticipated both Bastide and Herskovits, Price-Mars simply insisted that Haiti could not be studied as if it were an avatar of Europe with no African influence, and that Haiti's African heritage was itself amenable to scientific study. Both points are now unquestioned among anthropologists, although they may derive from them quite different conclusions. That the first point was also repeated by Duvalier as a part of a new *problématique* (Denis and Duvalier, 1936) does not make Price-Mars an exceptionalist. At any rate, in Price-Mars's own words, his seminal *Ainsi parla l'oncle* (1928) is "an endeavor to integrate the popular Haitian thought into the discipline of traditional ethnography (Price-Mars 1983: 7).

6 Two preceding laws on Communist activities under Presidents Estimé (February 1948) and Magloire (September 1951) make no reference to Haitian culture as such (Trouillot and Pascal-Trouillot, 1978, p. 443-44).

Haitian studies in general would benefit from a more systematic reading of Walter Rodney, George Beckford, Raymond Smith, and J.R. Mandle. Sidney Mintz's comparative essays on Caribbean peasantries (1979, 1990) would serve as an excellent starting point for such research.

There are so many questions left unanswered in Caribbean studies that have a direct impact on the way Haitianists could look at Haiti that I can only start such a list. Why are mating patterns similar to Haitian *plasaj*, or rural institutions similar to the Haitian *lakou* or the *konbit* present elsewhere in the Caribbean? How far do these similarities go? Are they surviving or disappearing at the same rate? For the same reasons? How do these tie in with gender? Market women in Haiti are strikingly similar to market women in Jamaica – or in Ghana, for that matter. Why? How far into social roles can we carry the post-plantation paradigm, Mintz's reconstituted peasantry?

Just as there is a post-plantation peasantry, there may also be a post-plantation state. My own comparison of the post-slavery elites of Dominica and Haiti reveals striking similarities. It is no accident that one of the most important slogans of nineteenth century Haiti – “Le plus grand bien au plus grand nombre” (“The greatest good to the greatest number”) – was the slogan of the mulatto elite in British-dominated Dominica, but it was the leitmotif of the darker Parti National in mulatto-dominated Haiti (Trouillot, 1992). Does the post-plantation situation lead to specific forms of state power, including specific forms of state rhetoric (Trouillot, 1990)?

One could tie to that issue matters well debated in Latin American studies, such as authoritarianism and the role of the military. Is there such a thing as a social authoritarianism that can effect forms of political power? The Haitian army, just like the army in Panama, just like the army in the Dominican Republic, just like – until recently – the army in Nicaragua, is the product of a U.S. invasion. What are the similarities and the differences between these institutions as they function in societies admittedly different but also in many ways similar?

Religion is another domain. To my knowledge, no one has yet systematically picked up the trail opened by Roger Bastide in his sketchy comparisons of Brazil and Haiti. There is also a trail to pick up in the work of Melville Herskovits on Africanisms – with the necessary corrections, of course, but also with a much needed rereading of Price-Mars. Now that we know more about, say, both Suriname and Brazil, how “African” does Haiti appear in the hemispheric perspective? And of course we could push the comparison all the way to Africa.

And similarly we should look at Haitian creole in the light of what we now know about creole languages as far away as Réunion. At the very least, Haitian creole studies would benefit much from greater familiarity with such works as that of Louis-Félix Prudent on Guadeloupe-Martinique, and especially the writings of Marvyn Alleyne on St. Lucian creole and other Afro-American languages. And I have still not said anything about music...

I have scratched the tip of the iceberg to make a more general point. Haitian studies has experienced a small but noticeable revival since the late 1970s. But there is more to do. Much more. There are threads to pick up, new connections to be made. One would hope that, when overemphasis on Duvalierism – if not on state politics – quiets down, practicing Haitianists will seriously start reading not only Bellegarde and Price-Mars (whom I consider to be the last of an intellectual lineage) but their precursors, the classics of nineteenth-century Haitian social thought<sup>7</sup>. In fact, all aspects of nineteenth-century life in Haiti will benefit from serious attention, since nineteenth-century studies have been unjustly outflanked by the dual emphasis on the slave revolution of 1791 and on twentieth-century politics. I emphasize social thought simply because the writers of that era, with their faith in universals and their desire to defend Haiti in a context of open ostracism, may have given us the most potent antidote to the myth of Haitian exceptionalism: specific questions, tuned to Haitian particulars but informed by international debates of the times.

<sup>7</sup> A good deal of this corpus is available. Further, publisher Henri Deschamps has recently issued the entire work – including hitherto unpublished volumes – of Thomas Madiou, Haiti's first comprehensive historian.

For Haitian studies cannot proceed without making a theoretical leap. Quite simply, we need to drop the fiction, inherited from the nineteenth-century racist literature, that Haiti is unique – if by unique one means that it escapes analyses and comparison. Haiti is not that weird. It is the fiction of Haitian exceptionalism that is weird.

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# O estranho e o ordinário: o Haiti, o Caribe e o mundo<sup>1</sup>

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Como alguém explica o Haiti? Afinal, o que é o Haiti? O Haiti é o filho mais velho da França e da África. É um lugar de beleza, romance, mistério, gentileza, humor, egoísmo, traição, crueldade, massacre, fome e pobreza. É uma sociedade fechada e retraída, cujo distanciamento, diferente de qualquer outra no Novo Mundo, rejeita suas raízes europeias”.

Um belo trecho, não é? Bom, aqueles que conhecem meu trabalho talvez tenham adivinhado que estou tentando pregar uma peça em vocês. Essas palavras não são minhas. Elas constituem o primeiro parágrafo de *Written in Blood*, uma descrição sensacionalista da história haitiana escrita pelo coronel da Marinha Robert Heinl e por sua esposa, Nancy<sup>2</sup>. Eu citei este parágrafo como introdução, pois ele exemplifica um ponto de vista vastamente compartilhado dentro dos estudos haitianos, e que eu gostaria de contrapor, a saber: a ficção do excepcionalismo haitiano. Heinl e Heinl começam com uma questão: “Como alguém explica o Haiti?”. A questão, então, é deixada de lado em favor de uma exaustiva lista de particularidades. Em seguida, ao final da lista, a ênfase muda para o isolamento do Haiti: o Haiti é único. Ele é diferente de qualquer outro país do Novo Mundo. E, de fato, se continuarmos lendo as próximas 700 páginas, logo descobriremos que ele é diferente de qualquer outro país – e ponto final.

A noção de excepcionalismo haitiano permeia tanto a literatura acadêmica quanto a literatura popular sobre o Haiti, sob diferentes disfarces e com diferentes graus de franqueza. À primeira vista, tal insistência no estatuto especial do Haiti parece ser o simples reconhecimento da trajetória espetacular do país. Eu sugiro, entretanto, que existem pautas ocultas – intelectuais e políticas – anteriores a essa insistência, e que essas pautas, no lugar de apresentarem um interesse genuíno pelas particularidades da história do Haiti, sustentam o excepcionalismo haitiano.

O Haiti é único. O Haiti é diferente. O Haiti é especial. Em um nível superficial, essas constatações poderiam simplesmente significar que um conjunto particular de características ambientais, históricas e sociais contribuem de variadas formas para tornar o Haiti diferente de outros lugares: o Haiti não é a Argentina, ou o Canadá, ou a Alemanha, ou o Senegal. Não tenho absolutamente nenhum problema com essas afirmações. Posso garantir que ninguém nascido em Aquin, Gonaïves ou Cité Soleil pensa que esses lugares sejam Buenos Aires, Frankfurt ou Dacar.

<sup>1</sup> Este texto foi inicialmente preparado como uma conferência de abertura para o seminário *Haiti in Comparative Perspective*, que ocorreu na Universidade de Nova Iorque, em 9 de fevereiro de 1990. O evento foi realizado com apoio do Consórcio das Universidade de Columbia e da Universidade de Nova Iorque para os Estudos Caribenhos e Latino-Americanos. O texto está reproduzido aqui com pequenas alterações. Agradeço a Susan Lowes pelas valiosas sugestões editoriais. Nota dos editores: Respeitando a ortografia contemporânea do crioulo haitiano, nós atualizamos os termos empregados por Trouillot ao longo do texto. Além disso, também completamos uma referência bibliográfica que, à época, estava ainda no prelo (Trouillot, 1992). Por fim, tornamos públicos nossos agradecimentos à esposa do autor, Anne Carine Trouillot, que gentilmente autorizou a republicação e a tradução deste artigo para o português.

<sup>2</sup> Os Heins viveram no Haiti na década de 1960, quando o coronel atuou como conselheiro do regime de François Duvalier. Para o trecho relativo à introdução, ver Heinl e Heinl, 1978, p. 1.

Contudo, aqueles que insistem com frequência na singularidade do Haiti não querem dizer apenas que o Haiti é único. Toda e qualquer sociedade é única, distinguível de qualquer outra. De fato, regiões dentro de um mesmo país podem ser distinguíveis de outras regiões. Sociedades, países ou regiões são produtos históricos e todos os produtos históricos são únicos – por definição e por necessidade. E quanto mais sabemos sobre um lugar ou uma pessoa, mais esse lugar ou essa pessoa nos parecerá único. Mas não seguimos repetindo isso: a vida é muito curta para tal. Que eu saiba, escritores estrangeiros ou nativos que escrevem sobre, por exemplo, a República Dominicana, o Paraguai, a Bolívia, a Tailândia, Madagáscar ou o Gabão – para citar apenas alguns lugares notáveis – não repetem *ad nauseam* o quão únicas essas sociedades são. Eles reconhecem essa singularidade e prosseguem a partir daí. Portanto, a celebrada singularidade da cultura e da sociedade haitianas deve significar mais do que a distinção que caracteriza um produto histórico de quaisquer outros produtos históricos.

Se todos os produtos históricos são únicos, nem todos eles são discerníveis da mesma forma. É bastante provável que uma configuração particular de circunstâncias levará a um produto histórico cuja singularidade é deslumbrante: um indivíduo, um grupo de indivíduos, uma instituição ou um fenômeno que nos chamará a atenção mais do que outras entidades similares. Em resumo, alguns produtos históricos são mais memoráveis do que outros, ao menos para certos grupos de observadores. Por mais singulares que possamos ser, faz sentido insistir que Júlio César, Napoleão, Shaka Zulu, Toussaint Louverture, François Duvalier ou Mikhail Gorbachev são únicos de maneiras que precisam ser reconhecidas. Faz sentido insistir no fato de que a Santa Sé é uma instituição religiosa única, que a Academia Francesa é uma combinação única de cultura e política, que o fascismo alemão foi um movimento político único, que o Estado de Israel é uma entidade geopolítica única, que os Estados Unidos, Cuba, Brasil, Libéria, Tibete ou as Filipinas são países bastante distinguíveis. A singularidade de cada um salta aos olhos e precisa ser enfatizada em seu próprio contexto ou ainda, a depender do caso, no contexto da história mundial.

Nesse sentido, é claro, o Haiti parece ser comparativamente mais singular do que muitos outros países. A lista de características que o fazem especial é longa, a começar pela história de São Domingos e a Revolução Haitiana: primeira e única revolução escrava bem-sucedida na história moderna. O primeiro país independente das Américas e, por muito tempo, o único onde a liberdade significava liberdade para todos. Primeira e, por muito tempo, a única república negra na história mundial e, de fato, o primeiro estado moderno não-branco. O país mais rural das Américas. A maior população falante de crioulo no mundo, etc, etc, etc.

Nesse sentido, é claro, o Haiti é de fato único. E se quisermos fazer um jogo semântico, ele não é apenas único: é excepcional, o resultado de uma impressionante convergência de particularidades históricas. Essa é a singularidade que explica a resiliência cultural do Haiti. Essa é a singularidade que atrai estrangeiros – turistas e acadêmicos, por bem ou por mal. Essa é a singularidade que sustenta o orgulho nacional haitiano – por bem e por mal. Essa é a singularidade na qual apostam os funcionários de turismo no Haiti, há mais de vinte anos, com o slogan de “Vive la différence!”.

Não tenho problemas com essa visão das particularidades do Haiti, ainda que possa questionar o uso que alguns fazem delas. Por todas as razões que mencionei, e provavelmente por muitas outras, o Haiti é excepcional de muitas formas. Eu insistiria, no entanto, que esse excepcionalismo é apenas uma forma de olhar para a realidade haitiana. Há continuidades muito menos petulantes que compõem essa trajetória espetacular. A maioria dos haitianos vivem vidas bastante ordinárias. Eles comem o que é para eles – e para muitas outras pessoas – uma comida bastante ordinária. Eles morrem mortes bastante ordinárias de acidentes bastante ordinários, de torturas bastante ordinárias, de doenças suficientemente ordinárias. Acidentes tão ordinários que poderiam ser prevenidos. Torturas tão ordinárias que a imprensa internacional sequer as menciona. Doenças tão ordinárias que são facilmente tratadas em qualquer outro lugar do mundo. Excepcional, não é?

Certamente mais excepcional do que a Índia, a ilha de Java, Burma ou a Etiópia – que são, claro, excepcionais à sua própria maneira. Ouçam Blair Niles, autor de *Black Haiti*: “sou familiarizado com as danças de gestos sutis do Japão, da Índia, de Java, de Burma. Eu assisti a dança da caça às cabeças dos Dayak de Bornéu. Aquilo era selvagem o suficiente; primitivo o suficiente... mas por mais selvagem que fosse, também era, de certa forma, sofisticado”. Então, Blair Niles descobriu o Haiti e suas danças. Elas, Niles afirma, “regrediram muito mais do que a caçada [de Bornéu]; voltaram ao início...” (Niles 1926: 27).

Nota-se que Blair está escrevendo com admiração, ao menos nessa passagem. Em outras partes do livro, ele critica fortemente os estrangeiros que difamaram o povo haitiano. Além disso, existem muitas evidências ao longo do texto de que Niles fez um esforço genuinamente maior do que grande parte dos autores, antes e depois dele, para entender o Haiti. Em todo caso, ninguém pode acusá-lo de não gostar dos haitianos. É justamente o contrário: ele é atraído por eles. Mas é atraído da mesma forma pela qual alguém pode ser atraído por um fetiche sexual ou um tabu. Isto é, ele é atraído pelo Haiti como uma forma de desvio. O que ele gosta no Haiti é justamente o que crê ser aberrante, a imagem oposta de um mundo de normalidade. Isso não é único e nem mesmo excepcional. Isso é estranho.

Ouçam o professor Heinz Lehman, da Universidade McGill, falando ao estudante Wade Davis, renomado autor de *A serpente e o arco-íris*: “Deixe-me poupá-lo de qualquer suspense, Sr. Davis. Nós entendemos... que você se sente atraído por lugares incomuns. Propomos enviá-lo para a fronteira da morte” (Davis 1985: 15). Aqui, Davis se sente atraído por lugares “incomuns”. Incomum não significa único e, assim como a referência sobre a fronteira da morte (como na versão hollywoodiana do livro), a palavra está aqui para enfatizar exatamente essa diferença. Não, aqui, incomum significa esquisito, estranho, peculiar, exótico, excêntrico, bizarro. Que estranho, não é mesmo?

De fato, Davis é cuidadoso o suficiente para não usar essas palavras; mas isso pode ser um reflexo do tempo. Até mesmo os guias de viagem e a *National Geographic* aprenderam a não apresentar lugares considerados exóticos com uma terminologia explicitamente condescendente ou depreciativa. Além disso, desde o século XIX, uma tradição haitiana de refutação afiada tem mantido muitos escritores estrangeiros, norte-americanos e franceses em particular, em estado de alerta. Assim, por exemplo, Davis – logo ele! – tenta se distanciar dos “filmes sensacionalistas e de *pulp fiction*” (1988:3). Os Heinls (que sintetizaram o pior da interferência norte-americana na política haitiana) dedicaram seu livro aos heróis nacionalistas haitianos. Tornou-se um requinte, entre os escritores estrangeiros, denunciar a imprensa haitiana de má qualidade enquanto davam a ela sua contribuição.

Nesse contexto, o excepcionalismo haitiano tende a funcionar como um subtexto para a maioria dos livros publicados fora do país, na segunda metade desse século. Enquanto ele permeia todo o trabalho de Davis, poucas frases realmente articulam o argumento, exceto talvez pela contracapa e o anúncio publicitário (Davis, 1985; Abbot, 1989).<sup>3</sup> Às vezes, porém, escritores – incluindo acadêmicos respeitados – podem ser menos cuidadosos ou indiferentes o suficiente para permitir que o excepcionalismo haitiano apareça no próprio texto. Mais uma frase dentre tantas: “o Haiti, como a Sicília no século XVIII, sempre foi um lugar distante”, um lugar com “uma predileção pelo bizarro e pelo grotesco” (Rotberg, 1971: 7-8). Como os franceses costumam dizer, com uma gentil condescendência: “Singulier petit pays”.

<sup>3</sup> Editores e revisores são menos cautelosos e mais sinceros do que os escritores. A Warner Books apresenta *A serpente e o arco-íris* como uma “jornada de descobertas através da fronteira entre a vida e a morte, entre o bem e o mal”. A contracapa da versão em brochura do mesmo livro cita frases de resenhas críticas do *Wall Street Journal* e do *Washington Post*: “Abrangente e exótico... exatamente da forma como Indiana Jones o contaria... Repleto de detalhes bizarros para deleitar os curiosos...” (Davis, 1985).

Estou, é claro, incomodado com essa condescendência. Mas isso não é tudo. O problema mais importante na ênfase exagerada na singularidade do Haiti – mesmo quando ela não é formulada em termos depreciativos – é tanto político quanto metodológico. Minha própria intolerância está menos relacionada à limitação frequentemente implícita em tais afirmações (as quais, afinal, dizem mais sobre seus autores do que sobre o Haiti) do que às consequências práticas dessa limitação. Quando nos dizem repetidas vezes que o Haiti é único, bizarro, anormal, esquisito, excêntrico, exótico ou grotesco, também estão nos dizendo, de diversas formas, que o Haiti é anormal, irregular e, portanto, inexplicável. Estão nos dizendo que o Haiti é tão especial que os métodos de investigação aplicáveis a outras sociedades não são relevantes aqui.

Em seu notável livro *Haiti and the Great Powers*, Brenda Gayle Plummer critica o mito do excepcionalismo haitiano e expõe algumas de suas consequências. Na visão de Plummer, “[a] ideia de que o Haiti não se encaixava em nenhum paradigma proibiu o desenvolvimento de tudo, exceto de políticas mais conservadoras” por parte de poderes internacionais, incluindo os Estados Unidos (Plummer, 1988). Poderíamos acrescentar que a mesma visão continua ainda hoje a influenciar alguns políticos nos Estados Unidos, na França ou no Vaticano – para citar apenas três dos Estados envolvidos com as questões haitianas. Plummer, entretanto, é muito mais indulgente do que eu em relação aos políticos e intelectuais haitianos, ainda que ela admita que eles compartilham parte da culpa. Na minha visão, o excepcionalismo haitiano atua como um escudo em ambos os casos.

Embora não se restrinja apenas aos escritores estrangeiros, a ficção de que o Haiti escapa a qualquer análise ou comparação surgiu das mentes de observadores europeus e norte-americanos, homens brancos em sua maioria, que escreviam sobre o Haiti no início do século XIX, momento em que a existência de um estado “negro”, estabelecido a partir de uma revolução anticolonial parecia uma aberração diante de seus olhos. Para uma profusão de escritores, de James Franklin a Gustave d’Alaux, passando por Spencer St. John e por Robert e Nancy Heintz, o excepcionalismo haitiano tem sido um escudo que mascara a contribuição perversa dos poderes ocidentais para a situação haitiana. O excepcionalismo haitiano funciona, assim, como um escudo contra a integração do Haiti a um mundo dominado pelo cristianismo, pelo capitalismo e pela branquitude. Quanto mais o Haiti parecer estranho, mais fácil será esquecer que ele representa o mais longo experimento neocolonial da história do Ocidente.

Até James Leyburn cometeu o mesmo pecado de omissão. No terceiro capítulo do seu importante livro, *The Haitian People*, Leyburn (1941: 32) escreveu: “se alguma vez algum país teve a oportunidade de começar desde o zero a escolha de suas próprias instituições sociais, esse país foi o Haiti, que teve essa oportunidade em 1804... Os haitianos poderiam (ao menos em tese) ter inventado todo um pequeno novo mundo com uma outra vida econômica, política, religiosa e social. Todos os caminhos estavam abertos para eles”. Leyburn conclui que, infelizmente, as limitações de Dessalines colocaram os haitianos na rota para o desastre.

Bom, isso não iria acontecer. Nem na teoria nem na prática. Com uma canetada, Leyburn apagou três séculos de dominação colonial direta e um século e meio de neocolonialismo. E tudo isso foi escrito por um autor que permanece, para mim, como um dos melhores observadores, entre haitianos e estrangeiros, da sociedade haitiana e de sua cultura.

O lado haitiano dessa história não é mais glorioso, ainda que, algumas vezes, pareça, ao menos no papel, muito melhor. De fato, muitos intelectuais e políticos haitianos continuam a repetir a mesma ladainha sem sentido e até mesmo em mais alto volume do que seus equivalentes estrangeiros. A realidade é que essa ficção é tão conveniente para as elites haitianas quanto para muitos estrangeiros, ainda que por diferentes motivos.

Antes do século XX, os escritores haitianos raramente, quando muito, promoviam a singularidade haitiana em seus estudos sobre a realidade de seu país. Na verdade, ocorria justamente o oposto, sobretudo na primeira metade do século XIX. Com efeito, os intelectuais haitianos viram, acertadamente, as teorias do excepcionalismo haitiano que estavam se espalhando na Europa e na América do Norte como implicitamente –

e muitas vezes explicitamente – racistas. Logo após a independência, um escritor como Barão de Vastey baseou-se nos princípios universais do Iluminismo para anunciar a Revolução Haitiana e rejeitar teorias que procuravam associar aparência física e caráter nacional<sup>4</sup>. No final do século XIX e início do XX, escritores como Demesvar Delorme, Louis-Joseph Janvier, Anténor Firmin, Edmond Paul chegando até Jean Price-Mars e Dantès Bellegarde tentaram, de diversas formas, dar um sentido ao Haiti no contexto internacional, aplicando algumas das teorias predominantes de seu próprio tempo para a situação haitiana. Tal fato é particularmente verdadeiro no caso das ciências sociais e da economia. Ainda que, atualmente, possamos questionar o liberalismo econômico de Edmond Paul, a sociologia de Louis-Joseph Janvier ou a etnologia de Jean Price-Mars, é preciso dizer que esses autores nunca pensaram que o Haiti fugisse dos paradigmas do seu tempo.

Mas à despeito desses autores terem citado pensadores europeus famosos, a prática política no Haiti frequentemente se alimentou do excepcionalismo. As elites haitianas atuaram como se, teorias à parte, o Haiti fosse excepcional e, portanto, devesse ser liderado também de forma excepcional. Desse modo, as políticas de um Delorme ou de um Firmin não diferiam muito das dos generais iletrados que hora os apoiavam hora não e que talvez tenham acreditado no excepcionalismo haitiano. Ainda assim, a suposição pública e incontestada, em todos os círculos intelectuais, de que o Haiti era realmente um país como todos os outros, limitou os danos infligidos pela aceitação de práticas que, em caso contrário, seriam consideradas não-convencionais.

Com a ocupação dos Estados Unidos, entre 1915 e 1934, entretanto, os estudos haitianos sofreram uma notável perda de qualidade, acompanhada pelo crescimento da aceitação de teorias baseadas na singularidade do Haiti. A ocupação levou a uma reavaliação da identidade haitiana entre as elites, incluindo o caso de escritores como Jean Price-Mars. Porém, o mal-estar ideológico daqueles tempos também abriu a porta para a possibilidade de questionamentos com relação aos universais herdados do Iluminismo. Partindo de Price-Mars, mas rejeitando sua herança iluminista, a escola dos *Griots* – da qual François Duvalier foi um dos membros – insistiu particularmente nas singularidades da *mentalité* haitiana<sup>5</sup>.

Assim, a partir de 1930, as pesquisas, a prática política e a legislação enfatizaram a singularidade do Haiti e, de fato, contribuíram para o fortalecimento dessa singularidade produzindo aberrações tais como a infame lei anti-comunista de 1969. Entre as muitas razões citadas para a proibição até mesmo da crença no comunismo, a lei destaca “a incompatibilidade das *doutrinas importadas*, notadamente o Marxismo-Leninismo, com a ordem social política e econômica do Haiti” (citado em Trouillot e Pascal-Trouillot, 1978, 445, grifos do autor). De acordo com Duvalier, o Haiti poderia encontrar os ingredientes para o seu progresso apenas em sua própria cultura, uma cultura que seria, evidentemente, única, adquirindo um sentido quase místico enfatizado pela doutrina *Griot*<sup>6</sup>.

Eu seria a última pessoa a dizer que a cultura haitiana não é única, ou que o Haiti não deveria lançar mão de suas potencialidades culturais. A questão é que antes e durante os anos Duvalier, as particularidades do Haiti foram utilizadas para defender as elites haitianas. O Haiti é único e portanto escapa às teorias estrangeiras, inclusive às análises sobre classes sociais. De fato, o Haiti escapa de toda e qualquer análise, no sentido estrito do termo. E ele escapa também das comparações. Portanto, podemos governar esse país de formas que parecem

4 Ao mesmo tempo, mas de uma forma mais sutil, poetas haitianos e, mais tarde, romancistas, responderam à mitificação pejorativa do Haiti pelo Ocidente com uma escrita que produzia seus próprios mitos, em um processo que continua até os dias de hoje (ver, por exemplo, Dash, 1988).

5 Como os membros da escola dos *Griots* afirmavam ser seguidores de Jean Price-Mars, ele passou a ser visto como um proponente do excepcionalismo haitiano, uma responsabilidade que não encontra justificativa alguma em seus volumosos escritos. Certamente, desde o início, Price-Mars não recusou o que ele entendia como ciência, nem mesmo os esforços mal-sucedidos de Justin Dévot de introduzir o positivismo no Haiti. Mais do que isso, em um movimento que antecipou tanto Bastide quanto Herskovits, Price-Mars insistiu que o Haiti não poderia ser estudado como se fosse um avatar da Europa sem levar em conta sua influência africana, e que esta era, no Haiti, passível de ser analisada cientificamente. Atualmente, ambos os argumentos são inquestionáveis entre os antropólogos, ainda que diferentes conclusões possam derivar deles. O primeiro ponto, que também foi repetido por Duvalier como parte de uma nova *problématique* (Denis e Duvalier, 1936), não faz de Price-Mars um excepcionalista. De qualquer forma, nas palavras de Price-Mars, seu livro seminal, *Ainsi parla l'oncle* (1928), “é um esforço para integrar o pensamento popular haitiano à disciplina tradicional da etnografia tradicional” (Price-Mars, 1983: 7).

6 As duas leis promulgadas anteriormente sobre as atividades comunistas, durante os governos dos Presidentes Estimé (fevereiro de 1948) e Magloire (setembro de 1951), não fazem referência alguma à cultura haitiana (Trouillot; Pascal-Trouillot, 1978, pp. 443-44).

desafiar a imaginação da maioria dos estrangeiros e de alguns tantos haitianos. O Haiti é especial; assim, merece instituições feitas sob medida e um governo feito sob medida. A manobra política aqui é evidente. Assim como a falácia intelectual sobre a qual está assentada.

Me parece que aprendemos muito menos sobre o Haiti se o interpretarmos como uma aberração que desafia qualquer explicação do que se o situarmos em uma perspectiva comparativa. Uma das limitações mais sérias dos estudos haitianos, no Haiti e em outros lugares, está ligada à propensão dos haitianistas, sobretudo dos acadêmicos nascidos no país, em estudar o Haiti e nada mais além do Haiti. A hipótese é a de que aquilo que aprendemos observando outra sociedade não pode nos ensinar nada sobre o Haiti, já que o Haiti é tão único. Sem dúvida, o insularismo é uma característica dos estudos caribenhos como um todo. Jamaicanos estudam a Jamaica, cubanos estudam Cuba e alguns estrangeiros estendem suas asas para além dos limites linguísticos do arquipélago. Porém, a ironia nesse caso é que a excepcional história haitiana apresenta muitas características que podem se beneficiar da observação de outras sociedades, especialmente na América Latina e, mais ainda, nas outras Antilhas.

No que resta deste texto, vou mencionar algumas áreas, centrando-me em exemplos de casos vizinhos, que poderiam certamente beneficiar os estudos haitianos. Me inspirei em tantos colegas que não sou capaz de mencionar todos aqui. Tampouco conseguirei apresentar todas as áreas potencialmente interessantes para um estudo comparativo.

O campesinato é uma dessas áreas, e uma das mais importantes. Passei quinze meses fazendo trabalho de campo na Dominica e acredito que aprendi muito mais sobre o campesinato haitiano durante esses meses do que ao longo dos dezoito anos vivendo em Porto-Príncipe. O Haiti, assim como as Ilhas de Barlavento, Jamaica, Porto Rico ou, em menor medida, como Trinidad e Tobago, tem um importante campesinato pós-*plantation*. Como as teorias sobre o impacto da economia de *plantation* ou sobre a passagem da *plantation* ao campesinato em um contexto dominado pelo capitalismo (Trouillot, 1988) se encaixam no caso haitiano? Até onde eu sei, Alex Dupuy talvez seja o primeiro intelectual haitiano a enfrentar essa questão. Os estudos haitianos, em geral, poderiam se beneficiar de leituras mais sistemáticas de Walter Rodney, George Beckford, Raymond Smith e J.R. Mandle. Os ensaios comparativos de Sidney Mintz sobre os campesinatos caribenhos (1979; 1990) podem oferecer um excelente ponto de partida para esse tipo de trabalho.

Dentre as tantas questões sem resposta presentes nos estudos caribenhos, e que poderiam influenciar diretamente a forma como os haitianistas olham para o Haiti, posso apenas esboçar uma lista. Por que existem padrões similares ao *plasaj* haitiano ou instituições rurais análogas ao *lakou* ou ao *konbit* em outros locais do Caribe? Até onde vão essas semelhanças? Estão elas em declínio ou sobrevivendo do mesmo modo e pelas mesmas razões? Como elas se relacionam com as questões de gênero? As mulheres comerciantes haitianas são surpreendentemente parecidas com as mulheres comerciantes da Jamaica – ou do Gana. Por quê? Até onde podemos considerar o paradigma da pós-*plantation* para os papéis sociais ou para o campesinato reconstituído de Mintz?

Assim como há um campesinato pós-*plantation*, também há um Estado pós-*plantation*. Meu próprio trabalho comparando as elites do pós-escravidão da Dominica e do Haiti revela similaridades surpreendentes. Não por acaso, um dos mais importantes bordões do século XIX, no Haiti – “Le plus grand bien au plus grand nombre” (“O bem maior para a maioria”) – o *leitmotif* dos negros do *Parti National* em uma sociedade dominada por mulatos (Trouillot, 1992), foi também a máxima da elite mulata na Dominica dominada pelos britânicos. Será que a situação do pós-*plantation* conduz a formas específicas de poder estatal, incluindo formas específicas de retóricas do Estado (Trouillot, 1990)?

Podemos aliar a essa questão temas já muito debatidos nos estudos latino-americanos, como o autoritarismo e o papel das forças armadas. Existe algo como um autoritarismo social que pode resultar em formas do poder político? O exército haitiano, assim como o exército do Panamá, da República Dominicana e, até recentemente,

da Nicarágua, é produto da invasão dos Estados Unidos. Quais são as semelhanças e as diferenças entre essas instituições na medida em que elas funcionam em sociedades reconhecidamente diferentes, mas, de muitas formas, semelhantes?

A religião é outra área importante. Até onde eu sei, ninguém ainda seguiu sistematicamente o caminho aberto por Roger Bastide ao esboçar comparações entre o Brasil e o Haiti. Outro caminho a ser explorado é o dos trabalhos de Melville Herskovits sobre os africanismos – com as correções necessárias, claro, mas também acompanhado de releituras da obra de Price-Mars. Agora que já sabemos mais sobre, digamos, Suriname e Brasil, o quão “africano” parece o Haiti em uma perspectiva continental? E, é claro, poderíamos levar a comparação até a África.

Da mesma forma, devemos olhar para o crioulo haitiano a partir do que sabemos sobre as línguas crioulas em locais tão distantes quanto a ilha da Reunião. No mínimo, os estudos sobre o crioulo haitiano poderão se beneficiar muito de uma familiarização com trabalhos como os de Louis-Félix Prudent sobre Guadalupe e Martinica, e especialmente com os escritos de Marvyn Alleyne sobre o crioulo de Santa Lúcia e outros idiomas afro-americanos. E eu ainda não disse nada sobre a música...

Toquei apenas na ponta de um grande iceberg para fazer uma observação mais geral. Os estudos haitianos têm experimentado uma pequena, mas notável renovação desde o final da década de 1970. Mas ainda há muito a ser feito. Existem caminhos a seguir e novas conexões a serem realizadas. Podemos esperar que, com a diminuição da ênfase exagerada no duvalierismo – para não dizer nas políticas de Estado – os haitianistas começarão a ler seriamente não apenas Bellegarde e Price-Mars (a quem considero os últimos exemplares de uma linhagem intelectual), mas também seus precursores, os clássicos do pensamento social haitiano do século XIX<sup>7</sup>. De fato, todos os aspectos da vida haitiana no século XIX se beneficiarão de leituras mais comprometidas, já que os estudos sobre este período têm sido injustamente prejudicados pela dupla ênfase dada nos estudos haitianos à revolução escrava de 1791 e à política do século XX. Enfatizo o pensamento social simplesmente porque os escritores daquela época, com sua fé no universalismo e seu desejo de defender o Haiti em um contexto de declarado ostracismo, podem nos oferecer um potente antídoto ao mito do excepcionalismo haitiano: questões específicas, afinadas às particularidades haitianas, mas informadas pelos debates internacionais de seu tempo.

Os estudos haitianos não podem prosseguir sem fazer um salto teórico. Dito de forma direta, precisamos abandonar a ficção, herdada da literatura racista oitocentista, de que o Haiti é único – se por único nos referimos a algo que escapa às análises e comparações. O Haiti não é estranho. É a ficção do excepcionalismo haitiano que é estranha.

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Revisão técnica: Rodrigo C. Bulamah e Júlia Vilaça Goyatá

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<sup>7</sup> Boa parte da obra desse conjunto de autores está disponível. Além disso, a editora Henri Deschamps publicou recentemente o trabalho completo – incluindo volumes até então não publicados – de Thomas Madiou, o primeiro dos mais completos historiadores haitianos.

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