

*vibrant*

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Dossiers

**Global Anthropological Dialogues**

Dossier Reflections on Anthropological Practice around the world

**Indigenous Peoples, tribunals, prisons, and legal and public processes  
in Brazil and Canada**

**Dossier COVID-19 in Brazil**

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# Practices, themes and problems of anthropology in the present: global perspectives and critical contexts in the contemporary world – a mosaic

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The current issue of *Vibrant* reflects the vitality of both the journal and the anthropology produced nationally and internationally by Brazilian anthropologists, whether working as individual researchers or through their dialogues, research networks and collaborative activities in international settings. Over the course of 2022 we published a diverse series of articles submitted to the journal independently. Covering a wide variety of themes, the nine articles making up this section explore the interactions between anthropology and other sciences, the challenges of the final years of the Bolsonaro government, activism in prisons, and the epistemological challenges of our métier ranging from an analysis of the classics to contemporary issues. The articles compose, then, a brief but expressive mosaic of the discipline's fields and approaches in which traditional and contemporary themes of anthropological inquiry converge, interrogating Brazil's excruciating reality over recent years. This is a theme also vividly present in two of the dossiers contained in this issue, which examine the ways in which a considerable portion of the Brazilian population (and beyond) has been vilified and their rights abused. Faced with this scenario, issues of gender and violence (Pereira, 2022) and forms of control and mobility (Rodrigues, 2022), as well as issues related to travestis, are examined in diverse contexts and through distinct approaches that mutually enhance one another.

The social forms of violence, which appear in different contributions to the issue, emerge in the work of Natalia Lago (2022) and her examination of the reality of the prison population, an important topic also addressed in the second part of the dossier “Indigenous Peoples, tribunals, prisons, and legal and public processes in Brazil and Canada,” organized by Stephen Grant Baines and Bruce Granville Miller (2021), the first part of which was published in Issue 18 of *Vibrant*. This dossier focuses on imprisoned indigenous persons, victims of layers of institutionalized violence. Contexts explored include those of Mato Grosso do Sul state (Aguilera Urquiza, Penteadó Junior & Galícia, 2022) during the Covid-19 pandemic, São Gabriel da Cachoeira on the Upper Rio Negro in Amazonas state (Jucá, 2022), or, within the framework of interdisciplinary dialogues, the work of lawyers Ela Wiecko Wolkmer de Castilho and Tédney Moreira da Silva (2022). The dossier continues with studies exploring the diverse ways through which State institutions and judicial/public proceedings frequently serve interests adverse – when not directly opposed – to those of indigenous peoples in both Brazil and Canada. The dossier thus concludes with important comparative reflections on indigenous contexts and their relations with nation states.

The direction taken by Brazil in the years from 2019 to 2022 in terms of indigenist policies, led by a government ideologically aligned with the principles of the international far right, is examined in the work of Rufino (2022), an important reflection in a setting rife with all kinds of social tensions, as observable in this post-election moment of Brazil in late 2022.

The mosaic of anthropological work refracted here also includes dialogues with fields of knowledge such as engineering and mathematics (Kelly, 2022), the interactions between sensory experiences in music and the use of audiovisual media (Vilella, 2022), or the exploration of the urban, a privileged thematic area in Brazilian anthropology as elsewhere, here set in dialogue with sociology and especially geography (Espinosa, 2022). These reflections are complemented by others on science in general (Marini & Marras, 2022) and anthropology in particular, whose historical trajectories are explored by João de Pina-Cabral in a shrewd essay (Pina-Cabral, 2022) surveying a new collection of books and, especially, the diversity of the discipline’s contemporary practices. These are likewise examined in the dossier “Reflections on Anthropological Practice Around the World,” the second issue of the *Global Anthropological Dialogues* section, inaugurated in the previous issue of *Vibrant*, which aims to provide an account of the international dialogues between the anthropology of and about Brazil and other world anthropologies, recognizing not only the need to surmount linguistic and hegemonic barriers but also pointing to the contemporary reality of the output of our intense joint efforts achieved with and through relations with colleagues from all over the world. Organized by Carmen Rial and Virginia Dominguez (Dominguez & Rial, 2022), the dossier contains papers by anthropologists from different anthropological associations in the context of the *Global Survey on Anthropological Practice* (GSAP). The reflections published here stem from the decisions to conduct the survey on a global scale taken through the network of the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA), created in 2004 under the leadership of Gustavo Lins Ribeiro in Brazil, during the 24th Brazilian Anthropology Meeting, the survey was affirmed at the biennial meeting of the WCAA held in Taipei in October 2014 (Nešković, Mathur, McGrath, Accaioli, Millar & Metzner, 2022). The texts cover a variety of themes in the different national settings included in the survey (on its general aspects, see MacGrath, Accaioli, Millard, Metzner, Nešković & Vucinic, 2022). In this dossier we find a detailed reflection on specific scenarios like those of Brazil (Rial & Machado, 2022) Argentina (Ferrero, 2022) and China, including Hong Kong (Fan, 2022; Mathews, 2022), among others, as well as broader aspects present across multiple spaces.

Finally, and extremely important for innumerable reasons, the dossier “Covid-19 in Brazil” provides space for the exploration of a multitude of perspectives on the Covid-19 pandemic, stemming from diverse themes and fields of anthropological research. Organized by Jean Segata, Marcia Grisotti and Rozeli Porto (Segata, Grisotti & Porto, 2022), the dossier highlights the singular forms and effects of the pandemic in the Brazilian setting – effects conceived as part of the social impacts of the same far-right administration governing the

country from 2019 to the end of this year. The research informing the dossier has generated knowledge that can assist in the reconstruction of policies designed to mitigate the pandemic's impacts, both through the advance of scientific knowledge (especially anthropological) and in areas more directly linked to studies of health, or on numerous other aspects. The articles making up the dossier provide comparative viewpoints, coauthorships between researchers with varied levels of training, multidisciplinary approaches in dialogue with anthropology, and perspectives on the realities faced by Brazil as seen from abroad. It thus contains a valuable series of studies, many of them derived from contributions to the important *Rede COVID-19 Humanidades MCTI* (Covid-19 Humanities MCTI Network), dealing with a variety of topics pertaining to the Brazilian pandemic context, furnishing ample material for comparative works at international level.

We wish everyone an excellent read and a fine end to the year.

The Editors

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# Reflections on mathematical figures and engineering approaches in anthropology

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## **Abstract**

This paper presents and discusses some examples of how mathematical figures and engineering approaches can be detected in anthropological theorizing and how a mathematical reading of certain anthropological theories is possible and sometimes fruitful. The paper proceeds in three steps: a comparison between experimental measuring and engineering “black boxing” as different ways of representing ethnographic reportage and anthropological theorizing; a discussion of feedback loops in anthropological theorizing; and a discussion of chaos theory and fractal geometry and some of their uses in anthropological writing. I finish by hinting at the fruitfulness of making allies across disciplinary boundaries given our anthropocenic predicaments and limitations in our cross disciplinary analogies.

**Key words:** mathematics and engineering, anthropological theory, chaos theory.

# Reflexões sobre figuras matemáticas e abordagens da engenharia na antropologia

## Resumo

Este artigo apresenta e discute alguns exemplos de como figuras matemáticas e abordagens de engenharia podem ser detectadas na teorização antropológica e como uma leitura matemática de certas abordagens antropológicas é possível e às vezes frutífera. O artigo desenvolve-se em três etapas: uma comparação entre a medição experimental e o método de “caixa preta” da engenharia como imagens diferentes da reportagem etnográfica e da teorização antropológica; uma discussão de feedback na teorização antropológica; e, finalmente, uma discussão da teoria do caos e geometria fractal e alguns de seus usos na escrita antropológica. Terminando sugerindo a fecundidade de fazer aliados através das fronteiras disciplinares, dados nossos apuros antropocêntricos, bem como algumas limitações em nossas analogias interdisciplinares.

**Palavras-chave:** matemáticas e engenharia, teoria antropológica, teoria do caos.

# Reflections on mathematical figures and engineering approaches in anthropology

*José Antonio Kelly*

## Introduction

After several years of teaching anthropology it has become noticeable to me that social science students tend to have a considerable aversion to mathematics, a sentiment often born during earlier phases of their education. The common separation between the hard and soft sciences often leaves students of the latter with little interest and knowledge of the former and a general impression of mutual incompatibility. This paper is not a systematic review of any intellectual intersections between the hard sciences and anthropology, it simply addresses this “intellectual gap” by presenting and discussing some examples of how mathematical figures can be detected in anthropological theory and how a mathematical reading of certain anthropological approaches is possible and sometimes fruitful.

It should be clear from the outset that this article is not about ethno-mathematics, or about mathematical tools deployed in social science methodologies, like the use of statistics in sociological analysis or other quantitative methods used in fields like medical anthropology or human ecology. In terms of the relationship between mathematics and anthropology, following Lévi-Strauss’s consideration of the subject (1954; 1963: 283), I am much more attracted, for example, to the affinity between what Lévi-Strauss called “qualitative mathematics” (ibid.: 585) – referring to group theory and topology – and social anthropological research.

Any attempt to explore the relations between mathematics and anthropology risks being criticized from two positions: either the result is overly metaphorical and lacking in rigor from a mathematical standpoint; or it uses math as a mystification or as an artificial appearance of scientificity, from an anthropological vantage point. I have strived to maintain a satisfactory degree of rigor, drawing from my early training as an engineer, and I am certainly not trying to persuade anyone of the value of anthropology by appealing to its “hard” scientific credentials.

In this context, in this article I review some ways in which ideas resulting from my dual training as an engineer and anthropologist have come to frame each other in my writing and teaching. I shall proceed in three steps. First, I compare Malinowski’s methodological recommendations for conducting fieldwork with Lévi-Strauss’ methodological guidelines for building structural models. I affirm that the first is modeled on a representation of ethnographic reportage as experimental measuring, whilst the second is analogous to the engineering process of assuming a black box and discovering its transfer function (both are explained below). This comparison also contrasts the role of change in each procedure. The second section discusses the analytical use of feedback loops, and how they can be suited to ethnographic analysis of social life, given that feedback can capture the inherent recursiveness we find in social processes. My main anthropological examples draw on the work of Gregory Bateson among the Iatmul and that of Edmund Leach among the Kachin. The final section is devoted to chaos theory and fractal geometry. Considering social processes as “complex dynamical systems”, the kind of processes from which chaos theory developed, I draw on a number of anthropological analyses, mainly from Melanesia and Amazonia, to highlight the usefulness for anthropological thinking of notions such as non-linearity, system attractors, self-similarity and non-integer dimensionality. Each section ends with a commentary on analytical shortcomings that are addressed in the following one, so as to establish a progression of increasing congruence between anthropological analysis and social processes.

## Experimental measuring vs engineering black-boxing

No one would dream of making an experimental contribution to physical or chemical science, without giving a detailed account of all the arrangements of the experiments; an exact description of the apparatus used; of the manner in which the observations were conducted; of their number; of the length of time devoted to them, and of the degree of approximation with which each measurement was made (Malinowski, 2002 [1922]: 30).

Malinowski's introduction to the *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* is devoted to the ethnographic method. It is written against the background of previous unscientific reports and in contrast to the observations of other white men who are not scientists yet may have contact with indigenous peoples. As Durkheim would do for sociology, Malinowski wanted to renovate anthropology, which he understood required an upgrade in its rigor. He believed that the natural sciences provided a clear model of how to advance in the legitimate production of knowledge and presented a number of methodological recommendations as steps in the pursuit of an ideal of objectivity: separating fact from interpretation; collecting all material from the conventional to the outlandish; considering the role of emotions to gauge the quality of the ethnographer as observer.

If we may see an aspiration to infuse the social with the positivistic principles and standards of the natural sciences, it is no less true that the "natural sciences" include a wide range of fields, practices, and methods. From this array of procedures Malinowski seems to model ethnographic reporting as an exercise in measurement, which makes the ethnographer an instrument for conveying an accurate portrait of reality. Though reality is not subject to quantification, to metaphorize ethnography as a measuring exercise infuses it with a quantitative ideal: hence the emphasis on precision and the avoidance of interferences that may affect accuracy.

All measuring devices must be designed to minimize alterations in the amount they are trying to quantify. There is no point in measuring the flow of a liquid or electrical current, for example, with something that will significantly change that flow. Instruments also require calibration and must be built to retain a constant sensitivity throughout a given range of measurements. All these features can be identified in Malinowski's methodological guidelines for ethnographic fieldwork. Minimum disturbance by the ethnographer/measuring device should be the result of co-residence, when the anthropologist's presence "soon adopts quite a natural course very much in harmony with his surroundings" (2002: 37). Calibration of the instrument is what the "transparency" of participant observation, the sharing of the feelings of the natives, hopes to achieve (2002: 58). And the advice to maintain an equal focus on the everyday and commonplace as on more singular events is analogous to keeping the sensitivity of a device constant throughout the range of possible measurements.

Of course this ideal of objectivity, which pictures the anthropologist as a "sensor" of another's culture has long been criticized. The anthropologist's culture, and dialogic and power relations with natives, and the general character of the anthropological project are recognized to have a much more nuanced and complex place in the production of knowledge. But it is nonetheless true that however aware we may be of the part we play in "observing facts" and seeing "their" connections with other "facts", we still perceive a part of our phenomenal experience as "facts" and other parts as operations on those facts. We do not need to buy into Malinowski's epistemological assumptions or aspirations to consider his guidelines as sound advice.

But the comparison I wish to make hinges somewhat intuitively on the value of change within a given method. If for the ideal of reproducing or representing another's reality faithfully, change or alteration – say between that reality and its representation – is something to be avoided or reduced to a minimum, there are other engineering and indeed anthropological methods where the place of change is very much the opposite. Change is a necessary feature that enables the modeling of a system.



## Engineering and structuralism's black box approach

A common task for an engineer – or at least a student of engineering – is to provide a model for a system the components and workings of which one doesn't yet know. This basically involves characterizing the system, initially identified as a “black box”, since we don't know what it is made of, by means of testing what kinds of operations the system applies to its input.<sup>1</sup> The idea is to map how the inputs are transformed by the system by registering the outputs generated by a set of controlled inputs. The “map”, the knowledge that input “ $x_1$ ” becomes “ $y_1$ ”, “ $x_2$ ” becomes “ $y_2$ ”, and so on, describes the system basically by what it does, how it transforms “Xs” into “Ys” (think of an amplifier that transforms electric voltage into sound volume in direct proportion for low frequency sounds, and dampens them for higher frequency sounds like a buffer speaker). This map of relations is called a transfer function.

This of course involves nothing more than finding an equation that represents the relations between Xs and Ys of the type we all learned in school,  $F(x)=y$ , and put in terms of a process, where Xs are inputs to a system and Ys are its outputs. This method of creating models for a system, which often serves the purpose of learning how to control it, shifts the focus from trying to find out what the black box is, to focusing on what it does. In other words, we are satisfied with knowing *what the system does*, and for all modeling purposes this is *what it is*. A description of what a system does, is always a way of knowing how the system responds to different events or changes in the environment where it is inserted.

Now if to return to ethnographic reporting and anthropological theorizing, it is not hard to see how structuralism's emphasis on relations more than terms; on systems more than institutions; on model building, experimentation and comparison; on function understood not as utility (as Malinowski would) but as dependency between variables; can be understood to be modeled less on experimental measuring and more on system-characterization through transfer functions.

Lévi-Strauss's requirements for “structural models” imply the assumption of culture -- or a domain like kinship or totemism -- as a black box, subject to being modeled by a transfer function. A good structural model is “made up of several elements, none of which can undergo a change without effecting changes in all the other elements” (1963: 279). A good model should also predict what these changes would be, and the sum of these changes in the model should constitute a transformation group. (Ibid.)<sup>2</sup>

Analysis in anthropology and engineering, in this view, involves a similar art: observing facts and elaborating “methodological devices which permit the construction of models out of these facts” (ibid.: 280) -- like determining what are the right inputs and outputs -- to then be able to “experiment on models”, that is, discover a “set of procedures aimed at ascertaining how a given model will react when subjected to change and at comparing models of the same or different types...” (ibid.) -- which is like establishing the transfer function of a system.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the best examples of the fruits of this method can be drawn from Lévi-Strauss' discussions of totemism and kinship. In the first case, the “methodological device which permits the construction of a model” steers away from totemic animals themselves, the terms, and considers as inputs to the system the difference between pairs of terms, so that a series of natural differences can be mapped onto a series of cultural differences.

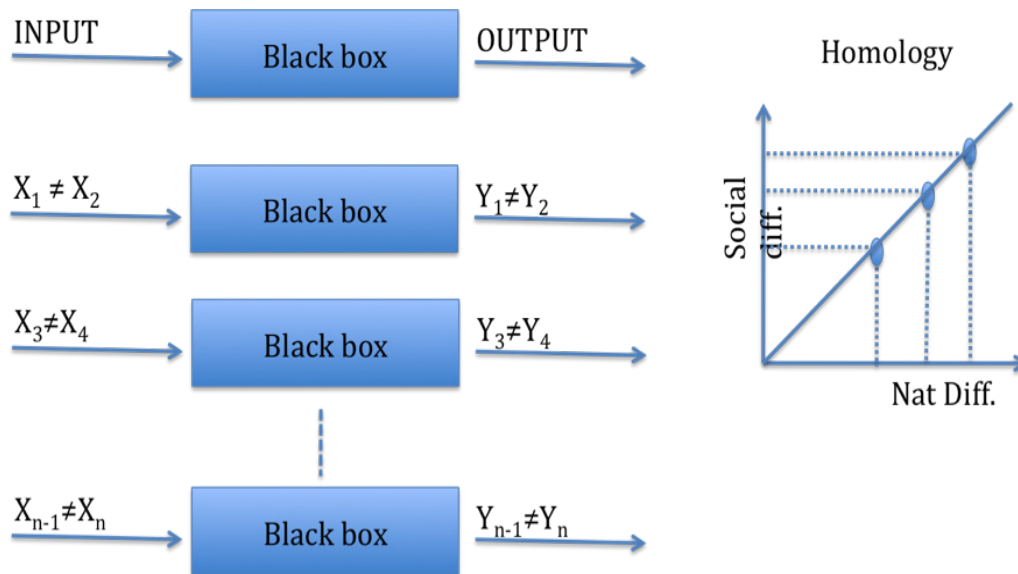
1 “The terms “black box” and “white box” are convenient and figurative expressions of not very well determined usage. I shall understand by a black box a piece of apparatus, such as four-terminal networks with two input and two output terminals, which performs a definite operation on the present and past of the input potential, but for which we do not necessarily have any information of the structure by which this operation is performed. On the other hand, a white box will be a similar network in which we have built in the relation between input and output potentials in accordance with a definite structural plan for securing a previously determined input-output relation” (Wiener, 1985 [1948]: xi).

2 Given that the subject of group theory in Lévi-Strauss's structuralism has been described and analyzed brilliantly by Mauro Almeida (1990) I will not discuss it here and refer the interested reader to Almeida's paper.

3 These methodological similitudes are, of course, not surprising, given Lévi-Strauss's interest in developments within mathematics as well as communications, game and cybernetic theories (see Lévi-Strauss, 1963 and Almeida, 1990).

The totemic transfer function is basically a relation of homology that converts natural differences into cultural ones in the form  $X_1 \neq X_2 :: Y_1 \neq Y_2$  where Xs are natural species and Ys social groups, like clans.

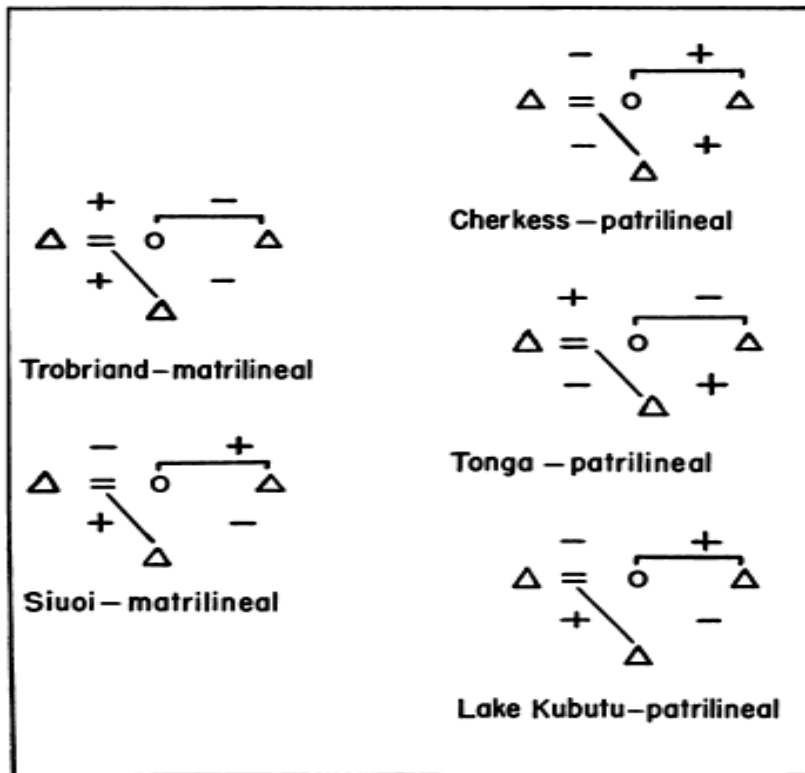
Figure 1. Totemic transfer function: Homology



Suppose Xs are natural species and Ys are clans. The transfer function is a series of homologies between natural and social differences.

In the case of kinship, in *Structural Analysis in Linguistics and Anthropology* (Lévi-Strauss, 1963) Lévi-Strauss' discussion with Radcliffe-Brown focuses on the latter's incorrect selection of an appropriate "methodological device" for building a structural model. Whereas Radcliffe-Brown only considers the relationships father/son and uncle/sister's son and maps them onto patrilineal and matrilineal systems, Lévi-Strauss considers four relationships -- brother/sister, husband/wife, father/son, and mother's brother/sister's son -- as constituting a system and hence he maps them onto each other to find out which relations remain constant among the relationships in a number of cases he examines, (see Fig. 3). Additionally, whereas Radcliffe-Brown considers the nuclear family to be "elementary", Lévi-Strauss' "atom" includes the crucial affinal relationship that links "elementary families" in the first place. Considering this more extensive set of relationships, Lévi-Strauss is able to account for a broader range of variations of an elementary kinship structure. This is like determining a transfer function whose inputs are the above four relationships and outputs are the relations between these relationships, which always satisfies two conditions: a) that "the relation between maternal uncle and nephew is to the relation between brother and sister as the relation between father and son is to that between husband and wife" (ibid.:42); and b) "[The] structure rests upon four terms (brother, sister, father, and son), which are linked by two pairs of correlative oppositions in such a way that in each of the two generations there is always a positive relationship and a negative one." (ibid.: 146).

Figure 2: kinship variations (Lévi-Strauss, 1963: 45)



The structural method does not eliminate the need for observation of ethnographic facts. Indeed, there is nothing germane to it that invalidates or is incompatible with Malinowski’s fieldwork recommendations. Lévi-Strauss affirms that observation and experimentation are two steps in the process of structural anthropology. “Observation” is thus still marred by the problems of measurement: reducing the observer’s impact on the measure itself -- we could say that we still need “sensors” to register inputs and outputs of models. “Experimentation”, on the other hand, is all about change; it needs change to see what the black box does, how it reacts, this being the essence of describing it, of finding its transfer function.

But what if the requirements of the “black-box method” were also those of measurement? It is not far-fetched to think that in the different ways anthropology has become more “reflexive”, “dialogical”, “post-social” and “ontological” it has allowed the changes and perturbations necessary for the structural “experiments” to imbue the “measurement” phase of enquiry, making the impact of the observer something other than a nuisance or error to be reduced. Of course, this does not mean the ethnographer is purposefully going to wreak havoc among community members. It means that, if the specific relationships that anthropologists build with the people they study involve something other than an authoritative representation of reality -- as emphasized during the “crisis of representation” -- if ethnography is not the measurement of events and their correlation with cultural symbols, it can be seen rather as an exercise in relating anthropological and native symbols, concepts and/or models (see Wagner, 1967). The implications can be stated in different ways: that the thing being measured and the measuring device (say culture) are of the same kind (see Wagner, 1981, Viveiros de Castro, 2002); that ethnographic reportage is necessarily an exercise of describing foreign concepts in our own terms (see Strathern, 1987); that we do not know in advance what our object is, that it is a blackbox, the study of which might alter the very concepts we use to describe it, betraying our own language in the translation, as the ontologists have affirmed (see Henare et al., 2007).

If we can envision anthropology as the study of culture through culture (*sensu* Wagner, 1981) the reflexive and progressive adjustment of the relations between native and anthropological symbols during fieldwork and ethnographic writing must also be a general feature of culture. This means that if the assumption of a system that can be modeled is to be upheld, it must include a feedback loop. That is, if our system relates inputs and outputs, the latter affect the former. Consider Sahlins' (1985) well-known discussion of structural transformation: in using cultural categories to interpret reality, this process extends the meaning of those categories and may further alter the relations between them.

This brings us to our second mathematical/engineering image and its relation to anthropological modeling: that of a system with a feedback loop. But before we get there, a final comment on the black box method and the recent term "black-boxing", as coined by Actor Network Theory (ANT).

The reader of Latour will be familiar with the phenomena of "black-boxing" whereby "scientific and technical work is made invisible by its own success. When a machine runs efficiently, when a matter of fact is settled, one need focus only on its inputs and outputs and not on its internal complexity. Thus, paradoxically, the more science and technology succeed, the more opaque and obscure they become" (1999: 304). Now the ANT method of "feeding off controversies" Latour advocates for destabilizing settled social sciences concepts like "social" and "society" (see Latour, 2012), is very much the engineering black-box approach just described. It may sound paradoxical, but the way to uncover the complexity made invisible by black-boxing is to treat the phenomena itself as a black box, reverse engineering the (black-box) effect with the (black-box) method. Consider the following extracts from *Reassembling the Social*, a recent exposition of the ANT program.

Sociologists of the social like to appeal to 'social inertia', as if there existed somewhere a stock of connections whose capital could be eroded only over a long time. For ANT, if you stop making and remaking groups, you stop having groups. No reservoir of forces flowing from 'social forces' will help you. *For sociologists of the social, the rule is order while decay, change, or creation are the exceptions. For the sociologists of associations, the rule is performance and what has to be explained, the troubling exceptions, are any type of stability over the long term and on a larger scale. It is as if, in the two schools, background and foreground were reversed* (Latour, 2012: 35, emphasis added).

The reason for this difference in duties is that, in the eyes of the former group [sociologists of the social], the choice of a departure point is not absolutely crucial since the social world already exists. For them, if you highlight 'classes' instead of 'individuals', 'nations' instead of 'classes', 'life trajectories' instead of 'social roles', or 'social networks' instead of 'organisations', all the paths will merge in the end since they are simply somewhat arbitrary ways to delineate the same big animal—in the same fashion as for the proverbial elephant seized successively by the leg, the ear, the trunk, or the tusk. However, the situation is entirely different for ANT because neither society nor the social exists in the first place. *They have to be retraced by subtle changes in connecting non-social resources.* Thus, every choice of a departure point will lead to the drawing of a completely different animal, fully incommensurable with the others. (Ibid.: 35-36, emphasis added)

## Feedback in Bateson and Leach

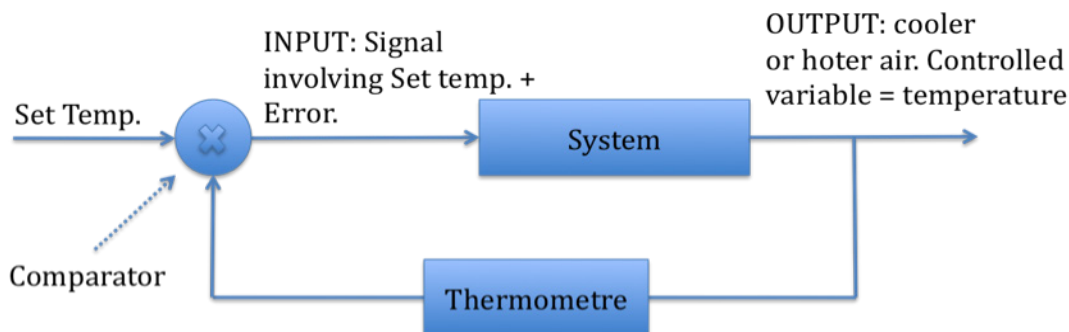
Feedback refers to how outputs are fed back into a system and become part of its inputs. The notion is particularly present in the study and design of control systems, where an engineer is interested in either describing the way a system regulates itself or in the design of mechanisms to control a system. In both cases, s/he may begin by assuming the system as a black box, figuring out its transfer function and then learning either how feedback loops effect appropriate self-regulation or which feedback loops would be necessary to control the system from the outside.

The ways in which information flows within a system and between itself and its environment, and the controlling function this flow can have over the system is the essence of the study of cybernetics.<sup>4</sup> In the broadest of terms, feedback can be negative and positive. If we can think of a system as having a goal or objective (like air conditioning keeping a room at a given temperature, or electro-mechanic servos keeping a drone in a stable position in the air), the system needs information about how well or bad it is achieving the goal. This information must be fed back into its inputs to correct the output and approximate it to the goal or keep it within an acceptable margin of error. This kind of negative feedback generally involves one or more sensors that provide the information about the error -- the difference between the current state of the output and the desired one -- which is fed back as input, to minimize the error, considering a given goal. A positive feedback augments the error of the output and can lead the system to growing states of instability. For this reason it is generally undesirable from the point of view of control.

Think of picking up a plastic cup of water from a table. Your hand, arm, eyes, and brain work together to achieve the goal. But this involves moving your hand in the right direction, at the right speed, stopping at the right moment and applying the right pressure on the cup so you can hold it without crushing it or letting it slip out of your hand. This entire process requires sensing how well you are doing the job and feeding that information to the brain so it can control the mechanics of picking up the cup.

Think now of the air-conditioning in a classroom: you have a remote control with which you set the temperature you want in the room. The machine switches on, either cooling or heating the air, and stops at some point, when its sensor, a thermometer, feeds back the information that the desired temperature has been reached. After a while, the room's temperature changes beyond a given designated limit, that information is fed back to the air-conditioning and triggers it on again (see Fig. 3).<sup>5</sup>

Figure 3: Negative feedback, air conditioning device example



Now the idea of self-regulation and the circularity of cause and effect it involves, has obvious resonances with social dynamics. The recursiveness through which past states of affairs influence present ones is intrinsic to social processes in so far as they are all time-dependent. We may learn much from any synchronic analysis that eliminates the need to consider a longer length of time, but even this kind of approach needs the passage of time to register sequences of acts and a range of “micro-changes” that allow the depiction of an adequate snapshot of the state of a ritual, social organization, language or culture.

Perhaps the most explicit example of the notion of feedback in anthropological analysis is found in Bateson's study of the Naven ritual among the Iatmul of Papua New Guinea, particularly his discussion of schismogenesis, which he defined as a “process of differentiation of behavioral norms resulting from the

4 Norbert Wiener's famous book is in fact entitled “Cybernetics: or control and communication in the animal and the machine” (Weiner, 1961 [1948]).

5 It should be noted that within the range of control systems, this ON-OFF method, is perhaps the crudest.

cumulative interaction of individuals” (1958: 175). The idea is intrinsically recursive and systemic because it requires that we see “the reactions of individuals to other individuals’ reactions” (ibid.). Bateson identified two basic forms of schismogenesis. Symmetric schismogenesis involves two individuals or groups reacting to each other’s behavior with a similar behavior, like the response to boasting with more boasting that characterizes competitive rivalry between men or groups of men of different patrilineages among the Iatmul. Complementary schismogenesis involves a differentiation between the parties by responding to a cultural behavior with a complementary one. Bateson’s examples were women’s submissive reactions to the assertive behavior of men, but also the submissive reaction of novices to their assertive initiators in the male initiation ritual. Both these types of schismogenesis are examples of positive feedback loops, where differences between the parties’ behavior tend to increase: boasting encourages more boasting and assertive behavior responded to with submission encourages higher degrees of assertion and further submission. While Bateson wanted to explain how differences between male and female ethos (culturally normative behavior) was created and sustained in relationships, the positive feedback inherent in schismogenesis quickly led to the question of how social groups didn’t simply breakdown due to the instability that ever-increasing differences, the unchecked positive feedback, leads to. His answer was that complementary and symmetrical schismogenesis worked as tendencies that compensate each other, in a self-regulating fashion, so that one form of schismogenesis counterbalanced the excesses of the other. In his 1958 epilogue, Bateson saw the need to find an explicit negative feedback loop that would, in different aspects of Iatmul life, exhibit this compensatory or self-correcting quality, and it was in the different inversions of male and female ethos in the Naven ritual and other combinations of symmetric and complementary behavior in initiation rituals where he found some of these mechanisms at work.

We could also think of Leach’s famous analysis of *gumlao-gumsa* political forms among the Kachin in terms of positive and negative feedback. Leach describes *gumlao* and *gumsa* as totally opposed forms of political organization - roughly as feudal/hierarchical and republican/egalitarian - and the Kachin as historically shifting from one form to the other due to the internal inconsistencies of the system they constitute. These contradictions can be cast in terms of the incompatibilities between principles of class and segmentary organization or in terms of the counterposed principles of rank and kinship. In any case, the *gumlao* egalitarian organization results from excessive social differentiation (positive feedback) in terms of rank at the expense of kinship. A *gumsa* Kachin chief who exaggerates the aristocrat-serf aspect of his social relations will provoke revolt and community fission by those very serfs who are also his kin. The new *gumlao* order restores the principles of kinship and reduces class differences to zero. This can be seen as a radical form of negative feedback -- i.e. kinship diminishing the difference created by rank. However, according to Leach, because the *mayu-dama* kinship organization implies a hierarchy of its own, *gumlao* Kachin lineages must either be arranged in a circle or tolerate the process of internal rank differentiation, whereby kinship and class hierarchies become aligned. Hence, it is a matter of time before a *gumlao* organization becomes *gumsa* again.

Leach sees both *gumlao* and *gumsa* as structurally defective and unstable, but the spirit of the analysis invites us to focus on a wider system that includes the Shan, which provides the model of political organization for *gumsa* Kachin.<sup>6</sup>

The system may appear unstable from the point of view of a single *gumlao* or *gumsa* community at any given moment, but viewed as a whole and over a wider historical period it is in stable oscillation, and hence self-regulated. External political and economic circumstances impinge on a system with a relatively stable Shan component and a Kachin component that swings from a Shan-like organization to its antithesis.

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<sup>6</sup> In contrast with the Kachin, the Shan appear stable and in part this is because, contrary to what happens among the Kachin, the Shan did not have a segmentary organization, because their principle of “structural continuity” is not “clanship and affinity”, but “land holding” (Leach, 1954: 214). It is because some Kachin chiefs strive to emulate Shan princes and political organization, that contradictions between politics and kinship arise among the Kachin in a way that doesn’t occur among the Shan.

It is interesting to note that in Leach's final remarks on *gumlao/gumsa* oscillation, we find many terms common to the kind of engineering approaches we have been describing: "structure", "disturbance", "environment", even if no mention of feedback or self-regulation is actually made.<sup>7</sup>

The ultimate 'causes' of social change are, in my view, nearly always to be found in changes in the external political and economic environment; but the form which any change takes is largely determined by the existing internal structure of a given system. In this case, the *gumlao* order and the *gumsa* order are both unstable; in situations of external disturbance the tendency is for *gumlao* systems to turn into *gumsa* and for *gumsa* systems to turn into *gumlao* (Leach, 1954: 212).

Implicit in Leach's remarks is a notion of a system's robustness or resilience, that is, its ability to self-correct despite external disturbances. Levi-Strauss (1966 [1962]), when discussing the logics of totemic transformations (in chapter II of *The Savage Mind*), also appeals to negative feedback in noting the resilience of totemic systems to reestablish their formal systemic qualities if demographic factors don't knock them too far out of balance.

A resemblance is also seen between Leach's analysis and Sahlins' mentioned above, the former in terms of social change and structure and the latter's in terms of cultural change and structure. We could say that as "political forms" are lived out, they are transformed in a way similar to how Sahlins understands the transformation of symbolic categories in their application to reality. In both cases, there will be a range of "external disturbances" that the system can cope with and assimilate like a shock absorber. Beyond a certain limit, however, the error correcting tendencies of the system are not enough and structural change follows.

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So far we have seen how the black-box method of mapping relations of input and output provides a good description of a system in terms of what it does, and that by modeling such systems with different forms of feedback we can picture the recursiveness we find in social processes. This modeling exercise is also based on registering how a changing environment impinges on the system and hence is attuned to a view of culture as being in continuous transformation, and analysis requiring both synchronic and diachronic lenses.

However, there are some drawbacks to the method. Considering our examples, we may ask whether feedback is not too ample a notion, where any two contrasting behaviors, cultural norms or principles of social organization may be modeled as being in a counterbalancing loop; the problem was posed by Bateson himself, but I think it remains an issue. It is also true that the idea of self-regulation or control of a system implies that it has a goal or objective and this, of course, re-introduces the problem of teleology for which the functionalists were rightly criticized. However broad, abstractions such as social reproduction, survival, adaptation, or equilibrium presuppose entities like "society" and "culture", which are hard to imagine as agents of management or objects of control.

If asked what the goal of the system might be we can conjure these possibilities -- adaptation, balance, self-preservation -- or venture others when we consider power relations internal to the system: the control of the means of production; the control of women by men; elders' control of youths; the control of scarce human labor via the control of women's reproductive capacities. The truth is we have no good answer to what is being regulated in self-regulation. The system metaphor begs the question of what a system is doing when it is relating all its variables. Would it be possible to think of a goal-less system or self-regulation without the self; that is, keep the method and drop its functionalist drawbacks? This is one way to see what Roy Wagner

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<sup>7</sup> This is no surprise considering that Leach was initially trained as an engineer.

has done in *The Invention of Culture* (1981).<sup>8</sup> Wagner's semiotics substitutes the distinction between symbol and referent with two symbolic modes: conventional and differentiating symbolization. In this view, cultural symbols lose their controlling hold over reality and we come to see all action and thought as a process in which the ordering effects of conventional symbols are in dialectic tension with the particularizing effects of differentiating symbols. This is an ecology of symbols where any distinction between an ordering system and its outer environment is an illusion, an artifact of native cultural convention or anthropological analysis.

## Chaos and fractals

One recent turn in the natural sciences in the past decades has been the development of "chaos theory". This theoretical corpus has been increasingly applied to natural phenomena and processes that were previously very difficult to model, due to their apparent randomness, disorder, and unpredictability. A cover term for these processes is "complex dynamical systems" and they include such things as weather patterns, turbulent flows of fluids and population dynamics. As the term and the description suggests, the kind of problems chaos theory attends to are not unlike those that anthropology is well versed in. Who would disagree that social groups are "complex," "dynamic" and to different degrees "systemic", or that they exhibit a combination of pattern making with a degree of randomness or unpredictability? Chaos theory addresses many processes at a human scale, and in contrast to other scientific theories that have called the attention of social scientists like relativity and quantum mechanics -- the first devoted to the very big, the second to the very small, and both beyond the reach of human experience -- constitutes a type of return to the "logics of sensible qualities" as Lévi-Strauss would have it (see Mosko, 2005: 8). For all these reasons, it is worthwhile for anthropologists to take a look at chaos theory.

Many features characterize chaotic phenomena. I will address only a few of them here, some just to note their resonance with social phenomena, while exploring others in more detail with specific ethnographic examples.

## Non-linearity

A linear system is one in which the outputs are proportional (directly or inversely) to the inputs. A non-linear system is one that does not have this proportionality; outcomes change in ways that are not proportional to inputs. Of course, most systemic processes in the world are non-linear, but mathematicians and engineers have developed methods to "linearize" them, that is, simplify the mess, making approximations to simpler models for the system, restricting its description to the range of its stable functioning. As far as we can understand ethnographic reportage as a "snapshot" of an ongoing human process, and all structural model building and theoretical generalizations as simplified versions of the real thing, they are also forms of linearization that "work" to some degree.

But think of the most simple description of meaning-making through language. When someone says "dark" you understand something literally or metaphorically obscure, the night or a complicated explanation. But if I say "bark" you will think of a dog or a tree. A simple change in one phoneme, /d/ for /b/, makes a big difference in the meaning of what I said. It is not hard to notice that making sense (meaning) is a non-linear process.

In the wider scope of our discussion, we have presented black boxes as systems that relate input and output variables in a kind of map that showed us what the system does. We saw that forms of positive and negative feedback could improve models of social processes because they better represent the recursiveness

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<sup>8</sup> It must be noted that Wagner draws inspiration for his *magnus opus* from both Bateson and Lévi-Strauss, innovating on their approaches, and blending their spirit.



of social life and describe forms of self-regulation and historical processes. Non-linearity allows us to make room for the fact that the system changes itself as it “does” all this relating. Think again of Sahlins’ structural history where social reproduction implies social transformation. Certain “happenings” are assimilated by the categories of culture and leave the relations between these categories unchanged. But other sequences of happenings, to the extent that they don’t fit nicely into the categorical cultural slots, provoke changes in the relations between categories. This is what Sahlins called “structural transformation”, which is similar to saying that the transfer function of the system is altered; that is, the system does not behave the same for the entire range of possible inputs/“happenings”. It is this kind of change that makes the equation between reproduction and transformation a nonlinear phenomenon.

### **Sensitivity to initial conditions**

Another characteristic of chaotic systems related to nonlinearity is their high sensitivity to initial conditions. This means that with a very small variation in the value of an initial input, the output will change disproportionately. A classic example is the so-called butterfly effect, which metaphorically expresses the high sensitivity of future states of the weather on earlier apparently unconnected conditions.

In anthropology we are surely aware of how slight differences in the “initial historical conditions” of social groups may lead these groups in different directions. As Mosko (2005) points out, we would normally call upon individual subjectivity, creativity, will, agency and choice to account for such variation. But his point is that this sensitivity is also characteristic of chaotic systems.

There is an interesting example of a “high sensitivity to initial conditions” in the ethnography provided by Carlos Fausto’s (2012 (2001)) study of the Parakana, a Tupi-speaking people living in the state of Pará in the Brazilian Amazon. The Parakana split due to an internal conflict around the 1890s. As a result, one group remained in their territory and another fled. A century later, Fausto described many differences among these two groups.

The western Parakana had no internal sociological divisions, no defined leadership position or political forum, and lived by foraging more than swidden agriculture. They had also developed a warring ethos, raiding enemy groups throughout the century, capturing numerous women from these enemy groups, which allowed them to develop a generalised polygamy. Relying on foraging for subsistence and raiding enemies for incorporating sociological difference, the western Parakana were a highly mobile “trekker” group. This eventually led them to run into an SPI (the Brazilian indigenist agency at the time) contact post and establish intermittent relations with whites, from which they obtained desired manufactured goods (like steel tools).

The eastern Parakana, meanwhile, were sociologically divided in two intermarrying moieties and three named patrigrups. They had a dual leadership model and a male political forum located in an external plaza. They lived less from foraging and more from agriculture, did not raid enemies, had a restricted, rather than generalized, polygamy, and were more sedentary and isolated from whites and other indigenous groups.

The western Parakana tended towards the kind of fluid and acephalous social organization associated in the regional ethnography with Tupi and Guianese societies, coupled with a socio-symbolic priority on otherness and the outside, as a source of productive internal differentiation. The eastern Parakana tended towards a more dialectical and closed-onto-itself organization, which in political and sociological terms is more akin to the central Brazilian Gê groups.

As Fausto queries the reasons for these important variations, what we find are really small differences in the initial conditions of the two groups upon fission. Differences like having a foreign captured child in one group and not in the other, for example, seem to have been important in making the eastern Parakana less warlike and mobile, while the lack of a degree of internal differentiation among the western group led them

to seek wives among enemies, which fomented a more mobile ethos as well as foraging. The development of moieties and self-closure in the eastern Parakana was favored by the fact that the fission left this group with a single kindred group focused on a group of siblings.

This is a very abbreviated account of all the minor factors that accumulated over time to increase the differences between the two groups, but it is enough to illustrate chaotic sensitivity to initial conditions. Moreover, it is quite remarkable to notice how a single ethnic group has the potential to develop in almost opposite socio-political directions. Finally, this study provides a historical account of what we could previously consider a transformation group (Tupi and Gê socio-cosmologies), only in terms of topological variation.

## Attractors

Attractors refer to the values of a variable towards which a dynamic system tends to evolve from a range of different initial conditions. Depending on the system, the attractor may be represented as a point, a curve, or a more complex n-dimensional manifold. A system such as a pendulum, for example, has a point attractor at its resting point. At whatever force with which the pendulum is initially set into motion, it will end up at the resting position after some time if no further force is applied. Following one of Mosko's (2005: 23) anthropological examples, we can think of cultural categories and their relations in Sahlins' analysis as an attractor of a cultural system whereby all happenings are interpreted through these categories. Even if happenings differ slightly from the categories that are used to interpret them, we may say that by guiding the interpretation, these categories, and the relations between categories, in effect "attract" the happenings to themselves. Leach's analysis of the *gumlao-gumsa* political forms may also be seen as a two-point attractor, that is, as states to which the Kachin political system will tend, oscillating in time from one to the other.

Serge Gruzinski (2002 [1999]) explicitly appeals to the idea of attractors when describing the relations between European and indigenous Mexican artistic forms during the early stages of 16th century colonization. Amid the demographic, social and political chaos resulting from the conquest, the European fable and the grotesque component of art constituted "attractors" that channeled lines of reconstruction and transformation within sectors of the newly hybridized (Indigenous-European) society. Whether it be along the lines of art, literature or even a city layout, Gruzinski's analysis shows, in my view, how the "savage" (sensu Lévi-Strauss) component of European and Indigenous Mexican thought constituted an "attractor"<sup>9</sup>, creating pockets of order, patterning, mutual interest and agreement in what Sahlins would call "working misunderstandings". These are privileged lines of interaction, along which, despite very different motivations for the interaction, the general advancement of each party's project allows for the satisfaction of mutual interests.

In my own analysis of relations between Yanomami and white doctors working among them (Kelly, 2011), I tried to show how a mutual interest in "civilization" has also worked as an attractor within an increasingly hybrid cultural landscape. Ever since the arrival and settlement of missionaries among the Yanomami communities along the Orinoco River, the civilizing project of missionaries was generally accepted and embraced by the Yanomami. However, this mutual interest was also a "working misunderstanding" because while missionaries' efforts to civilize were primarily motivated by efforts to "make society", that is, establish fixed conventions that would align the Yanomami with the State's desired forms of social, political, and economic organization, the Yanomami were motivated by their conventional efforts at "making people" or "making kin", albeit of a new hybrid nature. The gifts of manufactured objects and acquisition of new practices and knowledge like speaking Spanish, learning to read and write, eating the food of white people and using money were for the Yanomami forms of acquiring a new body, understood as an addition of new relational capacities with whites

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<sup>9</sup> That an attractor was constituted along artistic lines is Gruzinski's point; that it was also constituted along the "savage" aspects of art is my own reading of the descriptions Gruzinski provides.

and other Yanomami communities. For the missionaries, these were forms of preparing the Yanomami for their integration into the nation-state. “Civilization” was an attractor in this process insofar as it drew them together in an apparently common project which in fact helped to maintain their divergent motivations, “making people” vs. “making society”, relatively unnoticed. It was the partial overlap between efforts to make people and those to make society, that, as an attractor, fostered the creation of a region of understanding, agreement, and order, within a wider field of relations inclusive of dissonance, disorder, and disagreement. Nowadays, Orinoco Yanomami may contextually speak of themselves as “civilized”, yet what they mean by this -- having a hybrid Yanomami-white habitus as a result of historical transformations -- is quite different from what the doctors working at the community health posts, for example, understand as “civilization” -- which has less to do with a habitus and more to do with the upholding of conventions or rules enabling their harmonious co-existence and the smooth working of the health system in their communities.

### Fractal geometry

Fractals are among the mathematical objects that have recently caught the wider public’s imagination. Anthropology has also made use of the image of fractals to illustrate different qualities of social organization, personhood, ceremonial exchange, and such things as indigenous counting systems (see Wagner, 1991; Gell, 2006 [1999]; Kelly, 2001; Mimica, 1988). Among the different qualities of fractal objects, self-similarity, the indistinction of a part from the whole, and their non-integer (i.e. fractal) dimensionality have been drawn on in different anthropological descriptions. I will treat a few of these in turn.

Self-similarity refers to an object’s replication of a pattern at different scales and it is interesting to note its occurrence in many natural structures such as the shape of leaves, the form of a coastline, or the repeated branching of a river system. In anthropology, as Mosko (2005: 26) notes, we can think of Evans-Pritchard’s description of the Nuer political system in terms of segmentary oppositions as a case of social organization showing self-similarity at different scales.

A more explicit example comes from Gell’s (2006 [1999]) “reader’s manual” for Marilyn Strathern’s *Gender of the Gift*, where he depicts as fractal interlinking identities of gifts that flow in some Melanesian ceremonial exchanges. At every stage of an exchange trajectory, a gift objectifies “the donor’s capacity, not to produce pigs himself, but to elicit pigs from others, namely, partners further back the exchange path” (Ibid.: 48). So it is that in any given exchange, the pig being transferred objectifies the relation between donor and recipient, but the donor “encompasses” the number of similar previous exchanges within himself, which establishes the fractal self-similarity (see Fig. 4).

Figure 4: Fractal self-similarity in ceremonial exchange, from Gell (2006 [1999]: 49)

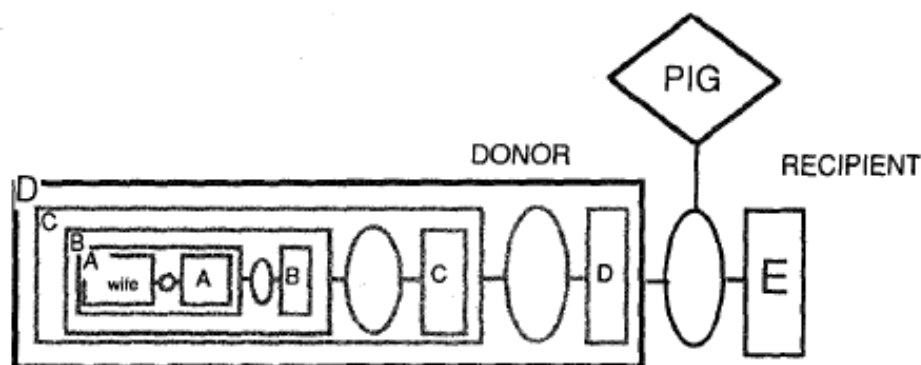


Figure 1.16

Another example is the self-similarity in the cascading bifurcations Lévi-Strauss identifies in some Amerindian myths. At every stage of the narration, one end of an opposing polarity becomes a new polarity itself, a pole at which the myth will continue to be told becomes again another polarity, and so on. The best example of this “perpetual disequilibrium” as Lévi-Strauss called it in *The Story of Lynx*, is the cosmogonic myth of the Tupinamba, where, for example, at one stage indigenous are opposed to whites, and at the next, the indigenous pole is divided into enemies and allies, and then the former, further divided into good and bad, and so on.<sup>10</sup>

One feature of fractals that should be noted is that, apart from a change in scale, the self-similarity of pattern means we cannot tell part from whole. One implication of this indistinction is that the conventional idea of the enumeration of parts that may add up to a whole, or their gathering to form a plurality, is not really applicable to a fractal object. This point was noted by Roy Wagner’s seminal *Fractal Person* (1991) where he shows how notions of oppositions between singular and plural, individual and group, part and sum -- which are all explicitly or implicitly conventional anthropological understandings of the individual, society and their mutual links -- are inadequate in the context of Melanesian sociality. This inadequacy is also evident in Strathern’s critique of the opposition of individual and society inspired by Melanesian ethnography (1988). In lieu of a language of individuals and groups, and of parts that add up to wholes, these anthropologists have appealed to other kinds of non-arithmetic operations like “obviation”, “eclipsing”, “replication”, “substitution/displacement”, “figure-ground reversal”, which don’t involve ideas of a singular opposed to a plural, or of enumeration and addition as the necessary link between the two. At the heart of these descriptions are metaphors of fractals that are more attuned to socialities where persons and relationships are not separated as terms and connections, the former being the creative agents of the latter. When Wagner writes:

A fractal person is never a unit standing in relation to an aggregate, or an aggregate standing in relation to a unit, but always an entity with relationship integrally implied (1991: 163).

And Strathern affirms:

In the way that Melanesians present social life to themselves, it would seem that there are no principles of organisation that are not also found in the constitution of the person (1992: 85).

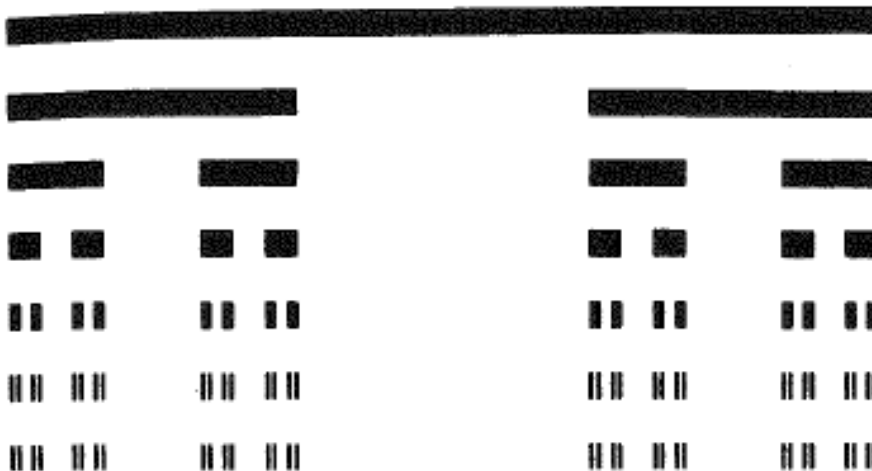
the images conjured are incompatible with the conventional metaphors of society as an organism, machine, or system with its differentiated parts functionally integrated into some whole.

<sup>10</sup> For other analysis deploying fractal imagery see Carneiro da Cunha (1998) and Kohn (2013).

Of course the “one-many” form of considering the passage from unity to multiplicity is also implicit in the very anthropological, and now juridical, notion of multiculturalism. So long as cultures, societies, or groups are envisioned as analogous entities that can interact with each other, and that taken together constitute a plurality of different and partial perspectives on the world, nature or humanity, it is a one-many -- and not a part-whole -- mathematics that is implied (see Verran, 2001). As Gow says *a propos* a misunderstanding between a Piro Indian woman and a white school teacher, also a woman, in the Peruvian Amazon: we cannot simply assume this to be an encounter between two cultures or cosmologies, for this would determine the situation in the multicultural terms of the white teacher – there being two different perspectives of a singular and same thing -- predetermining, as opposed to querying, the nature of the exchange (Gow in Viveiros de Castro, 2002: 138).

What kind of image can we thus make of what we would normally call an inter-cultural relation? Perhaps we could begin with Wagner’s insight into the unexpected questions the Daribi posed to him while he was pursuing his own anthropological ones: “their misunderstanding of me was not the same as my misunderstanding of them” (1981:20). The “working misunderstandings” I have mentioned between Yanomami and white projects of civilization, with one drawn to “making people”, the other to “making society” is a phenomenon involving a two-way misunderstanding. We could say there are not one, but two, relations here, from Yanomami to white and *vice versa*, or Melanesian to white and *vice-versa*. But the point is that the two relations are connected, they are part of each other, and yet remain wholly distinct. Each is fundamental for the other to take its shape but they don’t mix or fuse. We could say this phenomenon has a fractal dimension, something between one and two (see fig. 8, the Cantor set of dimension 0.6), which must be part of what Strathern (2004 [1991]) wants to convey when speaking of “partial connections”.

Figure 5: Cantor set. You can intuitively project to infinity and picture that the dimension of the points that remain is somewhere between 0 and 1: more than a point but less than a complete line. Taken from Strathern (1991: 3)



This idea has been taken up recently by de la Cadena (2015) in her work with Peruvian shamans in the Andes. Describing her relations with her shaman friends during their collaborative ethnography she comments:

Intriguingly, in our case, this partial connection was composed of, among other elements, our shared and dissimilar condition as Peruvians. Our ways of knowing, practicing, and making our distinct worlds—our worldings, or ways of making worlds—had been “circuited” together and shared practices for centuries; however, they had not become one. In the circuit, some practices have become subordinate, of course, but they have not disappeared into those that became dominant, nor did they merge into a single and simple hybrid. Rather, they have remained

distinct, if connected—almost symbiotically so, if I may borrow from biology. Inhabiting this historical condition that enabled us to constantly know and not know what the other one was talking about, my friends’ explanations conversed with mine, and mine with theirs, and inflected the dialogue with our heterogeneity. I translated what they said into what I could understand, and this understanding was full of the gaps of what I did not get... On things that are partially connected, John Law writes: “The argument is that ‘this’ (whatever ‘this’ may be) is included in ‘that,’ but ‘this’ cannot be reduced to ‘that’” (2004, 64). To paraphrase: my world was included in the world that my friends inhabited and vice versa, but their world could not be reduced to mine, or mine to theirs. (Ibid.: 3-4).

## Conclusion

Although I have not sought to build or defend a particular argument, this article has shown the merits of an engineering black-box approach, its similarities with the structuralist method and certain improvements on the modeling of social life based on feedback first, and later on characteristics of chaotic systems, such as non-linearity. It has also dwelt on the potential of certain mathematical images, such as fractal objects and dimensions, for describing phenomena such as intercultural relations. This entire exercise hinges, nonetheless, on maintaining a notion of system, with its implications of pattern, regularity, and predictability. It is also imbued with a certain primacy of visualization in the way we have talked about mathematical “images” and “objects” as more or less fit for “picturing” or “describing” social phenomena. We can of course dismiss both these implicit principles as Euro-American biases, artifacts of analysis. A post-modernly inclined anthropology would inform us as much, and those like Strathern who have so much insisted on making these biases explicit, would stress the need for laying out our interests when engaged in description and analysis.

The way chaos theory allows for both patterning and unpredictability, for viewing complexity, not in contrast to, but as susceptible to generalization, at least makes the system metaphor something more palatable for these critical positions. But even then, one may still question; Is this not just a re-labelling of what we already knew? What new light has been shed by naming what has already been described? I myself have this feeling to some degree. And though I cannot offer ways to dispel this doubt, the approximation between hard and social sciences holds a certain premise (or promise?) of human and non-human similarity that has both a tradition and contemporary advocates. Gabriel Tarde, for instance, upheld this position against Durkheimian human exceptionalism, providing some of the roots for Actor Network Theory. The same could be said of Gregory Bateson’s systemic and ecological approaches, and their influence on Eduardo Kohn’s bio-semiotic “anthropology beyond the human” (2013). Moreover, the study of the anthropocene has pretty much forced us into transdisciplinary alliance-making -- which is also a stance that is an important part of Bateson’s legacy -- showing how much different disciplines may share underlying ontological assumptions that are inapt for living in the anthropocene, and how a “constructive interference” can suggest novel, more habitable futures, amid the anthropocenic ruins (see Tsing, 2019). But perhaps there is also something of a profound aesthetic motivation in this search, not unlike what Lévi-Strauss identified as being a running undercurrent of the Amerindian mythological corpus: a nostalgia for a time when humans and animals could communicate uninhibitedly.

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# Lefebvre y el giro espacial en antropología urbana

## Notas para una epistemología del espacio vivido

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### Resumen

La antropología urbana es una disciplina a la que le costó nacer. Su origen, en el seno del departamento de Sociología de la Escuela de Chicago, sitúa a la disciplina en una posición de dependencia frente a la sociología urbana. Sin embargo, el enfoque etnográfico de la Escuela de Chicago dura poco, fagocitado por una sociología estadística y cuantitativa, que durante mucho tiempo será la dominante. Por su parte, los antropólogos llegan tarde a la ciudad, ya entrados los años 1960's, y cuando llegan, vacilan entre hacer antropología en la ciudad o antropología urbana. Es en las décadas de 1970 y 1980 cuando se intenta dibujar un marco epistemológico para la antropología urbana, que ha ingresado al siglo XXI huérfana de un objeto de estudio claro. Este es el diagnóstico del problema respecto al cual el filósofo urbano Henri Lefebvre puede darnos algunas luces. Usando fragmentos de etnografías propias como ejemplo, el presente texto realiza una relectura antropológica de algunos conceptos *lefebvrianos* como "espacio vivido" y "vida cotidiana", resaltando su carácter socialmente transformador; igualmente, a través de una serie de reflexiones epistemológicas, se tiene la intención de avanzar en la formulación de algunas conclusiones metodológicas relevantes para la construcción de una etnografía urbana con perspectiva crítica.

**Palabras clave:** Antropología urbana; Henri Lefebvre; etnografía urbana; espacio vivido; teoría etnográfica.

# Lefebvre and the spatial turn in urban anthropology

## Notes for an epistemology of lived space

### **Abstract**

Urban anthropology is a discipline that has struggled to become alive. Its origin, within the Sociology department of the Chicago School, places the discipline in a position of dependence on urban sociology. However, the ethnographic approach of the Chicago School was short-lived and was swallowed up by statistical and quantitative sociology, which was to become dominant for a long time. For their part, anthropologists arrived late to the city, in the 1960s, and when they arrived, they hesitated between doing anthropology in the city or urban anthropology. It was in the 1970s and 1980s that an attempt was made to draw up an epistemological framework for urban anthropology, which entered the 21st century without a clear object of study. This is the diagnosis of the problem on which urban philosopher Henri Lefebvre can shed some light. Using excerpts from my own ethnographies as an example, the present text makes an anthropological re-reading of some Lefebvrian concepts such as “lived space” and “everyday life”, highlighting their socially transformative character; likewise, through a series of epistemological reflections, the intention is to advance in the formulation of some relevant methodological conclusions for the sake of construction of an urban ethnography with a critical perspective.

**Key words:** Urban anthropology; Henri Lefebvre; urban ethnography; lived space; ethnographic theory.

# Lefebvre y el giro espacial en antropología urbana

## Notas para una epistemología del espacio vivido

Horacio Espinosa

### Introducción

En un socarrón artículo, el sociólogo Mark Gottdiener se pregunta “¿Quién es el dueño de Lefebvre?” (2018) y concluye que se ha instaurado una conspiración del silencio entre los sociólogos urbanos anglófonos para no reconocer al francés y entregar su legado a los geógrafos. Introducido en el mundo anglosajón por una heterogénea mezcla de geógrafos posmodernos (Edward Soja), filósofos culturales (Frederic Jameson), politólogos (Stuart Elden) y sociólogos urbanos (el propio Gottdiener), el pensamiento de Lefebvre se habría constituido, en palabras del sociólogo norteamericano, en un fetiche para los geógrafos marxistas. Empezando por David Harvey, por supuesto, pero también para una escuela de geografía de Los Ángeles, que supuestamente se vanagloria de renovar el pensamiento urbano gracias a Lefebvre, para así dejar atrás el triste legado “sociologista” de la Escuela de Chicago. Los geógrafos han convertido a Lefebvre en su “mercancía intelectual”, como sarcásticamente afirmaría él mismo (Gottdiener, 2002).

Vista desde el otro lado del Atlántico, esta historia sorprende, ya que durante los años 1970's tanto Lefebvre como Castells fueron los faros de la sociología urbana francesa. De la red académica que ayudaron a construir surgió la revista *Espaces et Sociétés* de la cual Lefebvre fue presidente; se creó la *Mouton Book Series*; el *International Sociological Association Research Committee on Urban and Regional Development (RC21)*; y el *International Journal for Urban and Regional Research*. De la misma manera, el pensamiento de Henri Lefebvre se mantuvo vivo en Francia gracias a Jean Pierre Garnier, y en España gracias a Mario Gaviria, otro gran sociólogo urbano y colaborador de Lefebvre. Sin embargo, en las últimas dos décadas, si alguien ha mantenido vivo el legado de Lefebvre, al menos en el mundo hispano hablante, ese ha sido el antropólogo Manuel Delgado. La noción *delgadiana* del espacio público como una ideología, así como la diferenciación que hace entre “lo urbano” y la ciudad, son de naturaleza eminentemente *lefebvrina*.

Consideraría un desatino hacer como Gottdiener y participar de esta *boutade* del ‘yo más’ en la guerra disciplinar por dirimir a quién pertenece Lefebvre, pero ahora introduciendo a la Antropología en el contencioso. El mismo Lefebvre no hizo más que cuestionar la división burguesa de las disciplinas científicas, dedicándole a este tema un libro entero: *Méthodologie des sciences* (2002). El exabrupto de Gottdiener es aún más chocante si caemos en la cuenta de que él mismo había escrito un artículo, dos años antes al mencionado, donde afirmaba que Lefebvre jamás se había referido a sí mismo ni como geógrafo o urbanista, mucho menos sociólogo o filósofo. Aunque Lefebvre fuera todo esto a la vez, él sobre todo se consideraba un marxista, seguramente de los “raros”, pero como buen seguidor de Marx, se opuso a toda tentativa de encerrar el conocimiento en compartimentos estancos. El Gottdiener del 2000 describió el proyecto *lefebvrino* de esta manera:

[...] antes que nada, el objetivo explícito de Lefebvre fue aprender la dialéctica de Marx lo suficientemente bien, como para pensar como Marx, y exhortó a sus estudiantes a compartir el mismo objetivo (2000: 94).

Lefebvre fue un “marxista metodológico” (Shields, 1999: 90) que enseñó a sus estudiantes a aplicar el materialismo dialéctico más allá del interés por el conflicto capital/trabajo, central en los estudios clásicos de Marx y Engels. En esto, y en el interés por el concepto de alienación, Lefebvre seguiría a Lukacs, para el cual la única ortodoxia marxista que merece la pena seguir es la del método (1984 [1969]: 73). Así, Lefebvre desarrollaría su teoría sobre la producción del espacio, temática ajena a la ortodoxia marxista, pero no se detendría ahí, realizando un giro epistemológico, proponiendo una “dialéctica” del espacio social (Soja, 1996). A pesar de su carácter díscolo, en los años ochenta, mientras el resto de marxistas ya se habían convertido más o menos al posmodernismo, Lefebvre, “el superviviente más anciano de la tradición del marxismo occidental” se mantenía “imperturbable y original sobre temas normalmente ignorados por la izquierda, sin doblegarse ni desviarse” (Anderson, 2015[1983]: 38).

Tras los pasos de Lefebvre –*ortodoxia en el método, heterodoxia en el objeto de estudio*– Guy Debord, uno de sus alumnos, aplicaría el método dialéctico a su crítica de “la sociedad del espectáculo” (1967), al igual que haría Baudrillard –otro célebre pupilo de Lefebvre– con “la sociedad de consumo” (2007 [1970]). Debord, introducido en el círculo cercano a Lefebvre por Michele Bernstein, formaría, junto con Raoul Vaneigem y la propia Bernstein, el núcleo duro de la Internacional Situacionista (IS), un grupo de ideología marxista pero de tácticas surrealistas y dadaístas. Lefebvre y los Situacionistas azuzarían acciones de agitación política en Estrasburgo y Nanterre, que culminarían en los sucesos revolucionarios de Mayo del ‘68. En opinión de Miguel Amorós, antes que por Marx, la IS estaría influenciada por Lefebvre, Nietzsche y Bataille (2010: 136), por lo que no debería extrañarnos que los propios situacionistas afirmasen ser tan marxistas “como Marx decía ‘yo no soy marxista’” (Internacional Situacionista, 1999 [1964]):

Lefebvre describiría como una historia de amor su relación con Debord y los Situacionistas; sin embargo, “hay historias de amor que empiezan bien y terminan mal. Esta fue una de esas” (Lefebvre, entrevistado por Kristin Ross, 1997: 69). Según Lefebvre, los situacionistas “insultaban a todo mundo [...] todo les molestaba”, por lo que al final, siguiendo el ejemplo de André Breton, expulsarían a todos los miembros díscolos hasta “conseguir un núcleo pequeño, puro y duro” (1997: 73). Debord especialmente caería en un dogmatismo tan violento como estúpido, ya que se trataba de un “dogmatismo sin dogma”, repitiendo mecánicamente “que todo urbanismo es una ideología burguesa” y al caer en tal reduccionismo, “abandonaron el problema de la ciudad” (1997: 83).

No sería la primera vez que Lefebvre se veía extrañamente envuelto en un ambiente donde primaba el dogmatismo autoritario; por esta razón abandonaría el Partido Comunista Francés (PCF), oponiéndose al silencio de esta formación política ante las purgas estalinistas, la invasión soviética de Praga y Hungría, pero sobre todo, al apoyo que el PCF profesó al Gobierno francés en la guerra de Argelia (Shields, 1999: 86). Mucho antes, en sus años como estudiante de Filosofía en el Instituto St. Augustine, Lefebvre habría rechazado las categorías aristotélicas dominantes, despertando en él una indeleble aversión por el *logocentrismo*, la primacía de la lógica formal y el carácter monádico de los conceptos científicos. Habiendo descubierto a Nietzsche y Spinoza, empezaría a formarse en su pensamiento un dualismo central, donde se enfrentarían en guerra eterna la «“experiencia vivida” (*le vécu*, lo vivido) y el “pensamiento conceptual” (*le conçu*, lo concebido)”» (Shields, 1999:9).

1 La figura del Lefebvre situacionista como faro del Mayo del ‘68 crearía el mito literario del profesor de teoría urbana como personaje activista, teatral y comprometido, imbuido en acciones subversivas. El escritor Sebastián Jovani, en su novela “Emet o la revolta” (2011), construye un personaje ficticio usando la figura real del antropólogo urbano Manuel Delgado, como líder de un colectivo situacionista llamado F.A.S.T.I.C (“asco” en catalán - Facció Autonoma de Sublevació Tàctica Inherent al Contexto) que se opone a la renovación urbana del Parque Güell de Barcelona para convertirlo en un parque temático de la marca de helados Ben & Jerry’s.

Lefebvre mantendría toda su vida este rechazo universitario a *le conçu*, en su crítica a los estudios urbanos clásicos, por ejemplo, aspecto sobre el cual fue especialmente contundente en *La revolución urbana* (1976 [1970]). Para Lefebvre, las ciencias especializadas, como la geografía o el urbanismo, han producido caracterizaciones *ad hoc* de la *sociedad urbana*, como sociedad industrial, post-industrial, de consumo, del ocio, tecnificada (o “smart” dirían hoy en día); pero lo urbano, en tanto *le vécu*, se les escapa. El propio Lefebvre tiene su propia definición sociológica de la sociedad urbana como “sociedad burocrática del consumo dirigido” (1976 [1970]: 8); pero si se hubiese quedado ahí no estaríamos ahora hablando de él. Quizás por esto el propio Manuel Castells (1998) negaba que Lefebvre hubiese sido un sociólogo empírico, por lo que le llama “filósofo”, no sin cierto ánimo polémico.

Gottdiener (2000) no está en absoluto desencaminado cuando señala el carácter lefebvriano del nuevo análisis urbano o “giro espacial” [*spatial turn*], en disciplinas como la geografía, la ciencia política y la sociología. Acierta igualmente –no sin “mala leche”– en atribuirles a David Harvey y Manuel Castells el rol de simples divulgadores del viejo Lefebvre a manera de *revival*; tanto el geógrafo inglés como el sociólogo español tienen un papel central en la refundación de la teoría urbana, pero siempre como aprendices del maestro. Antes del *spatial turn*, en pocas ocasiones los urbanistas habían pensado en *lo urbano* como tal, mucho menos de forma crítica al urbanismo capitalista. Su pobreza teórica era directamente proporcional a sus deseos de *poder instrumental*, prometiendo poco más que fabricar un buen producto. Los viejos urbanistas profesaban un antimarxismo militante, eran abiertamente liberales, ignoraban deliberadamente los problemas de clase y estaban poco interesados por la teoría (Gottdiener & Feagin, 1988; Castells, 1972; Harvey, 1976).

Aunque la vehemencia crítica de la teoría urbana es relativamente reciente, no siempre ha sido recibida con la radicalidad que requieren estos tiempos. En fechas no tan lejanas, Neil Brenner (2009) se preguntaba qué había de crítico en la Teoría Urbana que se autodenominaba “crítica”. Con cierta desesperación, Brenner consideraba insuficientes los planteamientos que, desde la geografía radical, se habían realizado al modelo que tendía a la urbanización global, desde un paradigma de capitalismo avanzado que reproducía (y continúa reproduciendo) la *doxa* neoliberal.

Hablamos de momentos especialmente álgidos, donde acababa de estallar una crisis financiera global como la del 2008, que derivaría casi inmediatamente en una crisis inmobiliaria, dejando a millones de personas en la calle. Mientras tanto, los Estados sometían a las masas a procesos acelerados de reestructuración urbana, generando una gran incertidumbre social. Este fenómeno parecía ocurrir en un escenario post-ideológico, donde las así llamadas “izquierdas” y las “derechas” se diferencian poquísimo, en su (nulo) intento por revertir los efectos de la urbanización neoliberal. En ese panorama, se sentía la ausencia de un urbanismo capaz de ser una herramienta verdaderamente revolucionaria. Estas fuerzas emancipatorias, en estado de latencia, más que ser azuzadas, intentaban ser encauzadas cívicamente gracias a una serie de repertorios urbanísticos (Brenner, 2009).

El rol de la Antropología urbana durante el cambio de paradigma de los nuevos estudios urbanos fue más bien modesto. La sensación de insignificancia que pesa sobre la disciplina no es nueva y, de hecho, se remonta a mucho antes del *spatial turn*. En “Exploring the city” de 1980, Ulf Hannerz provocaba a la disciplina, afirmando categóricamente que “la antropología urbana no tiene pasado y sí tiene motivos para preocuparse por su futuro” (1986 [1980]: 12). Esta obra era uno de los primeros intentos serios por teorizar la necesidad de superación de la antropología en la ciudad y llevar a cabo, de una vez por todas, algo que fuera digno de llamarse antropología urbana.

Veinte años después, Setha M. Low coordinaría el monográfico colectivo “Theorizing the city” (1999). En la introducción a esta obra, Low incidía en el lamento por la disciplina, afirmando que “la ciudad ha sido sub teorizada por la Antropología”, siendo marginada en esta tarea por sociólogos, geógrafos, urbanistas e historiadores (1999: 1). Esta antropóloga –cuyo guiño a la fundacional obra de Hannerz no se limita al título– se

hacía eco del llamamiento que ya había realizado el sueco, y pontificaba por una “antropología de la ciudad en lugar de una antropología en la ciudad” (Low, 1999: 2). Más de una década antes que Low, esta distinción ya había sido señalada en su justa importancia, y descrita como algo que va más allá de un simple gesto de “rasgarse las vestiduras”, en absoluto “trivial” para el futuro de la disciplina (Gulick, 1989: XIV).

Prácticamente ayer, en “A companion to Urban Anthropology” (2014), Nonini expresaba de otra manera el mismo grito de guerra para una nueva antropología urbana: ¡teoría, teoría, teoría!. En una genuflexión ritual, Nonini valora la importancia central de la etnografía para la ciencia antropológica, pero sólo para dar paso a la advertencia –crucial– de que la etnografía, por más importancia que tenga, no será en absoluto la solución a los problemas teóricos de la Antropología urbana. Igualmente, no se trata de un método intocable. En lo que se refiere a lo urbano, nosotros los etnógrafos no podemos simplemente “pasar el rato” esperando que un barrio o incluso una ciudad sea “una réplica ampliada de una aldea en las islas Trobriand a la manera de Malinowski” (Nonini, 2014: 02).

En el mismo volumen monográfico, Setha M. Low se muestra más optimista que una década antes respecto a la Antropología urbana. Habla de la muerte y renacimiento de la disciplina gracias al rechazo de “las estrategias de la etnografía tradicional como inadecuadas para hacer frente a las complejidades de las ciudades modernas” (Low, 2014: 16). Más adelante me referiré al “barrionalismo”, así como a la búsqueda del “salvaje urbano”, como uno de los síntomas de esta forma de hacer etnografía, presentes en muchas de las antropologías en la ciudad.

Sin que este trabajo tenga como propósito realizar una historiografía de la Antropología urbana, asunto que me sobrepasa, es necesario hacer un rodeo para contextualizar, aunque sea de una manera superficial, la continua crisis de la Antropología urbana. Tanto Hannerz (1986 [1980]) como Low (1999) señalan que la raíz del problema se remonta hasta los años 1930s, cuando algunos sociólogos de la Universidad de Chicago formaron lo que posteriormente se conocería de manera genérica como “Escuela de Chicago”. Aunque Engels había publicado la seminal investigación urbana “La situación de la clase obrera en Inglaterra” en 1845, las etnografías chicaguianas son reconocidas las primeras, que, *como tales*, fueron realizadas en el ámbito urbano. La gran mayoría de los trabajos de la Escuela de Chicago fueron publicados con posterioridad, en muchas de las compilaciones y monografías que se han dedicado al tema; por nombrar algunas, el volumen sobre William I. Thomas; “Social Organization and Social Personality” (1966); el dedicado a Ezra Park, “On social control and collective behavior” (1967); o “The City”, la célebre colección de ensayos de Park, Burgess y McKenzie, ese sí, publicado contemporáneamente, en 1925.

Una de las innovaciones de la Escuela, fue la introducción del punto de vista del participante, una perspectiva que los antropólogos contemporáneos llamamos “emic”. Está ampliamente documentado que Park se inspiró en el trabajo pionero de los antropólogos para llevar a cabo sus estudios en Chicago:

los mismos pacientes métodos de observación que antropólogos como Boas y Lowie han empleado en el estudio de la vida y costumbres de los indios norteamericanos, podrían emplearse aún más fructíferamente, en la investigación de las costumbres, creencias, prácticas sociales y concepción de la vida prevalecientes en la Pequeña Italia (Park, 1952: 15) La traducción me pertenece).

En las etnografías de Chicago había un interés, muchas veces magnificado, por el orden moral. Una preocupación constante por cómo los sujetos se presentan a los otros y como luchan por obtener una respetabilidad en un entorno complejo y cambiante. Este “orden moral” jamás fue definido, así como su contraparte “desorden moral”, que en muchos casos se parece a lo que hoy llamaríamos simplemente diversidad social. Así, aunque la Escuela de Chicago fuese pionera en el método, sus teorías no distaban de ser meras emanaciones superfluas emparentadas con los valores de los reformistas morales de la época. Teóricamente, quizás su mayor legado es el concepto de “ecología humana”, tristemente inspirado en los autores del darwinismo social.

Para la década de 1930, la sociología urbana etnográfica daría paso al estructural-funcionalismo, dominante en Sociología durante las décadas posteriores (Hannerz, 1986 [1980]: 41). Como es por (casi) todos reconocido, el método etnográfico, definido como “explicaciones sobre todo cualitativas y ricamente contextualizadas del pensamiento y la acción humanas”, es el signo distintivo de la antropología (1986 [1980]:18). Así, los antropólogos tuvieron la oportunidad de aprovechar el abandono de la etnografía por parte de la sociología urbana, para “reclamar lo que es suyo” e interesarse por lo urbano. Pero no lo hicieron. No es de extrañar que, en los años sesenta, cierto urbanista opinara que los antropólogos eran “gente notoriamente agorafoba, antiurbana por definición” (Benet, 1963: 212). Es hasta 1968 que Eddy publica el primer trabajo que lleva por título *Antropología urbana* (1968). La reacción provocada daría la razón a los que señalaban el supuesto antiurbanismo de los antropólogos.

Leeds describe a la antropología urbana como una disciplina “espuria y retrógrada”, una simple “excusa para mantener un asunto dentro de una disciplina que no puede y no debe manejarlo” (1972: 04); mientras que para Robin Fox no es más que “una lucha indigna por encontrar salvajes sustitutos en los barrios bajos” (1975: 20). Aunque podrían haberse ahorrado la virulencia, había una parte de razón en las críticas. Y no como cosa del pasado de la disciplina. Pensemos, por ejemplo, en las reificaciones etnologizantes que, ayer mismo, eran generadas por el mal uso del concepto de “*tribu urbana*” aplicado a los estilos urbanos juveniles. Originalmente una metáfora usada por el sociólogo Michel Maffesoli (2004 [1988]), con la cual señalar ciertos aspectos fragmentarios de una sociabilidad regresiva (“tribalización”) en la posmodernidad; lo de “*tribu urbana*” no es un objeto empírico, y en absoluto un concepto pertinente para categorizar a las culturas urbanas.

Esto no impidió que muchos antropólogos urbanos usaran la categoría de forma caricaturesca para describir a las culturas juveniles, como si *efectivamente* fueran reductos primitivistas enclavados en las ciudades contemporáneas. Así, regidos por estrictos rituales concernientes al vestido, la música, el uso de la violencia y el consumo de drogas, algunos antropólogos simplemente trasladaron el levi-straussiano principio de “*homología*”, para sugerir que estilo, identidad y forma de vida son simbióticos en los miembros de estas supuestas tribus (ver Feixa, 2006: 120). Un ejemplo realmente vergonzoso de cómo se cree encontrar a estos “salvajes sustitutos” en las culturas urbanas, lo encontramos en Costa, Pérez & Tropea (1996), donde los autores nos proporcionan una caricaturización extrema de los jóvenes urbanos como auténticos salvajes metropolitanos.

Si el salvaje urbano era un sustituto del nativo exotizado, la aldea urbana o “pueblo urbano” –usando el término de Gans (1982)– vendrían a ser los sustitutos de los enclaves pre modernos de la etnología clásica; lugares que, con la urbanización global, se volverían cada vez más inaccesibles para los antropólogos occidentales, obligados a mirar hacia la ciudad por necesidad antes que por voluntad. Un ejemplo clarísimo de estas aldeas urbanas es el *barrionalismo* o la fijación idealizante por los barrios, en gran parte de las etnografías urbanas. Aquí ya no hablamos del supuesto salvajismo de “tribus urbanas”, como los *punks* o los *skins*, sino su exacto contrario, la comunidad ideal perfectamente integrada.

En la mitificada “vida de barrio” habría una gran proporción de estrechas relaciones sociales; sin embargo, como ya aprendimos con Jane Jacobs, en las grandes ciudades hay que “deshacernos de cualquier ideal del barrio como unidad introvertida y autosuficiente” (2013 [1961]: 145). Resulta difícil encontrarnos con barrios, condensados lo suficiente hasta poseer todas las características de solidaridad orgánica y espontánea, atribuibles a una pequeña comunidad, pero dentro de la ciudad. Sin embargo, el propio Ezra Park sugiere el uso de la etnografía, no para el estudio de la realidad urbana o algo por el estilo, sino para estudiar el *Little Italy* de Chicago. ¿La búsqueda de “pueblos urbanos” y enclaves étnicos forma parte del ADN de la Antropología urbana heredado de la Escuela de Chicago? Es probable. Y ¿qué pasa cuando no se ha encontrado, materializado, este ideal *barrionalista*? Pues al antropólogo le da por usar términos como anomia, deshumanización y tantos otros para describir estos barrios “disfuncionales”. Esto ya ocurrió en etnografías clásicas, como la que llevó

a cabo Harvey Zorbaugh (1983), miembro de la Escuela de Chicago, en el Lower North Side, y que se publicó originalmente en 1929 bajo el nombre de *The Gold Coast and the Slum*.

Uno de los barrios estudiados por Zorbaugh, a las afueras de la Costa de Oro, estaba constituido básicamente por pensiones ocupadas por oficinistas, secretarías y otros trabajadores jóvenes solteros, cuya situación laboral estaba atravesada por la transitoriedad. En el barrio, las relaciones eran endeble, marcadas por el anonimato. Vaya que se trataba de un *barrio dormitorio*. Zorbaugh describe esta situación de forma dantesca como una zona de anomia, soledad y “desorganización social”, equivalente a lo que hoy en día se diagnosticaría como ausencia de “cohesión social”. El etnógrafo, al no considerar el contexto general del Chicago de los años 1920's, abierto y tolerante, no había reparado en que quizás los residentes de ese barrio expandían sus relaciones sociales por toda la ciudad, gracias a las posibilidades que daba la movilidad y el anonimato, como bien señala Hannerz (1986 [1980]: 61).

Más que antropología urbana, durante mucho tiempo lo que se ha estado haciendo es antropología *en* la ciudad. Etnógrafos aplicando metodologías de origen rural en un entorno urbano, eternas búsquedas de enclaves étnicos o proyecciones psíquicas de prejuicios anti urbanos que se confunden con análisis críticos. No es de extrañar que, ya en la década de 1980, el propio Hannerz oliera algo mortecino en la antropología *en* la ciudad realizada hasta la fecha; una muerte disciplinar que, para principios del siglo XXI, sería certificada por Setha M. Low. Por supuesto, no estaríamos aquí si creyéramos que esta muerte es definitiva. Como la propia Low afirma, “hay un renacimiento...” Es necesario, no obstante, que la disciplina se haga algunas preguntas epistemológicas y metodológicas, como las que extraigo de la inabarcable obra de Henri Lefebvre y otros autores que lo complementan. Estas reflexiones sobre *la cosa urbana* serán desarrolladas teóricamente a lo largo de este artículo y, en la medida de lo posible, ejemplificadas con fragmentos de etnografías urbanas propias.

## El espacio vivido

En sus maquetas, el arquitecto o urbanista “proyectista” suele representar el espacio como un recipiente vacío, estrictamente *euclidiano*; en esa aparente *tabula rasa* plasma libremente sus fantasías arquitectónicas y urbanísticas. En la visión canónica de los planificadores urbanos, el espacio es concebido por encima, a pesar o en contra de las relaciones sociales que ya tienen lugar en la ciudad. Se suele asumir que el diseño urbano prefigura los usos, relegando a los usuarios a una posición de dominación frente al experto. Esta visión tradicionalista de la arquitectura no tiene por qué ser “clásica”; con la mejor de las intenciones, teóricos contemporáneos que pretenden diseñar “ciudades para la gente” a través de proyectos urbanísticos a “escala humana” (Gehl, 2010), o teóricos de un “urbanismo con perspectiva de género” (Muxí et al., 2011), terminan rindiéndose ante la concepción euclidiana del espacio urbano: la ilusión de que el diseño arquitectónico determina el uso social.

En el otro extremo tenemos a la sociología urbana estructuralista. Si para el arquitecto el proyecto urbanístico prefigura el uso social, para sociólogos como Manuel Castells, la estructura social, sobre todo en un sentido económico, sería la que prefigura lo urbano. Es más o menos lo que el español afirma en “La cuestión urbana” (2014 [1972]): que el espacio no tiene ningún valor más allá de ser un producto de “las fuerzas sociales” y, por lo tanto, “no existe teoría específica del espacio, sino simplemente despliegue y especificación de la teoría de la estructura social” (Castells, 2014 [1972]: 152). Tanto si el espacio social está prefigurado por el urbanismo o por la economía, la ciudad es vista como un lugar sobredeterminado, cuyo destino ya ha sido escrito en otra parte. En las antípodas del posterior “giro espacial”, hablar de cultura urbana implicaría “antropologizar” la ciudad, todo un insulto para Castells, quien con sutil ironía afirma:



La “sociedad urbana” es definida ante todo como una cierta *cultura*, la *cultura urbana*, en el sentido antropológico del término, es decir, un cierto sistema de valores, normas y relaciones sociales que poseen una especificidad histórica y una lógica propia de organización y de transformación (2014 [1972]: 95).

Aunque entiendo la sospecha de Castells –que subyace a su crítica a la reificación de lo urbano–, su positivismo sociologista radical es insoportable. En línea con Martínez Lorea, considero que lo urbano “organiza la propiedad, el trabajo, las redes de cambio, los flujos de materias primas y energías que lo configuran y que a su vez quedan determinados por él” (Martínez Lorea, 2013: 14). Castells, antagonista de esta postura, identifica “el modo urbano” con la forma que adopta el aparato productivo en tanto “expresión espacial de los medios de producción” o el sistema de consumo, en tanto “expresión espacial de la fuerza de trabajo” (2014 [1972]: 154); incluso ironiza a costa de Lefebvre y la relativa autonomía que le otorga a lo urbano, tildándolo de “espontaneista social”, libertario y poco menos que un loco (2014 [1972]: 110). Al sociólogo le deja indiferente toda expresión urbana *gratuita* que no sea actividad productiva, que en su teoría termina reducida a un esotérico “elemento no-trabajo”, lo que no tendría una “expresión espacial específica” (2014 [1972]:154). La ciudad, para Castells, más allá de las prácticas productivas y de consumo, se vuelve *inespecífica*, una nadería, el descampado.

Pues bien, esto urbano *inespecífico* ocupa un lugar central para Lefebvre en La Producción del Espacio (2013 [1974]). El primer giro teórico que realiza respecto a la teoría urbana sociologista es cuestionar la existencia de un espacio abstracto pre-simbólico independiente de las relaciones sociales, o, como perfectamente lo ha sintetizado el propio Lefebvre “no hay relaciones sociales sin espacio, de igual modo que no hay espacio sin relaciones sociales” (2013 [1974]: 221). Un poco antes, en La Revolución Urbana (1976 [1970]), Lefebvre reescribía los modos de producción marxistas, como “modos de pensamiento, de acción, de vida” (1976 [1970]: 47). Esto tiene consecuencias políticas concretas, ya que no basta con cambiar la economía: hay que cambiar la vida.

La dialéctica lefebvriana en la producción del espacio consiste de tres órdenes interconectados: la “práctica espacial” [*lo percibido*] que expresa el vínculo entre la vida cotidiana (“el uso del tiempo”) y la infraestructura urbana (“las rutas y redes que se ligan a los lugares de trabajo, de vida ‘privada’, de ocio”); las “representaciones del espacio” [*lo concebido*]: el espacio urbano planificado, racionalizado, conceptual (de “los científicos, planificadores, urbanistas, tecnócratas, fragmentadores, ingenieros sociales y hasta el de cierto tipo de artistas próximos a la cientificidad”), es decir, “el espacio dominante en cualquier sociedad”; y por último, “los espacios de representación” [*lo vivido*], espacio apropiado por los habitantes o los usuarios urbanos, pero también el de ciertos artistas, escritores, y filósofos que “describen y sólo aspiran a describir”, en suma, “el espacio vivido a través de las imágenes y los símbolos que lo acompañan”, que no obstante, también es “espacio dominado, esto es, pasivamente experimentado”, pero “que la imaginación desea modificar y tomar” (Lefebvre, 2013 [1974]: 97-98).

Como en todo nudo, los órdenes de la dialéctica espacial (*lo percibido*, *lo concebido* y *lo vivido*) se encuentran entrelazados, por lo que su separación no es en absoluto “real” sino meramente analítica. No existe discontinuidad, por más que como efecto de la alienación no percibamos las heridas no suturadas del conflicto entre las tres esferas; por el contrario, hay una ilusión de armonía, que suele saltar por los aires en el nivel del espacio vivido, que es donde se perciben las contradicciones entre los distintos órdenes. Como enuncia el propio Lefebvre, es en el espacio vivido donde se intersecta la dominación con la imaginación creadora. Un ejemplo de cómo la apropiación urbana –en tanto modo central del espacio vivido– se encuentra en una dinámica conflictiva con el resto de los órdenes de la dialéctica, lo encontramos en el caso de los *tianguis* mexicanos. Los *tianguis* (del nahuatl “tianquiztli”) son mercadillos callejeros que se remontan a la época prehispánica y que, hasta la actualidad, prevalecen como la principal forma de comercio popular en el México urbano.

Desde 2009 hasta 2016 llevé a cabo una etnografía, a intervalos irregulares, en siete *tianguis* de la ciudad de Guadalajara, en el occidente de México (Espinosa, 2013; 2016; 2017). Lo vivido (*le vécu*) para la cultura urbana mexicana tiene en los *tianguis*, en tanto “espacio social”, un lugar privilegiado. A través del *tianguis* se realiza

la ciudad desde la perspectiva de sus usuarios. *Recorrer un tianguis es re-hacer la ciudad*, como se ha entendido desde siempre. De hecho, en nahuatl existe el término *tianquiztlayualoa* que expresaba este *hacer/ser tianquiztli* entre los antiguos pueblos mexicanos (Robles, 2004: 68). Nada distinto a lo que ocurre con cada recorrido urbano: si entendemos la ciudad como un sistema que conecta signos y objetos, entonces “el acto de caminar es al sistema urbano lo que la enunciación (el speech act) es a la lengua o a los enunciados realizados” (De Certeau, 2000 [1980]: 109-110); por lo tanto, caminar tiene un efecto performativo. Así como la enunciación hace la lengua, el caminar hace la ciudad.

Los tianguis, como forma suprema de la apropiación popular de las ciudades mexicanas, siempre han sido un *topos* más o menos incómodo para el poder establecido, cuya estrategia de control ha basculado entre la cooptación, la competencia y la represión a los tiangueros. John Cross (1998; 2005) lleva años investigando las formas de organización política de los tiangueros. En contra de la opinión popular, que acusa a los tiangueros de ser blanco fácil del “clientelismo político”, Cross argumenta que existe un vaivén que demuestra la existencia de una dialéctica cooptación-resistencia. Efectivamente, el Estado ejerce un control informal sobre los tianguis a través de la práctica de las “mordidas” (pagos ilegales) a los sindicatos, que otorgan y quitan espacios a los tiangueros bajo lógicas abiertamente clientelistas. Aún recuerdo cuando uno de mis informantes tiangueros se ofreció a colocarme “en un lugar chingón del tianguis” presumiendo de sus contactos sindicales (Espinosa, 2013: 228).

Sin embargo, los tiangueros están lejos de ser un simple tentáculo del poder del Estado. Así, cuando ha surgido en el horizonte algún proyecto multimillonario que necesite de reformas urbanas para las cuales los tianguis sean un estorbo, el Estado ha pasado de la cooptación a la represión, acompañada de campañas rebosantes de ideología higienista anti-tianguera (Espinosa, 2016; 2017). Ante estos casos, los tiangueros muestran una enorme capacidad de autoorganización y fuerza política. Esto es exactamente lo que ocurrió en Guadalajara en 2015 cuando se lanza la ley de “Imagen Urbana”, así como el programa “Banquetas Libres”, este último en un principio orientado a evitar que los automovilistas estacionen sus coches en las banquetas, pero que en “la letra pequeña” anunciaba que se actuaría también contra el llamado “comercio informal”.<sup>2</sup>

De forma simultánea a la expulsión de los tiangueros del centro de la ciudad, el entonces alcalde de la ciudad y hoy gobernador del Estado de Jalisco, Enrique Alfaro Ramírez, oficializaba el proyecto de creación de la Ciudad Creativa Digital (CCD) en las inmediaciones del Parque Morelos, que se encontraba desde hacía años en *stand by*. Dicho proyecto, nombrado como el “Hollywood de las artes digitales” por el anterior gobernador, Emilio González Márquez, contaría con empresas de cine, televisión, multimedia, videojuegos y animación digital, así como zona de viviendas, comercio y entretenimiento (Diario *El Informador*, 2012). El antecedente de la CCD sería la proyección de “La Villa Panamericana” –viviendas para los atletas de los Juegos Panamericanos del 2011– en la misma zona del Parque Morelos donde se ha construido la CCD. El resultado de las operaciones de expropiación y desalojo se calcula en cerca de 11 hectáreas adquiridas por el Ayuntamiento.

A la par de la expulsión vecinal, usando como caballo de Troya el proyecto de la CCD, se daba paso a lo que, sin disimulo, se describió como “limpiar el centro”, cuyo principal objetivo era la remoción de los vendedores callejeros. Por parte del gobierno y medios afines, los tiangueros se elevaban a la categoría de enemigos públicos, difundiendo la idea de que los vendedores callejeros son la principal amenaza a la movilidad urbana y el “buen uso” del espacio público. Es decir, se ideologizaban ciertos aspectos técnicos del urbanismo, como la movilidad. En términos lefebvrianos, se podría decir que el orden de las *prácticas espaciales* quedaba subsumido en la ideología hegemónica del *espacio concebido*. Esta ideología consiste en elevar el uso particular que las clases medias hacen del espacio público al rango de única forma aceptable de apropiación de lo urbano.

2 Véase *El Informador* del 17 de octubre de 2015 (<https://www.informador.mx/>)

De tal manera que esto se ha traducido en dos formas antagónicas de *vivir el espacio*: el “buen uso” de lo urbano del ciudadano clasemediero frente al uso espurio de la calle, como medio de subsistencia, para gran parte de los pobres urbanos.

La hegemonización de “la ideología del espacio público” (Delgado, 2011; Espinosa & Contijoch, 2021), no ocurrió de la noche a la mañana, sino que se fue forjando lenta pero profundamente, gracias a la publicitación de un estilo de vida “cool”, cosmopolita y cívico, apropiado por las clases medias urbanas, y después usado como marca por una nueva categoría de actor político: el “funcionario activista”. Hablamos de jóvenes políticos progresistas, muy bien formados académicamente, que conformarían gran parte del equipo de gobierno del alcalde Enrique Alfaro. Rodeado de estos expertos urbanos, sensibles a la dignificación del espacio público, al transporte sostenible, la ecología, la corrección política y el emprendedurismo, en vez del discurso de “los políticos de siempre”<sup>3</sup>, el propósito explícito del alcalde Alfaro fue hacer de Guadalajara “una marca ciudad”<sup>4</sup>, en la cual no tenían cabida los usos urbanos llevados a cabo por los pobres.

Se puede ver, entonces, desde una perspectiva lefebvriana, cómo los distintos órdenes se engarzan. Mientras el Ayuntamiento ha defendido, hasta la fecha, que la criminalización de los tiangueros se enmarca en un proceso de eficientización de la movilidad –sobre todo, aquella “sostenible”– lo que se percibe es que se trata de una “metanarrativa legitimadora” (Dolgon, 1999) con la que justificar el proyecto de la CCD. Para Jaume Franquesa, estas narrativas legitimadoras tienen dos características: 1) que mediante metáforas recurrentes camuflan el peso económico de las operaciones de renovación urbana; 2) mientras, moralizan y naturalizan estas renovaciones, presentándolas como intrínsecamente necesarias (Franquesa, 2007: 128-129). Aquí es donde la práctica espacial y la representación del espacio –es decir, la ideología urbana higienista– se alía con un discurso supuestamente técnico, para hacer el espacio vivido impracticable para las clases populares. Desde el discurso de lo practicado (la movilidad) se activa lo representacional y moralizante (la imagen urbana) para acabar con las apropiaciones urbanas populares (el tianguis como espacio vivido).

¿Esto significó el fin de los tianguis? En absoluto. De hecho, uno de los tianguis más golpeados por la represión, como es el popular tianguis Baratillo, continúa siendo lugar de esa excesividad propia del espacio urbano cuando es apropiado por las clases populares. En el Baratillo encuentro una situación peculiar de cómo se manifiesta la dialéctica entre espacio vivido *versus* espacio concebido. Toño, uno de mis informantes, me dice no trabajar de forma fija en el tianguis Baratillo. Sin embargo, cuando yo lo conozco tiene instalado un tenderete provisional, justo en la acera de fuera de su casa. Le pregunto por el proceso para conseguir un permiso e instalarse. Contrariamente a lo que estoy viendo con mis propios ojos, me responde que él, en ese justo momento “no se encuentra en el tianguis”. Intrigado, le pido que se explique, ya que lo veo *en* el tianguis, a lo cual me responde que el representante sindical<sup>5</sup> del tianguis le permitió instalar su tenderete, pero sólo si se ponía en la acera, ya que “*ahí ya no es tianguis*” (Espinosa, 2021: 282).

¿Cómo puede ser considerado “no tianguis” una manta que, evidentemente, está en el tianguis? Al parecer, la banqueta [acera], en tanto “espacio intermedio” entre una casa (el espacio privado) y la calle (el espacio público), “no es de nadie” y por lo tanto, en un claro ejemplo del uso de ciertos “alegalismos” por parte de los tiangueros; la banqueta se transforma en un espacio intersticial que escapa al control de la administración local. Este “alegalismo” es uno de los elementos que explican el crecimiento de los tianguis más allá de sus

3 Ruben Martín. “De activistas y trincheras políticas”. Diario *El Informador*. 3 de Octubre del 2015. Consultado: 19/11/2015. <http://opinion.informador.com.mx/Columnas/2015/10/03/de-activistas-y-trincheras-politicas/>

4 “Enrique Alfaro se compromete a promover una marca ciudad”. Diario *El Informador*. 21 de Mayo del 2015. Consultado: 18/11/2015. <http://www.informador.com.mx/jalisco/2015/593356/1/enrique-alfaro-se-compromete-a-promover-una-marcaciudad.htm>

5 Según mi informante Don Luis, la situación es clara, los tres sindicatos mayoritarios en el país son: “CROM, CTM y CROC, los tres manejan los tianguis”. Ellos otorgan los permisos para instalarse. El uso no es libre y abierto. Sin embargo, para poner una manta no hace falta un permiso “formal” sino sólo llegar temprano y tener el visto bueno de estos representantes. De esta misma manera, “en un mismo tianguis pueden estar los tres sindicatos, seccionados” y sin importar a cual pertenezcas, “normalmente los delegados [sindicales] tienen buenos lugares” (Espinosa, 2013: 239).

dimensiones oficiales, ya que crece *a hurtadillas* por los márgenes del espacio público, que son las banquetas. Para los vecinos, así como para los supervisores tiangueros, la banqueta se considera, de manera totalmente idiosincrática, como un *espacio intersticial de propiedad indecisa*. No es de extrañar que el programa de desalojo de vendedores ambulantes del centro histórico de Guadalajara se hubiese nombrado “Banquetas libres”, en una guerra franca contra las apropiaciones insolentes del espacio público.

Pero más allá del esquematismo, lo que nos muestra el caso de la apropiación de las banquetas por los tiangueros es el elemento *acontecimental* del espacio vivido. El tianguis es creación absoluta, ya que cada *puesta de tianguis* es irreductible a otra *puesta de tianguis*, como conjuración de fuerzas singulares no contenidas (del todo) en un esquema previo. Ese rastro de imprevisibilidad es “lo absoluto” de la creación tianguera. Asimismo, cada puesta de tianguis implica conjurar fuerzas que “causan” el tianguis, pero estas fuerzas ya forman parte del “efecto”, en tanto no son materializaciones de lo razonable sino *praxis* pura, que después será narrada en forma de anécdotas, aventuras, consejos, trucos o secretos. Este conjunto de narraciones constituye la *teoría tianguera* pero, a diferencia del racionalismo de academia, este saber no se transmite en espacios diferenciados de la práctica, por lo que el tianguis sólo se entiende *tianguendo*, es circular.

La idea de un espacio que se construye mientras es practicado es un acicate para la crítica de las visiones lineales, evolucionistas y teleológicas de lo urbano. Lefebvre criticará esta “historicidad impulsada hacia delante”, oponiendo una perspectiva en la cual el espacio-tiempo es atravesado por metáforas circulares, nietzscheanas: “la repetición, la circularidad, la simultaneidad de lo que parece diverso en el tiempo y nace de tiempos diversos” (Lefebvre, 2013 [1974]: 82). El espacio-tiempo de lo urbano no es otro que el espacio-tiempo de la vida cotidiana. La teoría crítica de lo urbano como *espacio vivido* se constituye en una especie de *médium* con el que Lefebvre milagrosamente reúne tanto al Nietzsche de la crítica al logos racionalista por un lado, y al Marx de la crítica al fetichismo de la mercancía por el otro:

La ciudad que podríamos describir como dionisíaca brota paralela, pero sin embargo, en el centro de aquella sometida al control y el orden que representa la autoridad despótica del rey (Delgado & Contijoch, 2021: 192).

Lefebvre propone un “espacio (social)” más allá de la clasificación “base-estructura-superestructura”, producto del “tiempo y el lenguaje” y no solamente de la dialéctica entre “valor de uso y valor de cambio” (2013 [1974]: 56). Como el enano que juega al ajedrez de Walter Benjamin: al final del laberinto urbano, se encuentra la figura mítica de Dionisos, que Lefebvre rescata de Nietzsche, para dar cuenta de la parte maldita de la ciudad, la que se resiste a ser dominada. Así como el espacio vivido se opone o se encuentra en tensión con el espacio concebido (producto de las fuerzas que pugnan por dominar lo urbano), igual en *la calle* se resiste a los intentos de normativización de la vida callejera. Hay razones suficientes para considerar a “la calle”, al “espacio vivido” y al “espacio social” como conceptos estrechamente relacionados, probablemente intercambiables. Una etnografía urbana debe ser una etnografía callejera. El etnógrafo no tiene por metodología otra que el deambular callejero, sumado a una pasión desmedida por el arte de andar “a pata de perro”:

La calle cumple una serie de funciones que Le Corbusier desdeña: función informativa, función simbólica y función de esparcimiento. Se juega y se aprende. En la calle hay desorden, es cierto, pero todos los elementos de la vida humana, inmovilizados en otros lugares por una ordenación fija y redundante, se liberan y confluyen en las calles, y alcanzan el centro a través de ellos; todos se dan cita, alejados de sus habitáculos fijos. Es un desorden vivo, que informa y sorprende (...) La calle y su espacio es el lugar donde el grupo (la propia ciudad) se manifiesta, se muestra, se apodera de los lugares y realiza un adecuado tiempo-espacio (Lefebvre 1976 [1970]: 25).

Manuel Delgado insiste en esta misma demarcación ontológica de lo urbano frente a la ciudad. Para nuestro antropólogo, existe una diferencia fundamental, anti-intuitiva si se quiere, entre la ciudad y lo urbano.<sup>6</sup> Cuando Delgado se refiere a la ciudad, está hablando de un asentamiento humano densamente poblado y con una gran concentración de edificaciones estables; mientras que “lo urbano” hace referencia a una forma de ser: “un estilo de vida marcado por la proliferación de urdimbres relacionales deslocalizadas y precarias” (Delgado 1999: 23). Lo urbano en Delgado es el espacio vivido en Lefebvre, aquello *inespecífico* que Castells considera un residuo; es, tanto para Delgado como para Lefebvre, el corazón mismo de la experiencia urbana.

Descartar lo propiamente urbano como ámbito legítimo de investigación tiene consecuencias metodológicas concretas. La más evidente es que los investigadores, cuando aplican un marco sociológico para estudiar cualquiera de los temas clásicos de la sociología urbana –como la vivienda o el trabajo– están efectivamente haciendo sociología aplicada a la ciudad, una sociología entre edificios. Pero *lo urbano*, se les escapa. Una epistemología que sea política y metodológicamente consecuente con nuestras bases ontológicas de lo urbano no puede apoyarse en mapas, modelos matemáticos o informáticos de movilidad o flujos. O, mejor dicho, puede hacerse, pero *eso* no es lo urbano en tanto espacio vivido. La prueba está en que esos mismos algoritmos pueden ser aplicados, sin variación, a personas o a hormigas. Lo que defendemos aquí es que las personas no deberían ser investigadas como si fuesen hormigas. El ejemplo de los tianguis es elocuente: uno puede mirar la ciudad “desde arriba”, desde las normativas, pero eso no es lo que ocurre “a ras del suelo”.

### ¿Revolución de la vida cotidiana o Revolución en la vida cotidiana?

Nada más abrir “La revolución urbana” Lefebvre ya sugiere el carácter *acontecimental* de lo urbano; escribe que el modo urbano no es reducible al modo de producción industrial, a pesar de que la sociedad urbana sea aquella que “surge de la industrialización” (1976 [1970]: 1). Es decir que lo urbano, en sí mismo, es un *exceso* que no se explica mecánicamente como simple efecto de la industrialización. Lo urbano es una *excesividad acontecimental* y esto tiene efectos para una epistemología crítica de lo urbano, ya que el conocimiento sobre la ciudad no es necesariamente un reflejo del objeto empíricamente definido. Es decir, el objeto *en tanto objeto de investigación* no es la copia conceptual del objeto con “existencia real”. Por lo tanto, *lo urbano* es un “objeto virtual, es decir, un *objeto posible*, cuyo nacimiento y desarrollo hemos de presentar ligado a un *proceso* y a una *praxis*” (1976 [1970]: 9).

La epistemología crítica de lo urbano implica, por lo tanto, la construcción de este *objeto virtual*, en cuya definición operativa, empírica, se encuentra el elemento de la *crítica utópica* que “abre el camino de lo posible, explorar un ámbito que no sea solamente el de “lo real” y lo realizado, ocupado por las fuerzas económicas, sociales y políticas” (Lefebvre, 1976 [1970]: 13). Una antropología urbana crítica no debe conformarse con un objeto realista que sirva tan sólo para describir la realidad urbana, que ya sabemos que inevitablemente es “todo orden, ordenanza y poder” (1976 [1970]: 14). Para Lefebvre, lo urbano es un *objeto virtual* que está preñado de posibilidad. A esta particular epistemología, Lefebvre le ha llamado “transducción”, es decir, “reflexión sobre el *objeto posible*” (1976 [1970]: 11).

Lefebvre propone la transducción como método para estudiar lo urbano, no a partir de las operaciones ortodoxas del método científico –inducción y deducción– sino considerando el carácter *poiético* de la realidad. Lefebvre usa el término “poiesis” en el sentido transformador que imprime toda actividad humana, con consecuencias para el modo urbano, donde es central la apropiación transformadora de la ciudad.

<sup>6</sup> De manera análoga, Delgado (2011: 19) diferencia entre “la calle” y el “espacio público”, siendo este último una “ideología” que inviste lo topográfico de moralidad. El espacio público se definiría por un cierto “deber ser” que supondría, a su vez, un “saber estar” basado en el auto disciplinamiento de las conductas en lugares de libre concurrencia, para adecuarlas a los principios de civildad y buena ciudadanía que se supone deben regirlo.

En este sentido, la vida cotidiana puede ser creadora de obras *poiéticas* (la vida como una obra de arte) a pesar de que “no toda creación es *poiesis*” (Lefebvre 2016 [1965]: 8).

Aquí, nuestro filósofo conecta directamente con la obra de De Certeau, en tanto la vida cotidiana es un invento (de nuevo, una *poiesis*) que puede producir vida social autónoma, espacios “liberados” parcialmente del mercado o del Estado; no necesariamente en el sentido de acción política organizada, sino “maneras de hacer” (tácticas y estrategias) constituidas como prácticas populares cotidianas que “juegan con los mecanismos de la disciplina” (De Certeau, 2000 [1980]: XLIV). Hablamos de imperceptibles actos de generosidad, hurtos, alegalidades o sabotajes varios que interrumpen el flujo corriente de acumulación capitalista en la ciudad. En este sentido, Lefebvre entiende que la ciudad es, esencialmente, apropiación de la ciudad. Un ejemplo de estas apropiaciones urbanas cotidianas tiene lugar cada verano en La Rambla, en el corazón turístico de la ciudad de Barcelona.

A lo largo de La Rambla se despliega una serie de vendedores ambulantes conocidos como “manteros”, en su mayoría varones senegaleses, que se dedican a vender mercancía pirata en plena calle, valiéndose de diversas tácticas que denominan “El Juego”. Lamine Bathily, mantero senegalés y portavoz del Sindicato Popular de Vendedores Ambulantes<sup>7</sup> (en adelante, “El Sindicato”) me explica que este *Juego* da inicio al salir de su hogar, donde la policía ya los tiene identificados. En momentos de especial tensión con las fuerzas de seguridad, los manteros pueden llegar a ser detenidos nada más salir de su casa. En otras ocasiones se crean regulaciones *ad hoc* que, bajo la apariencia de una norma general, están creadas para limitar la movilidad de los manteros: así ocurrió, por ejemplo, con la prohibición temporal de introducir “bultos grandes” en el metro, aprobada de manera *express* el verano de 2016 y que estaba pensada para que los manteros no pudieran transportarse con sus bultos llenos de productos.

Cuando logran superar la primera barrera, que es el acceso al transporte, los manteros tienen que resolver la disyuntiva del sitio dónde vender. Para ello, realizan una exploración previa cerciorándose de la presencia de Guardia Urbana, *Mossos d’Esquadra* (Policía autonómica de Cataluña) o policías sin uniforme (“secretas”). Si hay *secretas* en la parte baja de La Rambla, mejor ir a la parte alta; si el momento no es propicio para salir a vender, se esperará en los andenes y distintos pasajes del metro Cataluña. Forma parte de la táctica mantera el esperar para tomar una u otra decisión, lo que De Certeau denomina el “*kairos*” (2000 [1980]: 96) o momento oportuno.

El mantero, con su pesado y voluminoso bulto (“*ambu*”, en wolof) sobre la espalda, espera el momento oportuno para desplegarlo y transformarlo en una manta (“*sare*”). Si la policía o un secreta viene, el *sare* vuelve a transformarse en *ambu* gracias a un mecanismo que tiene la capacidad de territorializar y desterritorializar: un cordón que, al ser tirado, cierra toda la mercancía en su interior de manera automática y que permite al mantero, si es necesario, salir corriendo; o por lo contrario, instalarse para vender en cuanto se ve la mejor oportunidad. Este urbanismo táctico desplegado por los manteros se contrapone al modelo vertical del urbanismo organizado institucionalmente.

Un objeto (como una manta) es una puerta que produce una amenaza (Tirado 2001: 124), que puede abrir paso al acontecimiento urbano. El espacio vivido está hecho de estas minucias, de estos juegos socio-materiales donde objetos y personas se entrelazan, en una red de gestos (Lásen, 2006: 155). En los inicios de la Revolución Socialista en Rusia, por ejemplo, los constructivistas imaginaban la posibilidad de nuevos objetos, radicalmente distintos a los bienes pasivos de las sociedades consumistas. En un importante ensayo de 1925 –“La vida cotidiana y la cultura de las cosas”– el artista soviético Boris Arvatov imaginaba activos “objetos socialistas”

<sup>7</sup> El viernes 2 de octubre de 2015 nació el Sindicato Popular de Vendedores Ambulantes, a cuyo acto de fundación, en el centro de arte Santa Mónica, acudirían cerca de 80 manteros. Esta es una fecha clave en la organización de la resistencia contra la persecución y criminalización de la venta callejera. El Sindicato nacería al amparo del Espacio del Inmigrante, un colectivo popular y autogestionado, de apoyo y movilización política, a favor de los derechos de las y los migrantes, ubicado en el Barrio del Raval.

como “culminación de las capacidades psicológico-laborales del organismo, como fuerza sociolaboral, como instrumento y como co-trabajador” (Arvatov citado por Kiaer, 2009:05).

Para el constructivismo ruso, estos *objetos camaradas* eran pensados en una relación mutuamente activa, por lo que más que consumibles eran funcionales a la «creación-de-vida-cotidiana» (*bytotvorchestvo*) (Kiaer, 2009:06). A diferencia de la vinculación pasiva-espectacular que esperan los urbanistas de los ciudadanos, diversos colectivos rompen con el espacio representado por el urbanismo oficial, de forma efímera y gracias a la coparticipación de *objetos camarada*, como las mantas;<sup>8</sup> en el caso de los manteros, este saber-hacer es transmitido generacionalmente y desde los márgenes de la ciudad neoliberal, por redes familiares de apoyo, activistas, barriales, en algunos casos transfronterizas, generando un conocimiento experto acerca de las tácticas y estrategias para la apropiación popular de los medios de producción urbana.

Siguiendo esta línea, el método transductivo implica describir y analizar “lo cotidiano” para mostrar su dualidad, en tanto espacio alienado y potencia creadora, o en palabras del propio Lefebvre: “proyecto revolucionario de una liberación que desgaje de lo cotidiano la actividad creadora inherente, la obra inacabada” (1972 [1968]: 22). Así, propone el estudio interdisciplinar de la vida cotidiana como aquel espacio en el cual se intersectan reflexión, descripción y crítica política. Allí es donde el proyecto lefebvriano se aleja de la visión economicista de los marxistas clásicos. Para Lefebvre, el problema de la “producción urbana” no se reduce a la producción capitalista del espacio en tanto estrategia de acumulación, sino que, en un sentido amplio, se trata de la dialéctica de la producción-reproducción de la existencia social de los seres humanos; de ahí el énfasis en la vida cotidiana:

No es posible aprehender lo cotidiano como tal aceptándolo, viviéndolo pasivamente, sin tomar distancia. Distancia crítica, contestación, comparación; todo ello va junto... el análisis crítico de lo cotidiano revelará unas ideologías, y el conocimiento de lo cotidiano incluirá una crítica ideológica, y por supuesto, una autocrítica perpetua (Lefebvre 1972 [1968]: 39).

En este sentido, hay una diferencia crucial entre las posturas de De Certeau y Lefebvre respecto a la vida cotidiana. Lefebvre, no está cien por ciento seguro de que la vida cotidiana sea un producto de las prácticas autónomas de los usuarios de la ciudad; aunque podrían ser disruptivas, las prácticas urbanas no son autónomas, sino que se encuentran atravesadas por efecto de la dominación alienante. Se trata de una paradoja sólo en apariencia ya que, según Goonewardena, es en la vida cotidiana donde Lefebvre intenta alcanzar “el auténtico proyecto marxista: reemplazar a la filosofía y realizarla” (Goonewardena, 2011: 30). Insistiendo en la comparación, para De Certeau la revolución se da *en* la vida cotidiana, mientras que para Lefebvre, la revolución *emerge* de la vida cotidiana, como un acontecimiento o “momento”:

Llamaremos ‘Momento’ al intento de alcanzar la realización total de una posibilidad. La posibilidad se ofrece, se revela a sí misma. Está determinada y por tanto es limitada y parcial. Desear vivirla como una totalidad es agotarla y también satisfacerla. El Momento quiere ser total libremente; se agota en el acto de ser vivido. Toda realización como totalidad implica una acción constitutiva, un acto inaugural. Simultáneamente, este acto aísla un significado y lo crea. Funda una estructura frente al carácter transitorio e incierto de lo cotidiano (Lefebvre, 1961: 37).

<sup>8</sup> Los manteros no se valen tan sólo de *objetos camarada*; el trabajo etnográfico nos ha permitido reconocer el uso de objetos de protección espiritual, recurrentes en Senegal, pero también presentes entre los manteros de Barcelona. Hablamos de amuletos (*gris-gris*) para conseguir vender más, evitar la detención por parte de la policía o protegerse de posibles envidias entre compañeros manteros. Lamine Bathily me aseguraba que, a pesar de que su actividad política como portavoz del Sindicato lo exponía continuamente, su trabajo como mantero lo enfrentaba a la policía, y su *status* migratorio lo colocaba en una situación de ilegalidad, jamás había pisado la cárcel o había sido expulsado del país. Esto, más que un milagro, era producto de la acción de los *gris-gris*. Otras formas de protección entre los manteros son los baños con aguas aromáticas mientras se leen versículos del Corán (*safara*); pero también otro tipo de acciones, como sacrificios (*sarakh*), oraciones (*du’as*) o la pronunciación directa de ciertos versículos del Corán (*diatte*) (ver Contijoch & Espinosa, 2019).

Volvamos con el caso de los manteros. Su actividad cotidiana se inscribe en el ámbito de la reproducción social, es decir de lo cotidiano; la paradoja es, si atendemos a Agnes Heller, que es de la propia vida cotidiana donde emerge lo no-cotidiano (*Erlebnis*), que a su vez es el “fermento secreto de la Historia” (Heller 2002 [1970]: 39-40). Es decir, por sí misma, la venta callejera no es un acontecimiento, a pesar del acto, sin duda subversivo, de apropiación del espacio urbano a través del “Juego”. La ruptura –ciertamente trágica– que lleva a los manteros a trascender lo meramente reproductivo y empezar a organizarse políticamente, fue el fallecimiento del mantero senegalés Mor Sylla, en la zona turística de Salou (Tarragona) durante el verano de 2015. Había sido un año especialmente duro para el colectivo mantero, con múltiples arrestos y detenciones. Pero la tragedia sobrevendría el 11 de agosto: Mor Sylla “se cae” de un balcón mientras era perseguido por los Mossos d’Esquadra, en una operación “contra la piratería” –según la versión oficial de la propia policía–.

De este suceso, que pudo haber quedado tan sólo en un acto de duelo y catarsis alienantes, emerge la fuerza que politiza a los manteros y los lleva a formar El Sindicato. Se trataba, por supuesto, de la gota que rebalsaba el vaso de la indignación, ante la sistemática persecución de los vendedores ambulantes por parte del gobierno de los conservadores Artur Más (en la Generalitat de Catalunya) y Xavier Triás (en el Ayuntamiento de Barcelona). Según datos del mismo cuerpo policial catalán, entre 2011 y 2015 habían invertido 28.000 horas de trabajo en perseguir a los manteros, mientras el propio Conseller de la Generalitat afirmaba que la persecución de manteros era indispensable ya que “el top manta pone en riesgo el Estado del Bienestar” en Cataluña (Espinosa, 2017: 68). Aunque estos datos enmarquen históricamente la lucha mantera, una suma de hechos no explican lo irreductible de un acontecimiento llamado Sindicato Popular de Vendedores Ambulantes.

El filósofo y matemático marxista Alain Badiou enumera una serie de acontecimientos “perfectamente atestiguados” como la Revolución Francesa, la Revolución Cultural China, la invención de la música clásica por Haydn o la invención de la música dodecafónica por Schönberg; todos éstos inteligibles como acontecimientos. Pero también incluye el encuentro de dos amigos o una pasión amorosa: ¿cuál es el común denominador acontecimental en este listado de irrupciones singulares? Para Badiou, todos los casos mencionados implican un *plus* fuera de toda norma, que exige a los sujetos una toma de posición ética o un acto de decisión que resulte en “una nueva manera de ser” (Badiou 2003:71).

Tomarse en serio un acontecimiento exige una “fidelidad” a sus consecuencias en tanto “suplemento acontecimental” (Badiou, 2003: 70). Para los manteros, implicó tomarse en serio, y hasta sus últimas consecuencias, el asesinato de Mor Sylla por parte de la policía, en un ¡basta ya! que se organizó políticamente a través de la formación de un Sindicato. La tragedia hace emerger la movilización política, como una manera consecuente de ser fiel al suplemento acontecimental (el odio, la rabia, la pena, la indignación...). Los acontecimientos implican asumir que nada puede ser como antes, algo hay que hacer con *ello*:

La fidelidad acontecimental es ruptura real (pensada y practicada) en el orden propio en el que el acontecimiento ha tenido lugar (político, amoroso, artístico, científico...) (Badiou, 2003: 72).

El acontecimiento es una ruptura con la normalidad, por lo tanto, no responde a las leyes de la casuística; es “el efecto que parece exceder sus causas”, diría Slavoj Žižek, quién añade una dimensión espacial, ya que el acontecimiento “abre un hueco que separa el efecto de sus causas” (Žižek, 2018:16). Así, ante la violencia de Estado, los manteros podrían haberse replegado en su rol de objetos de intervención social, re-afirmados como víctimas. Eso era lo esperable si nos atenemos a “los hechos”. Pero, contra todo pronóstico, eligieron emerger como sujeto político, formando el que probablemente sea el primer sindicato popular y migrante en la historia de España.

Desde posiciones dogmáticas, hay una imposibilidad para pensar la *producción de lo radicalmente nuevo* prefigurando toda ontología urbana en la estructura económica o el diseño urbano. Frente a estas posiciones deterministas, una epistemología lefebvriana nos reta a un análisis cauto de la vida cotidiana.



*Momentos, situaciones, acontecimientos...* Los dos primeros implican una acción consciente del investigador, en tanto se construyen *ex nihilo* las situaciones que posteriormente serán analizadas. El último concepto es más escurridizo, implica una atención a lo que de extraordinario tiene la vida ordinaria. Lo importante, en todo caso, es ser conscientes de que una descripción del espacio vivido debe ir contrastada con la inmanente posibilidad *utópica* del objeto urbano.

## Hacia una etnografía radicalmente urbana

Setha M. Low (2014) data “la muerte y renacimiento” de la Antropología urbana en el lapso que va de finales del siglo XX hasta la primera década de los dos mil. Como la antropología urbana sigue viva, antes que de muerte propiamente dicha deberíamos hablar de un intento de asesinato. La autora ha identificado a la “etnografía tradicional” (Low, 2014: 16) como la culpable del fallido crimen: se le acusa de ser una técnica obcecada en estudios a pequeña escala, reduciendo la complejidad urbana a una serie de comunidades exotizadas como “otros internos”, a causa de un esencializado concepto de cultura, arma letal del antropólogo *en la ciudad* –diferente de un antropólogo *de la ciudad*. Muerta de aburrimiento, *barrionalismo* y “tribus urbanas”, la antropología urbana sería rescatada por “el giro espacial” llevado a cabo por geógrafos y sociólogos urbanos, que profundizaron en la noción de flujo urbano a escala global, centrándose en el análisis de la circulación del “trabajo, capital, bienes y servicios” (Low, 2014: 15).

Inspirados por el giro espacial, los antropólogos llevarían a cabo una reconceptualización de la ciudad más allá de sus propios límites, como un proceso macro de “urbanización transnacional” (Hannerz, 1992; Glick Schiller, 2014). No obstante, el giro más importante sería el propio cambio de enfoque respecto a “lo urbano”, que nunca más sería visto como un simple escenario para las relaciones sociales, sino como una serie de procesos donde lo social, lo material y lo espacial se encuentran entrelazados (Low, 2014: 17). La antropología urbana parece que se atrevía a romper con décadas de realismo ingenuo imperante. Así, haciéndose preguntas importantes en lo epistemológico, no tardarían en llegar las innovaciones metodológicas.

Un acicate en la reformulación de la etnografía urbana sería el crucial texto de George E. Marcus, “Ethnography in/of the world system: the emergence of multi-sited ethnography”, de 1995. Gracias a la etnografía multisituada, el antropólogo ya no tiene por qué sentirse anclado durante años a un solo lugar, buscando una comunidad dispuesto a adoptarle; desde el marco de “macroconstrucciones de un orden social más amplio, como el sistema capitalista mundial”, los etnógrafos se plantearían hacer observaciones en múltiples sitios, rompiendo con “dicotomías como lo local y lo global, el “mundo de vida” y el sistema” (Marcus, 1995: 95).

Low realiza, con precisión quirúrgica, el más contundente e inapelable diagnóstico de las enfermedades de la antropología urbana, pero se equivoca en el agente patógeno. La etnografía no es responsable de lo que los antropólogos han hecho de ella. Como todo método, el etnográfico es una caja de herramientas con la cual se puede construir un deslumbrante castillo o una pocilga. A la distancia, podemos decir que Low fue presa de un ambiente de histeria que se ha apoderado de la antropología en los últimos diez años. En este contexto de macartismo anti-etnográfico Tim Ingold representaría el papel de John E. Hoover. Ingold escribiría el más virulento (e incomprensible) de todos los panfletos contra el enfoque etnográfico en la antropología.

El mismo año de publicación del “Spatialities” de Low (2014), Tim Ingold escribiría “That’s enough about ethnography!”, donde argumenta que la etnografía “está haciendo mucho daño a la antropología”, dejando a la disciplina en el pasado “mientras otros campos de estudio siguen avanzando” (Ingold, 2014: 383). No es éste el lugar para hacer eco de todas las réplicas y contra réplicas al manifiesto. Mi crítica favorita es una entrada de un blog de estudiantes de antropología, irónicamente titulada “That’s enough about Tim Ingold!” y calificada por su autor como “una respuesta millennial” a la pedantería del célebre antropólogo (Powis, 2018). Y es que Ingold, desde la más absurda literalidad, reduce la etnografía a un “escribir sobre otros” (2014: 385).

Tal como lo ha hecho notar Susan MacDougall (2016), se trata de una visión anacrónica y demasiado literal de la etnografía que “se parece poco a lo que la mayoría de los académicos que se llamarían etnógrafos realmente hacen hoy en día”. En este sentido, el problema no lo tiene la disciplina, sino académicos como Ingold, que definen la etnografía de forma reduccionista para después quejarse del propio reduccionismo que ellos mismos han elaborado (Powis, 2018).

Para la antropología urbana, renunciar a la etnografía implicaría rechazar la *via regia* de acceso al estudio de la vida cotidiana: ¿qué aportamos cuando hacemos economía política de la ciudad al igual que los geógrafos marxistas? Lo que se necesita es ampliar la etnografía urbana con experiencias no provenientes de la antropología, antes que hacer de nuestra práctica un clon de otras disciplinas. En este punto es donde, de nueva cuenta, la herencia lefebvriana nos es muy valiosa. Antes que la etnografía multi-situada fuera definida por Marcus, Lefebvre ayudó a delinear el campo situacionista de “las derivas”, un ejercicio de investigación urbana, también multi-situado. Pero si Marcus ponía el acento en lo transnacional, con un enfoque multisituado inter-urbano, los situacionistas se interesarían por la crítica a la vida cotidiana, poniendo el enfoque en lo multisituado intra-urbano.

Inspirados en la “Crítica a la vida cotidiana” y en la teoría de los “momentos” de Lefebvre, los primeros ejercicios en “creación de situaciones” empezaron con el grupo COBRA, compuesto por arquitectos, y artistas, holandeses y belgas, como Constant Nieuwenhuys y Asger Jorn; estos ejercicios de intervención urbana serían continuados por los Provos, una facción de los proto-situacionistas del grupo COBRA. La intuición les decía que la ciudad moderna, en comparación con la urbe tradicional, había dejado de tener una centralidad, y así, fragmentada, más que recentralizarla de nuevo, lo que se proponía el grupo era crear situaciones para mapear las distintas nuevas centralidades. Ellos les llamaban acciones de “urbanismo unitario”, pero no tenía ninguna función unificadora sino que, enfocada como técnica de investigación, este urbanismo unitario prefiguró la etnografía urbana multi-situada:

[...] uno podría crear nuevas situaciones a través de vincular, por ejemplo, partes de una ciudad [...] Este fue el primer significado de la deriva. La deriva fue hecha por primera vez en Ámsterdam usando walkie-talkies. Había un grupo que iba a una parte de la ciudad y se podía comunicar con gente en otra área [...] El Urbanismo Unitario consistía en hacer que diferentes partes de la ciudad se comunicaran entre sí” (Lefebvre entrevistado por Kristin Ross 1997: 73).

Además de Lefebvre, los conocidos como Situacionistas se inspirarían en la figura de Walter Benjamin que, décadas antes que Lefebvre, constataba que la ciudad se “había convertido en un aparador con continuos y cambiantes puntos de fuga”, mientras el flâneur (paseante urbano) va observando y registrando “en *passant*, no una imagen de ciudad, sino las presunciones de la misma” (Vivas & Vidal, 2006: 125). El flâneur, mirando la ciudad que nacía de la industrialización, se convierte en espectador privilegiado de la calle, gran espectáculo surgido de la modernidad, en su tránsito hacia una sociedad que en apariencia se constituye absolutamente de ocio y consumo:

Es la mirada del flâneur, cuya forma de vida todavía baña la futura y desconsolada vida del hombre de la gran ciudad con una pátina de reconciliación. El flâneur está todavía en el umbral tanto de la gran ciudad como de la clase burguesa. Ninguna de las dos lo ha sometido aún. En ninguna de las dos está el flâneur en casa, sino que busca su asilo en la multitud. En Engels y Poe hallamos unas primeras contribuciones sobre la fisonomía de la multitud, que es el velo a través del cual la ciudad habitada se le aparece al flâneur como fantasmagoría (Benjamin, 2012 [1935]: 56-57).

La práctica de la *flânerie* no se circunscribe a la bohemia parisina decimonónica. El pobre urbano, incluso el más marginal, tampoco se resiste al encanto de la deambulación callejera como ejercicio psicogeográfico de creación de situaciones. Un ejemplo de esto son los usuarios tiangueros. A Pancho, uno de mis informantes durante la etnografía por los tianguis, lo conocí mientras realizaba una observación participante en el tianguis Baratillo. A él le gusta derivar por este espacio, efímero como todos los tianguis, pero no siempre con la intención de comprar. Es un flâneur tianguero. Disfruta recorrer los pasadizos del Baratillo, saludar a amigos, mezclarse entre la multitud, y al final, perderse. Lo único fijo en su recorrido tianguero es el ritual de iniciar a la altura de la Calzada del Obrero, donde se compra un tejuino –bebida fría elaborada con masa de maíz ligeramente fermentada–, lo mezcla con cerveza en un vaso desechable grande, se fuma “un toque” (cigarrillo de marihuana) y comienza a *derivar*.

Después de habernos conocido derivando cada uno por nuestra cuenta, acuerdo con Pancho realizar una serie de “*go-alongs*”. Margarethe Kusenbach describió los “*go-alongs*” como “una nueva herramienta de investigación etnográfica que pone en primer plano algunos de los aspectos invisibles, trascendentes y reflexivos de la experiencia vivida” (2003: 02); consiste en acompañar a los informantes en el transcurso de actividades cotidianas mientras activamente se intenta indagar, a través de la observación, haciendo preguntas y escuchando los relatos elaborados por los sujetos, en relación con el espacio vivido. Durante los *go-alongs* observo la *performance* de Pancho al caminar; él es un flâneur de barrio, que en lugar de bastón y bombín de *dandy*, ostenta cadena de cholo y “caminar tumbado”. A lo que Walter Benjamin le llamaba la *flânerie*, Pancho le llama “serpentear el tianguis”. Me explica que hacer “serpientes” significa saber tomar los pasillos, pero también fundirse con la gente; *hacer uso* pero también *ser* tianguis. El tianguis es un espacio de exploración y *trance*, o como dice Pancho, vas caminando y durante un tiempo “se te va el rollo”:

[...] a partir de aquí el baratillo ya se hacen dos calles: ésta de aquí y aquella y todo el tiempo estás de en medio que ya están ocupadas también, entonces se forman varios pasillos, que cruzan estas calles, entonces tu puedes ir haciendo “ffffff” esto ¿no? [hace un movimiento zigzagueante con la mano extendida] como haciendo serpientes, o como tu quieras, luego te vas un tramo por aquí y sales al otro lado, a la glorieta de aquel lado [...] Entonces, no sé, te puedes mover a la zona de acá atrás, donde está todo “el tiradero” [manteros con cosas usadas en el suelo], pero hay veces que ya te cambiaron de mono [persona], pero de repente, te encuentras lo que buscabas en el lugar menos esperado; o no te acuerdas que ya habías pasado por algún lugar pero ya habías pasado, o nunca habías pasado por allí pero tu crees que sí, o no te ubicas, o ¡quién sabe! [...] Es así como un laberinto, ¡está bien chido! y no se, es como la idea del pinche mercado de que te vayas moviendo, de que estés en un lugar y luego salgas a otro, por ejemplo aquí, ésta “madre” [cosa], mira va como dos o tres cuadras y de nuevo se vuelve abrir [se refiere a la calle donde están “los tiraderos”] se hacen otras tres cuadras de tianguis y por esa calle vuelves a salir a la principal y sales hasta abajo y pues es así: ¡para que le rasquen! (Espinosa, 2013: 199-205).

El recorrido de Pancho se opone al espacio muerto del mapa como pura representación. Gracias a la apropiación de “la calle geoméricamente definida por el urbanismo se transforma en espacio por intervención de los caminantes” (De Certeau, 2000 [1980]: 129). La advertencia de no confundir el mapa con el territorio se puede traducir en no confundir la representación de la ciudad con el espacio vivido: éste último no está hecho de hormigón, sino de mitos y viajes, memoria y pasiones, vida y muerte. La tensión entre el espacio *dominado*, “generalmente cerrado, esterilizado, vacío” contrasta con “el concepto opuesto e inseparable” del espacio *apropiado* (Lefebvre, 2013 [1974]: 213). Este conflicto entre *especies de espacios* es central para la etnografía urbana, nos permite distinguir el trigo de lo urbano de la paja del urbanismo; la vida urbana de su intento por ordenarla.

Con vasos comunicantes que los unen al espíritu del flâneur, los situacionistas, de carácter más bien disruptor, con Guy Debord como cabeza visible, teorizaron el concepto de *deriva* “como una técnica de paso ininterrumpido a través de ambientes diversos” (Debord, 1999 [1958]: 57); esta técnica fue concebida

en oposición a la racionalización del espacio urbano del movimiento moderno, de organización espacio-temporal. Tradicionalmente, las derivas situacionistas se han presentado como un deambular, sin meta alguna y planeación racional, que nos conducirían por los entresijos oscuros y olvidados de la metrópoli. Aunque no del todo falso, este tópico sobre las derivas es incompleto. Debord mismo ironizaba sobre el azar –y su supuesto carácter liberador y anti determinista–. Al final, el *quid* de la deriva es el deseo que el investigador despliega sobre el espacio urbano. En el extremo opuesto encontraríamos la utopía del investigador errante, que esconde una fantasía naturalista de tipo conservador: el caminante como un ser no deseante (Debord, 1999 [1958]: 59).

Desde hace dos décadas, la práctica de la deriva se ha renovado gracias a las aportaciones de *Stalker*<sup>9</sup>, laboratorio de observación nómada, cuyo miembro más visible es Francesco Careri. Este colectivo se ha propuesto “buscar en el nomadismo los fundamentos históricos de la anti-arquitectura radical” (Careri, 2013: 19). A pesar de que Gilles A. Tiberghien considera un error considerar a *Stalker*, o al propio Careri, como unos “neo-situs”, comparten con el Movimiento Situacionista una incesante búsqueda de “las partes ocultas de la ciudad” (Tiberghien, 2013: 10).

A nivel metodológico, *stalker* han introducido una regla en sus derivas, que es simple pero rompedora. Se trata de realizar la deriva siguiendo una línea recta y jamás retroceder, a menos que sea estrictamente necesario. Esto implica, en el entorno urbano, tener que atravesar la ciudad, saltando muros, cruzando vallas, llamando a puertas para entrar en casas, es decir, desobedecer la división entre espacio público y espacio privado. Se trata de la realización de la deriva en su vertiente más radical y libertaria. Si bien la deriva situacionista se constituía como una performance disruptiva de la ciudad burguesa, jamás se había planteado una afrenta tan descarada contra la propiedad privada.

Para *Stalker*, el hecho de “atravesar” la ciudad es una forma de “lectura psicogeográfica del territorio” (Careri, 1996), pero también es una manera de *nomadizar* la ciudad sedentaria. A partir de Deleuze y Guattari (2004 [1980]) se puede decir que, frente a la cuadrícula del “espacio estriado” de la ciudad sedentariamente construida, el *transurbante* superpone “el espacio liso” nómada. La técnica definitiva de las *transurbancias* de *Stalker* es el *andare a zonzo*, una expresión italiana que significa algo así como “perder el tiempo vagando sin objetivo” (Careri, 2013: 154). No hay una obra de arte o informe elaborado por *Zonzo*: el resultado de las derivas se parecería más a un *readymade urbano* que a un mapa. Lo que se construye desde una deriva son “otros lugares”, aquellos que se oponen tanto a “las utopías hipertecnológicas” como a “la ciudad pseudocultural del turismo” (Careri, 2013: 155).

Un intento de contextualizar las derivas situacionistas como parte de la investigación etnográfica lo encontramos en Vivas y Vidal (2006: 116-121); sin seguirlos a rajatabla, reinterpreto su particular manual para *derivar* la ciudad del siglo XXI como un primer esbozo metodológico para delimitar el campo de estudio de la etnografía urbana. Una primera particularidad de una etnografía radicalmente urbana es *el acceso inmediato al campo*; para los etnógrafos de principios de siglo XX, realizar su trabajo implicaba, de manera tópica, el realizar largos traslados a territorios, incluso a países lejanos, en regiones desconocidas o aisladas. Un etnógrafo de lo urbano normalmente habita su propio campo de estudio y se encuentra en un estado de inmersión permanente. Además, la movilidad transnacional y transcontinental inter-urbana ya no representa las mismas dificultades que en los primeros tiempos de los desarrollos etnográficos.

En tanto estamos inmersos en nuestro propio campo de estudio, la barrera entre investigador y objeto de estudio, en la etnografía urbana, se va diluyendo, ya que somos urbanitas e investigadores a la vez. Nuevamente hay que recurrir a la comparación con la etnología, aquella que estableció los procedimientos de la etnografía.

9 El nombre del colectivo hace referencia a la película soviética de ciencia ficción “*Stalker*”, dirigida por Andrei Tarkovsky e inspirada en el libro “*Picnic Extraterrestre*” de los también soviéticos hermanos Strugatski. Tanto la película como la novela transcurren en *La Zona*, un territorio postapocalíptico donde tienen lugar sucesos inexplicables. *La Zona* es evitada por la mayoría de personas, con excepción de los *stalkers* personajes marginales que la visitan y se pierden en sus descampados.

En aquellos viajes a *terra ignota*, el investigador se enfrentaba con situaciones culturales completamente distintas a la suya, por lo que se ha recurrido a la analogía del etnógrafo como un niño o aprendiz que “desde cero” absorbe las reglas sociales y de conducta en una cultura que le es completamente ajena (Marcus & Cushman, 2003 [1982]: 188).

Tradicionalmente, las etnografías han volcado su mirada sobre “los otros”, aquellos de culturas no occidentales, “exóticas” o premodernas. Así, a manera de contraste, se define la segunda de las características básicas de la etnografía en contextos urbanos: la (relativa) *proximidad cultural* del investigador con su objeto de estudio. Esto trae importantes consecuencias políticas al interior de la práctica etnográfica, ya que con el estudio de los otros se legitimaba la construcción de una diferencia cultural radical; también ha implicado, en ciertas circunstancias, el participar de procesos cruzados de normalización/anormalización de los actores sociales. Se estudia lo problemático, lo diferente, el *otro*. Por supuesto, la ciudad produce sus *otros internos*, y por más que el investigador sea culturalmente competente para moverse por la ciudad, su trabajo transcurrirá entre la familiaridad y la sorpresa. La mirada etnográfica sobre la ciudad genera extrañamientos y destruye la certeza de vivir en una sociedad homogénea; por lo tanto, la etnografía ayuda a develar las tensiones y conflictos que subyacen a la normalizada vida urbana.

Otra redefinición que introduce la etnografía urbana es lo referente a la noción de campo, el cual es visto como un lugar al que van los investigadores a buscar datos que traerán de vuelta para su análisis (Spink, 2005:02). La noción de campo, para la etnografía realista, ha reificado a los otros, que miro con ojos de entomólogo, mientras su hábitat nos aparece como algo lejano, descifrado en el despacho, donde se suelen llevar a cabo el análisis de lo recabado en el campo. Así, una tercera característica es que la etnografía urbana nos obliga a replantearnos *la división del trabajo de investigación* entre trabajo de campo y trabajo de despacho, a los que corresponderían las actividades de observar vs. analizar, llevadas a cabo por dos tipos de investigadores con jerarquías diferenciadas: el etnógrafo vs. el investigador principal, donde el primero ni siquiera figura en los *papers*. Así, no sólo se reproduce la división del trabajo académico, sino la falsa jerarquía entre la práctica y la teoría. ¿Qué sentido tiene para el etnógrafo seguir manteniendo estas jerarquías cuando la división entre el campo y el despacho es artificial?

Los etnógrafos urbanos actuamos por analogía; resolvemos problemas que se nos van presentando, introduciendo y descartando una serie de objetos de investigación, así como materialidades e infraestructuras que vamos conociendo. Se trata de juegos pragmáticos que no parten de una teoría o manual, como supuestamente funciona el conocimiento académico, sino que se constituyen como un saber-hacer a partir de unos conocimientos socializados de forma oral, gracias al rumor, la charla y el ensayo-error; sumados a una voluntad por transgredir el “uso correcto” de los métodos. Los etnógrafos urbanos, de la misma manera que los *bricoleurs* indígenas de Levi-Strauss (1988 [1962]: 38), llevamos a cabo un diálogo con los materiales que la ciudad nos proporciona, antes que un monólogo proyectual.

Existe, entonces, como cuarta característica, una *imposibilidad para delimitar el campo* por lo que Peter Spink propone la noción más interesante de “campo-tema” (2005: 05) como categoría útil para la etnografía urbana e incluso para la investigación social en general. El investigador ya no va al campo a “recoger” datos (como las naranjas en el árbol, esperando a ser cortadas) sino que uno está en un campo-tema y, por lo tanto, vamos cogiendo y pegando elementos significativos de nuestra propia experiencia cotidiana en la ciudad, de lo que ocurre aquí y allá, como lo haría un *bricoleur*.

El campo-tema no es un lugar delimitado, sino coordenadas espaciotemporales en el proceso de investigación. Como consecuencia, se produce una *indeterminación del período de investigación*, que sería nuestra quinta y última característica de la etnografía urbana. Es decir que, al no poder distinguir *a priori* lo que es el campo, tampoco se puede distinguir, con certeza, cuándo la investigación está agotada; ya sea por saturación, o por cualquier otra fórmula *ad hoc*. Esto sería suponer que la realidad de un campo puede ser vertida o representada

en su totalidad, lo cual es falso desde una perspectiva de flujo continuo, como la que implica la noción de campo-tema. La clausura (obligatoria) de la etnografía será siempre de carácter precario y arbitrario, pero la investigación podría no terminar jamás.

## Conclusiones

Conocemos al Lefebvre filósofo, sociólogo, geógrafo, marxista –aunque no del montón–, pero ¿existe un Lefebvre antropólogo? La intención de este ensayo ha sido darle un enfoque antropológico a su teoría. No hablo de inventarme un Lefebvre inédito, con experiencia en trabajo etnográfico, por supuesto, sino de algo incluso más radical. Lo que planteo es que Lefebvre, desde la filosofía, es el descubridor del objeto de estudio de la antropología urbana, a través de su concepto de “espacio vivido” y la crítica de la vida cotidiana. Este objeto de estudio propio, que no es el objeto de la sociología urbana o del urbanismo, encuentra en una renovada etnografía urbana la *via regia* para acceder a él.

Una disciplina que se quiera científica sólo lo es a condición de que pueda acceder a un objeto propio, que no sea una porción de objeto, ya cedido, o residuo de objeto de estudio de alguno de los aspectos no abordados por otra ciencia. Pues bien, la antropología urbana encuentra un objeto propio en el espacio vivido y, en un sentido general, en *lo urbano* como lo entiende Lefebvre. Estas son las bases epistemológicas sobre las cuales se puede re-construir un método propio, tan denostado como imprescindible: la etnografía urbana.

A diferencia del urbanismo o de la sociología urbana, de carácter totalizante, una etnografía urbana lefebvriana es una ciencia del espacio social, profundamente poética y anti-tecnocrática. Sabemos de las relaciones complejas de Lefebvre con el estructuralismo, pero es claro que su visión de lo urbano es beligerante con las perspectivas dominantes en su momento: la sociología estructural-funcionalista de corte marxiano de Manuel Castells, y la ecología humana de la Escuela de Chicago. El giro lefebvriano colocó a lo urbano a ras de suelo, al poner el énfasis en la vida cotidiana. Por eso, el acento que se le da a la *apropiación*, que hay que distinguir de *privatización*: “para Marx, la apropiación se opone fuertemente a la propiedad”; no hablamos de poseer o dominar la ciudad, sino de hacer *lo apropiado*; es decir, el espacio apropiado es “el espacio social que “incorpora” los actos sociales, las acciones de los sujetos tanto colectivos como individuales que nacen y mueren, que padecen y actúan” (Lefebvre, 2013 [1974]: 93).

La revolución lefebvriana en el campo de lo urbano pasó más desapercibida que la llevada a cabo en aquellos años 1970’s por la antropología, sobre todo a partir de la obra de Clifford Geertz (1988 [1973]), quien fue removiendo la idea de que el objeto de estudio de la antropología son aquellas totalidades entendidas como “Culturas” (con mayúscula), instalando una nueva sensibilidad, que confirmó que la etnografía es el estudio de los gestos productores de “acciones simbólicas”, antes que el estudio de formaciones sociales “totales” (1988 [1973]: 21-25). A partir de aquí se entiende como fuente legítima del conocimiento etnográfico cualquier situación cotidiana, como la emblemática pelea de gallos estudiada por el propio Geertz; de la misma manera, Lefebvre hace de la vida cotidiana su centro de análisis.

Lo que Lefebvre llamó *espacio vivido* –pero que también pudo haber nombrado *espacio liberado*– se opone al espacio dominado, pero ¿dominado por quién? Por las fuerzas del mercado, sin duda. Aunque también dominado por el urbanismo tecnócrata de las ciudades tristes, esterilizadas, predecibles. El proyecto higienista del urbanismo es trastocado por las sutiles apropiaciones de los usuarios, y en el ámbito de la investigación, por la renuncia del etnógrafo a ser *Ojo de Dios*. La politización de la etnografía pasa también por desconfiar de los mapas, cuadrantes, flujos y esquemas, propios de un pernicioso fetichismo metodológico. Accedemos a lo *urbano* a través de los gestos que exceden los mapas, residuos inapropiados que se resisten a ser totalmente simbolizados por la tecno-ciencia. Es lo real de la ciudad irrepresentable; en el centro de la espiral del laberinto.

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# Reports of a struggle

## Prison, gender, and activism in an association of prisoners' relatives

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### Abstract

The article explores the connections between gender, prison, and activism in AMPARAR, an association that works with *prisoners' families* in São Paulo, Brazil. The ethnography is developed in the activities of the association and in the monitoring of the connections mobilised by these activities. AMPARAR's work is located in an institutional web that includes non-governmental organisations and public institutions that produce both a violating state and a state that claims rights and guarantees. AMPARAR and the *family members* articulated by the association put a human face and body to complaints, and identify *violence* and *humiliation* perpetrated not only on their bodies, but on their husbands and children deprived of their freedom. Gender and sexuality are languages that allow such evocation and contribute to women producing a place of mediators and rapporteurs for the abuses that occur within prisons.

**Keywords:** gender, prison, activism, family, state.

# Relatos de uma luta

## Prisão, gênero e ativismo em uma associação de familiares de pessoas presas

### Resumo

O artigo explora as articulações entre gênero, prisão e ativismo nas atividades da Amparar, associação que atua junto a *familiares de presos* em São Paulo, Brasil. A etnografia se desenvolve nas atividades da associação e no acompanhamento das articulações mobilizadas por essas atividades. O trabalho da Amparar se localiza em um emaranhado institucional que inclui organizações não-governamentais e instituições públicas que produzem tanto um Estado violador quanto um Estado a quem se reivindica direitos e garantias. A Amparar e as familiares articuladas pela associação dão rosto e corpo a denúncias e identificam violências e humilhações perpetradas não só em seus corpos, mas no de seus maridos e filhos privados de liberdade. Gênero e sexualidade são linguagens que permitem essa evocação e que contribuem para que as mulheres produzam um lugar de mediadoras e relatoras de eventos ocorridos no interior das prisões.

**Palavras-chave:** gênero; prisão; ativismo; família; estado.

# Reports of a struggle

## Prison, gender, and activism in an association of prisoners' relatives

Natália Lago

This article presents some reflections on the involvement of *family members*<sup>1</sup> in prison activism and in defending the rights of people whose freedom has been denied<sup>2</sup>. The text forms part of my doctoral research, where I followed the movements of women recognised as *prisoners' relatives* in three different, yet connected, ethnographic contexts regarding prisons in São Paulo, Brazil (Lago, 2019)<sup>3</sup>. Within my research, the three major axes of ethnographic observation encompassed: i) the traffic of visitation lines in a prison unit located in the state of São Paulo; ii) the controversies surrounding *intimate body searches* (or *vexatious body searches*) and the banning of this practice<sup>4</sup>; and iii) the activism by families of incarcerated persons who organise themselves through the *Associação de Amigos e Familiares de Presos/as* (AMPARAR) [Association of Prisoners' Family Members and Friends], located on the east side of the city of São Paulo. In this article, I aim to present part of the research that discusses the work done by AMPARAR and its role in the activism against human rights violations in prisons.

The name of the association, AMPARAR, is a verb in Portuguese (*amparar*) that means to protect, to offer support or refuge. The work of the association mostly involves *welcoming* and *supporting prisoners' families*. The *welcoming* is materialised through listening and providing orientations regarding several issues, such as how to apply for a prison visit, or how to get legal advice from the *Defensoria Pública* [Public Defender Service Offices]. The ability to *support prisoners' families* through *welcoming* them is emphasised by AMPARAR's founders as its unique contribution among the myriad of organisations working in the prison field. Moreover, the fact that *prisoners' families* are persons directly affected by the prison is part of AMPARAR's contribution in the networks of movements within which the association is located.

Therefore, I discuss AMPARAR's host of activities in the light of two main topics: first, the association's relation with different institutions framed as part of the *state*; and second, AMPARAR's work on the political coordination of *prisoners' families*. These two aspects will be analysed within the ethnographic observation of a single event: a public hearing that discussed human rights violations inside a prison unit, in which there was expressive participation of the *prisoners' families*. The presence of prisoners' family members, activists, legal practitioners and political representatives allows the public hearing to function as a key event in which certain

1 The words, expressions, and phrases in italics are original terms voiced by the people I have spoken to in field research.

2 I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers who read and provided valuable comments for the development of the arguments I present in the article. I am also grateful for the generous reading of Isadora Lins França.

3 The research was developed under the supervision of Júlio Simões at the University of São Paulo (USP) and was financed through a scholarship granted by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), Brazil.

4 The *vexatious body search* (called an *intimate body search* by the prison administration) consists in checking the bodies of people that enter the penitentiary establishments and occurs based on the argument that they may be hiding illegal/banned objects (like mobile phones and drugs). This strip cavity search requires that people remove their clothes and have their genitals, buttocks, anus, undergarments and breasts (in the case of women) inspected. It may also include squats combined with some physical effort (e.g., coughing). Moreover, a part of the search includes going through a metal detector that indicates whether the naked body of the visitor is suspected of carrying anything. The controversy over the *intimate/vexatious body search* that has recently developed in Brazil, specifically in São Paulo, involves governments, national and international human rights organisations and agents from the justice system.

types of violence are categorised, where the ideas of ‘torture’ and ‘humiliation’ act as limits. I argue that the activists, by evoking languages permeated by gender and sexuality, on numerous occasions throughout their *testimony*, give meaning to the violence that is experienced by themselves and by their loved ones in prison, multiplying their voices beyond the walls of the institution.

Before we arrive at the daily life of AMPARAR and the aforementioned public hearing, a brief presentation of the theoretical-methodological references supporting this work is required.

## Theoretical-methodological frameworks

Prisons are the subject of my research particularly considering the permeability and flux of people, goods and information inside and outside of their walls. From a wider perspective, I assume the stance that gender is central to understanding these movements and that the regulations at play between the prison administration, inmates, and their family members. I contribute to this discussion in particular by broaching the ways in which the *inside* and *outside* of prison are created not only within prison walls, but also in ‘outside’ relationships, in other words, by the relatives, mostly women, who maintain family or affective bonds with persons behind bars.

I take the view that the prison goes beyond its physical-institutional spaces and is also present in the neighbourhoods where it is part of the formation and rearrangement of relational bonds and trajectories. Many other works within the field approach prisons through their permeabilities. These pieces of research may not have a single framework, but their different contributions point towards some shared perspectives, as seen in Cunha (2003; 2002), Godoi (2015; 2016; 2017), Mallart (2014; 2019), and Padovani (2015; 2017; 2018). The incarceration of a family member implies not only the absence of this relative, but also the presence of prison, which restructures relationships and pervades everyday dynamics, as observed in the works of Comfort (2008) and Ricordeau (2012). Thus, I understand the prison as a wide field that comprises the physical limits of the institution, but also involves the negotiations that happen around it. The transit of people through the institutional walls, family arrangements to carry out visits, preparations for long journeys to the towns where prisons are located, activism produced by the recognition of the individual as a ‘prisoner’s relative’, agreements and disagreements between relatives that end up involving those deprived of their freedom and vice-versa.

The broad theoretical-methodological approach that sustains the research encompasses the relationships between the inside and outside of prison from the perspective of gender and family. I reiterate my understanding of gender in its relational dimension, in the production of femininities and masculinities and the regulations, humiliations and negotiations resulting thereof (Scott, 1986; Butler, 1990). Thus, the perspective that guides my work is marked by feminist theory and discussions concerning the production of categories of differentiation (Simões, França & Macedo, 2010), projecting difference as an analytical category (Brah, 1996). In other words, my perspective confers a central role to the production of differences, inequalities, and agency – as well as their limits – among women and men marked by imprisonment. These differences, produced in certain social and historical contexts, are perceived in terms of gender, sexuality, race, class, and generation<sup>5</sup>. In the approach I propose, not only are gender and sexuality languages that cross the relationships between women and men among each other, but also in relation to the prison institution. I argue that in this movement, both gender and sexuality, as well as the prison institution itself, are mutually produced<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> I acknowledge that these categories of differentiation are mutually constituted, hence it is not possible that their productions occur separately from each other (McClintock, 1995). The article’s focus on the dimensions of gender and sexuality, therefore, does not disregard this reciprocal constitution, rather it is the analytical approach that is possible for this specific work.

<sup>6</sup> Some researchers explore the mutual production between prison and gender through the prism of sexuality, gender identity, and LGBT people in prison. See: Sander (2016) and Zamboni (2017; 2020).

My interest concerns that which is produced around the prison, in its surroundings and by way of it, and involves not only those who are imprisoned, but also those who circulate through the institution as visitors – the *relatives*. This means that, as movements take place around the prison, the prison itself is constituted: the forms of agency of the ‘prisoners’ wives’, of the ‘prisoners’ mothers’ face numerous regulations produced in different spheres: i) the prison institution – through the *Secretaria de Administração Penitenciária* (SAP) [Secretariat of Prison Administration], the unit directorates, the receptions and employees’ shifts; ii) disseminated guidelines attributed to the *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (PCC) [First Command of the Capital]; and iii) regulations produced by the women themselves in dialogue and in tension with the two previous components, the prison institution and the PCC, disseminated through conversations, gossip, rumours, and observation of their own conduct and that of others.

These forms of agency and regulations operate on the basis of gender conventions that bring about ways of being a *prisoner’s wife*, of being a *prisoner’s mother*, of being part of a *relatives’ movement*. It is important to note that these women present themselves and are presented in relation to their prisoners at all times. How do these women handle these regulations and how do they mark them subjectively? What regulations go beyond the limits of the acceptable and are regarded by them as *humiliation*?

The varying forms of humiliation and regulation that involve women’s visits to prisons, as well as their behaviour on the outside, strongly indicate the permeability of being *inside* and *outside* prison and that prison does in fact expand beyond its physical boundaries. These same regulations show that the penitentiary institution makes itself present by establishing procedures and submitting bodies to intervention, as a way of reinforcing that ‘the systems of punishment are to be situated in a certain “political economy” of the body.’<sup>8</sup> (Foucault 2012 [1975]) – in spite of the possible transits and permeabilities.

It is worth mentioning that my research and thus my data are produced from an ethnographic perspective. The research focuses on fieldwork, constructed from my participant observation, following the paths of women through prisons as *prisoners’ family members*, and listening to their narratives. I understand that the ethnographic practice is plural. In this sense, it involves listening and talking to ‘valued informants’ that share with the anthropologist ‘a distanced, analytic, even ironic view of custom’ (Clifford, 1983). Strathern (1999) addresses the complex relationship between the fieldwork and writing within the ethnographic practice. They both meet, but do not encompass one another. Thus, writing is not a secondary activity, it is one of the two fields that shape ethnography. Describing a scene, transposing a given situation into text are part of the anthropologist’s theoretical creation. The data presented in this article was produced based on conversations and shared analysis between me and the women who I have encountered. I also took the observations produced by those women into consideration, especially in regards to their struggles in and out of prisons.

Once this reflection on conducting prison-related research from outside of their walls was established, I describe part of my work at the aforementioned organisation AMPARAR. In the case of AMPARAR, the connections between prison, gender, and activism are revealed in the association’s pathways and in the activities of Railda Alves, one of its key members<sup>9</sup>.

7 The PCC emerged as a collective of prisoners in the male prisons of the state of São Paulo. The *Comando* dictates procedures in the majority of state prisons, of both women and men, and in marginalised neighbourhoods – this means that rules of coexistence/ethics among *thieves* operate inside and outside prisons, and also involve non-members of the ‘world of crime’. A series of studies have set out to discuss the PCC, its ways of operating inside and outside of prisons and its expansion beyond São Paulo and Brazil; I emphasize Biondi (2014, 2016) and Feltran (2018).

8 Translator’s note: this is a citation from the English translation of Foucault’s work by Alan Sheridan: FOUCAULT, Michel. 2012. *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison*. New York: Doubleday. pp. 25.

9 Pseudonyms are not used to refer to the members of the AMPARAR association. Their trajectories are public and well known, and changing their names would erase the impact they seek to build. The names of the *relatives* that participate in the activities organised by the association, however, have been changed to protect their identities.

## Reports of a struggle within/against the state

The engagement of Railda Alves with activism surrounding prisons took place at the end of the 1990's, when her son was arrested and sent to the FEBEM<sup>10</sup>. She defines this period as permeated by a great deal of *humiliation*, but also as a moment of intense political formation in denouncing the *torture* against her son and the sons of other *mothers*. As their children grew up, they left FEBEM and were apprehended by the criminal justice system. In 2004, Railda and other *mothers* began to organise themselves through AMPARAR, supporting the *relatives* of those imprisoned by both the socio-educational system (for adolescents) and adult prison units<sup>11</sup>. One of these *mothers* is Miriam Duarte, a co-founder of AMPARAR. Politically, in the long term, the association fights for the end of prisons – a perspective in line with that defined as ‘penal abolitionism’ (Ricordeau, 2018). Although AMPARAR is open to family members as a whole, the greater involvement of mothers of prisoners in the association’s daily life is notable. The association’s public actions and activities, in contrast, count on the presence of inmates’ mothers and wives.

Railda is 55 years old and considers herself to be a black woman. Since the founding of AMPARAR, Railda has been dedicated to prison issues and to her relationship with *relatives* by offering support, listening to, and forwarding requests from prisoners’ family members. Her path in the struggle against prisons goes beyond the personal suffering revealed by her son’s imprisonment. In other words, Railda has continued to dedicate herself fully to AMPARAR’s work even after her son was no longer deprived of his freedom<sup>12</sup>.

Railda’s work within AMPARAR involves: a) circulation throughout the neighbourhood, the city and institutions; b) accompanying *relatives* in court to check and verify its legal proceedings; c) going to the Public Defender Service Offices to forward requests in lawsuits, participating in meetings, and making pleas; d) following and taking part in debates and seminars; and e) visiting *relatives* that live near the headquarters of AMPARAR. Negotiations with organisations at different levels in the field of *human rights* are necessary to go beyond supporting *mothers* and other *relatives* that seek help from these organisations, whether to forward lawsuits and plan strategic actions for each of them, or to move forward with charges regarding the violations of rights committed against inmates and their visitors.

Based on her research with ‘family members of victims of violence’ and inspired by the works of Veena Das (2007; 2004), Juliana Farias states that the passage of these families through organisations and institutions fuel their struggles against violence and demand strong emotional investment (Farias, 2014). Beyond that, pursuing the paths that lead to police departments, the Public Defender Service Offices, and non-governmental institutions is, for the author, ‘part of the everyday reconstruction of a state entrenched in practices, languages and places considered on the margins of the national state’ (Farias, 2014:15).

Within this approach, I locate AMPARAR’s work in an institutional web that includes non-governmental and public institutions that produce both a violating *state* and a *state* that is sought after to demand rights and guarantees. If the association’s narrative is critical of the prison, the guards and the police as part of a violating *state*, the state organisations, such as the Public Defender Service Offices, are part of the *state* from which compensation is sought and to which pressure is applied to respond to claims and charges.

<sup>10</sup> Acronym for the old *Fundação para o Bem-Estar do Menor* (FEBEM) [Foundation for the Well-Being of Minors], nowadays called Fundação CASA. In 2006, the many reports of torture and ill treatment of the teenagers detained at FEBEM culminated in a change in the institution’s name (but not necessarily in its practices).

<sup>11</sup> In Brazil, adolescents (12-18 years old) and adults respond to criminal charges in different spheres of justice and are deprived of their freedom in different institutions – which is not to say that the system intended for adolescents does not practice many of the violations of bodies and rights observed in adult prisons.

<sup>12</sup> Railda’s trajectory and her involvement with the prison theme are explored in another work. See: Lago, 2020.



Through their accounts, the *state* emerges as a producer of violations and as an organism where alternatives to these same violations are sought. This discussion is framed based on the contributions of researchers who regard the state as a process produced by and producing subjects (Abrams, 1988; Das, 2004; Vianna & Lowenkron, 2017; Aguião, 2018). The *state* here is a broad category that organises and directs the dialogue produced by Railda and by AMPARAR, following the logic that ‘the idea of state – far from being an immaterial element – should be considered in its embodiment, its moral qualifications, its capacity to shape, limit and produce desires and horizons of possibility’ (Vianna & Lowenkron 2017:18). Throughout AMPARAR’s and Railda’s movements and relations with the *state*, I seek to map the ‘intricate grid of overlapping and conflicting strategies, technologies, and discourses of power’ that, rather than a ‘linear argument’, conforms to a ‘feminist theory of the state’ (Brown, 2006:193).

The association’s position accuses prisons, guards and the police as parts of a violating *state*, which is also supported by Railda’s many accounts of members of the police corps acting violently inside a FEBEM unit, for instance. On the other hand, *state* organisations, such as the Public Defender Service Offices are part of a *state* that demands vindication and pressures for change and denunciations. Railda’s discourses on the *state* indicate ‘the ways in which subjects, their experiences and relationships act in the processes of state production and, conversely, how these processes participate in the constitution of these subjects and, consequently, in their experiences and relationships’ (Efreim Filho, 2017:9). Railda’s discussion of the *state*, this category that encompasses violations and provides possibilities for mobilisation, has the effect of the activists’ own production and of their actions in dialogue and in conflict with state institutions.

The emergence of Railda and other women as activists occurs through the role they occupy as *mothers* – a position respected because it is imbued with a moral imperative. The *mothers* are the ones who bear the *suffering* of their children and who literally stand in the way of the police when they invade a FEBEM unit in the case of a rebellion. Mothers are even allowed the right to be *hard core*, to *rebel*, on behalf of their children. Being a mother opens doors in the activist context. At the same time, being a mother can cause discomfort when the moral conventions about the term diminish their strength or capacity to rebel<sup>13</sup>.

As mentioned above, part of the association’s work consists in forwarding cases to the Public Defender Service Offices. The defenders, especially those who belong to the *Núcleo Especializado de Situação Carcerária* (NESC) [Centre Specialised in the Prison Setting] are called on by Railda to obtain information on the status of lawsuits, the possibilities of sentence progression, the result of investigations within the prison system, among other issues. It is worth noting, then, that under its current management, NESC is therefore a critical partner for AMPARAR in the provision of information on the cases that are under the association’s radar<sup>14</sup>.

Partnerships are not limited to NESC though. Together with NESC and other institutions, like *Pastoral Carcerária*<sup>15</sup>, AMPARAR participates in negotiations, organises public events, and is invested in the construction of an agenda that aims for prison abolition. Together with these and other institutions, AMPARAR organised a *public hearing* in February 2018 that was heavily attended by *prisoners’ families*<sup>16</sup>.

13 The moral conventions on ‘mothers’, and their denunciation of ‘state violence’ are well analysed in several works, such as: Vianna & Farias, 2011; Leite, 2004. Farias, Lago & Efreim Filho (2020) published a general overview of research that focuses on the struggles for justice organised by ‘mothers’ of victims.

14 NESC has three public defenders, a social worker and a social scientist on its team. The position of the centre’s coordinator is valid for a period of two years, renewable for a further two. AMPARAR’s positive dialogue with the current NESC management therefore has a time frame; when the director of the centre changes, rebuilding dialogues and a shared agenda of action is required once again.

15 The *Pastoral Carcerária* (Prison Pastoral) is linked to the Catholic Church and acts in the prison sphere offering religious assistance to prisoners and intervening in the defence of prisoners’ rights. More information can be found in research that has some connection with the actions of *Pastoral Carcerária* (Lago, 2014; Godoi, 2015; Padovani, 2015) or on the organisation’s own website: <http://carceraria.org.br/>. (Accessed on Feb. 22, 2021).

16 The organisation of the hearing involved a few institutions: the *Núcleo Especializado de Situação Carcerária* (NESC) [Centre Specialised in the Prison Setting] of the Public Defender Service Offices of the State of São Paulo, the *Escola da Defensoria Pública* (EDEPE) [School of Public Defence], the *Ouvidoria da Defensoria Pública* [Public Defender Ombudsman], the *Instituto Terra, Trabalho e Cidadania* (ITTC) [Land, Work and Citizenship Institute], the *Instituto Brasileiro de Ciências Criminais* (IBCCrim) [Brazilian Institute of Criminal Sciences], *Conectas Direitos Humanos* [Conectas Human Rights] and AMPARAR.

I draw attention to this event as my main source for exploring the involvement of *relatives* in the prison debate, some of the existing tensions, and strategies in the creation of demands directed to the *state*.

## **GIR, torture, and relatives at the opening table of a public hearing**

São Paulo, late afternoon, February 2018. People, mainly women, fill the lobby adjacent to the assembly hall of the state Public Defender Service Offices, located in the city centre. Some men in suits circulate among the attendants, who are having some snacks from a selection on the table. I recognise a few faces among the hustle and bustle – lawyers and NGO employees conducting projects on prison, as well as members of the *Pastoral Carcerária* wearing the institution’s t-shirt. Many *relatives* arrive in groups, exiting vans and entering the building. A queue directs people to register for the event that is about to begin. I get in line and say my name and email to the young person that takes the registrations using a computer spreadsheet, and receive the materials handed to me – a paper folder with a leaflet about the Public Defender Service Offices and a notepad. I soon see Railda and Miriam, who wave at me. After greeting them, we talk about how the hearing is packed, a good surprise even for Railda, who had organised the *relatives’* attendance to the event. I go into the hall and find no more chairs are available. I go back to where Railda is and we go outside to smoke with a few of the *relatives* while the hearing is yet to start.

This public hearing had been organised to discuss the *Grupo de Intervenção Rápida* (GIR) [Rapid Intervention Group], a kind of ‘riot squad’ of prison officers that operates in São Paulo prisons. According to the state government, the group is responsible for acting in ‘critical situations like the subversion of order and discipline, riots and rebellions in prison units and provisional detention centres’<sup>17</sup>. The GIR has become a high priority issue for a public hearing due to accounts of beatings and other violations of rights related to the group and shared with NESC defenders at the first meeting between the new centre management and representatives of social movements<sup>18</sup>.

On the day of the hearing, the massive presence of *relatives* filled the main hall and required the preparation of an adjacent room, where a portion of the attendants followed the discussions on a big screen. The panel, part of which made the opening statements, consisted of two public defenders – one of them from NESC and the other from the region of Presidente Prudente<sup>19</sup> –, a priest from *Pastoral Carcerária* and Railda, AMPARAR’s coordinator. The initial speech by the NESC defender mentioned the organisations that collaborated to make the hearing happen and paid special attention to AMPARAR, represented by Railda – ‘you are an example of strength’, said the defender.

Having introduced the theme of the event, the defender pointed out that the activities carried out by the GIR are based on a resolution from the SAP which ‘does not have constitutional validity’<sup>20</sup>. He also highlighted the need to ‘discuss the group’s actions to trace paths’ that can lead to overcoming them. The agenda of the hearing, therefore, was explicit: to collect episodes of violations perpetrated by the GIR and come up with strategies to propel the charges forward, while considering the apparent unconstitutionality of the resolution that forms the basis for the creation of the GIR in the first place.

The second public defender on the panel presented a report with information on the GIR’s actions and concluded in his speech that ‘the GIR does not torture alone... that is if we conclude that it does indeed torture’, when he was interrupted by the audience’s intervention, shouting ‘ELE TORTURA! ELE TORTURA!’

<sup>17</sup> Extract from the report about the GIR produced and published by the state of São Paulo news portal. Available at <<http://www.saopaulo.sp.gov.br/spnoticias/sistema-prisional-tem-tropa-de-elite-para-atuar-nas-penitenciaras/>>. Access on 02/04/2021.

<sup>18</sup> Rafael Godoi (2016) highlights the GIR ‘riot squad’ and their truculence as an explicit manifestation of institutional violence within the prison system.

<sup>19</sup> Presidente Prudente is a municipality in the State of São Paulo situated in a region that concentrates a significant number of prisons.

<sup>20</sup> The resolution in question is Resolução SAP-155, from 2009.

[THEY TORTURE! THEY TORTURE!]. Once the buzz died down, he continued by saying that ‘other institutions, that conceal themselves, also torture’.

The defender’s argument, brought up at other times throughout his speech, held that the violations perpetrated by the GIR are only made possible because other institutions hide when faced with accusations—the judiciary and the *Ministério Público* [Federal Public Prosecution Service], for example. The dynamic of the GIR’s actions, therefore, is a result of the combination of the actions of some and the omissions of others. However, the form of relativisation used in the defender’s comment, that credited the discussion of the hearing with the ability to decide whether the GIR was guilty of torture or not, produced an immediate and heated response from the women in attendance. Interventions by the audience with commentary, videos, and other types of participation began there and continued throughout the remainder of the hearing.

The same defender exhibited a news report with a recording of an intervention by the GIR<sup>21</sup>. While the video showed the prison’s ‘riot squad’ throwing ‘stun grenades’ that provoked a fire inside a closed cell and hitting wounded men that escaped the cell with batons, the women yelled ‘look at what the state does, people!’, ‘they treat prisoners like animals!’, ‘these are the prisoners that are going to be returned to society!’ Another said that things ‘are worse now’. One of the attendants left the room at the end of the viewing in tears, comforted by another woman.

Both the torture mentioned by the women at the hearing and the possible relativisation of the torture by the public defender are not obvious categories. The public defender attributed the public hearing with the ability to produce evidence of *torture*, either through videos or through the *testimonies* of the participants, or through the recognition of the omission of public institutions that should oversee the violations that occurred in prisons. The women present at the hearing mobilised the same materials and equated them with the conditions of the prisons, extending the idea of torture to the entire institution that ‘treats prisoners like animals’. The existence of torture did not seem to be up for debate from the viewpoint of the *women relatives*. What was at stake was the very meaning of the term, and even the definition of the tortured subjects – after all, are the women not also tortured in their processes of entering and leaving prisons?<sup>22</sup> The definition of torture is a key through which women can also understand themselves as *victims*. In this movement, they become subjects of rights.

After the news report was shown, the priest from the *Pastoral Carcerária* that was also on the panel shares with the audience the experience of shadowing the GIR’s activities in the prisons in his region of the state. The region’s *Conselho da Comunidade*<sup>23</sup> [Community Counsel] was granted the right to be previously notified about the GIR’s interventions and be present whenever they happened. According to the priest, *physical torture* does not happen due to their presence, but the presence of the *Conselho da Comunidade* does not stop the GIR members from practicing *psychological torture*, mentioning, in this last category, shooting at already dominated inmates with rubber bullets, and threatening inmates with dogs. Even though the incursions of the GIR accompanied by the *Conselho da Comunidade* prevent physical torture, the priest argued that ‘we can’t be the GIR’s babysitter. It’s not our role. The [group’s] attitude has to change’.

When commenting on the examples of the GIR’s *attitudes* that need to change, the speech was interrupted by two women. The first adds ‘that we bought! With our money!’ following a comment by the priest that the inmates’ belongings are thrown away (and often destroyed) by the members of the GIR.

21 The scenes shown in the 2014 report were recorded by the GIR itself in 2008. The video is available at: <<https://tvuol.uol.com.br/video/video-flagra-a-gentes-penitenciarios-espancando-detentos-em-sp-04024C99316AD4915326>>. Accessed on Feb. 4, 2021. (WARNING: This video contains scenes that some viewers may find disturbing).

22 I remind the reader that visitors have their bodies searched as a criterion for entering a prison - which frequently involves stripping.

23 The *Conselho da Comunidade* is a provision in the Brazilian *Lei de Execução Penal* [Law on Penal Enforcement] (Brasil, 1984) and should ‘represent society’ in the surveillance of the prison system. Their members (who run for the position and whose candidacy is subject to the approval of the other members) have the prerogative of visiting the prison units within the counsel’s region.

The second to interrupt asks: ‘Can I say something to the priest? The GIR *lives* in the prison [that she visits]. We go in *escorted* by the GIR. 12-gauge shotgun pointed at children’ (emphasis in original).

The women’s speeches following the priest’s intervention do not seem to fit in the categorisation of condemnable actions by the GIR, as *physical torture* and *psychological torture*, although both the priest and the two relatives probably agree that none of the GIR’s practices are acceptable. The women seem to want to make a point that seemingly everyday situations are part of the violent relationship that the GIR establishes not only with the inmates, but also with their *relatives*. Throwing away and destroying belongings in an operation does not just affect the imprisoned person, but the person who bought those belongings with their money; going into a prison *escorted* by the GIR and facing this presence round the clock in a unit is part of the *humiliation* constantly mentioned by the women that circulate in the prison units as *visitors*.

The last speech from the panel was Railda Alves’s from AMPARAR. The defender that mediated the proceedings said her name and that she ‘requires no introduction. Over a decade fighting’. After her non-introduction, Railda started her intervention by saying ‘we have to unite to face this state’ and thanked ‘every one of the women present’. She acknowledged some of the different cities from which relatives had travelled for the hearing, and the women added, from the audience, places Railda had not mentioned that were also represented there.

Railda’s speech was brief and remarked on the impossibility of humanising prisons, the absence of the rich and the presence of the ‘black, poor and marginalised’ in prisons, as well as the importance of looking at topics like the ‘LGBT issue’ in prisons. Railda also remembered episodes from the time when she herself and Miriam Duarte, who was in the audience, faced the ‘riot squad’ of the then FEBEM when they first started the *relatives’* movement, in the 1990s.

As soon as all those on the panel had concluded their speeches, the councilman Eduardo Suplicy<sup>24</sup> who was watching in the audience asked if he could speak, and questioned whether the public hearing was also attended by the SAP or their representatives. When the response was negative – despite having been invited – he committed to sending a report of the public hearing to the SAP and to seek mechanisms for dialogue both with the secretary and the governor<sup>25</sup>.

In this item, we observed how different actors dispute the understanding and even the existence of violence in prisons in the public sphere, particularly that which can be denominated *torture*. In the next item, we see how *family members*, when managing their experiences through *testimonies*, place themselves at the centre of the dispute for rights in the face of *state violence*, asserting themselves in a legitimate place of claiming.

### ***Within the law: some testimonies by relatives***

Once the panels speeches and councilman’s interventions were over, the NESC defenders sat at the table to organise the next step of the hearing, comprised of *testimonies*: ‘Shall we move on to the testimonies?’

Many of the attendants volunteered to speak, which resulted in disputed slots – there were 22 – and constant debate between the public defenders on the ‘panel’ of the hearing and the women who had the microphone and exceeded their suggested two-minute time limit to speak. On a few occasions, the defenders requested an *aside* to share information they judged relevant – and these *asides* were not constrained by the two-minute rule.

<sup>24</sup> Eduardo Suplicy is a well-known politician in Brazil affiliated with the PT, or Workers’ Party. He was a senator for 14 years before losing an election to the Senate and was later elected a representative for São Paulo City Council, a position he currently holds.

<sup>25</sup> It is worth mentioning that the night before, the councilman’s office organised another public hearing to discuss another issue pertaining to the prison world: the situation of female inmates.

Events like those of a public hearing in the shaping of complaints and in the production of ‘victims’ of (state) violence are discussed in other contributions. The works of Myriam Jimeno (2010) and Virginia Vecchioli (2018) articulate political mobilisation through public acts in the production of ‘victims’ of situations of violence that occurred in Colombian and Argentinean contexts, respectively. Even the dynamic of panel speeches, testimonies, and asides does not seem by chance nor exclusive to this public hearing specifically. Gwenola Ricordeau (2018) also discusses the role of family testimonies in an article on the involvement of prisoners’ relatives in abolitionist movements. The author states that relatives usually have their participation framed either as ‘witnesses’ of what they see in prison, or as ‘messengers’ of prisoners. Although respected from these relational speaking places, their own experiences and analyses are often not the centre of their participation in movements. In the context of the public hearing, the public defenders’ speeches, riddled with objectivity and technicality, seem to justify the interruptions of the relatives’ speeches. The information, at the end of the day, is of interest to the participants who share their stories in that space.

At the same time, the idea of the *testimony* is fundamental to humanise the person whose rights have been violated and which is the very reason for the existence of a demand. The testimony acts as one of the inherent mechanisms to the constitution of victimhood in the vindication of rights that mark contemporary politics, with trauma as a moral landscape, along with other mechanisms involving evidence and reparations, as proposed by Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman (2009). Thinking in line with the authors, it can be said that the victim’s place says less about a ‘person’s truth’ and more about agency, particularly in situations that involve the creation of empathy and access to rights. These contexts and their mechanisms mainly inform about the place of ‘victims’ in the moral economies of our time (Fassin & Rechtman, 2009:279). The testimonies put a human face and body to the mechanisms mobilised not only by the public defenders, but also by organisations for the protection of rights, which would be diminished without the presence of the women to share their stories<sup>26</sup>.

The *testimonies* of relatives who were at the public hearing describe situations that are extremely relational. I present, as follows, four blocks of family speeches that took place during the hearing and that express the *relatives’* own paths and obstacles around prisons, and also describe situations that happened to those imprisoned.

I never thought I’d be in this situation. | Before, we’d take our clothes off and be inside at 10 o’clock. Nowadays there’s a machine and we only get inside at 14:30. | Why aren’t prison documents made in an easier way? Why do we have to wait in line? Well, they say nothing ever happened. Nothing ever happened *before*. But now *we aren’t making a fuss, we’re going by the law*. | We’re convinced we need to lead a *movement within the law*. | We’ve made claims in many places. The Ministério Público, Brasília, CONDEPE, CNJ<sup>27</sup>. We’ve approached all the right institutions. *Soon Carmen Lúcia will see this and they’ll get involved*. Mark my words. | I’ve been to Brasília, I’ve talked to Erika Kokay, to Carmen Lúcia’s advisor and I only hear one thing: *the families united to win!* | This Pact of San José, Costa Rica... took us to the custody audience that lasted three minutes, I was there. Nobody was set free. The decision was made. Carmen Lúcia has already said that [drug trafficking] isn’t a heinous crime, but it’s no use. | I want to ask all of you, Eduardo Suplicy... *who are bigger than us*, to save us. The GIR poked the inmates’ anus with the baton. That’s a *humiliation*. | *The GIR are a bunch of cowards. COWARDS!* They are masked men who aren’t brave enough to show their faces.  
My husband called me last night in tears.

(Extracts from speeches by the hearing’s attendants. Emphasis added)

<sup>26</sup> A moment parallel to that explored by França in her discussion on the creation of the category ‘LGBTI refugee’ (França, 2017).

<sup>27</sup> The *Ministério Público* is the name of the Brazilian Federal Public Prosecution Service. CONDEPE is the acronym for the *Conselho Estadual de Defesa dos Direitos da Pessoa Humana* [State Council for the Defence of Human Rights] of São Paulo, formed by representatives of the state government and civil society. CNJ is the acronym for the *Conselho Nacional de Justiça* [National Council of Justice], formed by representatives from different spheres of the judiciary.

In the *testimonies*, the women are the narrators of episodes that happen to them upon entry and exit to the prisons, but not only that; they also share episodes that happen to their colleagues during visitations, to their husbands and children, they report their manoeuvres and resistance strategies and share information that should not have been shared at a public hearing.

The first block of speeches shows us the scale of the work it takes to follow a family member denied freedom: the bewilderment in finding yourself in the prison context (*I never thought I'd be in this situation*); the dimension of the time spent, waiting to enter a prison unit, with or without the *intimate/vexatious* body search, and the waiting time even to obtain documents that allow entry to a prison unit<sup>28</sup>.

The second block of speeches mentions displacement, conversations, and aspirations that involve the struggle of the relatives for their inmates. The displacement involves trips to Brasília, Brazil's capital, but it is not exclusively geographical. There is a displacement in the strategy revealed in the *movement within the law* in contrast to the *fuss*. This change indicates that the women who spoke there had been making claims within formal frameworks: in the justice system, in many instances, and in initiatives with politicians, all mentioned by their speeches. Their presence at the public hearing and the speeches celebrating the *union of the families* to keep the struggle alive are also part of this strategic displacement. In this context, the name of the former president of the Brazilian Supreme Court, Justice Carmen Lúcia, was recurring: she was cited as someone with whom a dialogue was sought, and whose intervention could change the correlation of forces in favour of the *relatives*. Eduardo Suplicy, a well-known politician, also appears in the speeches as someone *bigger* than the relatives, capable of saving them – despite the fact that they themselves are struggling.

At the same time, activating mechanisms *by the law* does not prevent questioning and suspicion of those same laws. The Pact of San José<sup>29</sup> and the custody audiences are placed under scrutiny since their effects do not avoid imprisonment considered unjust by the *relatives*.

The final block of speeches concerns situations told to the women by their husbands and sons highlighting the *humiliation* imposed by GIR members against the inmates. This *humiliation* is marked by gender and sexuality prescriptions that involve the violent interaction that the members of the GIR enforce. In denouncing the violation and *humiliation* suffered by their men, the women also question the *courage* of the *masked men* who form part of the squad, in a tug of war that challenges what it is to be a man based on gender and sexuality codes common to the *relatives*. As they questioned the masculinity of GIR men, they reinforced their own femininity: the strength of women who had the courage to follow through with complaints about the group.

There is one last phrase that seems trivial, but which caused a certain discomfort in the context of the public hearing. *My husband called me in tears yesterday*. As soon as the woman speaking mentioned that her husband called, the room fell silent. She noticed the tension and used a short pause to reorganise her speech. She proceeded with information about the (awful) conditions of the prison's health service where her husband serves his sentence. With her participation over, she went back to her seat in the audience and spoke to the colleagues around her. She justified herself by saying the phrase *slipped out*.

The existence of mobile phones in Brazilian prisons is well-known, and used as justification for the search procedures practiced on visitors and for the GIR's incursions themselves, the very theme of the public hearing. The tension surrounding the *relative's* speech is not related to what was said, but where it was said.

<sup>28</sup> Rafael Godoi (2015) explores the dimension of time involved in carrying out a visit, and of how the lines for entry in the prison begin in the hometown of the person who travels hundreds of kilometres to meet an incarcerated family member.

<sup>29</sup> The pact mentioned is the "American Convention on Human Rights," available at: [http://www.oas.org/dil/treaties\\_B-32\\_American\\_Convention\\_on\\_Human\\_Rights.htm](http://www.oas.org/dil/treaties_B-32_American_Convention_on_Human_Rights.htm). Accessed on June 28, 2020.

The context of a public hearing is that of the struggles *within the law*; in other words, of claims and demands made through legal mechanisms that in turn consider the presence of mobile phones in prisons illegal<sup>30</sup>. The separation between what can and cannot be said at these times is something these women are very weary of, even if some phrases slip out at certain times.

The *testimonies* recounted by the *relatives* throughout the hearing produce certain movements regarding their *fight* strategies. The narratives speak of situations imposed on those who visit and deal with prison from the outside, but also about situations experienced by incarcerated husbands and sons through a 'second hand' narrative brought to life by the women. In addition, the *fight strategy within the law* implicates in narrative displacements, interlocutions, and normative solutions to the violations identified by the *relatives*. Under these circumstances of dispute through *legal channels*, knowing what you can and cannot say is crucial.

## Final considerations

Throughout the text, I have sought to present a perspective on prisons in their connection with gender and activism through the work of an association organised by *prisoners' family members*. AMPARAR's work was mobilised in this writing from a specific event: a public hearing in which relatives sought to discuss violations of rights within a prison unit. My place in ethnographic observation, from outside the prisons and as a volunteer at AMPARAR, allowed me to explore the association's relationships with family members and AMPARAR's and Railda's activism, the latter was driven to become an activist due to her child's deprivation of freedom in the 1990s.

In a conversation the day after the public hearing, Railda tells me that she and the *relatives* share the opinion that the public hearing was a *success*. They felt they were able to say what they wanted, and that the public defenders present were committed to forwarding their claims against the GIR, as well as other violations identified and recounted by the *relatives* in their *testimonies*. Beyond the evaluation of the participants concerning the hearing, the event allowed for the witnessing of the *relatives'* movements, their processes for the production of demands, and some of the tensions involved in the relationships among the relatives themselves and with human rights defence organisations.

Both *suffering* and *humiliation* act as elements for agency (Mahmood, 2001) among these women, that is, they are part of their experiences with the prison institution, present in the daily negotiations around prisons and are activated in the production of narratives about themselves and their relationships. In the case of the *mothers* of AMPARAR, prison is the central point of the narratives of *suffering*, not because it introduces suffering into their lives, but because it brings about the possibility of creating trajectories in activism, allows for transits and dialogues with prisoner's relatives and with movements, and is part of the development of battles against the state. In Railda's narrative on the disputes and dialogues, we see the emergence of the *state* as a category, an interlocutor, and an opponent, which is composed by the relationship with Railda's activism. These women's activist paths are framed by prison and enhance their struggles, but also limit them to the trope of mothers and to the narrative form of the *testimony*.

The relational nature of the role played by these women is inscribed in a gendered language. After all, at the public hearing they were *relatives* (of inmates): people who are not incarcerated, but who deal with the prison institution and move through it and its devices. The waiting in line, the entry and exit procedures, and the emission of documents are prisons' daily routines that collaborate to construct, among these women, the sense of suffering and humiliation they mobilise in their *testimonies*. Their struggle against perpetrated violations demand that they ponder on what can and cannot be said in the different contexts they take part in.

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<sup>30</sup> In her thesis, Bruna Bumachar (2016) works with the use of technology (including mobile phones) in the maintenance of bonds between foreign inmates and their families.

The profusion of institutions at the hearing comprises the *state*, which is simultaneously the accused and the recipient of the stories shared in that space. AMPARAR and the *relatives* represented by the association, and who are taking action *within the law*, put a name and a body to their claims and identify violence and *humiliations* perpetrated not only against their bodies, but against their husbands' and sons', who have been deprived of their freedoms. Here, gender and sexuality are languages that enable this identification and that contribute to the creation of a role for these women as mediators and narrators of events that happen inside the prisons.

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# Expose and protect: reflections on experimental scientific practices based on a case study

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## Abstract

Based on ethnographic research, the article reflects on experimental surgical practices related to the development of ventricular assist devices (the so-called ‘artificial heart’). Focusing on the relationships between *animal models* and the numerous professionals involved in the experiment, the hypothesis of this article pinpoints the unavoidable game of exposing and protecting all the agents who establish relationships therein, as a condition for understanding and innovating on legitimate grounds. This game, ethnographically followed step by step, meets both scientific and ethical imperatives. The reflection leads us to consider, among other things, the sensitive, decisive character of otherness regarding experimental animals in the course of the experiments. According to the aforementioned hypothesis, this is when notions of *participation* and *disparticipation* in the game of otherness with these *animal models* seem to clarify the economy, simultaneously affective and intelligible, put into practice in the relationships performed therein.

**Key words:** Social studies of science; Laboratory ethnography; Ethics and knowledge in innovation; Animal models and experimentation; *Participatory* and *disparticipatory* otherness.

# Expor e proteger: reflexões sobre práticas científicas experimentais a partir de um estudo de caso

## Resumo

Baseado em etnografia, o artigo reflete sobre práticas cirúrgicas experimentais que envolvem a produção de Dispositivo de Assistência Ventricular (o chamado “coração artificial”). Com foco nas relações entre *modelos animais* e os diversos profissionais implicados no experimento, a hipótese do artigo aponta para o incontornável jogo entre expor e proteger todos os agentes ali relacionados, tal como condição para se conhecer e inovar em bases legítimas. Esse jogo, acompanhado no passo a passo etnográfico, atende assim a imperativos tão científicos quanto éticos. A reflexão leva a considerar, entre outras coisas, o caráter sensível e decisivo da alteridade com cobaias no curso dos experimentos. É quando noções de *participação* e *desparticipação* no jogo de alteridade com esses *modelos animais*, conforme a hipótese referida, parecem bem esclarecer a economia, a um só tempo afetiva e inteligível, posta em prática nas relações ali ensaiadas.

**Palavras-chaves:** Antropologia da ciência e da tecnociência; Etnografia de laboratório; Ética e conhecimento em inovação; Experimentação animal; Alteridade *participativa* e *desparticipativa*.

# Expose and protect: reflections on experimental scientific practices based on a case study

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## Expose

The time had come for the long-awaited scene. It was another acute *in vivo test*<sup>1</sup> on an experimental animal to implant a ventricular assist device (VAD) – better known in the *lato sensu* as an artificial heart<sup>2</sup>. The atmosphere combined tension and excitement in the operating room, where the highly experimental event was to be dramatised once again. It is 2016 and the event brings together a multidisciplinary team from an important cardiology centre in São Paulo<sup>3</sup>. Among the cast, renowned surgeons, a perfusionist, an instrumentalist, a veterinarian, laboratory technicians, bioengineers, medicines, reagents and a whole paraphernalia of technological devices. In such dramas, there is no actor, human or non-human, organic or mechanical, analogue or digital, that is not exposed and tested in the experiment.

The profile of each of those exposed is shaped depending on the event in question<sup>4</sup>. As with all exposure, vulnerability surrounds the beings present and subject to testing, though clearly each of them is exposed to different risks. For example, in this setting, no one was sure what the role of an anthropologist might be, ordinarily associated with the study of culture, social relations, and humans, not with experimental activities in medicine and natural and technical sciences. After overcoming the initial difficulties of being accepted in the environment, where such a presence was not expected, the anthropologist was exposed as an object of curiosity. For the surgical team, perhaps she played the role of an audience, but within the ethnographic task, she was also exposed. This was the case, for example, when they attributed kinship between her and the ‘patient’ (experimental animal, *animal model*) therein exposed to experimentation<sup>5</sup>.

1 Acute surgical procedures are characterised as short-term experimental tests for the validation of medical technologies under development. For them to be transformed into products intended for human patients, the devices need to undergo stabilisation procedures. Unlike long-term tests, in acute procedures, animals must remain in the surgical field for six hours with the device installed. Once the evaluation has been completed, the animals are euthanised.

2 Here we refer to data collected within the scope of Marini’s doctoral research (2018) regarding the production and use of cardiac technologies generally known as artificial hearts. The ethnography was conducted together with a network of researchers, institutions and several devices. Circulatory assist devices are technologies developed to assist or replace the heart function of patients suffering from heart failure. Their development is justified by the existence of high rates of cardiovascular diseases that result in heart failure. In the advanced stage, when patients become refractory to relevant medications, they must undergo heart transplants. Faced with the high demand for replacement and the scarcity of available human organs, so-called artificial hearts emerge as temporary and definitive alternatives. However, these are experimental, controversial and unstable strategies, much like transplants.

3 The names of the interlocutors mentioned in this article – bioengineers, doctors, veterinarians, surgical and vivarium technicians, etc. –, together with the names of the institutions, have been changed or withheld to maintain confidentiality. Here too, protection is required.

4 We understand that the agents of any composition of the real, like the experiment described here, gain their effective figuration and functionality only in the event itself, not before it. Even then, it is necessary that the relationships tested in the experiment remain constant or stable, as we are pursuing here, so that, in turn, we can expect from the agents the reiteration of the actions that they demonstrated in the experimental scene. In terms of Latour (1999a), this concerns the transition of the agents in question from ‘performance’ to ‘competence’.

5 In another situation, there was a joke that seemed to bring human and non-human animals closer together. The lead surgeon arrived at the laboratory while the surgical field was being prepared. After dressing, he passed by the anthropologist, who was waiting outside the room, at the window through which it was possible to observe the movement that took place in the operating room. This was not the only observation position occupied, but in that situation, this was the angle chosen. Upon entering the room, and noticing this unknown, unrecognised presence (who was not dressed as if she were part of the surgical team), the surgeon asked if the anthropologist was a relative of the patient. The jocular tone revealed that pigs do not have relatives who are able to watch and worry about their procedure (*disparticipation*), on the other hand, it explained the proximity considered by the surgeon, who ought to operate on that animal ‘as if’ it was a patient (*participation*).

With the scenario prepared, the appearance of this actor was now awaited, no less of a protagonist in the scene, within whose exposed chest the purpose of the experiment would be conducted. It was the pig, who had come from the vivarium to the operating room, accompanied by a technician, the veterinarian's assistant. The *in vivo* tests that succeed the bench tests are crucial for all those involved in the experiment – from the chief surgeon to the pivot bearing on the VAD –, all aligned and exposed according to the device being tested, all represented therein by their specific functional roles, also at risk in each moment.

Prior to the intervention that would transform the pig into a new temporary entity constituted by the fusion between its heart and the artificial device, another series of preparations had been made to ensure, as much as possible or desirable, that the pig was able to implant the device. As with previous procedures, the preparation – which principally includes the establishment of the 'surgical field'<sup>6</sup> – consists of mimicking the surgical practice routinely performed on humans in the hospital's surgical centres, where this medical, bioengineering experimentation was now taking place. If all went well with the implantation of the device, the scene would extend for the six-hour follow-up period, at the end of which the pig would be sacrificed – technically speaking, it<sup>7</sup> would be submitted to 'passive euthanasia' – according to the protocol procedure established by the ethics committee that operates in the institution itself.

While the surgical field was being set up for the intervention on the pig, the mood quickly cooled down: unexpectedly, the pig destined for experimentation 'died during the thoracotomy'<sup>8</sup> – an interrupted procedure, with exclusion of the animal from the experiment, the test invalidated, no generation of expected data. All the preparation for the surgical intervention had been in vain: hair removal from the body regions that were to be operated on (to avoid infections), a procedure called trichotomy of the inguinal, cervical and thoracic regions; the insertion of introducers and catheters that enable communication between the inside and outside of the body through which the introduction of medications, measurements and collections takes place; intubation, which is the insertion of a tube into the trachea to assist in ventilating the animal throughout the procedure; and the application of mechanical ventilation, which is a form of artificial respiration designed to ensure the maintenance of gas exchange (since anaesthesia, muscle paralysis and subsequent replacement of cardiorespiratory functions make it impossible for the body to perform its normal ventilation). Finally, the team lost all the meticulous work of exposing the thorax as a means to access the animal's heart, whose half-open body has to remain alive for controlled communications between inside and outside – a division that is simultaneously reified and imploded by surgical interventions, when we consider that the metres of tubes spread across the room, enabling the blood to circulate through the space, distribute the body beyond the borders of the skin, reformulating the relevance and scale of what is inside and what is outside.

Surgical procedures are risky ventures. Cardiac surgeries, which are sub-specialties, are proven to be especially radical, dangerous, unstable, demanding a challenging specialisation, as highlighted by the surgeon who we witnessed in field research when performing paediatric surgeries, his area of expertise. He was emphatic in highlighting that the low demand for this surgical specialty in reference to the challenges: they are time-consuming surgeries in which errors are unacceptable, because they can be catastrophic. On the other hand, there are always new techniques emerging – which is why surgeons need to be constantly updating and improving. Like other procedures of medium or high complexity, cardiac surgeries carry the

6 For further explanation regarding the formation of the 'surgical field' and the debates on this, see Marini (2019). A brief description of this is also available below in the section 'Protect', together with the scope that we give to this prophylactic institution.

7 Authors' note on the translation: The English distinction between 'She or He' and 'It' contributes to our argument here. Thus, we have 'She or He' as *participation* and 'It' as *disparticipation*. The strategic alternation in the use of the pronoun can then be recognised, since far from being a mere detail or accident, it is affirmed as a device or resource, even when this is not conscious and intentional, to engender either continuities or discontinuities between beings that are present. Our argument is that this alternation proves to be crucial for the good of the procedures and of those involved in experiences like the one analysed in this article.

8 Thoracotomy is the incision to open the thoracic cavity, which in this case was for the VAD implantation experiment

risk of making the patient even more sick than they were before the intervention. Experimental surgeries, such as those performed on animals, which do not have the same infrastructure as surgical centres (despite the effort to reproduce the right conditions as closely as possible) are even more vulnerable to complications.

It is not uncommon for experimental animals to die during such experiments. Before this surgery, two other pigs had died ahead of schedule, with the DAV already implanted and working for a few hours, thus interrupting observations that were supposed to be more extensive. Less common, however, is what was now happening with this third pig submitted to surgery: he had ‘given up’ on living, as the vivarium technician informally put it in a formal environment. Or he had ‘surrendered himself’, as one of the bioengineers present said, even before interventions in the surgical field could be advanced. Upon rupture of its pericardium – the membrane that protects the heart – the pig surprisingly ‘went into sudden cardiac arrest’, as described in later reports<sup>9</sup>. The pericardium can be understood as the last physical boundary that separates the heart from its exterior. It is the membrane that remains after the skin, a layer of flesh and fat, and eventually the bones of the rib cage, are ruptured so that the heart is finally exposed and accessible to the eyes and hands of the surgeons, who can then manipulate the left ventricle, where the inlet cannula of the device is attached, as well as the aorta artery, where the outlet cannula goes, connected by anastomosis<sup>10</sup> like in other procedures.

The team of surgeons and the veterinarian responsible reported that the animal had suffered a sudden sickness, for no apparent reason. This is how the case was stated in the reports and, with this justification, a request was made to the ethics committee to include one more animal, since in this aborted experiment it was not even possible to implant the device, let alone observe the interaction between the device and the organ, which are the two main objectives of the experiment. In a previous trial, another pig had died unexpectedly, explained as a result of fibrillation, a type of cardiac arrhythmia characterised by rapid, irregular beating of the atria, which may have been caused by the presence of microbubbles of air in the coronary arteries, resulting from difficulty in fixing the device cannula to the guide ring fixed to the heart. Although the cannula fitting to the guide ring seemed firm, difficulty in attaching the device parts to the heart – given the type of fitting developed by the bioengineers<sup>11</sup> – may have caused it to come loose, causing the entry of gases into the circulatory system, which must remain sealed<sup>12</sup>. Technical objects, once exposed to composition with other agents with which they must work, are no less vulnerable. Evidently, this vulnerability begins to extend, as if through participation or contagion, to other agents or actors directly involved, such as the bioengineers who designed the socket.

Although it was not possible to follow the organ’s interaction with the device, the experiment was still considered valid, however, since on this occasion the artificial heart was implanted and the cause of death was attributed to complications in the procedure. Even though it was not possible to collect data regarding the pump in operation, since the animal died soon after implantation, when it was transferred from cardiopulmonary bypass and its circulatory functions were restarted, the trial ended early and abruptly, but it was not discarded. In the reports, the case was registered as ‘intercurrences when the animal came off ECC’ (extracorporeal circulation), at which point it was observed that the inlet cannula was loose in the guide ring.

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9 When presenting the results in her doctoral thesis, one of the bioengineers responsible for the experiment cited another study with an electromechanical artificial ventricle implanted in 26 calves, in which five deaths from sudden cardiac arrest were recorded. This data was presented to justify the similar percentage of sudden cardiac arrest in the two studies. In these comparisons, the success rate is recognised since it follows the indices produced in the reference contexts.

10 Anastomosis is a surgical procedure designed to establish a relationship that allows flow between two tubular or hollow structures.

11 A careful analysis of the difficulties of meeting the requirements of fitting was developed by Marini (2021). Considering the difficulties that led engineers to reformulate the structure of the device, this imposed itself, requiring a new form. Since this creation took place based on the flaw identified, we affirm the understanding that imagination is an aspect of technoscientific production that goes through an embodiment due to the material and concrete engagement with things, and is not merely a projective, ‘mental’ idealisation. In an experimental regime, this engagement refers to odds and risks that concern everyone in the composition of technical apparatus.

12 This condition is described as an embolism, which is the obstruction of a blood or lymphatic vessel due to the presence of abnormal and insoluble elements, formed by a broad diversity of elements, including gas bubbles.

Despite an attempt to reposition the cannula after the fixing the device in place a second time, the animal's organ 'went into fibrillation'. But given that, up to that point, the setbacks had not outweighed the successes, the legitimacy of the experiment was justified.

Breakdowns like those described are events that usually have the power to expose the elements or agents that have been submitted to some composition: their working black boxes are opened<sup>13</sup>, other possible compositions are insinuated; other adjustments, substitutions or new alignment routes in the machinery in question. Breakdowns expose and render agents and relationships visible that were previously invisible or opaque because they are so stable and habituated. This was the case therein: the cannula fitting was exposed as imperfect in the experiment and its figuration enabled it to gain these contours *in the event*. Moreover, this was the case even in relation to the breakdown of, say, the organic machinery of the animals that did not withstand the procedure, since it had been possible to formulate reasonable explanations related to premature deaths, but not in the case of the pig that died for no apparent reason – or none directly related to the experiment – resulting in a death in vain. Now, an exposure in vain can dangerously disseminate the lack of protection of those concerned in the experimental scene (animals, surgeons, engineers, veterinarians, institutions, techniques, prestige, etc.).

If the opinion of the bioengineer was discarded, according to whom the pig had 'surrendered himself', even more so was the opinion of the vivarium technician, according to whom the pig had 'given up' on the experiment by relinquishing its own life. However, for the technician, this opinion was based on an embodied experience with the pig, in their backstage interactions prior to the experiment itself, that of the cherished scene in the operating room. For him, the animal had already given up on the experiment, it was no longer performing satisfactorily in the preparatory stages in the vivarium. Now it was the technician who exposed himself to certain, veiled derision from the other professionals who saw themselves duly authorised to diagnose the official 'good reasons'<sup>14</sup> for that sudden intercurrent. Not being a surgeon or a veterinarian, the technician was responsible for nothing more than ensuring the material conditions, together with the animal under his guard and care, that contribute to the smooth running of the procedure. He did not possess specialised, legitimate knowledge to issue similar reports. However, his dismissed point of view, exposed in therein as mere opinion, was based on care devoted to the animal in the vivarium and the pig's lack of resistance when carried from the vivarium to the operating room. Along this path, the animals are already pre-anesthetised, a measure taken to reduce the level of stress, as determined by ethical parameters, and indeed useful to the experiment, since a less stressed animal responds better to the extremes imposed by these experimental surgical procedures.

From the vivarium to the operating room, the animals are carried on open carts, the same ones intended for transporting boxes and heavy objects, precisely because the experimental animals are already pre-anesthetised and, therefore, are unable to make this journey through their own effort. Once in the operating room, the animals are placed on a stretcher, which because it is higher than that of the cart, requires that they be lifted, and thus requires a certain strength from the auxiliary technicians who accompany them, sometimes with the assistance of the bioengineers and veterinarian, particularly when the models used weigh around 70 kg, like pigs. This was the case of the pig that 'gave up' or 'gave up on itself', since the one in the previous experiment, weighing 45 kg, arrived at the operating table under complaints from the surgeon, whose objection was based on the indication that the 'the aortic arch of the animal showed significantly reduced dimensions' (compared to the ideal average human). In response to this objection, the mass of the second animal selected was approximately 60 kg, a trend that was applied in the following procedures, with animals above 70 kg, like the pig that 'gave up' on the experiment.

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<sup>13</sup> On the productivity of breakdowns, see Latour (2014); on opening black boxes, Latour (1987).

<sup>14</sup> On naturalistic 'good' and 'bad reasons', see Pignarre (1997) and Marras (2002). Here, we argue that the validity of distinguishing the good reasons from the bad when understanding the placebo effect, the object of Pignarre's work, also applies to the case in question.



According to the technician, unlike the resistance that the animals usually present along this path, even when pre-anesthetised, involving bodily movements and agitation, the pig in question did not show the expected resistance, which in turn made it difficult for the technician to carry it, because by ‘giving up’ and transferring its weight fully to those who carried it, the animal’s body felt heavier than others with similar mass, like those they had handled in previous procedures. Its behaviour of ‘surrendering himself to’ to anaesthesia – of throwing all its weight, of not resisting the possible threats that awaited it<sup>15</sup> – was interpreted by the technician as a sign of its weakness, its unwillingness to engage in the procedure, which was reinforced by its unforeseen death, as if it had given up on the experiment and on life itself.

## Protect

It can be argued, as some of the bioengineers present did, that the technician’s interpretation of the animal giving up was unfounded from the viewpoint of science and naturalistic ‘good reasons’ (Pignarre, 1997), it was merely laic speculation (rebuked as fanciful or imaginative) expressed by an assistant who was less qualified in his academic career. However, the role of vivarium technicians and veterinary assistants, similar to that of nursing professionals, implies a *sui generis* experience that the function of the anthropologist exposed therein did not think should be neglected in her descriptions and analyses.

As a rule, the assistant and the veterinarian are the only professionals who encounter the animals before anaesthesia. In this case, the assistant technician was probably the only person who had been face to face with the pig that had given up on following through with the scene. It was this vivarium technician who held the animal’s limbs so that it would not react to the sting of the injection, who felt the weight of its body when carrying it to the stretcher, who tied its legs, as well as those of the other pigs that had participated in previous procedures. It is the technician’s role to be responsible for the care and protection of the animals placed in their keeping. Among other reciprocal attentions with the animals in their keeping, therefore, their knowledge includes the experience of touch, and that of one living being face to face with another, looking each other in the eye. Therein, an entire semiotics of the carnal takes place that evades those who do not live it each time, in each situation, facing the idiosyncrasies or differences of every human-animal relationship that is initiated. It was this experience that enabled the technician to recognise and announce a distinct disposition already evident in the body weight of that pig compared with other animals of the same or lower mass, but which seemed lighter. Here is what he read as indicative of the ‘giving up’ of that particular pig, his body surrendered<sup>16</sup>. Such a reading requires considering touch as both an interpretive and a physical resource.

Thus, where touch and the exchange of glances are developed (cf. Haraway, 2003 and 2008), where responsive attention to signs by awakened beings is cultivated, it is there that we note how a notion considered outdated, forgotten, or even estranged in anthropology, and in philosophy, begins to make sense: the notion of *participation*, which marked the thinking of French philosopher and sociologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl in his work at the onset of the twentieth century<sup>17</sup>. The ethnographic extract that we avail ourselves of here invites us to review the pertinence of relationships of continuity or *participation* between beings – as in the present

15 We emphasise that all ethical criteria were met for animal welfare, such as pre-anaesthesia, the function of which is to reduce stress. The fact that there is resistance and struggle on the part of the animals is in no way indicative of mistreatment. The same veterinarian, who also worked with companion or domestic animals, such as dogs and cats, reported that stress is also present in procedures performed in his private clinic, completely disconnected from his work with experimental research. A certain tension and resistance while the animals are awake is not unique to experimental practice. There is resistance even in surgeries that aim to cure diseases in domestic animals.

16 It is possible that the technician risked voicing his assessment only because he was among a committed collective that had failed to develop plausible, measurable scientific explanations. No measurements, biological or biomedical knowledge were found that might explain the event in that setting.

17 Regarding attempts to positively restore the notion of *participation*, particularly when considering continuities between beings and environments in the geohistorical epoch of the Anthropocene, see Marras (2019).

case, the relationship between the vivarium technician and the pig that ‘surrendered himself’<sup>18</sup>. We signalise the general definition of *participation* that Goldman (1994: 199), in his scrutiny of the work of Lévy-Bruhl, summarises as follows:

A network of connections, interpenetrations and dependencies of all beings and things in the universe with each other. Everything and everyone are immersed in a kind of universal consubstantiality, which causes each element to be mysteriously connected to all the others (...); synthesis is there *a priori* and the world, a kind of organism intersected with reciprocal connections.

This concerns the character of continuity, consubstantiality, contagion, intimate bond or participation of affections between heterogeneous beings or entities, thus considered as open to each other, presupposing and possessing each other reciprocally<sup>19</sup>. Thus, for the case under examination, we were witness to the pig in the human and the human in the pig. Since they are inscribed in the naturalistic tradition of the modern world, when asked, doctors, like those followed in this ethnography, will readily recognise the continuity between humans and animals through the theory on the evolution of species, through their more or less distant transformations into each other and from their origins. Otherwise, research on experimental animals (in this case, mammals) would be meaningless. Hence, these animals act as substitute *models* for humans – and, in our name, in the name of science and knowledge, they are sacrificed. As such, these successive sacrifices (more so those that occur in vain) are disturbing<sup>20</sup>. Thus, as much as this continuity is established on a purely biological plane, and that ‘human exceptionalism’ (Haraway 2008) operates among us, guaranteed by the official modernist division between nature and culture (Latour 1991), even the staunchest naturalist does not doubt the sentient nature of non-human animals – in general, the larger the mammal used as an experimental animal, the greater the perception of this fact. Even if the animal is emptied of any subjectivity or intentionality, there is no doubt regarding the pains and pleasures that it feels.

We observed, moreover, that agency in the most sentient, autonomous and rational of beings is both limited and suspended by anaesthesia<sup>21</sup>. However, a good surgical procedure depends on this, above all, more complex and acute procedures. At the very least, the establishment of the ‘surgical field’ is intended to purify and ensure unwanted participations (such as voluntarism, subjectivation, will) are controllable by means of a technical, chemical apparatus. Thus, what can be said concerning a body that gives up on itself? What can be said regarding the aforementioned giving up, prior to complete sedation? The point is that if intersubjectivity emerges between the beings present (and could be productive for the medical and scientific purposes in question), to the same extent, it is necessary to consider that intentionality becomes problematic

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18 Without doubt, we could also unfold the relationships of *participation* between, for example, bioengineers and technical objects, all subject to testing in the experiment. To ensure the brevity of this article, we focused, albeit exemplarily, on the relationships between the human and non-human animal in the scene described.

19 Here we use the notion of ‘reciprocal possession’ by Gabriel Tarde (1999 [1895]).

20 ‘We don’t kill, we sacrifice’, says the young researcher, leaning on the bench, who says he is already feeling ‘depressed’ by the routine of ‘using’ animal ‘models’ in his research on Marfan syndrome (cf. Marras, 2014, p. 248). ‘Sacrifice’, ‘use’ and ‘model’ are terms among many others that, in our view, form part of the task of trying to protect research and researchers who expose animals in experiments, as a requirement of producing scientific knowledge. In accordance with the argument of this article, these are terms that seek *disparticipation*, that is, to produce discontinuity between animals and humans in scientific experiments, particularly those that can inflict pain and death on ‘experimental animals’ (another term with a similar function). It should be noted that, within this scope of practices, language and mobilisation of the world’s resources always go together, they are interdependent.

21 There is a debate concerning the manner in which the cyborg relationships established with anaesthesia – which limits the capacity for human agency, while simultaneously redistributing it, in that the body and technologies are intimately intertwined – allow us to reconsider the traditional notion of agency, including the possibility of unintentional agency (Goodwin, 2008). To what extent is it possible to attribute agency to patients in a coma or undergoing an operation? In his proposal to redefine the concept of agency, Goodwin suggests that devices that allow us to measure vital signs/body signals become part of the agency of the entity composed of the organism and the technical apparatus. The patient’s physiological signals, therefore, are recognised through the mediation of signals and sounds emitted by the machine. It is worth asking, however, whether this is not a very mechanistic concept of human agency, as Slatman has (Marini, 2018b: 118).

and could become a factor in the pollution of the good practices in question, including the surgical practices mentioned above. Perhaps it can be said that the ever-pressing challenge therein is to convert intersubjectivity into interobjectivity.

To be affected by the pain that the animal might suffer, to sympathise with its injuries, like those caused in experimental animals during medical experiments, illustratively alludes to Rousseauian *pitié* (Marras, 2014). It takes great effort, an entire ritualistic technique of protection on the part of the medical team, which begins with their training, for these professionals learn to deal with the suffering of humans, including the need to protect their own sanity, but, naturally, also in relation to experimentation on non-human animals. We readily recognise that the reason for existence of animal ethics committees is almost solely based on compassion and participation, on this device that requires ‘humanisation’ of the death of experimental animals submitted to scientific experiments. The effort to humanise the treatment and death of these experimental animals attests to the fact of participatory continuity (also referred to as the Christian inspiration of compassion, sympathy, commiseration, condolence) perceived in this setting between humans and animals. It is therefore necessary for the person to protect themselves against what may appear to be ruthless, barbaric, and difficult to bear when handling animals in these extreme tests. In other words, the action of animal ethics committees has the effect of protecting both laboratory animals and humans, given this participatory continuity between them. The opposite of this care and attention appears as scientific, civilisational excrescence that must be avoided at all costs – like the constant recollection of Nazi experiments, which they intended to protect by identifying them as scientific, while in the same act failing to protect the sciences.

For the sake of argumentative precision, it is worth observing certain important differences in the relationship with animals, albeit briefly, especially to properly situate the problem of empathy. It is true that animals in vivariums are safeguarded by ethical regulation standardised by a committee invested with the proper authority, but their fate is unavoidable: sacrifice. While they are protected from ill-treatment, they are not protected from their certain, fatal outcome. The nature of this dynamic is of a very different type from that instituted, for example, in hunting, where the game of relationships is tested and risked with each undertaking. In this case, the disentanglement is not guaranteed. If, behind the scenes and on the stage of scientific experimentation, empathy manifests itself as a recognition of subjectivity (that can denounce an animistic inclination), it is necessary to consider that compassion does not operate as a projection of a moral ideal, but is expressed in terms of a technical, ritualistic pragmatics that requires concrete, material effort. By claiming a dark aspect of empathy in relationships with other animal species, Nils Bubandt and Rane Willerslev (2015) intend to suspend the notion of empathy as a moral virtue. Illuminating the relationship between empathy and deception is the idea behind the term they have suggested – ‘tactical empathy’ – which is related to a deceptive, predatory purpose. This concerns assuming the other’s point of view in order to deceive them. As the authors discuss, otherness, in the mimicry of the other, is reinforced and stressed in favour of the success of the activity of hunting. There is, therefore, a nexus between empathy, sociality and deception that reveals a certain management of otherness for venatorial purposes by the hunters. Empathic identification in these cases acts precisely to reinforce otherness, but for deceitful purposes<sup>22</sup>, and is ultimately destined towards capture and predation. Hence the claim to disassociate the empathic faculty from the moral economy implicit in the concept of empathy<sup>23</sup>.

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22 Here we remember the Deleuzian definition of animal in his *L'Abécédaire* (1988-89), which is also in line with the tactics of deception in the work of Bubandt and Willerslev: the animal, proposes the philosopher, is ‘un être fondamentalement aux aguets’ [a being fundamentally on the lookout].

23 Historically, the idea of empathy as a human virtue – which emerges in the midst of liberal theories – is constructed as anathema against violence, trickery and deceit. It is a virtuous antidote that promotes understanding, trust and compassion, the antithesis of deceit, aggression and conflict. As indicated, Bubandt and Willerslev (2015) argue against the prevalence of this tonic.

In the hunting situations examined by Bubandt and Willerslev, all beings are subject to the position of prey and predator. Predation in these contexts is a condition of existence, the game of capture involves seduction, and is not without risks and dangers. Empathic mimesis, such as human hunters imitating an elk, is precisely what contributes to making hunting effective, and it is crucial that the make-believe mechanisms are not exposed. In contrast, regarding the case that we examine here, it seems that we are facing engagements and problems of a very different nature. If empathy can denote a moral virtue, if compassion is a projection that can reveal an animistic participation, circumstantially, what matters in the scene where we do ethnography is the effectiveness of these devices and dispositions in the control of risks when faced with recognising the subjectivity of the animals in this setting. We have thus established a kind of contract that envisions, as far as possible, legal, moral and psychic protections. Here, deceit, simulation, the game of make-believe, do not prevail. This is why we suggest that, in our case, it is not a matter of questioning whether the recognition of subjectivity is something that necessarily leads to positive or elusive feelings of empathy, but rather of recognising the establishment of a pact. The compassion assumed by ethical regulation, however, does not rule out the remaining efforts for technical and ritualistic protection. However, if the empathic device provided by the ethics committee guarantees the outcome of relationships, it cannot guarantee the consent of all parties if we recognise the pig's unwillingness to adhere to the procedure.

It appears as if we are facing a phenomenon that Descola (1998) characterises as merely ascribing rights and legal principles to a given class of beings, that is, a mechanism for protecting animals by granting them rights – or imposing duties on humans towards them –, without fundamentally calling into question the modern separation between nature and society. We are not satisfied, however, with reducing this to its legal scope, since what we observe are intersubjective participations and the recognition not only of rights, but of intentionality, which leaks in relationships and into the routine management of practices. This, after all, is what ethics committees do: they protect animals from abuse, protect humans from legal and moral judgments, and reveal that, despite scientific efforts to desubjectify the interiorities of agents in relationships, guarding against routinely emerging animistic, empathetic leanings is imperative.

However, if the participatory feeling of compassion supports an ethical edifice that to some extent protects the beings present in similar laboratory dramas, this feeling may also paralyse action, compromising scientific practices and knowledge. The line that separates the signals to advance and the signals to retreat is tenuous. General norms can be challenged with each new experimentation, with each new scene, with each new constraint, with each new alignment of agents that threatens the expected course. In any case, we reiterate that it is possible to recognise a series of devices, of varying degrees of subtlety, that medicine makes use of to protect itself from the often paralysing effects of compassion, of participatory continuity between beings. Here, we feel it is worth mentioning a significant one, mostly because it is so banal, the expression '*vir a obito*' [end in death], indeed, it was used by professionals exposed to the laboratory scene and accompanied by the ethnography of this article. It is an official, technical expression, used constantly in medical-scientific reports, to avoid fully assimilating the effects of death, even in relation to human patients. This validates the hypothesis that technical reason integrates the effort not to confuse subjects who are present, like the medical teams and patients, so that thus distanced, a situational, operative difference is restored between subject and object, doctor and patient, humans and animals. With the brakes of compassion under control – wherein, it must be stressed, language plays a decisive role – action can follow its course on legitimate and tolerable grounds<sup>24</sup>.

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24 Apropos, to protect resonates with Maria Puig de la Bellacasa's (2017) proposition concerning care; of how this politically ambivalent notion, considered far from innocent, remits an impure involvement. This involvement does not concern fusion, but rather maintaining an adequate distance. At this point, it seems pertinent to refer to Haraway's (2003) notion of 'significant otherness'. This concerns knowing how to 'honor difference' in each 'ontological choreography', in each dance of immanence of 'emergent naturecultures' that Haraway collates with 'categorical abstractions', rigid identities that pre-exist relationships.

Examples like this abound and can be widely mapped. Two others we consider worth mentioning, which appeared in the ethnography analysed here and that provide indications of the dangers of the contaminating participation (affective and material) of agents among themselves. The first refers to the establishment of the ‘surgical field’, which consists of covering the patient’s body apart from an exposed opening in the region that is submitted to surgical intervention. The justification immediately raised for this device is to protect the patient from the risks of contamination, due to the contiguity of the exposed surfaces. However, if protection is required, it is because the ever-present risk of contamination comes from the participation of undesirable microbiological agents (for example, hospital bacteria) where the sterilised region must remain as such. Moments of high bodily exposure are moments that also require strong protection because the inescapable data with which they work in this setting concerns what we call participation – in this case, the participation of agents that take on the figuration of infectious germs, the infection being a clear indication that organic agents, highly heterogeneous among themselves and of no less disparate origins, can be dangerously infected and continue within each other<sup>25</sup>.

It is the ontological consubstantiality of organic beings with each other (like pigs and humans) that operates there, informed by the organic and evolutionary kinship between species, both as an indispensable strategy for the invention/discovery of new surgical procedures (and new drugs and therapeutic treatments) and in measuring the risks of contagion and opportunistic infections that must be ritually avoided through absolute technical rigor.

However, as we advance here, we shall present another solid justification for establishing the surgical field: that of also protecting professionals on the surgical team, since, restricted to seeing and touching only the region exposed by opening the field, the surgeon can then concentrate without the risk, and without minimising the risk, of having to stand before the entirety of an organism, whose similarity with their own leads them, through the participatory continuity to which they are exposed, to the unproductive and undesirable situation of having to deal not with the ‘analytical animal’ (which the surgeon must engage), but with the ‘naturalistic animal’ (from which they must distance themselves)<sup>26</sup>. The ‘analytical’ refers precisely to parts, such as those exposed by the opening of the surgical field. The subjects that the surgical action is composed of (arteries, vessels, prostheses, organs, etc.) should reside there, and only there. It could be said that the latter risk is of the symbolic order, while the former is of the material order. However, here we will not be discussing the problematic character, perhaps barely pertinent or even worthless, of this opposition (material versus symbolic), particularly when it is so ontologically determined. Rather opening ontologies (including the surgical incisions in the bodies themselves) is all that is at stake in the scene, more so at the level of acute experimentation, much like the scientific-medical experimentation we have been following ethnographically. We are therefore faced with the relational character of ontologies open to one another – character that is as auspicious (on which the advancement of medical sciences depends) as it is dangerous (such as the septic, sanitary and hygienic risk of visible or invisible, macro or microscopic, beings in contact)<sup>27</sup>.

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25 To us, the principle that informs the notion of ‘immune system’ does not seem to indicate anything else.

26 On the decisive difference between ‘analytical animal’ and ‘naturalistic animal’, see Lynch (1988).

27 From human patients to *animal models*, with symmetrical and asymmetrical treatments, using different types and degrees of empathy, we have here the emulation of the commitment and responsibility of the surgical team towards a person, thus training surgeons who need to avoid the threat of putting human life at risk. Indeed, one of the surgeons interviewed in the ethnography revealed that medical and surgical residents are gradually trained in simulation models, using plastic parts for learning the structures, and *animal models*, which can be organs detached from their dead or living bodies submitted to procedures. From his point of view, in each of these cases the commitment is different, and the responsibility of operating on a human being imposes greater anxieties. In the best seller *Do no harm*, neurosurgeon Henry Marsh reveals: ‘I dislike talking to patients on the morning of their operation. I prefer not to be reminded of their humanity and their fear, and I do not want them to suspect that I, too, am anxious’ (Marsh 2016: 49). Perhaps within this, something close to the type of ‘tactical empathy’ proposed by Bubandt and Willerslev (2015) can be encountered, and within the game of dissimulation perceived in hunting, in which, according to the authors, the viewpoints of others are assumed in order to deceive them. This is not what happens between pigs and laboratory humans, as we argue here; however, it could be considered to be similar to the ‘dehumanisation’ intended in surgeries performed on patients to ensure greater efficacy during the same – or a controlled dehumanisation, so to speak, that in any case is subservient to humanisation, to the promotion of the patient’s health – a humanising promotion that spreads and is distributed among all the entities involved.

The second example stems from the refusal of the team in the operating room to seriously consider the attribution of intentionality, as suggested by the vivarium technician and veterinarian assistant, to the pig that 'gave up' on the experiment. It is a refusal not so much of the anthropomorphic character assigned to the animal, but rather of the excess anthropomorphism attributed by the technician, as if a boundary, never definitively established, was undesirably crossed therein. Or as if the participatory experience of the vivarium technician with the animal under their care was not allowed to spill over into the surgical-laboratory room, where an alternate control of subjectivities must come into play. However, the participatory relationship between the animal and the technician in the daily life of the vivarium has to occur so that the animal model is maintained under the right conditions, as required by the extremes of surgical interventions. In order to understand the core of so many scientific practices, like the case study in question, it seems imperative to dismantle the assumed paradox that it is necessary to deal with either the 'analytical animal' or the 'naturalistic animal' (Lynch, 1988). Our research shows that the technical and objective quality of the 'analytical animal', as required by the experiments, depends on the convivial and environmental quality of the 'naturalistic animal' in the vivarium. There is no interobjectivity without intersubjectivity.

We learn from Latour (1991) that, at the very least and above all in scientific concepts and practices, all purification presupposes mixtures and vice versa. Separating and mixing, mixing and separating – this is how the sciences proceed, testing this measure each time, comprised of advances and retreats, of the production of vulnerabilities and protections. Hence, ultimately, it does not seem credible to affirm, and even less so peremptorily, that the manner of originating and providing existences in modern sciences is either one or the other – purifying or mixing<sup>28</sup>. It is worth repeating that purification of the 'analytical animal' is impossible without care in the cultivation of the 'naturalistic animal'. An animal that arrives in a state of stress in the operating room threatens the chances of success for the ongoing experiment. Thus, we understand why the surgeons and bioengineers made fun of the opinion of the vivarium technician, who assigned anthropomorphic intentions to the animal that had 'given up' on living and, as a result, on continuing to participate in that experiment. Where there is intention, there must be spirit, subjectivity, or subject to the image of humans – this incites compassion and restores participation that, inside the operating room, must be purified, controlled, at the risk of constraining and polluting the progress of the experimental scene should the act continue, since the scene is protected by various forms of decorum and prohibition.

Since anthropologists tend to pay attention and take the jests, jeers and mockery they witness in the field seriously, we similarly dealt with the witticism about barbecuing the pigs and, as the witty remark proceeded, that it was necessary to report its death to its relatives. This refers to something we witnessed a few times, particularly at the end of the experiments, when prior to euthanasia induced by substances that silently executed the animals, a few of the bioengineering researchers who still remained in the operating room, together with laboratory technicians, fantasised about a different fate for the animals that, once they have left the vivarium, cannot return there, and must invariably be sacrificed. Instead of sacrificial incineration, they said, in a jocular tone, it would be better to dedicate the animals to 'a good barbecue', were it not for the amount of medication recently applied to the animals, thus making their consumption as safe human food

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<sup>28</sup> As we understand from Bruno Latour's (1991) anthropology of the moderns, in the practices of the sciences, the mixtures of the most heterogeneous entities or beings are previously ensured by the ontologisation of everything that exists between what is natural and what is social. This bicameral purification of the real ensures the unimpeded course of mixtures, which since then were freed from fears and taboo, decorum and impediments, concerning what might originate from unforeseen monstrosities by the real previously known in its forms and forces – whether social or natural. This 'constitution' of the modernist edifice entered into crisis due to the ontological proliferation it generated, to the point where the 'hybrids' became monsters that were no longer recognisable as natural or social, no longer easily distributable in one or other chamber, one or other 'ontological home'. It is worth noting, however, that the destitution of the transcendental character of the natural/social opposition does not eliminate the service, the intelligibility, the making of the world of this opposition in immanence, and not only that of scientific production, of life and the activities of moderns (Marras, 2021).

unfeasible. This or similar jokes would not be made with a human patient. We suggest that doing so with a non-human animal in this setting fulfils the important role of affirming the discontinuity between pigs and humans, as fundamental as the continuity that brings them together.

Merely verbalising it, the act of imagining consuming that meat produces an empathic gap between human and non-human animals. The joke emerges, however, at the moment of possibly the greatest difference between them. In surgical centres, death is rarely decreed during or shortly after surgery, which will require the stabilisation (or not) of the patient in an intensive care unit. Therein, after only a few hours, depending on the severity of the procedure, it will be possible to evaluate the success of stabilisation. In other words, there are mechanisms to assess whether the correction in question was well executed. However, even when the signs are positive, it is still possible that the radical situation of vulnerability to which bodies submitted to invasive surgeries are exposed to, like in heart surgery, hinders their recovery and results in death. In contrast, regarding experimental surgeries on non-human animals, the outcome is given at the outset: it is non-negotiable and redefines the role of animals in this chain of knowledge production and device development. Even when dead, the bodies of patients may still be veiled and honoured by their relatives, while the bodies of pigs will end up in a freezer, waiting to be collected by the sector of city hall responsible for their incineration: nothing vain or innocent in that which the joke referred to. It fulfils the reinforcement of operational differences – and this enables operations to be performed (see note 5).

### Summary and final considerations

Thus far, we have gathered sufficient data to support the argument that, at least in comparable scientific activities involving similar organic forms, it is never a question of deciding, conclusively or for all situations, between images of reality (ontology) and technical procedures (methodology) based either on participatory continuity or on discontinuity between the beings present. In anthropological vocabulary, these two modes of identification – naturalism and animism (and for our purposes, only these) – are not mutually exclusive, but alternate in the course of the actions and knowledge at each experimental stage. In other respects, we agree with Latour (1991) that official modern naturalism makes use of the ruse of staunching the effects of participation, however unofficial and proliferate, applying step-by-step purifying mechanisms intended to ensure strategic separations between ontological orders: here the thing, there the person; here the non-human, there the human; here the object, there the subject; here the intention, there the mechanism; here the natural facts, there the social facts; and so on.

The point, however, in the ethnographic case we are examining, is that we encounter the renewed pertinence of animism and participation among us moderns, and this at the centre of an activity, of scientific activity, with which, predominantly and even today, it is customary to associate the disenchantment or objectification of the world. However, our examination ran into proprieties and interdictions that are not to be confused with mystification that concerns the pure domain of sentimentality, the pollution of knowledge. Thus, no longer the opposite of rationality and cognitive maturity. No longer error or difficulty operating distinctions. No longer the mysticism with which modernity has wrongly accused the so-called *others*. Hence, the *participationist* image of so-called traditional peoples, in contrast to moderns, is no longer sustainable. It seems to us that it is much more realistic to comprehend how this or that regime of *participation* and *disparticipation*, making use of continuities and discontinuities between living beings (involving the most varied consequences of life and death), each sets in motion in every experience of the composition of reality (Marras, 2021).

Indeed, in our opinion, knowing how to make constant use of the continuous and the discontinuous among the living beings exposed therein, and sensitive to each other, is what primarily integrates scientific intelligence and intelligibility, perhaps even specifically medical intelligence and intelligibility in regimes

of high-level experimentation, much like the ethnographic extract taken here as a source and a reference. In these regimes, the generation of knowledge certainly requires cautious equilibriums between exposing and protecting *animal models*, but no less so for others concerned in this setting: from the anthropologist to the surgeon, from the vivarium technician to the bioengineer, from the perfusionist to the veterinarian. In this sense, everyone in the scene resembles experimental animals, albeit with very different consequences for each part. An experiment worthy of the name, calls into question prestige, funding, institutions, titles, careers: or the very lives of non-human animals directly or indirectly involved in the simulations. It is difficult for anyone to leave there exactly as they entered. Moreover, the testers are tested in the tests.

The point to highlight and reiterate is that, just as exposure, without which there is no failure or success in experiments, affects all those involved in the experimental scene (with different meanings and weights for each actor), so too protection, which results from exposure and makes everyone vulnerable, is required of humans and animals involved in these test situations. Where there is exposure and openness to being vulnerable, there must be some protection. From this game between exposure and protection, new knowledge can emerge, as is always desired and expected, together with technical innovations, such as those pursued in the experiments narrated here regarding the ventricular assist device. In fact, the ethnographic case that guided our reflections here precisely reveals this game of alternations made at moments of opening and moments of closing, at moments of transpositions and at moments of limits.

Knowing requires the risks of exposure, which in turn require protective counterparts. Stabilising new understandings and new techniques puts the methodological imperative of destabilising the entities under testing (including, we assert, those who test, and not least the instruments, the technical objects, also subject to testing). This forced stress moves passions and convictions, anxieties and speculations – all there, far from the calm and ordering of a previously stabilised scientific fact, whose image, as current as it is inexact, tends to strongly generalise scientific activity as that of the discovery of a reality that is already there, ready and waiting for its unveiling by a simple spell. From the field research, according to the argument developed here, we were also able to gather clear evidence that confirms the practical effort of dealing both with *participation* with the animal and with what we call *disparticipation*, this selective discontinuity between organic human and non-human beings, all otherwise exposed to the experimentation in question.

We said that participation, even in a naturalistic regime, appears as a given: mammals, more so those of similar body size like humans and pigs, are strongly considered as continuous with each other by derivations of a general evolutionary basis. For this reason, making use of so-called *animal models* is not only mandatory for numerous experiments, including surgeries and testing new drug molecules, but also for participation that assumes an animist inclination, that of commiseration and empathy, which therefore gives rise to setbacks, interdictions, slowdowns, taboos and protections that meet ethical and moral duties. And finally, presupposed participation in relation to sanitary protective measures and septic control, given the constant threat of everything falling apart with undesirable, uncontrolled contamination, especially when bodies and things are mutually exposed to unprecedented associations on the stage of surgical and laboratorial experimentations.

Clearly, in the experimental scene, everything and everyone becomes unproductively unprotected when people do not pay attention to such material and symbolic sensitivities and acts of vigilance. Hence, inflicting vain, careless suffering on experimental animals in these experiments is to be exposed, without protection, to that which prosaic understanding calls *dehumanisation*. Those who dehumanise others considered deserving of compassion and the right to life are dehumanised in a continuous act – that which, in the previously evoked language of Rousseau, is recognised as *pitié*. When this occurs, knowledge itself is polluted. That is why ethics committees, like those focused on the welfare of animals cultivated in vivariums, end up protecting the candour and suitability of knowledge in production. Without subjective care, the desired objectivity is lost.



There is no naturalism or objectification that somehow does not have to do with this ineradicable background of continuity between humans and animals.

The conclusion remains that humanised treatment in relation to *animal models* is, rather, a matter of measurement and strategy. In other words, the animistic productivity of continuity between humans and animals, aimed at preserving legitimate and tolerable bases each time the scientific production of knowledge is entered into, should not prevent the interventions that naturalism opens and enables for experimental scientific activities. Hence the ritual effort (in which jocular tirades fulfil their role) of discontinuing with the animal, of affirming that pigs are pigs and humans are humans. Otherwise, if the trans-species continuity between humans and pigs were not staunched at strategic and decisive moments, it would impede or seriously complicate the course of experimentation. So how can we not recognise that naturalism and animism are composed of, alternate between, and inter-adjust to one another in the production of this knowledge? By methodologically engaging in both modes of identifying with animals subject to testing, that is how we obtain, on the one hand, the authorisation for the experiments, and, on the other, the legitimate figuration of the expendable in the myriad animals that 'end up dead' in the name of science.

Finally, we can now state that the dynamics of exposing and protecting human and non-human living beings involved in highly invasive and experimental interventions (like those the ethnographic extract examined here) primarily integrate acceptable technical and scientific knowledge and practices. This must be the case, as long as the otherness of the beings present therein, open to each other, proves to be ethically regulated – formally and informally. Such scientific activities are vitally dependant on this kind of reciprocal, albeit asymmetrical, opening of beings that expose themselves, but not without the corresponding protections, while taking advantage of these regulated openings, in order to provide chances to grant contours to new and emerging knowledge.

We defend that in similar experimental scenes the ontology of beings is submitted to the pragmatic course of the tests. Therein, they are what they do or fail to do in methodologically oriented inter-respondent regimes. Their essences are shown in their actions, according to each concurrence of circumstances, foreseen and unforeseen, the expected and the imponderable. They are ontologies obtained each time (Marras, 2021). We are in the midst of fact-making and talk-making – a regime of society or association between humans and animals (the focus of this article), without excluding technical objects and all manner of the most heterogeneous actors. Everything and everyone are at risk, without which nothing safe can emerge in scientific knowledge. No new certainties without the methodical provocation of uncertainties. Here we find the most auspicious character of adventure of the sciences, of this choreography composed of dances and counter-dances of human and non-human agents linked in experimental scenes. Even where life and death lurk – sensitively and dramatically.

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# Poetic opening stanching by violence

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## Abstract

This article reflects on violence committed against *travestis*, examining a series of murders of *travestis*, together with narratives regarding violence, to see where these events and stories lead, and to formulate related questions. Through this movement, the research develops such questions as: what are the motives behind the violence committed against *travestis*, and what do these motives tell us? If violence is expressive – in other words, if it tells us something – what is it saying? Can we talk about crimes as being gender-based? If so, how should we consider the relations between gender, sexuality, and violence? What desires are at play? And what do these events tell us about the concept of gender itself?

**Keywords:** Gender, violence, sexuality, power, desire.

# Abertura poética que a violência estanca

## Resumo

Este artigo busca refletir sobre violência contra travestis. Seguindo uma série de assassinatos e narrativas sobre violência, o texto procura ver para onde esses eventos e histórias levam e, no percurso, formular perguntas. Tal movimento conduz a indagações, tais como: quais são os motivos da violência contra travestis? O que nos diz? Se a violência é expressiva, ou seja, se conta algo, o que estaria dizendo? Poderíamos falar em crimes com um caráter genericado? Se a resposta for afirmativa, como pensar as relações entre gênero, sexualidade e violência? Quais são os desejos em jogo? E o que esses acontecimentos nos dizem sobre o próprio conceito de gênero?

**Palavras-chave:** Gênero, violência, sexualidade, poder, desejo.

# La apertura poética que la violencia estanca

## Resumen

Este artículo reflexiona sobre la violencia contra las travestis. En base a una serie de asesinatos y narrativas sobre violencia, el texto se propone saber hacia dónde llevan esas historias y acontecimientos para poder formular preguntas en ese transcurso. Esto conduce a indagaciones tales como: ¿qué nos dice la violencia contra las travestis?, ¿cuáles son los motivos? Si la violencia es expresiva, es decir cuenta algo, ¿qué estaría diciendo? ¿Podemos hablar de crímenes con carácter de género? Si la respuesta es afirmativa, ¿cómo se pueden pensar las relaciones entre género, sexualidad y violencia? ¿Cuáles son los deseos que están en juego? ¿Qué nos dicen esos eventos sobre el propio concepto de género?

**Palabras clave:** género, violencia, sexualidad, poder, deseo.

# Ouverture poétique endiguée par la violence

## Résumé

Cet article cherche à réfléchir sur la violence exercée contre les travestis. Suite à une série de meurtres et de témoignages, le texte essaie de voir où conduisent ces événements, ce que charrient les histoires et partant, formule des questionnements. Les événements de cette sorte interrogent: quels sont les motifs de la violence envers les travestis et que nous dit cette violence ? Si la violence est expressive – en somme, si elle dit quelque chose, alors de quoi s'agit-il ? Pouvons-nous parler de crimes genrés ? Si oui, comment penser la relation entre genre, sexualité et violence ? Quels sont les désirs en jeu ? Que nous disent ces événements sur le concept même de genre ?

**Mots-clés :** Genre, violence, sexualité, pouvoir, désir.

# Poetic opening stanching by violence

Pedro Paulo Gomes Pereira

We were in mourning, stunned by the escalation of violence against *travestis* in the city of Santa Maria, a municipality in the State of Rio Grande do Sul. On the morning of December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019, I received a message informing me that Verônica had been murdered. She was a local leader and ran a boarding house for *travestis*. It was the third death during that period. Before her, Carol and Mana had already suffered the same fate and, soon after, news came of two more murders, those of Selena and Morgana. Five deaths in five months. In a short space and time, this series of murders seemed to condense the existing appalling data on violence against *travestis* and trans persons.

In 2019, 124 trans persons and *travestis* were murdered in Brazil, according to the *Associação Nacional de Travestis e Transexuais* (ANTRA) [National Association of Travestis and Transsexuals]. Among these deaths, 80% occurred after excessive violence, and in only 8% of cases were the suspects identified. According to *Rede Trans Brasil* [Trans Network Brazil], in 2018, there were 150 murder cases and, in 2019, 10,535. From the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 2020 alone, there was a 180% increase in the number of homicides compared with the previous year (Souza *et al.*, 2021). In a Brazilian study that sought to describe the profile of notifications of violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, *travesti* and transgender people (LGBT) between 2015 and 2017, based on secondary data from the *Sistema de Informação de Agravos de Notificação* (SINAN) [Notifiable Diseases Information System], Isabella Vitral Pinto *et al.* (2020) showed that of the 24,564 reports of violence against the LGBT population registered, 69.1% were between 20 and 59 years of age, half were black (50%), 46.6% were transsexuals or *travestis*, the most frequent type of violence was physical (75%), and in 66.2% of cases the likely perpetrator was male.

Faced with this scenario, particularly in reaction to the Santa Maria murders, the feeling was one of fear, but, as Butler (2004) has taught us, fear and mourning are also instigations for patient political reflection. Such feelings moved me during this period, because, in addition to this climate and sadness, the murdered *travestis* were interlocutors of mine in research that I coordinated. Since 2011, together with Martha Souza, I have investigated the itineraries of *travestis* from Santa Maria in the *Sistema Único de Saúde* (SUS) [Unified Health System – Brazil’s National Health Service]. This experience led me to reflect on the ethnography I had conducted between 1998 and 2001, in which, for the first time, I came across the relationship between *travestis* and Afro-Brazilian religions (Pereira 2014). All this led me to believe that it is difficult to prescribe the limits of ethnographic work and to know precisely where it begins and ends, including its extension in time and space. As Peirano (2014) reminds us, the ethnographic experience is within us, and facts experienced in the field for years can be constantly remembered or reinterpreted. That is what happened to me; in Santa Maria, I learned from *travestis* (one of them, a “mother-of-a-saint”, *mãe de santo*<sup>1</sup>, who had been murdered) part of what I know concerning incorporations and concerning gender (Pereira 2014, 2017, 2019a, 2019b).

Moreover, shortly after the murders, COVID-19 struck. Unable to return to Santa Maria, I began to be called on in several ways. Some people asked me what to do; others wanted to tell stories, vent, talk about their lives. Thus, in addition to the research mentioned, the ethnographic experience, many of the stories narrated here were sent to me by the interlocutors in the middle of the pandemic, by phone, messages, video calls,

<sup>1</sup> A “mother-of-a-saint” (or a “father-of-a-saint”) is the central authority figure within a *casa de santo ou terreiro*, responsible for leading both religious events and other activities. They express the will of the *orixá* who commands the *terreiro*. They are also called caretakers, because their task is to care for the saints, the *terreiro*, and for initiates (the children-of-a-saint) (Pereira, 2019a: 7).

and through social media. Other times, researchers came to me to tell me what they were witnessing, in an attempt to understand the scenario of violence; health professionals, wanting to intervene, approached me, expressed their doubts and asked questions. Thus, I began to be requested by organisations and people with whom I was involved and had been in close contact for decades.

This article is, therefore, the result of these demands, conducting a kind of interpellated anthropology; for me, responding to them represents an attempt to opening up to Others (Segato, 2006). By making myself available to my interlocutors, I continue to seek to construct partial, situated conversations that may be of interest. Violence appeared for me in a fabric composed of bodies, vulnerabilities and the occupation of urban spaces. To face this complexity of relationships, I began to follow the narratives of *travestis* who focused on the relationship between violence and desire. I sought to follow the path traced by them and, thus, engaged in the task of accepting the ideas of my interlocutors as concepts, I sought to identify their questions (Viveiros de Castro, 2002).

In this sense, I seek to reflect on this tragic context. This movement can lead us to the following questions: what are the reasons for violence against *travestis*? What do they express to us? If violence is expressive, that is, if it tells us something, what is it saying? Can we speak of gender-based crimes? If the answer is yes, how do we consider the relationships between gender, sexuality, and violence? What desires are at stake? And what do these sad occurrences tell us about the very concept of gender?

## Murders in Santa Maria

On September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019, 23-year-old Carol and her colleagues '*faziam ponto*' [were soliciting 'tricks'] on an important avenue in Santa Maria, in a place known as a prostitution spot for *travestis*, where clients feel safer to make their approach<sup>2</sup>. The space, full of trees, out of sight of the city dwellers, suggests privacy. However, that which is discreet for clients, since the shadow protects them from the gaze of acquaintances, is unsafe for *travestis*, since it exposes them to danger.

That night, at one point, a young man approached, walking slowly. He wanted a *programa*<sup>3</sup>. Aline then addressed Carol: 'Go, it's your turn'. Carol and the young man left. Nearby, there was a garbage disposal container, and the two went behind the container. When she noticed what was happening, Aline commented that she did not believe they were going to have sex right there, since it was not like Carol. At that moment, they heard a shot. Carol came up, trying to run, but fell to the ground covered in blood. What followed was marked by screams, sobs, cries for help. But it was no use, Carol died there, on the avenue asphalt. The young man ran off. Later, they learned that he did not want to pay and had tried to rape her, but when Carol evaded him, he fired. The murder was recorded on security cameras, and the young man was arrested.

That same night, in another part of the city, far from the city centre and the avenue where Carol had been murdered, Mana, a *travesti* of presumed age between 35 and 40 years old – which, as a sex worker, meant she was considered old – was heading to the house of a well-known young man. She worked sporadically in her neighbourhood because, due to her age, she did not get many clients. A very different situation from when she was younger and she participated in the carnival balls and beauty contests in the city. Some time ago, Mana had lent a helmet to an acquaintance, and since she had not been given it back, she decided to go and get it. When asked to return it, the young man was outraged. He entered the house and came back yelling:

<sup>2</sup> I decided to use the real names of the murdered *travestis* with the aim of following their decisions and imaginations throughout their lives. The names of the remaining interlocutors have been changed to protect their identities.

<sup>3</sup> Here the term *programa* [a programme] is a slang used by sex workers that has a similar meaning to English equivalents 'date' (He wanted a 'date') or 'party' (He wanted to 'party'). It is also used in the sense of 'turning a trick': *fazer um programa*.

‘Now you’ll see how we’re going to give you the helmet’. He and several other young men cornered Mana and killed her with 12 stab wounds.

The two deaths reverberated around town. The *Comissão Especial da Diversidade Sexual e Gênero* [Special Commission on Sexual and Gender Diversity] of the *Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil* (OAB) [Brazilian Bar Association], in Santa Maria, deplored the two crimes. Perhaps because of the repercussions, the cases were investigated, and the killers arrested. This response softened the mood and the latent revolt of the *travestis*.

When Carol and Mana died, the local press interviewed Verônica, who maintained a boarding house for trans women and *travestis* in the city and was one of the leaders of the LGBTI+ movement in Santa Maria. Carol was a resident in this boarding house. In her interview, Verônica denounced the multiple forms of violence against *travestis*, and added: ‘When we leave the house, we don’t know if we’re coming back’.

Then came the alternative LGBTI+ Parade, with the theme ‘*Que bom te ver viva!*’ [lit. Good to see you alive!], all due to the deaths and debates that arose from them. Verônica went to the Parade and, on stage, recalled the murders of Carol and Mana. With these acts, *travestis* and other LGBTI+ people believed they had sensitised the population and hoped that there would be no more murders like those on September 7<sup>th</sup>. However, mere months later, the city was surprised by another murder.

It was December 12<sup>th</sup>. Verônica and three other *travestis* were on the same avenue where Carol had been murdered. Although Verônica was no longer ‘soliciting tricks’, she was there to earn money with the aim of promoting the organisation of parties in the community and donate gifts to needy children in her neighbourhood at Christmas. That night, the *travestis* were called to the car of a young man who offered 50 reais for ‘a trick’. No one accepted and they soon left to take shelter under the trees. The boy, indignant, began to shout: ‘I don’t kill *veados* [queers] only because I don’t want to. I could kill that *veado*’. Upon hearing that, Verônica returned, since she always took the lead, as she said, in ‘defending the girls’. ‘When one of us was beaten, she was there, standing up to the cops, standing up to guys in the street, in cars’, said Aline after the incident. When she returned, Verônica asked: ‘What’s that?’ and tried to slap the young man. However, he dodged her and delivered a knife blow to her abdomen. It was enough to kill her. Once again, screams, cries for help. The ambulance took 40 minutes to arrive and Verônica had already lost a lot of blood. She died before the surgery.

Since Verônica was much admired in her neighbourhood, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) got together and managed to hold the wake in the Council Chamber – evidently, not without protest from a certain local elite – and with the absence of all the councillors. At her burial, people walked through the cemetery screaming, crying, and the voice of a *travesti* echoed: ‘Verônica!’, while the others responded: ‘Present!’, as recorded in a video by Avelar Neto (2019).

At Verônica’s house, the situation was desperate, as they did not know whether the boarding house would continue to operate. ‘In addition to losing Verônica, we could all be on the streets’, said one resident. At the time, there were many requests for *travestis* not to solicit on Presidente Vargas. Faced with these pleas, Aline, a good-natured black *travesti*, who was present when Carol was killed, asked: ‘Where should we go? How are we going to eat? I’m from Canoas, I don’t have a family anymore, I can’t go back there’. Another resident of the boarding house argued that it was the best spot in town, and they all needed to earn a living.

The night after Verônica’s murder, on December 13<sup>th</sup>, even though they had changed location, a *travesti* was assaulted and someone tried to rape and kill another. During this time, under pressure from NGOs due to the murders, the councillors scheduled a hearing in the chamber, with the presence of the OAB and the *Conselho Nacional de Combate à Discriminação e Promoção dos Direitos de Lésbicas, Gays, Bissexuais, Travestis e Transexuais* [National Council to Combat Discrimination and the Promotion of the Rights of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, *Travestis* and Transsexuals].



The year ended with sadness. The New Year arrived with uncertainties concerning Verônica's boarding house. The apprehension increased when, on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, the *travestis* learned that in Sarandi, in the interior of Dilermando de Aguiar, a neighbouring municipality, 50 km [35 miles] from Santa Maria, Selena Peixoto, 39, had been murdered, shot in front of her home. The police arrested two suspects for the crime. According to rumours, the motivation was because of a debt that one of them had with Selena for the purchase of a horse. Selena maintained a *terreiro de batuque*<sup>4</sup> and was well known and respected in her neighbourhood.

A few days later, on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, in the Chácara das Flores neighbourhood, another murder: Morgana Cláudia Ribeiro, 46, was found dead inside her home. Born in Santa Maria, she lived with her '*familia de santo*'; only people 'of the religion' lived in the house. She had become a *mãe de santo* in 2014, but claimed to have been 'of the religion almost all her life'. She had been raised by her *pai de santo*, the only family she had ever known. The day after the murder, the report from the *Instituto Geral de Perícias* [Coroner Service and Forensics Dept.] indicated that the cause of death was 'traumatic brain injury due to a lesion in the temporal region'.

Five murders of *travestis*, among them a local leader and two *mães de santo* with strong influences in the community<sup>5</sup>. The atmosphere was one of concern and fear, especially among the *travestis* and their circle of acquaintances. Part of the population was indifferent to the deaths, considering they were cleaning up the city or claiming alleged links with drug trafficking. But what were the motives behind them and what does violence against *travestis* express?

## Violence against *travestis*

Santa Maria is considered a medium-sized city, with over 280 thousand inhabitants, that has extensive influence in the central region of the state. It is home to the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM), which in the first semester of 2018 had more than 30 thousand students. In addition to UFSM, the city has seven other higher education institutions. The city stands out for having the second largest concentration of Brazilian military, comprising the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division of the Brazilian Army and the Santa Maria Air Base. The concentration of students and soldiers, the proximity to the border, among other factors, undoubtedly contribute to the disposition of a certain virile masculinity and to the demand for sex, including the demand for prostitution<sup>6</sup>. However, evidently, these data are insufficient to understand the scenario described above, which requires more careful observation (Balieiro & Miskolci, 2020).

To begin with, it is interesting to remember that murders of *travestis* demonstrate how the gender expresses relationships of dominance, vulnerability, extermination, and impunity. Gender norms assign the possibility of living, as well as contributing to certain bodies being considered illegitimate, deprived of recognition and exposed to violence<sup>7</sup>. As unrealisable lives, *travestis* live processes that ruin their humanity (Butler, 2019a), exemplifying a dehumanisation that provides conditions for the irruption of the feeling of impunity (killed for asking for a helmet back, for collecting a debt) or of hatred ('I don't kill *queers* because I don't want to').

4 *Batuque* is a generic denomination of Afro-Brazilian religions that worship the orishas, through dance, songs, etc., mainly in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, and neighbouring countries Argentina and Chile. A *terreiro de batuque* is a space dedicated to these religious practices.

5 Stories like these are present in the works of Duque (2011; 2012). The author describes wakes and uses the term '*finada*' [deceased] as a way for the *travestis* to deal with violence, reconstructing their memory.

6 There is a glut of literature on masculinity, so I shall my limit indications to Almeida (2000), Connell (2005), Connell & Messerschmidt (2005) and Miskolci (2012). There are also works that analyse masculinity and borders, for example, the dossier *Corpos, fronteiras, gênero e sexualidade* [Bodies, borders, gender and sexuality], organised by Nieto Olivar and Passamani (2019), and masculinity and the military (Leirner 1997, 2001), to name a few.

7 For an approach to the construction of the relationship between violence and power that emerges as an instrument of articulation in relation to the various forms of violence presented in this article, see Mason (2002) and Cecchetto (2004).

In the cases in Santa Maria: two of murders were committed by firearms (one involving attempted rape, the other over a disagreement); two by knives, in one case the victim was ambushed followed by 12 stab wounds; and the fifth was killed with different objects. Three crimes were committed by persons known to the victim, and two by unknown persons. None of the accused claimed to be the victim's sexual partner. Since witnesses who were not close to the *travestis* refused to provide information about the victim or the crime, there were difficulties in punishing the culprits, which reproduces violence and the feeling of impunity. Moreover, these factors feed back into each other. The ease with which a knife is plunged into the abdomen, or with which a defenceless body is shot at, is directly proportional to hatred, underpinned by a sense of impunity (Efreml Filho 2016, 2017).

The fear on the street was constant. Of the five murders of *travestis* in Santa Maria, four were on public roads, even when they were in front of their home or the residence of an acquaintance. These murders signal something concerning the uses of space and how gender is deeply related to the way a person can appear in public space, establishing who can move around freely, who is criminalised on the basis of their appearance, who is afraid to go out at certain times of the day or night, who is limited to certain locations (Butler, 2009).

In all cases, there were insinuations of the *travestis*' involvement with trafficking, drug use and illicit acts. These insinuations and the aforementioned resistance of witnesses to provide information concerning the victim or the crime, act through a 'moral grammar' (Miskolci & Pereira, 2019; Carrara & Vianna, 2006), which acts by naturalising violence (considering it to be ordinary and automatic that crimes occur there and to such people) and also indicate the negative field where the victim is located. This moral grammar acts by transforming the victim into a (co)participant in the crime. In Santa Maria, manifestations on social networks sought to position the victims as troublemakers, which is why the accused sought to distance themselves from the image of lawlessness that could make them morally indistinguishable from their victims. This naturalisation and the above-mentioned moral grammar construct *travestis* as killable beings.

The murders, the mobilisation of the LGBTI+ community and the media visibility of the brutal violence did not signal the sharing of an understanding that these were hate crimes, given that 'being a *travesti*' constitutes a determining factor in executions, since it assumes the features of, to use Bento's term (2014; 2016), trans-femicide. In addition, the official pronouncements of the local police on the murders denied their qualification as 'hate crimes' and attributed to them futile motivations. Such an understanding fuelled contempt for the deaths; two city delegates, however, took a stand on the matter. Weeks after Verônica's murder, the city's *Delegacia de Proteção ao Idoso* [Police Station for Older Adult Protection] changed its name to the *Delegacia de Proteção ao Idoso e Combate à Intolerância* [Police Station for Older Adult Protection and Combating Intolerance], as it also became responsible for incidents involving the LGBTI+ population. At the beginning of 2020, the female police chief who had worked for 18 years at the *Delegacia Especializada em Atendimento à Mulher* [Police Station for Specialised Assistance to Women] took over the command of this police station in early 2020. Since the time of Verônica's murder, this institution had already stated that the deaths of *travestis* should be counted as femicides (Souza *et al.*, 2015).

However, the pronouncement of the two female police chiefs and the changes in the city between 2019 and 2020 were not enough to eradicate resistance to recognising gender-based crimes. Considering this resistance, or flat-out refusal, is this not exactly the gender-based violence that we should investigate? Such an attempt implies asking how *travestis* understood these murders and other aggressions, and how their narratives delineated the very texture of the violence<sup>8</sup>.

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8 Ethnographies by Judite Chipenembe (2018), Nelson André Mugabe (2019) and the Brazilian anthropologist Francisco Miguel (2019) address the experiences of 'trans persons' and are important for a comparative project. Obviously, while always carefully considering the specificity of travestilities.

## The *travestis*' narratives

Faced with the murders, the *travestis* of Santa Maria perceived the possibility of being raped and of always being subject to death at the whim of others. Impacted by this, they began to remember similar events and share their experiences. The research conducted since 2011, was achieved through participant observation, interviews and monitoring of the daily lives of *travestis* in Santa Maria. However, after the murders, the *travestis* not only began to narrate their stories in conversations, but also in several unusual ways. As I mentioned, some of the narratives were also sent to me by phone, in messages, on social media, etc.

During the conversations, they insisted on indicating that the fear was mainly directed towards the relationships they established with their clients and with men who sought them out for sex. In light of this situation, panic spread among the *travestis*. The ease with which killing occurred ended up creating an atmosphere of constant foreshadowing of violence, related to the manner in which the murders were carried out. The repeated violence was as much a theme for activism, which counted its deaths, as for the police, who needed to respond to the 'crime wave', and in terms of the subjective displacement it produced among those close to and within people who share experiences of vulnerability. Thus, the 'accumulation' of cases produced a feeling of increasing violence that exceeded the possibilities of understanding. This situation began to produce an 'atmosphere' that led the *travestis* to comment on the violence and to formulate relationships and possibilities.

Motivated by this climate of fear, the narratives focused on violences suffered in the relationships with clients. Although in previous works I have analysed state violence against *travestis*, police violence, and even family violence, or that perpetrated by other subjects, guided by the logic of gender and not due to issues related to the sex market (including damage to property), etc. (Souza *et al.*, 2015, 2021), at the moment when the murders were being discussed, the *travestis* indicated the relationships with clients as the most relevant to understand the context in which they lived; that is, everything happened as if these were the core of the concerns on which they sought to reflect. My task then was to follow these formulations, record them and affirm them. Everything indicated that, to respond to violence, the imagination appeared to invest in the fabric of the relationships they formed with the clients.

This is how, in later conversations with the *travestis*, a discussion began about who the clients were and how they defined them<sup>9</sup>. After all, who were these men? What made these men look for *travestis* and sometimes rape or kill them? Why were clients (and men who came to them for sex) and prostitution chosen as an object of discussion?

These questions lead to several likely answers<sup>10</sup>. First, because of the characteristics of the murders and crimes narrated. In Santa Maria, two of the murders were carried out by clients, in search of sex, as a result of conflicts during negotiations; the others, by people close to them who had relationships with the *travestis*, including sexual relationships. Furthermore, other crimes narrated in conversations with Aline and Carla included attempted rapes, which I recount below. Second, there is the possibility that *travestis* are engaged in daily routines that involve the night, in a sexualised universe, in which a *travesti* is recognised as being '*na pista*' [lit. on the track] (a place of pleasure and danger). Third, the violence committed by men who seek them out for sex indicates an increased level of exposure and vulnerability to which they are subjected.

9 In preparing this article, among other data, I felt the need to know the age, level of education, place of residence, marital status, and religion of these men. I will dedicate myself to this task at another time.

10 There is a body of literature on the clients of *travestis*. Pelúcio, for example, has conducted research on *T Lovers*, and she has produced ample work on the sex market and the relationships between *travestis* and clients in Brazil and in European countries (Pelúcio 2004; 2005; 2007a; 2007b; 2009a; 2011a; 2011b; 2011c; 2011d, 2013). Although it deals with virile prostitution, Perlonguer's book (1987) was important in its thinking on relationships of desire. The link between the construction of gender and sex work intervenes in issues of gender, inequalities, the labour market, among others. See Benedetti (2004), Piscitelli (2006; 2007), Piscitelli, Assis & Olivar Nieto (2011), Nascimento (2014), Patriarca (2017), and Teixeira (2008).

Thus, it is important to discuss relationships of desire and hate in these unpredictable relationships, because while there are men who kill *travestis*, there are those (in smaller numbers) who love and marry them.

Be that as it may, these partial responses must be contextualised in the climate of fear that affected the *travestis* of Santa Maria at the time. It is interesting to highlight that there is no way to directly and invariably link the figure of the client to violence, as shown by important approaches on the subject (Pelúcio 2006; Piscitelli and Teixeira, 2010; Teixeira, 2011).

In Santa Maria, when we were talking about the subject, a representation emerged: the client who seeks a *travesti* defines himself as heterosexual, he approaches ‘all manly, very *gaucho*’<sup>11</sup>. According to Carla, at that moment, you get the impression that ‘it’ll be a cool *programa* [trick]’. After one or two encounters, however, the *travestis* conclude that the client ‘is a *maricon*’. Carla continues: ‘you have to lend him a wig, you have to lend him lingerie, he wants to be passive, then he gets angry’. According to the *travestis*’ narratives, this scene is very frequent.

The *travestis* maintained that they preferred to ‘be passive’. I heard one of them declare that she did not like to ejaculate: ‘why make such an effort to transform our bodies if we do it like men?’. However, to continue to get clients entails ‘being active’. Penetration forms part of the relationships, part of the economy of desire. Carla sums up the dilemma:

I’d like to have surgery, because I am very feminine. I wanted to have the surgery and remove the penis, but if I do that, I can’t do *programas* anymore. That’s what they look for in me: they want penetration. If I take too much hormone and can’t get an erection, I can’t get clients anymore. The men who seek me want to play a passive role. Most of them.<sup>12</sup>

On the avenue, when they are ‘*na pista*’ and a known client approaches, it is common for *travestis* to announce: ‘There comes another *maricon*’. A *maricon* is a client who seeks to be penetrated and is the counterpoint of a ‘real man’ (Pelúcio, 2013). But who is this real man? Evidently, someone with very masculine and penetrating characteristics. Given the ways of conceiving sexual positions, pleasures and even the stereotypes at play, there is, therefore, complicity in the eroticisation of the heterosexual. When asked if ‘real men’ were clients, Aline hesitated. First she said they could be, then she thought it difficult. As Pelúcio (2013) pointed out, clients will always be *mariconas* for *travestis*, since by publicly denying their desires, they move out of the moral zone of masculinity, as they lack courage or honour.

Aline added: ‘We don’t like to be touched on our penis. They all come down here saying the same thing: and they always say they won’t touch it, because they’re too manly. But, over and over again, they all want the same thing: the day comes when they turn their backs on us’. ‘Turning’ has a corporal and moral meaning: offering your buttocks to a *travesti* (Pelúcio, 2013). Notwithstanding the positions and conformations of established sexual relationships, clients identify themselves as ‘hetero’, as ‘macho’. According to Vanessa, ‘after the *programa*, the young man who just gave me his arse, leaves all horny, macho, and goes back to his wife’. However, it is necessary to consider the differences of class, generation, race, and even experiences of migration.

In the narratives I collected, relationships with clients are delicate and involve secrets and careful gestures, because, at any moment, ‘the situation can get dangerous’. Many revealed that the greatest fear is when they are alone with clients: ‘We are afraid of dying and being raped, being hurt’, added Aline, who began to narrate Dani’s story, in a paused voice, accentuating the words:

11 In Rio Grande do Sul, the term *gaucho* is commonly used by natives to refer to themselves. Here though, the *travestis* use *gaucho* to define heterosexual male clients who display a virile masculinity.

12 As was well observed by Flávia Teixeira, in a personal communication, this assertion can also indicate a moral accusation in relation to the client; perhaps as a way of displacing it, using the ‘same argument’ with which the *travesti* is branded.

It was very late at night. A client approached, but he ‘smelt terrible, he stank of cachaça and sweat’. But apparently, he wasn’t drunk. They agreed on the *programa* and left. Half way there, in a dark place, the client punched Dani and knocked her down. Then he approached and held her violently. He withdrew his erect penis and tried to rape her, but soon lost his erection. He couldn’t manage penetration. In a few minutes, he gave up and left, pushing Dani’s body away from him, who couldn’t even scream. She just asked him not to hurt her in the end, given the client’s features. The man walked away. Dani came back to the spot as she had ‘to get something to pay the bills’. At the spot, other *travestis* said that that man was a *maricona*. They knew well what he liked.

The above account by Aline emphasises Dani’s expressions, recalling certain phrases from memory (which I placed in quotation marks). Next, accompanying Aline, Carla narrates the story of Alda and an attempted murder. The story, which I try to transcribe—from memory—in the following paragraph, appears syncopated, without the drama of its narration spoken with a muffled voice and marked by silences.

Alda was on an avenue in Santa Maria, known for being a prostitution spot for *travestis*. It was Thursday and a special customer was due to arrive. He was punctual and at midnight he would be there. As expected, João arrived and began looking for Alda, who was ready. She had put on her best lingerie and was carrying a very sensual, short, black dress. They got into João’s car and went to a well-known motel in town, but a little farther away. The couple gets out, João pays in advance for the *programa*. Alda slowly undresses and offers the black dress and lingerie to the client. Somewhat awkwardly at the moment, João enters the bathroom, puts on the clothes and, with a racing heart, goes back to the bedroom. He begins to touch Alda voluptuously. João sits on the bed, holds Alda’s penis and starts performing oral sex, somewhat recklessly. In a few more minutes, Alda will penetrate João. The client kept on her panties, which had simply been moved aside, and her black dress. Soon, João reaches orgasm. After sex, he goes back into the bathroom, takes a shower, rubbing himself insistently. The couple gets in the car. Not a word. To interrupt the discomfort of the situation, Alda tried to say something. Still silence. For some reason, Alda touched João between his legs, and he lost control. He stopped the car and pushed her violently. As she fell, Alda lacerated her leg and screamed unrestrained, ‘shitty *maricona*’, ‘*veado*’ [queer]. Immediately, João throws the car on top of Alda, who cannot dodge it: the tires go over her right foot. The car disappears down the asphalt. Alda can’t walk, her body hurts. She picks up her thrown bag and tries to call. No signal. She manages to walk to a point where she gets a signal to call for help. As she waits, she cries in anger and apprehension. She could be dead, as some of her friends were. It was an ‘easy *programa*’, even so, for a *travesti*, ‘you never know if you’re coming back’.

When describing the violences experienced, Aline and Carla claimed to have chosen ‘more peaceful’ stories, because ‘no one had died’ in them. The speed with which they accessed narratives like these in and of itself indicates that violence is common. These scenes are extreme forms of domination (including discrimination, attempted rape, physical violence), which must be conceived within a continuum that includes the murder of *travestis*.

As the literature on the subject has already indicated (Butler, 2009; Segato, 2003, 2013), the killers are not associated with pathologies or ‘male aggression’ but are found within a context of domination. Segato (2003; 2013), for example, argues that sexual crimes are not the work of deviants, those with mental illness, or anomalies, but rather expressions of a profound symbolic structure that organises acts, fantasies, investing them with intelligibility. Thus, the aggressor and the collective share the gender imaginary, speak the same language, and understand each other.

## Gender and violence

As we saw in Aline's story, there was an attempted rape. Thinking about similar violence against non-trans women or *travestis*, Segato (2013) concluded that rape is directed at annihilating the victim's will, in which they suffer a loss of control over the behaviour of their bodies. Consequently, rape seeks to eradicate the power of a person as an index of otherness or alternative subjectivity. In this case, the aggressor addresses his peers and does so in numerous ways: he requests acceptance into their society and, from this perspective, the raped woman functions as the immolated sacrificial victim of an initiation ritual in which he competes with his peers by demonstrating his aggressiveness and his power of death, so as to occupy a place in the virile brotherhood.

For a subject to acquire his male status, it is necessary that another subject does not have it, but grants it to him through a persuasive or imposing process that Segato (2013) denominates 'a tribute'. Under the 'normal' social and political conditions of the status order, women are the tribute givers; men, the recipients and beneficiaries. The structure that relates them establishes a symbolic order, marked by the inequality that organises all spheres of social life, governed by the asymmetry of status law. According to Segato's model, the crime of rape is the result of a mandate that emanates from gender structures that ensure, in certain cases, the tribute that guarantees new members access to the virile brotherhood. An intersection of two axes occurs: one vertical, the victim's consumption; and one horizontal, conditioned on obtaining tributes. The aggressor who takes possession of the female body in an open, public space does so to show that he can and to communicate with his peers.

Despite the sophistication of Segato's proposal, the stories of *travestis* seem to force us to rethink the imagination of the masculine and feminine. There is something in this formulation that seems to differ from the *travestis*' narratives, from the stories told and the murders described above, since in them, the gender imagination wanders along paths that the concepts of masculine and feminine seem to elude.

For example, on the part of clients, there is a search for detachment from the sex scene with *travestis*. In the case of Carol's murder, when arrested, the young man who killed her stated that he did not have sex with *travestis*; even so, he managed to post on his Facebook page that he 'the last thing he was there for was to pick up a *travesti*'. The actions of the accused were directed to show that he did not have relationships with *travestis* and not to maintain his innocence. The affirmation of his masculinity occurred through the suppression of his involvement with *travestis*, in the erasure of the scene (Balieiro & Miskolci, 2020). Occasionally, as I heard from Carla, some *travestis* posted on social media: 'so now you don't want it, right? So, then I'm going to post your photo here. Next time I'll take a picture of what you did.' There is, therefore, the threat of exposing that relationship, which for the client is distressing. In Cachoeira do Sul, a town near Santa Maria, a *travesti* began a firmer relationship with a young man and fell in love. At some point, he said he did not want it any longer. The *travesti*'s reaction was to say that she would 'tell everyone', revealing what had been kept secret up to that point. He killed her.

When a man rapes a non-trans or non-*travesti* woman, he is likely sending a message to other men (Segato, 2013): I have power over this woman; I want to and can possess that body; I can do what I want with her body. However, with a *travesti*, the man is engaging in something ambiguous. If, at times, the client identifies the *travesti* as female; at other times, this is no longer understood as a legitimate expression of the feminine. There is a fine line between pleasure and revulsion (Pelúcio, 2009a, 2009b), as I will argue later. How do we talk about a mandate if the tribute is not declared? And of brotherhood, if communication between peers is obscure?

Initially, while still in some form of dialogue with Segato (2013), you could argue that those who are on the feminine pole contribute to the affirmation of masculinity. Furthermore, violent action can be understood as part of a 'conversational community' (Corrêa, 2012) – acting as society expects their gender to act; a conversational community where articulating is less important than acting. In reality, masculinity distances itself from verbalisation (including impersonal sex between men in bathrooms), as if a code of silence were something

masculine – the secret that is linked to masculinity (Simmel, 1999). However, the attempt to withdraw from the scene that involves sex with *travestis* also indicates that something unexpected has occurred, while the denial of proximity and erasure of the scene indicate the existence of noise in communication and dissonance in acts. Everything takes place like the erasure of a scene because intimacy with *travestis* should not exist, much like sexual violence.

Directly addressing the staggering number of murders, Bento (2014, 2016) argues that trans women and *travestis* are a hyperbolic expression of the place of the feminine in our society, which is why violence is directed against bodies and subjectivities that express performative stylistics closer to the feminine. Violence may function to remind us that *travestis* perturb the norms of sexual and gendered life, blurring the boundaries and categories through which we see and interpret the world (Mason, 2002: 57). The main social function of this type of violence is exemplary spectacularisation: disfigured bodies contribute to the cohesion and reproduction of the law of gender that defines that we are what our genitals determine (Bento, 2014, 2016; Gonçalves Jr., 2018). In Bento's definition, *travestis* are in the female field. Anchored in such dispositions and feelings, violence works to guarantee the reproduction of gender norms, diffusing the idea that bodies that deviate are not lives worthy of mourning. Thus, murders like the ones I have narrated, for example, are trans-femicides.

There is a difference between the norm and violence. In Butler's texts, the norm is linked not only to forming subjects, but also to undoing them. That is, there is something about violence that excludes certain bodies and subjectivities from intelligibility (Butler, 1990, 1993). There is, however, a lapse between the formation of subjects and subjection (Butler, 1997), which guarantees that if violence is related to norms, it is not fully identified with them. Norms are related to power, but are characterised less by the use of force or violence than by the logic that allows for the power of reflection on their strategies. Power should be perceived as a relation between forces or a relation of forces that is a *rapport de force* (Deleuze, 1998). Violence is thus a 'concomitance or consequence of force, but not its constituent element' (Deleuze, 1998: 56), which is why relations of force surpass violence and cannot be defined by it.

As Butler (2004) herself pointed out, the norm transforms restrictions into a mechanism and proceeds with a movement through which legal power becomes productive. Did Foucault himself not signal the passage from a society of blood (one marked by blood symbolism) to a society of knowledge as a norm and as a discipline (Blanchot, 2002; Foucault, 1976)? Thus, even though we can speak of a normative violence, which occurs in the very process of the formation of subjectivity, these relationships have to be nuanced.

Furthermore, although Bento's (2014, 2016) argument is closer to the scenario I found in Santa Maria, I wanted to highlight some characteristics I observed in Alda's story, which was narrated by Carla. Clients could be allocated to the male pole: the client pays for the *programa* and is placed on the side of those who have the power to establish relationships; men can – and should – satisfy their desires, since the imperative of *jouissance* relocates subjects in the terrain of masculinity (Pelúcio, 2009b). The relationship between client and *travesti* is never symmetrical, even when there is an initial agreement on values, and there is always the fear that this agreement will be broken. Despite this, a *travesti*, with a female body, assumes the active role. The client, when establishing passive anal relations, believes he is left without possession, letting masculinity slip away. Since penetration is always a masculine act, those who allow themselves to be penetrated are feminised (Pelúcio, 2009b).

The fluidity of classifications threatens the client's masculinity, as it is closely linked to the *travesti*'s penis. Furthermore, while it seems acceptable for men to seek out prostitutes for sexual relations, this legitimacy does not apply to *travestis*. Since they are not fully considered women, when men seek them out, their masculinity is called into question, their heterosexuality becomes suspect and moral criticism is extended to family members and intimate others. *Travestis*, in turn, 'claim to be "more macho" than their clients, as they have the courage to "come out" and "face society"' (Pelúcio, 2013).

Finally, following the narratives, whether socio-anthropological or those of the *travestis*, allows for an approximation of disparate visions and actions: *travestis* who die because they are female, hyper-women; clients with an aggressive masculinity and, at the same time, *mariconas*; *travestis* ‘more macho’ than the clients. This scenario makes it difficult to locate gender in a binary logic of oppositions, since relationships emerge in movements of force, in flows and, even if they somehow revolve around the masculine-feminine opposition, the more they become entangled in it, the more they outline and produce differences (Rolnik, 1996).

Less than a misunderstanding of the analyses or inaccuracy in the narratives, these disparities may be indicating that the terms masculine and feminine cannot fully define what is happening: language fails when it approaches forbidden desires.

## Forbidden desires

Desire is understood here as the construction of assemblages (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972, 1980) as an attraction directed towards certain universes, as a repulsion from others, as forms of expression that are created ‘to embody the sensitive states that such connections and disconnections are producing in subjectivity’ (Rolnik, 2016: 24).

In the context I am turning to, there is desire; however, apparently, this desire is not possible. As I have already mentioned, there is a fine line and, at some point, the client distances himself from his own desire and demonstrates horror at the body that had previously attracted him. The desire is in him: he puts himself in positions and relationships, but sometimes he cannot stand it. Masculinity is constructed as if men had the right to access other bodies, but the domain of masculinity is fragile, since any element that breaks through and challenges it ends up revealing ambiguities, which become disturbing. It may be that violence (in which, as we have seen, murder is only one form – the cruellest) emerges in this imprecision between the desire that is experienced and the impossibility of conceiving it contextually<sup>13</sup>.

In this scenario, perhaps the most striking affect is shame: of having this desire, of the acts, of the bodies (Balieiro and Miskolci, 2020). ‘After sex, they don’t even want to touch us’, said Aline. On this subject, Carla recalled: ‘I had a *programa* once that, after sex, the man couldn’t even look at me’. In some stories, like the one about Alba and João described above, the client is also unable to talk to the *travesti* who accompanies him. Thus, the language is both non-verbal and corporal – sex, desire and, at its limit, physical violence. This leads us to verify that virile masculinity (or a certain virile masculinity) is fragile because it fears its own desire.

In the preface to the Brazilian edition of *Negócios do Michê* by Perlongher, Peter Fry (1987) analyses the relationship between desiring the desirable and desiring the undesirable, revealing the conformity of certain desires to the norm in contrast to desires that are exercised despite the norm. Fry warns at the outset that the most exciting subject of the book is the desire—transitory and mediated by money—that occurs between people of the same sex and that momentarily unites people who are socially distant. The desire that occurs ‘in absolute opposition to socially acceptable desire’ (Fry, 1987: 15). Here, the scene is also one of desirous flight that entangles bodies, as described by Perlonguer (1987), diversities of devices that are established to channel this desirous outbreak to avoid or neutralise the dangers of such flight. However, in the cases I am addressing, the opposite is true, the dangers of death or violence are imminent for the *travestis* and the danger is the client’s surfacing effeminacy.

For most clients, the *travesti* is never ‘fully’ or ‘completely a woman’; she is ambiguous (Benedetti, 2005; Duque, 2017). Even when seduced by a femininity or even an ambivalence, at some point, the client perceives the ambiguity (of the penis, of being penetrated), or he perceives that it evanesces and a side emerges from

<sup>13</sup> In this article I seek to describe and analyse the narratives of *travestis* from Santa Maria concerning men who seek *travestis* for sex, trying to cover a set of experiences that cannot be generalised, because there are, as I have pointed out, numerous possibilities for the desire to arise.



which he yearns to escape. This imprecise game produces (and is the product of) pleasure and disgust; they are two affects that are in intimate relationships at that moment (Pelúcio, 2009a). Cynthia once told me: 'If he [the client] just wanted to be penetrated, he could go to a gay man. But they come to us because we can be mistaken for women'. And she immediately corrected herself: 'we are women'. Perhaps the clients desire the imprecision, the vacillation.

By some means, in certain situations, the desire turns against the subject; anger mixed with disgust fosters a desperate hatred that fuels violence. To use Gaile Mason's (2002) terms, 'repertoires of disorder' are created, involving dirt, sexuality, *travestis*, and clients. If ambiguity on certain occasions is part of desire; in certain circumstances, when revealed, it is linked to violence. Far from a well-defined, binary framework of masculine and feminine, instability erupts under the diligence of ambiguity, caused by a refusal, a gesture, an argument, a disagreement, as in the cases of some of the murders in Santa Maria. A hand that unknowingly touches the other causes violence to erupt. Perhaps due to the simple fact that touch signals who has the initiative (attributed to the straight, manly man). In other words, being touched is a gesture that removes masculinity at a moment when it is already being called into question. So touching someone becomes (or feels like) aggression. Therefore, the ability to touch or its impossibility are ways of drawing boundaries between protection and rejection, hence the (im)possibility of being touched emerges at the centre of conceptual and political challenges related to difference (Parrini, 2018).

Perhaps, when violating a woman, a man understands this violence as within the possible: 'I desire this body and I desire this desire' – this action communicates to their peers a possible virile masculinity. With a *travesti*, like in the scene described by Carla, at some point, he probably perceives something impossible and distances himself from his desire and his own desirous body. Once again, the relationship between desiring the desirable and desiring the undesirable, to use Fry's (1987) terms. Thus, it is necessary to frame what is possible: 'my body does not want (and cannot desire) the undesirable'. Is violence then a way of dealing with the body after actions that could not have occurred, but which cause obsession? Thus, what the person wants to communicate is: 'the desire does not exist, I long to erase it, to obliterate it'. The problem lies in the part that remains of this impossible body, of this burning desire.

Considering that these relationships are always contextual, to desire a *travesti* is to desire the undesirable; for the person, it is constructing the possibility of impossible desire. A desire that happened, that happens, but the instability of what moves it determines the need to eliminate an opening, as if to say: 'I have to kill this impossible possibility in myself'. Desire accompanies the inventions of bodies and is seduced by poetics. Poetics, understood as 'the effect of estrangement' (Jakobson, 1960; Langdon, 1999), signals that something changes when we are faced with the poetic dimensions of language and life. Of course, here it is not just about language or performances, but about the entire poetics of the processes of invention of *travestis*' bodies and subjectivities.

For a fleeting moment, something impossible appeared on the horizon of the possible: a female body with a penis, which yearns to be penetrated, but which, when penetrating, assumes a position that it believes is masculine; this poetically constructed body penetrates a man who defines himself as straight and is dressed in seductive, feminine clothes. After the *jouissance*, the silence, the insistent cleaning of the body that aspires to return to some place in listless daily life. In this case, what is inadmissible is the opening that appears for a moment: the escape, the reinventions that insist on obsessing, the flight. Violence appears in the interstices of the moment. Perhaps such an instant can lead to thinking on the very concept of gender and its openings.

With this in mind, in the next section, I seek – without proposing any grand synthesis of the proposed themes and, it should be said, in provisional explorations – to think about the concept of gender from another angle: gender as opening.

## Gender as opening

As is evident, it is not easy to separate the life of gender and the life of desire. For Butler (2004), the social norms that constitute our existence imply desires that do not originate in individuality and the viability of our existence depends on them. Butler also recalls that in Hegel (1992), desire is related to recognition; desire is always a desire for recognition. If part of seeking desire is achieving recognition, then gender, insofar as it is animated by desire, will seek recognition. If the projects of recognition available to us are those that undo the person, then recognition is converted into a centre of power where humans are differentially produced (Butler, 2004).

Desire and social norms are thus linked to the question of power. Gender forms part of the regulatory order, and therefore gender performativity cannot be theorised separately from the enforced, reiterative practice of regulatory sexual regimes (Butler, 1993, 2004); it is a form of continuous social disciplining that is never complete; gender involves power relations in which a person's position changes according to circumstances; it is not something that you have or you are, rather it is 'a social imposition to which we all always respond and to which we never fully comply' (Miskolci, 2021: 87).

However, it is Butler (2004: 15) who warns us that norms can become disconnected, show their instability and are open to resignification: 'Norms do not exercise a final or fatalistic control'. Not invariably, because desire is not entirely determined, nor can sexuality be fully captured in a rule. Sexuality can never be reduced to the effect of a rule; in some senses, sexuality translates us outside of ourselves, it can never be reduced to 'a container' (Butler, 2004: 15), as we are driven by something that lies elsewhere and whose purpose we cannot fully capture. There is then room for flights and openings.

Following not only this last movement by Butler, but also the economy of desire that I have already discussed, it would be interesting to invert the proposition: not norms and power as priorities, but rather desire; consequently, not metaphors of 'container' or metaphors of architecture (like those of Butler and Foucault), but tropes of flight, of gas, of flows.

It was precisely following this logic that, in a letter sent to Foucault in 1977, Deleuze (2006) highlighted the primacy of desire over power and the secondary character of devices of power. According to the French philosopher, a social field flees everywhere in advance, the lines of flight come first. 'Flight lines are not necessarily revolutionary, on the contrary, but they are what power arrangements are going to seal off and tie up [...] desire is precisely in the lines of flight, the conjunction and dissociation of fluxes' (Deleuze, 2006: 127). Lines of flight are the first determinations, because desire acts as an agent in the social field; thus 'power arrangements are both products of these assemblages and that which stamp them out or seal them up' (Deleuze, 2006: 129).

As early as 1986, in a conversation with Paul Rabinow and Keith Gandal, Deleuze defined the difference between him and Foucault: they did not have the same conception of society. For Deleuze (2006), society is 'something that is constantly escaping in every direction' (Deleuze, 2006: 280), constituted by lines of flight. The problem for any society was to prevent such flight; the powers came later. Deleuze then talks about the difference between what surprised him and Foucault: 'What surprised Foucault was that faced with all of these powers, all of their deviousness and hypocrisy, we can still resist. My surprise is the opposite. It is flowing everywhere, and governments are able to block it' (Deleuze, 2006: 280).

In the case of Santa Maria, we saw that simply allocating the scene within the masculine-feminine binary grammar leads to obscurity of their fluid character, in which the terms seem to be unable to define what is happening. Desire acts, actuates; words are slippery, terms swing, terms differ. And this difference signals other possible worlds. A gap opens, a crack, an opening, as if screaming that the rules cannot control and discipline everything. This can be contradicted as merely a fleeting moment; true, but what is instigating is the opening. There is always a beyond; an Other thing; one in an Other form.

Perhaps, taking due care with what a transversal crossing between thoughts from different origins requires, paying attention to differences in comparative processes (Strathern, 1999), this idea of gender as an opening that I have been developing somehow converges with the fluidity and mutability described by Marilyn Strathern (1988), in which people contain within themselves multiple possibilities with immanent capacities that can be activated (Piscitelli, 1994). Thus, gender is an operator of differences that shapes social relations. According to her, 'The idea of domains corresponding to men's and women's worlds is not a dualism that needs to be sustained in the Melanesian context' (Strathern, 1988: 96).

Considering this fluidity and cases involving dissident genders and sexualities, violence erupts in order to restore social norms, the intelligibility of the moment and, as a mandate, to ensure a masculinity momentarily blurred. Therefore, gender and violence are correlated and implicated. However, coming at this in another way, insofar as gender signals an opening, other possibilities not yet imagined, other pleasures (those forbidden, or pleasures in the forbidden), there is always the presupposition of failure (of repetitive acts), always a lapse where the norms cannot fully reach, there is always something that takes flight. Therefore, could this opening cause obsession to such an extent that we cannot define gender without saying, at the very least, that this opening defines gender in the same proportion as structures, norms and acts? What do the norms do? Are they not also stagnating, tying up, sealing off (to use Deleuze's expressions) possibilities – albeit through violence – that the openings insist on enunciating? The point is not to imagine that those who question the binary logic, or the reinvented bodies, are on the other side of the crack, since the opening is never what is constituted, somehow already wrapped in norms, but rather an instance that signals what is yet to be invented, yet to be constituted. What the opening signals is becoming: there is always a beyond.

With their bodily transformations and feminine performances, *travestis* challenge the social norms that operate the logic of sex/gender intelligibility, presupposing behaviours and actions. From then until their death, and even after it, devices act to restore the norms. Murders are the most extreme form of these devices. How do these devices work? Through the lack of recognition of liveable lives, which leads to insensitivity with regard to murders like those described here, naturalization (again: it is natural that crimes happen to these bodies and in these places), and a moral grammar as phenomena that feed back into each other. These devices create an overall scenario that is itself violent, but do not indicate that all men have committed and/or commit physical violence. What is it then that leads to murder or rape? *Travestis* tell us that, in relationships of desire, the boundary between aversion and pleasure is more tenuous. Here the devices, characterised by a hyper-corporality manifest in murders, rapes, physical aggressions (Parrini, 2018), violently turn against the openings that bodies invent and actions that insinuate themselves in fragile moments.

## Final notes

The murders in Santa Maria are hate crimes, trans-femicides anchored in this process of impunity and in a moral grammar that blames the victims. Faced with these violences, the *travestis*, reflecting on an economy of desire, indicated that their fear was mainly directed towards the relationships they establish with their clients, with the men who seek them out for sex. They depict a context in which the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine', understood in a rigid, binary manner, could not fully define what was happening. I again insist: here, binary grammar ceases; something takes flight and language fails when it approaches forbidden desires.

The narratives raised questions: who were these men who sought out *travestis* and looked at themselves, at their desire, wanting to stanch the open possibilities? Violence appeared as a concomitant, or as a consequent movement of burying openings of a desire that should not exist, of a pleasure that turned to unrealisable lives.

However, simply linking murders to the action of norms obliterates how norms also act in the formation of the person, constituting them. Led by my interlocutors, I learned about desire and its investments, the affects and affections of moments. Something ruptures with the affections that make violent actions possible *in a scenario that is always contextual*.

I ended up asking myself if the very concept of gender as a norm could not be displaced in favour of another that understands gender as openness. In this case, violence would then be untimely, desperate actions that accompany *travestis* throughout their trajectory, from when they begin to transform their bodies, in schools, in families, in health services, even after they are dead (Souza *et al.*, 2021). These actions aim to contain, to staunch poetic openings, the reinventions of bodies and subjectivities and their pleasures. From this perspective, the title of this article is imprecise. A more accurate option is: poetic openings that violences *seek* to staunch, search incessantly and through different means, without ever fully achieving them, because there is always an other-possibility that the openings signal, there is always ‘something that is constantly escaping in every direction’ (Deleuze, 2006). In conclusion, it is worth asking: beginning with the idea that gender can be defined as poetic opening, what are the means to oppose violence? Could it not be precisely the recognition of poetics, instead of considering them to be ‘ideologies’ and forbidding them?

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# Anthropology's Ancestors: A review essay on a new Berghahn collection

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## **Abstract**

Anthropological history is today a growth area. This essay reviews the new collection *Anthropology's Ancestors* that Aleksandar Boskovic is editing at Berghahn. The three short books he has published so far are very engaging intellectual histories of three anthropologists of the past who have recently received increased critical attention and whose legacy certainly deserves it: Robertson Smith, Margaret Mead and Françoise Héritier.

**Keywords:** Sacrifice; gender; blood; embodiment; Margaret Mead; Robertson Smith; Françoise Héritier.

# Antepassados da Antropologia: Uma revisão da nova coleção da Berghahn

## Resumo

A história da antropologia é uma área em crescimento rápido. Este artigo discute a coleção *Anthropology's Ancestors* que Aleksandar Boskovic tem vindo a dirigir na editora Berghahn. Os três curtos livros que saíram até hoje são histórias intelectuais de três dos antropólogos do passado cujo legado tem vindo recentemente a receber merecida atenção crítica: Robertson Smith, Margaret Mead e Françoise Héritier.

**Palavras-Chave:** Sacrifício; género; sangue; embodiment; Margaret Mead; Robertson Smith; Françoise Héritier.

# Anthropology's Ancestors:

## A review essay on a new Berghahn collection

João Pina-Cabral

### A busy history

The history of anthropology has never been as busy as over the past few years. The writing and researching of it seems to be undergoing a moment of effervescence right across the globe. Just as anthropology distances itself theoretically from the major interpretive frameworks that constituted the undisputed background assumptions for a century, it seems that anthropologists are called to re-read in a new light the discipline's past insights. As it happens, some of the more persistent misinterpretations of our recent past are calling loudly to be re-examined (e.g. on participant observation, see Pina-Cabral 2023). The thing is: our ancestors remain with us in new ways, just as we distance ourselves from them.

Everyday another interesting exploration comes out in one of our disciplinary journals (some, such as *History & Anthropology*, *Anthropological Theory*, or *HAU*, to cite only three, have published consistently innovative contributions in this line). At the same time, some of the recent re-presentations of classical works will undoubtedly stay in the coming future as commonly acknowledged references. I have in mind works like Dorothy Zinn's translation of Ernesto de Martino's *Magic: A Theory from the South* (2015), Jane Guyer's re-translation of Mauss' essay on the gift (2016), or Shryack and Da Col's omnibus of Pitt-Rivers's essays (2017).

As it happens, Brazilian anthropology is no stranger to disciplinary history—in fact, it was decidedly a forerunner of the genre. Márcio Goldman's book on Lévy-Bruhl (2019 [1994]), Lygia Sigaud's essays on Leach and Mauss (1996, 1999, 2007), Eunice Durham's essay on Malinowski (in 2004), Mariza Peirano's *Uma Antropologia no Plural* (1992), and of course the monograph on the school of Nina Rodrigues by Mariza Corrêa (2013 [1998])—these are surely among some of the more masterful examples anywhere. Some of you, I am sure, will consider that I am being unfair in having left so many other perfectly good examples out of my list of preferences. I apologize in advance for that; only that these were the ones that marked more strongly my passage through Brazil and the way it changed my view of anthropology.

A particularly interesting feature of recent publications on the history of anthropology has been the emergence of a new style of short book that combines the biographical essay with a theoretical re-assessment of the chosen author's contribution. These constitute great aids to teaching and thinking. I am reminded of essays such as Sally Cole's biography of Ruth Landes (2003), Virginia Kern's essay on Julian Steward (2010), Séan Morrow's life of Monica Wilson (2016) and the collection of essays the Bank brothers dedicated to her (2013), Julia Blackburn's fascinating essay on Daisy Bates in the Australian desert (1994), or Robert Gordon's brilliant setting in historical context of Gluckman's life and ideas (2018). Again, many more might have been named, but as far as I am concerned all of these have helped me significantly in teaching ethnographic theory over the past decade.

Many of these books will, I am sure, remain with us in the long run, as they not only bring to light a particular author whose fame might otherwise have waned among contemporary practitioners, but they provide important analytical continuities at a time when we are experiencing major shifts in analytical trends. This brings to light a curious aspect of these first two decades of our new century: we seem to have moved from rejection to reformulation; from a *post-something* moment to a *neo-something* moment. As an example, see the fascinating neo-structuralist trends that are emerging out of the inspiration of quantum mechanics (e.g. Barad 2007) or complexity theory (e.g. Dalton 2021).

## A passing canon

A scientific discipline is a space of collective encounter—a multistranded, never unified, always-conflictual agora. In that sense, there are no new disciplines but only new disciplinary developments; we all sit on the shoulders of those who preceded us. Thus, no one who comes anew to a field of scientific enquiry can escape having to deal with a canon—that is, a set of accepted references by relation to which they frame their questions. Yet, there are no eternal canons—all canons are *passing canons*, in the sense that Donald Davidson had in mind when he said that all prior theories are passing theories (2005 [1986]: 86-109).

One of the more insidious forms of ethnocentrism is *chronocentrism*: the naïve belief that our present wisdom has superseded the wisdom of those whose lives unfolded in times before one's own. Any well-heeled practitioner of any scientific discipline will confirm that the challenges that we face today are not all that distant from those faced by our colleagues in the past. Our canon, therefore, should always be open both to the future—in the sense of being concerned with what our contemporaries are proposing all around us—as well as to the past—in the sense of including the *savants* of bygone ages. This means that, much as we inevitably dialogue with the canon of the teachers who inspired us, each one of us is ultimately responsible for the choice of their own canon.

In the case of ethnographic researchers, our very fieldwork explorations yield profound changes in our analytical canon—as was the case with my fieldworks in Macau first and then in Bahia. Whether we are Serbian, Portuguese, Russian or Brazilian; male, female or other; rightwing, leftwing or other; white, black or other ... whatever we are, when we choose those who inspire our writing as anthropologists it is our responsibility to be inspired by the 'best': those whom we judge to be the more trustworthy, the more creative, the more insightful thinkers. Science—and anthropology even more—is a universalist enterprise; one from which no one who can enter the debate can be excluded. I say this whilst knowing fully well that we do not only choose our ancestors because of the analytical and empirical perspicacity of their work, but also because the perspectives they developed echo with our own interests. Furthermore, where we are and what is happening around us matters for how we choose to approach the human condition broadly conceived—different local traditions necessarily yielding different canons. Yet, beyond that, no anthropologist can afford to bypass the more creative work of any other anthropologist, wherever that was produced. This is why the history of anthropology is such a central concern of anthropology—the times in which we could falsely pretend that 'anthropology is a young discipline' are long over. None of us has the right or can afford the luxury of forgetting our canon, even as it passes on, and we successively redraw it. That is the beauty of the best work on the history of anthropology that is being done today.

In what follows, I will refer in particular to three little books—each one of them a long essay focusing on an anthropologist of the past whose work amply deserves our consideration today. They are part of a new collection called *Anthropology's Ancestors* that Aleksandar Bosković is editing for Berghahn. Even as it is starting, the collection already promises to be an inspiration for young people who, newly coming to anthropology, want to know what the discipline is all about. As a door of entry into anthropology, these personalized essays, where an author's life and work are developed succinctly but with sufficient breath to make them justice, are far better and much more inspiring than yet another boring (and soon to reveal itself out of date) "Introduction to Anthropology" or another compendious "History of Anthropology" (or worse still, of the anthropology-of-this-or-that). The worse thing one can do to a young beginner is to make them read one of those simplified and more often than not biased overviews of the discipline, of which there are so many. Experience shows that it is far better for students to become well acquainted with one or two of the past luminaries of our discipline, whilst trusting that a better grasp of the discipline's broader history will come in time.

Aleksander Boskovič is a Serbian (Scottish-trained) anthropologist who has worked and carried out research in South Africa and Brazil, having been inspired, among others, by Mariza Peirano's pioneering work on the history of anthropology (see his edited volume *Other People's Anthropology*, 2008). The three volumes that have come to light so far cover three distinct periods of the discipline: William Robertson Smith was an all rounded scholar of the Belle Époque who worked on ritual and religion; Margaret Mead was perhaps the most media-savvy anthropologist ever, who worked at mid-twentieth century; and Françoise Héritier was the principal successor to Lévi-Strauss in Paris, and an anthropologist whose breath of research and brilliant analytical skills have not yet been fully appreciated. Boskovič starts his collection with a choice of some of the very best, and the essays are written by authors who studied them profoundly and deeply respect their legacy. Furthermore, to start off with, Boskovič had the wisdom of avoiding the more consensual cases, which means that there is novelty in what we are being offered.

## **Margaret Mead**

The book on Mead is written by Paul Shankman, a respected American specialist on Pacific Island cultures. The book is an overview of her and her work from early on in the 1920s, when she studied with Ruth Benedict and Franz Boas in New York, to her final days as a media figure in the late 1970s. The story that Shankman recounts is truly fascinating: Mead was one of those people whose personal life was quite as exciting, and at times even more, than her written work. In fact, recently this has been highlighted by Lily King's novel—*Euphoria* 2015—where the author recreates the troubled period during fieldwork in Papua New Guinea when Mead broke with Leo Fortune to start a relationship with Gregory Bateson that marked the history of anthropology. From the late 1920s, when our colleagues were enthusiastically responding to the Malinowskian reforms, to the early 1960s, Mead was always in the forefront of developments, always producing creative, voluminous, and engaged research. In fact, her exploratory war-time work 'at a distance' has acquired increased methodological relevance today, during these our Covid-haunted days.

But Shankman does not finish there. Soon after her death, Mead's legacy found itself involved in a quite spurious attack moved by an Australian colleague, who managed to tap onto the sort of prejudiced slander that the mass media and our less scrupulous colleagues enjoy. In a short, but decisive final chapter, Shankman lays the matter to rest: the critiques were mostly unfounded and, overall, based on a dishonest manipulation of sources.

Despite some obvious weaknesses, Mead's work continues to be inspirational today. Shankman reminds us that she was indeed prone to romanticise her descriptions, and that she was not always as analytically rigorous as she might have been. In particular, in the 1970s, during the last decade of her very long and active life, the discipline was undergoing major changes not unlike today; the consensus of the post-War period suddenly vanished in face of the problems brought to the discipline by a new generation. By then, Mead no longer seemed able to respond creatively to the new challenges posed by the generation of people (such as Marshal Sahlins) who came out of the student uprisings.

Personally, I met her in 1976, in a situation that I did not enjoy. I was a graduate student in Johannesburg, South Africa. At the time, the ANC, which was the main organization fighting apartheid, had declared an academic boycott of South Africa. Retrospectively, I must admit that this boycott was probably one of their least fortunate policy decisions. Its future implications, in terms of the destruction of the previously lively academic life of the country, are still being felt today. Yet, for us that heard Mead speak then in Johannesburg, leaning on her prophet's forked staff, her disregard of the boycott and, worse still, her arrogant posture as someone who claimed to have a solution for what surely was one of the more complex political challenges of contemporary history, left us decidedly underwhelmed.

The reader may ask, therefore, why should we today choose to include Mead in our canon. Shankman's critical but respectful overview of her career leaves no doubts about that: she was certainly one of the more creative and prolific thinkers at mid-century, and even although she was not a declared feminist and she did not yet use the distinction between sex and gender, she was certainly a figure about whom anyone studying gender and personhood today is inevitably drawn. Moreover, in the late 1930s, during her years of collaboration with Gregory Bateson, she became a pioneer in what are today major fields of anthropological research, using audio-visual material to explore embodiment, gender, and sensory relations in a truly pioneering fashion.

### **A theologian's anthropological legacy**

Boskovič himself authors the second book in the collection. It is a study of William Robertson Smith (1846-1894), one of the principal British scholars at the end of the nineteenth century—truly, an intellectual giant. He was not properly speaking an anthropologist, since this was a period that preceded the modernist definition of sociocultural anthropology as a discipline that we take for granted today. Robertson Smith started his professional life as a pastor in the Free Church of Scotland. Later, he became one of the greatest specialists that ever existed on the Old Testament and, more broadly, its relations with Semitic societies.

Having carried out actual field research in the Middle East, Robertson Smith finished his days as a Professor in Cambridge, where he became world famous for his work as editor of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, a job for which a tremendous amount of scholarly accomplishment was required. Here we have an 'ancestor' who did not conceive of himself primarily as an anthropologist and whose work moves way beyond our discipline in terms of its relevance, but who is nevertheless a central component of the canon of most professional anthropologists today.

He was fired from his first post in the Free Church Seminary at Aberdeen after lengthy judicial proceedings during which his rationalist and critical approach to the Bible's history was judged to be deleterious to the faith of his students. Eventually, as a Professor in Cambridge, his importance became generally consensual. Half a century after his early death, however, at a time when anthropology was moved by more relativist and synchronicist approaches, his rationalist exegesis of Biblical texts came to be queried by some of anthropology's principal thinkers. Evans-Pritchard, in particular, in his 1959 Aquinas Lecture, explicitly criticizes the influence that Biblical criticism had on the founding of modern anthropology (accusing Robertson Smith of being moved by 'positivism' and 'agnosticism', which he pointedly lumps together—Evans-Pritchard 1963). In his lectures on the history of anthropology, he further criticizes Robertson Smith's theories (1981). As a descent theorist, Evans-Pritchard saw the clan, organized according to a strict structure of patrilineal segmentation, as the founding element of Semitic societies. For him, the earlier scholar's emphasis on blood sharing and on matrilineal relations seemed illogical. For us, today, however, such Durkheimian certainties no longer seem to carry quite as much conviction as they did in Evans-Pritchard's days and we are prone to sympathize with Robertson Smith's insights.

Whilst Boskovič dedicates the central chapters of his book to a history of anthropological approaches to myth, this is probably not the area where most of us today are bound to find inspiration in Robertson Smith's work. His contribution to the study of ritual and, in particular, his profoundly insightful approach to sacrifice as communion, is the area that any contemporary ethnographer working on religion would be advised to revisit. His work on sacrifice was the backdrop for Mauss and Hubert's classical exploration of the theme (1981 [1964]) and, subsequently, for all the work carried out on the topic at mid-century (see Bourdillon and Fortes 1980), including some now classic works, such as Luc de Heusch's book on sacrifice in Africa (1986) or Girard's book (1972) on sacredness and violence, which so marked Freudian debates, and, finally, of course Maurice Bloch's time-setting *From Blessing to Violence* (1986).

Even though, today, we are prone to discard the primitivist analytical framework that Robertson Smith took for granted, his emphasis on communion (the sharing of a common substance) no longer seems to us as unreasonable and contrary to logic as it seemed to Evans-Pritchard at mid-twentieth century. Is he not lurking in the shadows, we ask ourselves, when we read McKim Marriott's revolutionary essay on substance-codes (1976)? In fact, in this regard, Françoise Héritier's late work on kinship and body substances opens vistas that justify plainly our revisitation of Robertson Smith's early exegesis of Semitic ritual history.

### The great successor

Gérald Gaillard is responsible for the third book—a life history of Françoise Héritier (1933-2017). As was inevitable—both because she is our near contemporary and because of the specific characteristics of French intellectual life—the book has a very distinct feel from the other two. As it happens, for those who do not read French, it will probably turn out to be a helpful entry into the more recent history of our discipline in that country. Gaillard places Héritier's work and career squarely within the institutional framework where it developed and by reference to a French kind of intellectual stardom that is very distinct from the type of accolade that characterizes success in Anglo-American contexts.

Notwithstanding, Héritier's life trajectory mirrors significantly that of Margaret Mead: she starts with an important investment in intensive fieldwork (in her case among the Samo of Burkina Fasso/Upper Volta), then she produces an important theoretical and comparative contribution as a researcher and teacher (at the CNRS and then the EHESS), and finally dedicates the end of her life to a deeply engaged type of public anthropology, largely associated to the center-left spectrum and feminist causes. Whilst being a woman in a man's world—the picture in the book's cover shows her alone in the middle of around thirty of her male colleagues at the prestigious Collège de France—she was by no means the first woman to mark centrally French anthropology. In fact, in the beginning of her academic life, she was inspired by one of Mauss' most distinguished students, Germaine Dieterlen, also an Africanist. And again, much like Mead, her married history is very much part of her career. Her two husbands (Michel Izard and Marc Augé—whose family names she added to her own in her publications during the periods when she was married to them) were an intrinsic part of her intellectual and institutional projects. However, and much as he might have had other plans concerning his succession (Gaillard 2022: 68-70), it is Claude Lévi-Strauss that sets the intellectual launchpad upon which she was going to work during the principal period of her professional life, both before and after she succeeded to his principal postings in the Parisian Olympus in 1980.

Like her mentor, she aimed to be part of a line in the structuralist study of kinship that, having emerged from the work of Durkheim, was renewed in the 1930s by Radcliff-Brown and then, at mid-century, by Lévi-Strauss. This is very much how she told her intellectual story, whenever she attempted an overview. *L'exercice de la parenté* (1981), where she starts from a strictly orthodox structuralist exploration of kinship terminologies, and then moves to a discussion of alliance and incest prohibitions, is probably the work that marks the high point of her intellectual fame.

From the mid-1980s onwards, largely moved by the emergence of the AIDS pandemic and the way in which the disease was transmitted through the sharing of bodily substances, her work starts moving in a distinctly different direction. This new dialogue with human biotechnology was also moved by her active participation in the discussions concerning assisted reproduction and its legal implications. As her engagement in public-political committees and the media increased, the emphasis in her work moved from a preoccupation with alliance to a concern with the sharing of substances in the constitution of human persons (1989 ([1986]) and how this affected gender relations, namely in terms of power.



How this latter work connects with her earlier work, and particularly with her claims to be an orthodox follower of Lévi-Strauss' early structuralism, was never too clear and remained uncertain to the end, in spite of her repeated efforts at bridging the gap. Having been privileged to attend a small course of four lectures that she gave at the Casa Velazquez in Madrid in 1989, I was at the time puzzled by the way she managed to avoid the glaring epistemological disjunction between her earlier structuralist exercises and her later, far more culturalist approach to the role of bodily fluids in human sociality.

The final decades of her life were marred by a severe health condition that ultimately left her seriously handicapped. This in no way distracted her from her increasingly intensive engagement as a public intellectual. She played an important role during the final days of the Socialist Party's hegemony over French politics. Although she kept away from organized feminist activism, Hérítier defended her own universalist conception of the right to difference in very vocal and creative terms, enthusiastically applying her theoretical insights on alliance and the role of bodily substances to the public debates that so marked the early 2000s. As it happens, the close attention given in the two closing chapters of Gaillard's book to Hérítier's activities as a public intellectual in Paris, will probably turn out to be more interesting to a French readership than elsewhere.

Hérítier claims that, when she left her office at the Collège de France upon retirement, she found an unfinished manuscript at the bottom of a drawer that she no longer remembered. This, she claims, she had abandoned shortly before setting off to write *L'exercice de la parenté* under Lévi-Strauss's inspiration. The resulting book, which she finally published three decades later, *Le retour aux sources* (2010), turns out to be the ethnographic monograph of the Samo of Upper Volta that she had never finished. It is not a book about 'kinship' but a book about a house-based African society and the way in which its institutions (namely concerning marriage and descent) are echoed in the worldview that its members share. From a focus on rules and systems, here we move to a focus on persons, houses, participation, and values that responds very much to our more contemporary theoretical concerns. This is, to my mind, her best and most mature contribution to a discipline that she so wholeheartedly defended. I recommend it to the readers. Sadly, however, Hérítier's very fame as a public intellectual probably explains why this brilliant (earlier but last) book passed largely unnoticed.

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# Perpetual motion: Displacement of *travestis* from an ethnographic perspective

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## **Abstract**

Intense mobility is a characteristic observed in the context of *travestis* who work in sex markets. Studies on the subject usually emphasize that this mobility is related to a project of refinement, social ascension, and greater social, symbolic, and economic well-being, besides serving as a project of transformation and beautification of the bodies. Based on ethnographic work, I argue that, in order to understand the various orders of displacements of *travestis*, it is necessary to understand such movements as a perpetual motion machine, and not as being determined by imperatives that would necessarily lead to displacements from one place to another in search of something - much less something exceptional. In the observed context, displacements are a way of being in the world. Events occur during the displacements, not because of them.

**Keywords:** displacements; ethnography; *travestis*.

# Moto-contínuo: deslocamentos de travestis em uma perspectiva etnográfica

## Resumo

A intensa mobilidade é uma característica notada no contexto de travestis que atuam nos mercados do sexo. Os estudos sobre o tema costumam enfatizar que essa mobilidade possui relação com um projeto de refinamento, ascensão social, maior bem-estar social, simbólico e econômico; além de servir como um projeto de transformação e embelezamento dos corpos. Com base em um trabalho etnográfico, argumento que, para compreender as várias ordens de deslocamentos de travestis, é necessário compreender os movimentos como uma máquina de moto-contínuo, não como sendo determinados por imperativos que levariam necessariamente aos deslocamentos de um lugar para outro, em busca de algo, muito menos como algo excepcional. No contexto observado os deslocamentos são um modo de estar no mundo. Os eventos ocorrem durante os deslocamentos, não em função deles.

**Palavras-chave:** deslocamentos; etnografia; travestis.

# Perpetual motion: Displacement of *travestis* from an ethnographic perspective

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## Introduction: the displacements

Displacement is a striking characteristic of *travestis*<sup>1</sup> who work in the sex markets. During the field research, statements about not being born in the city where we were, whatever it was, were recurrent and always pronounced with emphasis. From our first conversation, Raabe<sup>2</sup> told me that she was not from São Carlos (SP), and that she had only been in town for a few weeks and did not plan to stay long. This was a line that was often repeated by many other interlocutors. Many *travestis* claimed to come from cities such as Manaus (AM), Florianópolis (SC), Franca (SP), Ribeirão Preto (SP), São Bernardo do Campo (SP), Lima (Peru), São Paulo (SP), Campo Grande (MS), and said they had already passed through so many other cities, sometimes including cities in other countries (such as Spain, Italy, and Belgium).

Once, while talking to Raabe on Facebook, after unsuccessful attempts to find her again on the *Streets*<sup>3</sup>, she told me that she was no longer in São Carlos (SP). I asked her why she had left, and received an emphatic answer: “*There’s no settling down with us; I’m not from there, I am from Franca, and now I’m in Piracicaba. I went there just to get to know the city and earn something. I don’t tie myself down to one place [...]*”.

The substantial academic production on the multiplicity of sex markets and street prostitution in Brazil has already pointed out that this activity has its specificities in urban public spaces, since it implies a high degree of mobility and people turnover (Fonseca, 1996; França, 2014; Patriarca, 2015; Piscitelli, 2013; Olivar, 2013; Sales, 2013; Santos, 2012; Osborne, 2004). Specific works on *travestis* even attest to the difficulty of conducting field research with them because of their constant mobility (Pelúcio, 2009; Kulick, 2008; Nascimento, 2014a; Vartabedian, 2012; Benedetti, 2012; Silva, 1993; Teixeira, 2008).

In the context of this study, displacements are of fundamental importance and reveal, also, central aspects in the construction of relationships. Thus, this work focuses on the fact that the people who participated in the field research are constantly on the move, never “*settling down*” and never “*tying themselves down to one place*”. The goal here is to analyze the various meanings that the displacements may contain, and examine what they can reveal about the dynamics of the existential transits of these *travestis*.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a Brazilian Portuguese word that literally means “transvestite”, but a precise translation into English is not possible. *Travestis* have existed in Brazil for a long time, being male-designated individuals who take on a female identity and may or may not undergo sex reassignment surgery. Therefore, they do not identify as crossdressers, and the only word in English that could somewhat approach the meaning of *travesti* is “she-male”. This word, which is informal and quite aggressive, is appropriate insofar as *travestis* are highly segregated in Brazilian society, typically inhabiting the outskirts of cities and often resorting to prostitution in order to make a living. The precise differences between transsexuals and *travestis* have been controversial, since they may be colored by long-established prejudices in Brazilian society.

<sup>2</sup> All the names of people involved in the fieldwork concerning this research have been changed in order to preserve their anonymity.

<sup>3</sup> “On the *Streets*” (in Portuguese, “na *Rua*”), spelled in italics and with a capital R, refers to the way *travestis* refer to the spaces outside the house. Despite also being a space of work and impersonality, the *Streets* are not the rest of the world outside the house (DaMatta, 1991). They constitute, like *the turf* (in Portuguese, “o *pedaço*”) (Magnani, 2012), the intermediate space between the private and the public. And, insofar as it is a territory appropriated and produced by *travestis* and one that becomes a referential space for sex market, it also contains the “code-territory” (Perlongher, 1987), because it is also a territoriality expressed in a peculiar code, which provides categorical attributions to bodies and desires in movement, producing subjectivities, representing a movement of deterritorialization and also promoting a sort of reterritorialization (Rodrigues, 2019).

The term *displacement*, employed by me, does not correspond exactly, but is related to the terms “movement” and “action”, used at different times in anthropology<sup>4</sup>. I use the word *displacement* based on the ideas of “*never settling down*” and “*never tying oneself down to one place*”, in order to approach the originality of the characteristics of the movements carried out by travestis in this context. Displacement, therefore, indicates both movement and action: A way of being in the world, a way of building relationships and constructing oneself.

In addition to geographical displacements, the transvestites displayed many other orders of displacements in meaning and significance. These displacements are not only contextual projects of the individuals, but intrinsic to and a component of the relationships in that context. As a result, *travestis* move through cities that are not usually mentioned in studies about *travestis*, transsexuals, and even homosexualities. As Nascimento (2018) reminds us, most research on these subjects focuses on capitals and metropolitan regions, presenting them as typically urban phenomena - but an “urban” that is closely associated with metropolises.

Hélio Silva (1993; 1996; 2007), seeking to understand the relationship between a *travesti* identity and society, showed that, in big cities, *travestis* no longer needed to hide, as they did until the mid-1980s. In the 1990s, a series of works directly associated *travestis*, prostitution and metropolises, claiming it to be a phenomenon specific to big cities (Oliveira, 1997; Pirani, 1997; Jayme, 2001; Kulick, 2008; Florentino, 1998).

Since the early 2000s, research on *travestis* has diversified its themes, addressing issues related to the construction of the body, identity and sexuality, generational differences, migration, forms of violence, etc. (Benedetti, 2012; Carrara & Vianna, 2006; Bento, 2006; Teixeira, 2011; Duque, 2011; Siqueira, 2009; Lima, 2009; Leite Jr., 2011). However, these works still focused on and carried out their research in large cities. Only after 2005 has research about *travestis* started to include medium-sized cities and the northeast of Brazil (Vale, 2005; Maia, 2006; Nascimento, 2014b; Patrício, 2008; Pelúcio, 2009; Cardozo, 2009; Guerra, 2015).

The *travestis* I have worked with move around a variety of cities, no matter how big or small, whether they are capitals or in the countryside, or whether there is a preference for the main capitals of the country. Thus, the three cities where I conducted fieldwork (São Carlos/SP, Franca/SP and Campo Grande/MS),<sup>5</sup> between the years 2016 and 2020, seem to be somewhat different from the landscapes featured in the main works in the field, which focused on capital cities and metropolitan regions.<sup>6</sup> The displacements happen without needing a project, or even any previous planning, nor through built, stable and organized networks. During these geographical displacements, many other displacements are experienced – related to relationships, bodies, and gender,<sup>7</sup> thus highlighting the condition of constant displacement as a way of being in the world for these *travestis*.

Ethnography helped us realize that *travestis* do not move in order to modify their bodies, or to construct a gender identity, or to acquire material and symbolic goods, for the sake of distinction, or solely and exclusively to work. All of these things occur during displacements, but not as an ultimate purpose and/or goal. The high level of creativity and sophistication of the *travestis* is remarkable, making it evident that there is no simple and direct relationship between displacement and work, that is, one does not travel only to work.

4 Evans Pritchard (1978), when observing the Nuer, pointed out the importance of being aware of the movement, dynamism, and displacements of people. The renewed studies of the Manchester School (Feldman-Bianco, 1987) addressed the displacements, analyzing the new urban logics arising from the displacement of populations - the “undesirables”, “nationless” people without rights due to wars, exile and other forms of violence, mainly in Asia and Africa (for example, the camps in Dadaab, northeastern Kenya, filled with Somali, Sudanese and Ethiopian refugees).

5 This work was funded by CAPES (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel) and FAPESP (São Paulo Research Foundation); process n° 2016/08210-2.

6 The “choice” of these cities was based on empirical motivations. That is, by following my interlocutors, I arrived to these cities. There was no previous planning. What defines a capital city, a country town, whether a city is small or medium-sized, is a static classification that dialogues with institutional, political and administrative orderings, and which is external to the *travestis*. The cities, for them, are also built through their displacements. This gives rise to a reflection on a possible “*travesti* city”, but it would be necessary to present another ethnographic approach to consolidate this argument, and more elaborate analytical twists that are not the purpose of this study.

7 The mechanisms and relations created by *travestis* to carry out their geographical as well as body-gender displacements are beyond the scope of this article. I intend to address them soon in another publication.

There is also no established causality between bodily transitions and sex markets, i.e., they do not modify their bodies as a function of a ruthless imposition of the market. There are *clients*<sup>8</sup> who appreciate specific shapes and bodies, but *travestis* do not modify their bodies solely and exclusively to please their clients. There is still no correlation between the displacements and the transitions of the bodies, which means that the *travestis* do not travel to modify their bodies or plan a course that is aimed at this purpose.

The dimension of work comes into view, since I conducted my field research while they were working. However, I emphasize that the *travestis* are not limited to the work or to the specificity of the activity they perform, which would place them in a presumably precarious situation that would require them to constantly move around. Thus, what I highlight is their way of understanding and being in the world, which involves not only economic aspects, but multiple orders of intertwined relations in life. If work can be one of the reasons for the displacements, it is fundamental to understand work as an integral part of life, not as a determining infrastructure that produces all the other relations.

With that in mind, what follows in this article is an effort to portray the displacements carried out by *travestis* in a particular context, so as to capture the complexity of their movements, highlighting the ingenuity, depth, and intelligence of my interlocutors. I argue that these displacements occur continuously, as parts in a perpetual motion machine, which reuses indefinitely the energy generated by its own movement. I use this metaphor in order to help the reader visualize the displacements as movement and action, and a way of being in the world.

This article presents the geographical displacements and relations through ethnographic accounts that highlight the displacements witnessed in Campo Grande (MS) between 2016 and 2020. Then I propose that the displacements understood as being in perpetual motion find dialogue with the so-called “mobility turn” (Freire-Medeiros and Lages, 2020) and with recent anthropological productions, such as that of Silvana Nascimento (2014a; 2014b) on the “interstitial places” that allow for the existence of a way of life during displacement; also, that of Guedes (2013) and Machado (2014a; 2014b), who present the idea of “mobility as value” and regard movement as a producer of differences. With this, I hope to offer some contribution to the field of “anthropology of mobilities” (Souza and Guedes, 2021: 09).

## Geographical displacements

At first, it is possible to understand the “*never settling down*” and “*never tying oneself down to one place*” as a sign that *travestis* do not stay for long periods in the same city. Moreover, we can see that there are displacements of various intensities and lengths in the context of *travestis* involved in sex markets. The following displacements will be presented through ethnographic accounts, emphasizing the expressions “*never settling down*” and “*never tying oneself down to one place*” in particular, highlighting the displacement as a way of being in the world - not as a function, or as something planned, or the result of a project that sets routes and goals, but as perpetual motion, that is, both producing and being the product of relationships.

I met Natasha in São Carlos (SP) at a time when things were not going very well for her. On a hot Thursday night, I went with Raabe to a bar called “De Ponta Cabeça”<sup>9</sup>, and we saw Natasha unconscious, lying on a line of chairs at the back of the establishment. We used my car to take her to the house in which she was staying, and made sure she was going to be okay. The aid was completely unselfish, but from that day on Natasha and I established a relationship. The next day I found a message from her on Facebook thanking me for the gesture.

8 The common expression used by *travestis* to refer to the activity they performed was *programa* (the act of having a sexual encounter and receiving payment for it), and the people who requested the *programas* were called *clientes* (clients) or *mariconas*, depending on the sexual preference of the client. *Mariconas* are “male” clients who enjoy being penetrated by a *travesti*.

9 Portuguese for “Upside Down” (TN).



When I looked for her again to resume my fieldwork, I was very well received, “*You helped me the other day, so I am going to help you now*”.

Natasha was born in Campo Grande (MS), is 36 years old and has been working in the sex markets for about fifteen years. In the beginning, according to her, “*she hadn’t become a travesti yet*”, she only took “*female hormones*” and performed as a “*Drag Queen/transvestite*” at nightclubs for the LGBTQIA+ public in Campo Grande. Because she had relatives in Dourados (MS) (about 230km from Campo Grande) and knew Flávia, one of the oldest *travestis* in the city, she went there to spend some time working.

Flávia was born in Aquidauana, another city in the countryside of Mato Grosso do Sul, but she was in Dourados (MS) for Natasha’s debut in the sex markets. Flávia, a friend of Vera’s (one of the *travestis* who manage houses that provide accommodation to *travestis* in the city of São Carlos), said that the “*novata*”<sup>10</sup> would do well in São Carlos, that the city was good and she would make a decent amount of money there. Natasha says that Flávia “*persuaded me. I went to Campo Grande, packed my bags, grabbed all the things I needed and, on January 7th 2013, I think, I went to São Carlos, me and a friend of mine*”.

Natasha was a friend of Raabe’s; our meeting was fortuitous and took place in a situation where she needed help. However, from this meeting came a relationship of reciprocity and an invitation to visit her hometown. The trip from São Carlos (SP) to Campo Grande (MS) took a little more than 12 hours of naps interrupted by numerous bus stops. It was hot, and at 7 a.m. the sun was already out and strong. I had forgotten about the one-hour difference between our different time zones, and woke up Natasha with messages announcing my arrival. Our conversation was brief, and we agreed to meet on the *Streets* at night.

At the agreed location, after waiting for 10 minutes, I saw Natasha getting out of a car and walking towards the corner where I was waiting for her. She was wearing a short basic black dress, high-heeled sandals, and was carrying a handbag. At the intersection of 7 de Setembro St. and 14 de Julho St., in the city center, we greeted each other. She quickly told me about how things worked on the *Streets*, how the space was divided, its dangers, conveniences, schedules, and people. The conversation flowed as if we had just seen each other a few days before. We laughed, we remembered the day when we first met and I learned that, in São Carlos (SP), after the third month of her stay, things had not been so great: “*Many negative things happened to me in Sanca [São Carlos (SP)] and that is why I’ve never returned*”. According to her, she had gotten “*involved with the wrong people*”, and she’d had problems and a minor altercation with the *travesti* running the house that offered room rentals to those coming from other cities - or “*de fora*”<sup>11</sup>, as she would say.

In Campo Grande (MS), Natasha and I met every night. We’d talk on the street corner, either standing or sitting on the steps of a store that closed at night. On occasion, we would walk to a bar on Fernando Corrêa da Costa Av. (two blocks down) to grab a drink, then we’d go back. My presence did not disturb or scare away the customers; when she went away for a *programa*, I would either stand on the corner talking to other *travestis* and male prostitutes, or I’d walk around the area.

Campo Grande is the capital of the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, with 885,000 inhabitants, according to the latest census by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). It is situated in the south of the Midwest region of Brazil. Besides the fact that the capital is geographically close to the Brazilian border with Paraguay and Bolivia, the state of Mato Grosso do Sul is also home to a large indigenous population composed of various ethnicities (atikum, guarani kaiowá, guarani ñandeva, guató, kadiwéu, kinqinau, ofaié, and terena), and this all results in a great variety of accents, cultural exchanges, and plenty of clients.

<sup>10</sup> Portuguese for “newcomer” (TN).

<sup>11</sup> Portuguese for “from outside” (TN).

This city is the main reference for education, business, and leisure for many smaller towns in the region. The flow of goods, money and people is constant, and this is why there are customers for the sex markets every night. However, it is important to point out that the customers are not just people from other places. On Wednesday nights, for example, the “market” becomes very busy, and most of the clients are young men from Campo Grande (MS) who are involved in stable relationships, and therefore act so as to keep their business with the *travestis* a secret, “*Little do they know, their girlfriends, because they’re over there, suspecting nothing, while their men lie about watching the game with their buddies, okay? So the guys take a picture, they send their girls a selfie, and then go crazy behind their backs. I’ll just be at this or that place with the boys’, they say, ‘Nothing special, no big deal’, right? And they go out thinking they’ll hook up with a girl, but end up hooking up with a travesti. That’s how it is*”, revealed Natasha, explaining the way many of her clients deceive their partners and friends.

The sex market services offered on the Streets in Campo Grande (MS) can be found at several locations at night: along the Costa e Silva Avenue - from Vila Olinda up to just outside the city center; in some blocks of Calarge Street - in the Vila Glória neighborhood, in particular next to the Vespasiano Martins State School; around the bus station (even if only on occasion); in some parts of Julio de Castilho Avenue and downtown, where Natasha usually is, close to the Ary Coelho Square, at the corner of 7 de Setembro St. with 14 de Julho St., as previously mentioned.

The city center, during the day, is mostly busy with commercial activities and services. There is an abundance of street commerce on the sidewalks, stores with popular prices and a “*camelódromo*” - a building constructed by the city government to house most of these street traders and which takes on the aspect of a “popular market”, with clothing and shoe stores as well as a large supply of mobile phones and related products (covers, chargers, headphones etc.). During weekdays, the flow of people and the volume of purchases does not seem so great. One gets the impression of an “old city center”, forgotten or ignored<sup>12</sup>, especially when one walks down the Afonso Pena Avenue, leaving the square towards the Campo Grande Shopping Mall and Parque das Nações Indígenas. The urban landscape changes along this route. In the neighborhoods Jardim dos Estados and Santa Fé, there are designer fashion stores, bank offices, a SESC unit, fast food outlets and, as previously mentioned, the mall and the park.

The Ary Coelho Square occupies an entire block in the city center and has four bus stops, one for each of the surrounding streets: 15 de Novembro St., 14 de Julho St., 13 de Maio St., and Afonso Pena Avenue. It is usually where cultural events take place but, despite being well lit at night, it stays empty, merely a place for people to pass through, most of the time. If, during the day, the city center is busy with commercial activity, the same can be said about it at night, when it is occupied by people who work in the sex markets. In addition to the sex workers, there are also drug users and sellers, especially near the church cathedral of Nossa Senhora da Abadia e Santo Antônio.

In the city center, *travestis* usually can be found in the area southwest of the Ary Coelho Square, especially along the streets 15 de Novembro, 7 de Setembro and 26 de Agosto. The male prostitutes tend to stay in the area south of the square, between the streets 14 de Julho and 13 de Maio. The women, in turn, usually go southeast, past 13 de Maio Street. These separations, although generally agreed upon, are not set in stone. It is not uncommon, for instance, to see male prostitutes in the company of *travestis*. Women circulate less frequently outside their “territories”, although that does happen as well.

In the area occupied by women, *travestis* and male prostitutes, there is only one small bar and a street food cart on the corner of 15 de Novembro St. with 14 de Julho St., in front of the square. On a Wednesday night, at around 11:30 pm, I had a snack on the corner while listening to the male prostitutes chatting about rap and

<sup>12</sup> In August 2018, the city government, in partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank, launched a “downtown revitalization” project. The project was extensive, and it was designed to last 5 years, promising to completely change the layout of downtown Campo Grande, e.g., by moving pole-supported overhead power and telephone cables underground. The main goal of the project was to build sidewalks and pedestrianize the city center.

waiting for Natasha to return from a show. That night, I requested that we record an interview. The more formal conversation allowed me to ask certain questions that, during our normal daily interactions, did not feel very appropriate. I asked, for example, about the dynamics of the *Streets*, their spatial divisions and the categorization of bodies, in addition to seeking to better understand the displacements.

In Campo Grande (MS), as in São Carlos (SP), the places occupied in the city are called the *Streets*. However, in the latter, occupations by *travestis*, as previously mentioned, take place only in the area along Getúlio Vargas Avenue, which is divided into “*frente*” (front), “*trás*” (back), “*dentro*” (inside), “*fundo*” (bottom) and “*baixo*” (lower). In the capital of Mato Grosso do Sul, however, there is not just one region that is regarded as the *Streets*. Thus, divisions are made all over the city. Besides female and male prostitutes, the city center is usually occupied by the younger *travestis* (aged 18 to 22 years old) who wear more clothes to work. Around the bus station and along Costa e Silva Avenue are the young *travestis* who wear less clothing, and the older ones (over 50 years old). “*The most ‘cacura’, the oldest ones who’ve ever lived here stay there*”. “*Cacura?*”, I ask. “*Yes. The really old ones, the walking fossils*” [laughter]. The *travestis* working along Júlio Castilho Avenue are older too (over 40), except that they are more “dressed up”. “*The older girls are all so shapely, you know? Like the old-school travestis, like Vera. The ones over there at Julio de Castilho, they are the ones who dress up more, like drag queens, right?*”. Finally, according to Natasha, the ones that hang out at Calarge Street are mostly drug users.

The *travestis* who come to the city have many different origins. Most of them come from the countryside of Mato Grosso do Sul and other states. This offers confirmation to our initial perception and to our dialogue with the existing literature, which affirms that there is a close relationship between mobility and the sex markets, as well as displacements and the *travestis*. Even the *travestis* who are “from the city” and who were there during the time when I conducted my fieldwork, reported numerous experiences with displacements.

After this first visit to Campo Grande (MS), I traveled back to São Carlos (SP), but we agreed that I would soon return. We kept in touch, but Natasha postponed the new meeting several times, frustrating my attempts. My intention was to expand the observation to other regions of the city occupied by *travestis* but, when I finally managed to return to Campo Grande (MS), I remained restricted to the downtown area – not because I wanted to, but because Natasha dodged all my requests that we go to other areas together<sup>13</sup>. I thought it would not be wise to go alone for two reasons: The fear of not being welcomed (because I had not been recommended by anyone), and the fear of causing some unpleasantness with those who had invited me to be in town.

## Displacements of relationships

During the nights we would meet and hang out on the *Streets*. Sometimes early, from around 8 pm to 1 am, or later, starting at around 10 pm and saying our good nights at 3 in the morning. Once, while we were sitting on the steps of a closed store, a *travesti* approached and greeted Natasha. They were friends who had not seen each other for some time. Virgínia didn’t even wait to be introduced and told me that she had spent some time in the city of São Paulo, which was the reason she had been “missing”. She was thinking of working with other things, she’d had a job interview for a snack bar, and later that week she was going to go through a selection process for a clothing store. According to her, the position at the snack bar had already been secured, but working at the store would be better. Curiously, in the course of the conversation - which went into the

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<sup>13</sup> There is an unspoken agreement concerning the occupation of spaces in cities by those who offer *programas* on the *Streets*. I believe that, because of this, Natasha avoided going to other places. In a previous work (Rodrigues, 2019), I addressed issues related to the creation, occupation, uses, disputes and appropriation of spaces in the sex markets in São Carlos (SP), dialoguing with categories such as *the turf* (Magnani, 2012) and the *Code-territory* (Perlongher, 1987). It would be interesting, at another time, to expand and deepen a specific reflection about Campo Grande (MS), taking also into account recent contributions on sex markets, prostitution and sex work in Campo Grande (Passamani, Rosa and Lopes, 2020).

early hours of the morning, as they shared memories, laughed, exchanged thoughts on the next edition of the “miss gay” contest, and complained that the Streets were not “busy enough” that night - Virgínia asked “Do you know anyone in Rio Preto? São José do Rio Preto?”. After I told her I didn’t, she continued, “I want to go there, but I don’t know anyone in the city anymore. Luciana Close used to live there, but she’s gone to Italy with Rafa. She once told me that it was nice there, but I still would like to go with someone I know to see for myself”. “But didn’t you get a job?” asked Natasha, to which Virgínia replied, “And why should a job stop me from traveling?”.

One Friday, early in the evening, I texted Natasha to find out what time we would be meeting on the Streets. We exchanged a few messages and, at first, we were not going to see each other because she was going to spend the night with a client - which was not surprising, it had happened before. However, after two hours, she texted me saying that she was going to be free at around 1:00 am and she intended to return to the Streets, despite the late hour. After this, she offered to take me somewhere, to a party called “Join”. I had rented a car that day, intending to drive around all the areas occupied by *travestis* and confirm the information I had been given. I told Natasha about my plan, but she was less than thrilled about it: “Going to these places may not be a good idea because, in general, the *travestis* from Costa are the oldest in town, and they don’t like interviews, that kind of thing. They are very reserved, you know? And on Calarge, the queers over there are, like, drug users, and so on. Some of them, right? Others aren’t, but they don’t like to give interviews either, not when they’re working”. However, since we were going to meet at a late hour and I had already rented the car, I went against her recommendation and drove around the city.

Indeed, on Costa e Silva Avenue and near the Bus Station there were young *travestis* wearing little clothing - or very little, putting their bare breasts and buttocks on display; a few older *travestis* could be seen as well. On Júlio de Castilho I also saw *travestis* who were very well “dressed up”, but I cannot say if they were older than those who occupied the city center. On Calarge Street, I saw few of them and, concerning those who I was able to observe, it was not possible to say whether they were using any kind of substance, as Natasha had suggested. In the downtown area, however, while walking near the church cathedral of Nossa Senhora da Abadia e Santo Antônio, and as Natasha was away with a client, more than once I was offered cocaine and crack by drug dealers.

Just before 1 am, I found Natasha visibly drunk. She jumped into the car, greeting me excitedly, “What kind of car is this? Shall we go for a drive?”. In her hands was a small plastic bottle of brandy, “Oh, sorry. I’m drunk. The Streets are dead tonight, I went with just that one”, she was referring to the client she had told me about earlier. While I was driving, not knowing where we were going, we kept talking. Very agitated, she asked if I could turn my mobile phone into a wi-fi router. At the time, I had no idea how to do that, but she borrowed my phone and was able to access the internet on her device through mine. She sent a voice message to a friend, letting her know we were going to “Join” (the party). “Stay out front and wait. We’re coming, bitch! I’m going with a friend of mine”. After she was done with the message, she started teaching me the way to the party. On the way, I asked if her “husband” would be joining us at the party. We had talked on the phone before this trip, and she had told me about this “boy”, a male prostitute who also worked in the downtown area. However, I learned at that moment that they were no longer together, “he cheated on me with a trans woman! These days he’s hooked on the rock [crack]. I don’t care about that piece of trash anymore!”, and that is how she gave me an update on her marital status.

On Ernesto Geisel Avenue she took a quick sip of cognac and started feeling sick. I stopped the vehicle. She opened the door and got out of the car to take some air and try and recover. She came back into the car, closed the door and realized that she was not well: “Please take me downtown. I’m really sorry”. We went back downtown. At a hotel near the Santo Antônio church, she asked me to stop, because she was friends with the receptionist. She went in, freshened up a little, and returned slightly more composed, smoking a cigarette. “I think it’s better if you leave me right here”. We weren’t going to the party anymore.

Even though I was worried, I left her and went back to the place where I was staying. I tried to get in touch with her through phone calls and messages. No success. At around 3:30 am I returned to the Streets but could not find her. The only news was that she had gotten into a gray (or silver) car and had not yet returned. In the morning (at about 7:00 am), Natasha answered my messages, saying that she was fine. According to her, she had been up all night. She apologized and said that we should meet at night, and go to another party together (one called “*Corrida das Drags*”), where there would be a drag queen contest and she was going to be a judge. However, in the middle of the afternoon, she told me that I would have to represent her at “*Corrida das Drags*” because she had gotten into a fight, was “*all bruised up*” and would no longer be going to the party. She referred me to Andromeda Black (one of the drag queens organizing the event) and put us in touch by phone.

Andromeda Black was very receptive, but showed some irritation when I arrived alone, because Natasha had not confirmed her absence: “*You can’t trust travestis, they always blow us off*”, complained the drag queen all dressed in yellow (wearing extremely high heels, stockings and a tight dress). Then, she told me I could not be a judge, because nobody there knew me and this could cause a stir among the participants. According to Andromeda, appointing Natasha as one of the judges was intended as a way of recognizing and honoring her. She had been one of the “pioneers” among the city’s Drag Queens, before becoming a *travesti*. “*Practically all of them became travestis*”, Andromeda added<sup>14</sup>.

“*Corrida das Drags*” is organized by drag queens from the city and surrounding region. It consists in showing an episode of the series/reality show RuPaul’s Drag Race (hence the name “*Corrida das Drags*” - which is Portuguese for “drag race”, a literal translation intended as a joke, “*but nobody’s racing anyone here, please remain calm*”, explained Andromeda, laughing), then a performance by one of the competing drag queens, the judges’ assessment, and then a performance by a guest drag queen. The party has an itinerant character, the number of editions following the number of episodes of the TV series, and with each new season the event is held at some performance venue or nightclub in the city. On this occasion, the event was being held at a venue called “*Resista!*”, located in the downtown area, in front of “*Orla Ferroviária*”<sup>15</sup>. The house, whose events are mainly geared towards an “underground audience”, with more emphasis on rock/metal/death/trash/grind bands, has been the best house in town for “*Corrida das Drags*”, “*even better than the gay and LGBTQIA+ nightclubs*”, said Andromeda.

The heat in Campo Grande (MS) gave no respite, even at the end of summer. At about 8 pm, an episode of RuPaul’s Drag Race was played on a big screen inside “*Resista!*”, but many preferred to stay outside on the sidewalk, chatting, drinking and hoping for a breeze to cool off a little. The highlight of the evening were the performances by the drags “Pam Venus” and “Rafa Spears”. They presented their performances to a good and lively audience that went back outside as soon as the performances were over. The sound was loud and the party was happening more outside than inside the venue. That is, until the police arrived.

The police had been called because someone had reported that minors were consuming alcohol at “*Orla Ferroviária*”; the treatment dispensed by the police officers, however, was highly excessive. They arrived with several cars, motorcycles, emergency lights on, sirens blaring, jumping out of their cars with guns in their hands, spreading panic and terror. The young people started to run. We, who were on the sidewalk on the opposite side of the street, only stood there watching, but it didn’t take long for an officer to arrive and “ask”

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<sup>14</sup> I learned from Andromeda that there had been an important Drag Queens movement at the end of the first decade of 2000, in the capital city of the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, and that practically all the drags from that time are now *travestis*, most of them working in the sex markets. It would be interesting to conduct a study on this specific displacement (from drag to *travesti*). However, during my fieldwork, this information was isolated and without recurrence. Because of this, I do not have enough elements for further development.

<sup>15</sup> This square was built on the old location of Campo Grande’s railroad tracks. The space is part of a “cultural corridor” next to the city’s *Horto Florestal* (a municipal nursery), *Mercadão Municipal* (a wholesale produce market), *Camelódromo*, and *Orla Morena*.

us to disperse. The doors of the house were then shut, and we dispersed. I was invited to resume the party at another nightclub (“Sis Lounge”, located near Campo Grande Shopping Mall), but I chose to look for Natasha on the Streets, instead. Without success.

In two days, the flow of information as well as the changes in behaviors, plans, relationships and commitments had been fast and intense. First, Natasha and I were not going to meet - then, yes, we were, but the scheduled time changed several times; then, the invitation to go to “Join”, Natasha’s breakup, no longer going to “Join”, Natasha’s disappearance, the invitation to be a judge at “Corrida das Drags”, Natasha getting into a fight, then refusing to show up at “Corrida das Drags” and, finally, my (denied) nomination as a judge in a drag queens contest. This dynamic is not episodic. The difficulties in finding people again, scheduling meetings, fixing schedules, along with changes in relationships, plans and behavior, these are all added to the heterogeneity and spontaneity of the displacements.

This whole scenario supports the idea of constant movement in its context. However, the displacements are of various kinds, and they are not circumscribed or limited only to geographical displacements with the sole purpose of finding work. In particular, I have so far highlighted how there are changes and originalities in the displacements themselves, which could be expressed as “displacements within displacements”, that is, displacements of relations within the geographic-spatial displacements. This idea of “displacements within displacements” is expressed without moral valuation, considering the displacements as being explainable in themselves, or even as not being the opposite of stability, and especially not taking stability as a desired presupposition.

## Perpetual Motion

Recently, Candice Vidal e Souza and André Dumans Guedes, along with other researchers from different ethnographic contexts and subjects, have reflected on “what is and what could turn out to be an anthropology of mobilities” (Souza and Guedes, 2021: 09). The idea is that mobilities are not only central as constitutive of worlds. Thus, they recognize that these mobilities are a legitimate and prolific object of anthropology as an academic discipline. And they demonstrate how spatial displacements and movements have a central place in the lives of their interlocutors, and in how these people conceive and express such mobilities.

This anthropology of mobilities carries out a dialogue with the so-called “mobility turn”, which configures an epistemic shift institutionalized in the early twenty-first century (Freire-Medeiros and Lages, 2020), thinking of mobilities as constituting an analytical perspective to study entangled phenomena of movement, representations and practices. In this epistemic turn we find mobility studies with a critique of migration studies. The critique of mobility studies is elaborated on the basis of the contrariety of analyses that oppose mobility and sedentarism, taking the latter as the norm (Schiller and Salazar, 2012).

Working with this contrasting pair can lead to the victimization, stigmatization, and condemnation of sex workers and prostitution, as it can lead to the assumption that *travestis* move compulsively because they lack options or opportunities. It may still suggest that they are not endowed with agency and the capacity for personal calculations, intellectual elaborations, and the creation of a way of being in the world. As exposed in the ethnographic report, Virgínia, when expressing her desire to get to know São José do Rio Preto (SP), did not express despair or suffer from lack of opportunities.<sup>16</sup> Adriana Piscitelli (2013), on the migrations and mobilities of Brazilian sex workers to Europe, points out the empirical tensions and tactical choices that problematize the hyper-sexualization, victimization, and vulnerability that is always associated with these women.

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<sup>16</sup> It is important to point out that I am not disregarding transphobia, the killing of transgender people, and the unemployment rate among *travestis* and transgender people, which is more than double the national average (Benevides and Nogueira, 2021); I am only emphasizing that displacements have no direct causal relationship with this condition.

Another effect of working with the binomial mobility-sedentarism is that of taking sedentarism as the norm. This leads to looking at people who are on the move as morally inferior. Moreover, as Liisa Malkki (1992) suggests, considering sedentarism as the rule can lead to problematic analytical consequences, as identities end up tied to territorialities, making it difficult to analyze “displaced and uprooted” people (Malkki, 1992).

According to Malkki (1992), naturalizing the linking of people to places produces a territorializing logic that is fed by botanically inspired metaphors in the form of arborescent roots, creating what she calls “metaphysical sedentarism” (Malkki, 1992:34). According to the author, sedentarism is taken for granted in our culture, to the point of being invisible, reflected in language and social practices, which look at displacement as pathological. Also according to Malkki (1992), these assumptions on sedentarism define displacement not as a fact within a social context, but as an internal, pathological condition of the displaced.

Raabe, Natasha, Virgínia and so many other travestis who displace themselves are neither morally inferior nor have any pathological condition. They present a way of being in the world that offers us the possibility of thinking about the complex relationships between mobilities and inertias, relationships between people, migratory regimes, and even identities, as Schiller and Salazar (2012) point out.

According to Gupta and Ferguson (2000), people who are on the move do not have “less identity” or “less culture. On the contrary, these people reterritorialize the spaces through which they move, producing cultural differences that can be rightly thought of as linked to the experience of constant displacement. However, despite being important and interesting, these approaches still take displacement as a function or consequence of the changes that occurred in the world at the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st (Hannerz, 1994; Glick Schiller, 2015). And I believe that the ethnographic account presented here helps to minimally question whether the displacements of *travestis* are consonant with or resulting from the condition of the world in the twenty-first century.

Recent literature on *travestis* addresses issues concerning displacement and its implications. Kulick (2008) mentions in passing the existence of a migratory flow of *travestis* since the 1970s, with France as the preferred destination until 1982. For authors like Silva (1993), the trip to Europe means something more than a cosmopolitan experience, by crossing political and symbolic borders. And following a vision based on the logic of distinction, the author emphasizes that these countries offer dollars, foreign language, and refinement.

Teixeira (2008) also points out that the displacement from Brazil to Europe is a recurring theme, that the experience in the sex markets and the dream of working in Europe are part of the universe of the *travestis*, creating a world of possibilities for social ascension. She also highlights that the migration of *travestis* is not linked to poverty, but to hopes for a better life.

This focus on the motivations for traveling to Europe resembles the work of Julieta Vartabedian (2012, 2014). According to the author, Brazilian *travestis* who have traveled and are traveling to Europe have a migratory project, referred to by her as “trans migration”. Vartabedian claims that not only do they migrate seeking greater social, symbolic, and economic well-being, but also their geographical mobilizations affect the way they transform and beautify their bodies.

Larissa Pelúcio (2009) states that this migratory flow of *travestis* is accentuated in the 1980s and 1990s, establishing Italy as a main destination. She highlights what Margareth Rago (1989) had made evident: the link between immigration and sex work. The author calls attention to displacement as constitutive of *travestility*, and necessary in the construction of the sex market.

As pointed out by Piscitelli (2009), research on sex markets shows that the people who work there are rarely included in academic studies on migration but, when they are, they appear in the role of victims. In fact, studies on the migrations of *travestis* are rare. The very expression “sex tourism” and related studies ignore several modalities of travel in search of homo sex (Luongo, 2000). With regard to human trafficking, there are some similarities because, before 2005, according to the law, sex corresponded to gender.

Thus, *travestis* were considered men and, therefore, outside the legal scope of this type of trafficking (Teixeira, 2008).

I highlight the importance of the works of Kulick (2008), Silva (1993), Teixeira (2008), Vartabedian (2012; 2014) and Pelúcio (2009). However, the contrast made here by varying ethnographic contexts offers a contribution that brings displacement to the center of the debate. It is possible to challenge these works by pointing out that Natasha, for example, has never traveled outside of Brazil, nor has she shown any interest in doing so. Furthermore, her displacements between Campo Grande (MS), Dourados (MS), São Carlos (SP), and those within the capital city of the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, were not motivated by the need to cross political and symbolic borders, the hope for a better life, or body beautification.

What I have argued, based on my fieldwork, is that, in order to understand the various orders of displacements among *travestis*, it is necessary to understand these movements as a perpetual motion, that is, not as determined by socio-spatial imperatives that would necessarily lead to the displacements from one place to another, in search of something; much less as something exceptional, which regards sedentarism as metaphysics or a project of the person - a project that regulates life and expectations, supported by a set of precepts or norms recognized as moral values. Thus, displacement does not relate with the idea of function in the mechanical sense. Function is understood here in the sense that there is an “organic” correspondence between social institutions and, due to the supposed need for social organization, pre-existing units. Such units would make possible the necessary conditions for the existence of a social whole and the way in which individuals would move about in it.

As previously stated, a common assumption, when it comes to thinking about migration, is the assumption of movement as a critical event, exceptional, “accidental,” secondary, or derived in relation to stability (Malkki, 1992). However, it is possible to notice, in the context of *travestis* in the sex market, that the “in between” is also inhabitable (Guedes, 2013: 32). Something analogous to that was posited by Gloria Anzaldúa (2007), who proposed a new identity for the marginalized female subject who was born and lived in mobile, polyphonic and hybrid spaces on the Mexico-United States border. *Travestis*, in the context here presented, as well as the “new mestiza,” a classification given by Anzaldúa for this counter-hegemonic border identity, prove that it is possible to live in “in-between places”, or “places of passage.”

A similar argument is presented by Silvana Nascimento (2014a, 2014b) when looking into the histories and sociabilities of *travestis*, transsexuals and drag artists in the state of Paraíba, revealing the occurrence of networks of relationships that cross municipalities and cities at various scales. The author calls these displacements between cities in the northern coastal microregion of Paraíba an “interstitial place”, and sheds light on the constant movement of people and things that enables the existence of a way of life during the displacements.

According to Nascimento (2014a), this way of life is only possible in an interstitial territory, between the countryside and the capital, between the backlands and the coast. “A way of life that is expressed on the road, in the literal and metaphorical senses, in an interstitial space that is constituted on the edges of metropolitan regions” (Nascimento, 2014a: 70). However, despite the metaphorization of this way of life, it is still tied, according to the author, to a territorial location. Even when the so-called in-between places (or smaller cities) are spaces located near major cities, they still provide a strategic location for the circulation of people. That is, in a way, Nascimento’s “interstitial place” is linked to being a “place of passage” for truck drivers, workers, students, and other travelers.

It is the author herself who states that it is the constant movement of spaces that makes possible the existence of this way of life for cis women and *travestis* who find subsistence in the sex markets (Nascimento, 2014a: 71). From this, stems the thought that being on the physical fringes of large cities underlies the displacements and way of life in interstitial places. According to Nascimento (2014a), the way of life in the interstitial places,



in the microregion of the northern coast of Paraíba, is similar to that of Perlongher's (2005) "nomad", as "the nomad establishes locations, but never stops moving around, drifting" (Perlongher, 2008: 247). According to the author, these drifts are guided by the desire to perform a sexual act in exchange for a payment or symbolic enjoyment from clients – or from other professionals or flirts also involved in the sex markets.

The way of being in the world evidenced by Natasha, Raabe and Virgínia, with their displacements, does not depend on their being in marginal territories or in those that offer strategic conditions for the circulation of people and goods. Although Campo Grande (MS) is a capital city, it has no close or direct relationship with São Carlos (SP), Franca (SP), or São José do Rio Preto (SP). Nor do these *travestis* carry out their displacements guided by sexual desire or material and symbolic exchanges. The creation and satisfaction of desires, as well as the exchanges and relationships occur during the displacements, not because of or motivated by them.

Thinking about displacement as a way of being in the world also makes it possible to dialogue with at least two other recent Brazilian anthropological studies. Namely, that of "mobility as value", presented by Guedes (2013), and that of Machado (2014a, 2014b), who considers movement to be a generator of differences. Interestingly, there is a certain confluence in both approaches, even though they are from entirely different ethnographic contexts.

André Dumans Guedes (2013), when discussing "movements" and "durations" in the north of the state of Goiás, links classic works on popular groups and peasantry in Brazil to his extensive fieldwork, demonstrating that "movement" and "wandering" are part of a historical characteristic of many popular and rural human groups in Brazil, and not exceptional things – or the product of structural conditions. Guedes (2013) takes this historical characteristic into account to create a native theory on "movements" and "durations", mobilities and permanences that fully permeate the lives and trajectories of these subjects.

The author presents mobility as the source of a code that informs the organization of social space in various spheres, thinking of migration not as a concept, but diluted in a set of phenomena. His argument moves towards thinking of mobility as a code that not only refers to factual or objective displacements, but one that informs the way people think and attribute meaning to the world in which they live (Guedes, 2013: 38).

When talking about "movements" and "durations," Guedes (2013) focuses on the intensities of movements that are constant, even during permanences, because movements are not only physical-geographical, but a code. In an interesting way, this conflicts with the way I have presented the displacements of *travestis*. The author does not consider displacements only from an empirical point of view, but he considers mobilities as a value of his interlocutors – just as, for Natasha, there is no teleology of the movements from Campo Grande (MS) to Dourados (MS) or from Campo Grande (MS) to São Carlos (SP), and vice-versa. Just as there is a "culture of movements" among Guedes' interlocutors, there is a "no settling down" culture among *travestis* which can be read as a perpetual motion.

In another context, Igor Renó Machado (2014a) explores numerous ethnographic examples in order to demonstrate different dimensions of movements. From the transitions of a family from the countryside to an urban area in Minas Gerais, to experiences of mobility within a rural neighborhood in the south of the same state, to international migrations of Brazilians to Portugal, to people from Valadares migrating to other countries. Machado (2014a) draws a connection between movement and kinship, reflecting on the production of socialities based on the movement of people across different spaces which acts as a qualifier and producer of socialities.

Machado (2014b) presents movements as a generators of infinitesimal differences, as catalysts of transformations in the orders of kinship and as a potentializer of new entanglements created from new lines that are cast in time and space. According to the author, there is a movement to produce one's own kinship and, at the same time, the movement implies changes in the relationships among the members of a family.

Just as, in some contexts, movement can entail transformations in kinship structures and be an effect of its determinations (Machado, 2014b), in the context of *travestis* it is possible to think of displacement as a producer of socialities. That is, displacements express the ways in which people are in a process of becoming through relationships (Strathern, 2006), and geographical and spatial displacements themselves are both products and producers of these relationships. I will now turn to ethnographic accounts to try and make clearer the parallel I have drawn. Natasha's displacements from Campo Grande (MS) to Dourados (MS) and then to São Carlos (SP) are products of the relationships between her and Flávia, and between Vera and Flávia. Her displacements also made it possible for Natasha to gain entry into the sex markets, and they produced the relationships between Natasha and Vera and between Natasha and myself – just as Natasha's displacements within Campo Grande (MS) fostered her relationships with “*Corrida das Drags*” and Andromeda Black. This goes to show that the displacements work as a perpetual motion machine, using the energy generated by its own movements to produce other displacements.

A displacement defines a kind of relationship that, of course, is a thousand relationships, a bundle of symbolic relationships; a kind of relationship that changes in shape, tone, and nature, to the point that perhaps it ceases to be one without us realizing it. Marilyn Strathern (2006), when discussing the circulation of items of wealth in Sabarl, draws attention to the fact that axes and shells that are considered valuable do not represent human beings, but relationships between people – and that objects are not created in opposition to people, but rather because of people. Along this line of reasoning, displacements are neither external nor do they express the attitudes of the *travestis*; for this reason, I reiterate that they are not an extrinsic function, apart from the person, but a relationship that helps to build other relationships.

Displacements are relationships themselves, and therefore it is recommended that one should look at “the capacities of relationships that are the focus of the operations” (Strathern, 2006: 263), because these capacities reveal the social relations that form them and the people they produce. The first property of a relation is that “each of its parts contains information about the whole and there is information about the whole encased in each of its parts” (Strathern, 2014:278); and the second property is that a relation “(...) needs other elements to complete it, since one must always ask between which elements relations are established” (Strathern, 2014: 279). Thus, relations are established between displacements, people, places and cities. Moreover, at the same time, displacement is understood as a relation, contrasting with the approach of viewing it as a function of social homeostasis or derived from external (historical, economic) injunctions.

## Final considerations

This article has demonstrated the importance of displacements in the context of *travestis* working in sex markets. Based chiefly on the stated principles of “*never settling down*”, “*never tying oneself down to one place*”, and on the ethnographic accounts, I have argued that displacements, in this context, are related to movement and action, revealing themselves as a way of being in the world of *travestis*, a way for them to build relationships and construct themselves.

I have emphasized that the displacements do not have an instrumental nature, that they are not a means to an end. With that in mind, displacements can be observed in São Carlos (SP), Franca (SP), Dourados (MS), and Campo Grande (MS). Such locations seem somewhat unlikely when compared to those reported in the literature on *travestis*. For this reason, I presented ethnographic accounts that demonstrated geographical displacements, both between cities and within the intra-urban space. I also presented displacements of relationships, such as in Campo Grande (MS), when Natasha and I, in the same city, kept missing one another, almost went to a party, and I ended up being nominated to be a judge in a Drag Queen contest. In these displacements, the flows of information, as well as changes in behaviors, plans, relationships and commitments, are fast and intense.

I have argued that a good way to understand these displacements is to think of them as parts in a perpetual motion machine, in the sense that the machine indefinitely reutilizes the energy generated by its own motion. According to physicists, the perpetual motion machine is physically and objectively “impossible”, because it violates the laws of thermodynamics. However, for the purpose of understanding the displacements of *travestis*, this matters little, because what interests us is the idea of a constant production of movements that are independent and without objective purpose.

The image of a perpetual motion machine is convenient, because it encourages us to look at the production of movement that has no other purpose than to feed the machine that produces the movement. It is an invitation to look at the acting, the doing, the moving, both from one city to another, from one place to another in the same city, and also at the displacements of relations that occur during and through the geographical displacements. It is precisely because I focused on the actions that I did not try to identify or create abstractions about a network or a formed circuit. Such abstractions are possible only by looking in retrospect, in hindsight, and assuming some degree of stability. However, the goal was to focus on displacements, because it is in and through them that relationships are created, thus I argue that the displacements can be understood as a way of being in the world.

In this sense, there is a dialogue with the regimes of mobility and their critique of metaphysical sedentarism that regards stability as the norm and movement as something exceptional. Moreover, the understanding of the displacements of *travestis* resonates with Brazilian anthropological productions such as Silvana Nascimento’s (2014a, 2014b), on the “interstitial places” that allow for the existence of a way of life during displacement; with “mobility as value”, presented by Guedes (2013), and with that of Machado (2014a; 2014b), who thinks of movement as a generator of differences, offering contributions to what “may become an anthropology of mobilities” (Souza and Guedes, 2021: 09).

At this point, it is possible to affirm that the displacements of *travestis* are comparable to a perpetual motion machine, one which expands, contracts, arranges and rearranges itself, always creating something that overpowers, swallows up another, producing a positive multiplicity of quality of encounters. This machine couples with others in a system, forming associative regimes: together-separate, interrupt-flow, fill-empty. In other words, the production of a production. Always in motion, always moving and being moved by smaller and larger machines. A production without purpose and without end.

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# The equality trap: notes on indigenist policies in the Bolsonaro government

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## **Abstract**

Fervently criticizing the theme of difference and public policies that emphasize it, Bolsonaro and other top officials in his government propose a new indigenist policy for the country, based on the understanding that all Brazilians are equal. This article seeks to demonstrate that supported on a generic notion of equality, Bolsonaro has established an indigenist policy that seeks its own extinction by putting an end to difference, or its recognition, leading the Brazilian state to return to assimilationist policies from the period before the promulgation of the Federal Constitution of 1988. The article explores government actions related to Indigenous territorial rights and gives special attention to efforts to liberate Indigenous Lands for the realization of various economic activities, such as mining, gold prospecting, cattle raising, energy generation, tourism, and cultivation of genetically modified organisms.

**Keywords:** Indigenist policy, Bolsonaro government, Indigenous lands, mining, Federal Constitution of 1988.

# Ciladas da igualdade: notas sobre a política indigenista no governo Bolsonaro

## Resumo

A partir de uma crítica ardorosa do tema da diferença e às políticas públicas que o enfatizam, Bolsonaro e outros componentes do primeiro escalão de seu governo propõem uma nova política indigenista ao país, construída no entorno da acepção de que os brasileiros somos todos iguais. Este artigo procura demonstrar que, amparado em uma noção genérica de igualdade, Bolsonaro constitui uma política indigenista que almeja a extinção de si mesma pelo fim último da diferença, ou de seu reconhecimento, conduzindo o Estado brasileiro a um retorno às políticas assimilacionistas do período anterior à promulgação da Constituição Federal de 1988. O artigo explora algumas das ações do governo no âmbito dos direitos territoriais indígenas e dá especial atenção aos esforços de liberação das Terras Indígenas para a realização de atividades econômicas diversas, como mineração, garimpo, agropecuária, geração de energia, turismo e cultivo de organismos geneticamente modificados.

**Palavras-chave:** política indigenista, governo Bolsonaro, terras indígenas, mineração, Constituição Federal de 1988.



# The equality trap: notes on indigenist policies in the Bolsonaro government

*Marcos Pereira Rufino*

## Introduction

Since the establishment of the Brazilian Republic, the policy of the Brazilian state towards Indigenous peoples, considering the defense of the lives and rights of these peoples, was in consonance with a broad group of factors such as the national political situation, the mobilization of civil society around Indigenous rights, and pressure from abroad – exercised by civil organizations, nation states and multilateral organizations – in response to events with strong repercussions. Studies of this historic process clearly identify that the Republic's Indigenist policy was predominantly assimilationist for a long period, and expressed an understanding that the cultural diversity and ways of life of these native populations would be a provisory condition, and that it is up to the Brazilian state to accelerate and facilitate their passage to “civilization”.<sup>1</sup> The Service for the Protection of Indians and Localization of National Workers, which was created in 1910, defended assimilation policies and was renamed the Indian Protection Service eight years later (Souza Lima, 1995). The National Indian Foundation (Funai), which was born from the ashes of the Indian Protection Service in 1967, during the military regime, continued this perspective of integration of the Indigenous into the world of labor and national society, and only took a distance from this perspective in the late 1980s.

It would be incorrect, however, to not recognize important advances in the decades that preceded the Constitution of 1988 – which is unprecedented in its recognition of Indigenous rights (Carneiro da Cunha, 2018) – particularly those referring to the rights to their territories. For example, the Constitution of 1934 took an important step because its article 129 determined respect for possession of land by the “forest dwellers who are permanently located within them”, and prohibited the alienation of this land by any means. In 1939, a council was formed that was responsible for guiding national Indigenist policy and the work of the Indian Protection Service, in response to criticisms of actions by the state. The National Council for Indigenist Policies was composed of young engaged researchers who left an important legacy to Brazilian anthropology in coming decades, such as Eduardo Galvão, Darcy Ribeiro, Heloísa Alberto Torres and Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira. Even during the military dictatorship there were some positive actions to guarantee Indigenous territories, despite the authoritarianism and countless situations of violence against these populations, which was propitiated by the developmentalist policy for the construction of large infrastructure works, and for the opening of the Amazon to economic activity (Davis, 1978; Hoornaert, 1992; Trinidad, 2016). The Constitution of 1967, enacted under the government of General Castelo Branco, eliminated an important legal gap in the previous constitutional text that did not define the ownership of land whose possession and use was recognized to the Indigenous. Since then, Indigenous Lands are defined as federal property, thus preventing any private party from insinuating a particular right to these territories. With the annulment of that Constitution and the promulgation of a new one in 1969, this time under the military junta that substituted General Costa e Silva, the text related to Indigenous territorial rights was not only maintained but gained more precise contours

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<sup>1</sup> There are many studies that address Indigenous policy in the twentieth century and its perspective for socio-cultural assimilation of our socio-diversity. Among the most important names we can cite Antônio Carlos de Souza Lima (1995, 2009, 2015), João Pacheco de Oliveira (1978, 1985, 2016) and Darcy Ribeiro (1962).

that are present in the current Constitution of 1988. In addition to reaffirming that the Indigenous Lands are public patrimony, for the exclusive possession and use of the Indigenous, and which cannot be alienated, the Constitution of 1969 added two important propositions: in addition to declaring null and extinct “of legal effects of any nature that have the object the domain, possession or occupation of lands inhabited by forest dwellers”, it determined that the non-Indigenous occupants would not have a right to “any action of indemnification” against the Brazilian state and against the official indigenist agency.

Nearly three years since the beginning of the government of President Jair Bolsonaro, we note a sharp shift in the direction of an indigenist policy that is more coherent and unified, without the contradictions and tensions that marked the action of the federal executive in the Indigenous field in recent years. We now have an Indigenous policy that is clearly anti-Indigenous in a dual sense of the term. The anti-Indigenist attitude is first manifested in how the government has directly and clearly attacked the regulations, norms, actions and public policies that we commonly understand to be located in the field of Indigenous rights. Secondly, the anti-Indigenist posture is expressed in the reality itself of an Indigenist policy whose aim is to terminate itself through the extinction of its object. It is a policy that strongly supports a project of assimilation of the Indigenous to the national community, reviving a public policy perspective questioned by anthropologists in the mentioned National Council of Indigenist Policy in the 1940s, combated by the Indigenous movement and support organizations since the 1970s and definitively buried by the current Federal Constitution.

This article seeks to demonstrate the characteristics of the Bolsonaro government’s Indigenist policy by exploring these two meanings of anti-Indigenism. Firstly, we argue that President Jair Bolsonaro actively promotes an understanding that is appropriated from a modern and current criticism of ethnocentric concepts from the colonial period that traditionally associate the Indigenous to nature, and returning to the ideology of their integration to national society. We then discuss the actions of the federal executive that seek to modify or extinguish the public policy tools focused on these peoples, constituted mainly since the 1990s. Finally, we seek to highlight how the Constitution of 1988, and the way it is wielded by some republican institutions, has been the great obstacle to the implementation of Bolsonarist indigenist policy.

## **Equality traps**

In “*Ciladas da diferença*” [Traps of difference], Antônio Flávio Pierucci (1990) narrates a landmark event for the US feminist movement that demonstrates how social struggles that emphasize difference can run concrete and not just theoretical risks of flowing in the direction opposite than they desire. The giant retail store chain and the largest employer of women in the United States at the time, Sears, Roebuck and Company, was sued for sexual discrimination in 1979 by the US government’s Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. Sears reserved those departments where sales paid commissions, and thus offered better earnings, to men, who were a minority of the employees. The company’s defense strategy involved the decisive participation of a feminist historian Rosalind Rosenberg, whose argument pointed to the distinctions between men and women in the workplace. Using arguments published in a book by another feminist historian, Alice Kessler-Harris, who testified in the same suit, but in support of the plaintiffs, Sear’s defense argued that men and women were substantially different not only in their aspirations towards work but also “in their interests in the jobs that they preferred and the types of products that they preferred to sell” (Pierucci, 1990: 21). The tough blow that Sears victory meant for the US feminist movement should, according to Pierucci, warn us to the traps that a defense of difference can create. The author recalls that in addition to being a theme that defines traditions of political rights, difference can always imply a defense of inequality, making it impossible to emphasize the difference without making a value distinction.

Four decades after this episode, Bolsonaroist indigenist policy brings a paradox to this debate. We see the president himself, the self-proclaimed leader of a conservative and Christian political rightwing, come to defend a new indigenist policy based on the theme of equality. It is on this basis that he has denounced as mechanisms to perpetuate a social and economic apartheid previous policies related to the Indigenous that have created protected territories and established public policies for differentiated treatment. For Bolsonaro and his ministers and closest aides, the indigenist policy that was constructed after the military dictatorship is abusive because of the isolation that it imposes on native populations, preventing them from attaining the happiness brought by work and the wealth it produces. In the Bolsonaroist view, although they live on their lands that are wealthy in natural and mineral resources, they are prohibited from exploiting them, which condemns them to a cycle of misery, debt and permanent dependence not only on the state, but also on the ill-fated action of national and foreign NGOs that earn high profits for assisting these populations and their territories.

Most Indians are Brazilians like us. They want electricity, television, to date a blond girl, to have internet.<sup>2</sup>

Now look, in Bolivia we have an Indian who is president. How come in Brazil we have to keep them cloistered on reserves, as if they were animals in zoos?<sup>3</sup>

Our Indians, most of them, are condemned to live like pre-historic men within our own country. This must change. The Indian wants to produce, wants to plant, wants the benefits and wonders of science and technology. We are all Brazilians.<sup>4</sup>

The Bolsonaroist narrative makes an effort to portray Indigenous policy since the dictatorship as a terrifying dystopic drama, in which helpless Indigenous people are held captive on confined territories, like inert elements of nature or jailed animals, closely monitored by a broad network of control devices, whose agents compose an obscure network supported by powerful interests. Money, minerals, biological assets, and national borders would be some of the ingredients that place the native populations of Brazil at the center of a transnational complot. And as in the movies, it is up to the hero, an outsider to palace politics, a critic of the dominant interpretations, and a denier of established truth, to enter the scene and change the course of history.

The interpretation of reality and the president's discourse perhaps bring us a parallel with the Sears episode in the United States. In the Bolsonaroist reading, the indigenist policy born at the political opening of the 1980s had produced a fundamental inequality between men precisely because of its emphasis on difference and its supposed denial of the subjacent equality among Brazilians. The praise of cultural diversity and native identities would serve to separate us and them, denying the Indigenous the right to history, science, and technology, but above all to belonging to the greater "us" of "Brazilianness". Here, no Indigenous will be president.

However, if traditions belong to the field of reinvention, as Adam Kuper affirms, perhaps we should rethink the central themes of the tradition of political rights, at least in the realm of the Brazilian experience with the Bolsonaro government. If in the Sears case difference was used to support discriminatory and therefore unequal employment practices, here it is the category of equality that serves to support a conservative action that proposes to terminate public policies that support diversity and attention to minorities. A structuralist analyst may suggest that the terms of the conservative cosmology of the Bolsonaro universe move in groups of transformation and that the pairs difference/inequality and similarity/equality are no longer found where they should be. Here, the trap is equality.

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2 Declaration by Jair Bolsonaro during the electoral campaign, Várzea Grande (MT), on 30/04/2017.

3 Statement by Bolsonaro after the second electoral round, Cachoeira Paulista (SP), in 30/11/2018.

4 Statement by the president on the morning of 27/11/2019, Zona Franca de Manaus.

In this version of conservatism, we have a glorification of the identical, the same, the image of oneself. Statements such as “my party is Brazil” or “the Indian is a human being just like us, whether we like it or not”, expresses this choice of one over the multiple. Diversity, in all its manifestations, must be abolished, expelled, like diseased tissue from the body of the nation. And in this sense, the indigenist policy becomes a policy against the Indigenous, because it seeks to have them disappear along with their difference. It is not a simple revival of past assimilationist proposals, which saw the integration of the Indigenous to national society as an inexorable phenomenon, specific to history. In the assimilationism of the past, state, military and other agents believed that the indigenist policy would have a crucial role in providing a smooth transition from the Indigenous condition to the state of civilization, despite the reports of violence and inhuman actions towards these populations in countless situations. This version perhaps recognizes that difference is not so fragile and integration not so inexorable. It now wants the state to induce a centripetal movement that undoes the previous efforts to value internal differences and national socio-diversity, made possible by the Constitution of 1988, and that to greater or lesser degree guided the governments of the democratic period.

Another paradox of the president’s declarations is the “modern” aspect of his criticism of policies for protection and support to the Indigenous consolidated until then. The Indigenous Lands are portrayed as abominable zoos that harm the human condition of the beings “confined” there who are condemned to live in pre-history and far from civilization. In addition to isolation, the prohibition of mineral exploration and of leasing land to neighboring farmers makes them permanently poor, and always dependent on Funai and Brazilian and foreign NGOs. Condemned to live in an immutable cultural bell jar because of outdated anthropological concepts, the “myth” - the nickname given to Bolsonaro by his supporters - wants to bring the Indigenous into history. He wants to free them from nature, from the crystal forest that cannot be touched, and make them free to work, for wealth and glory. If Native Americans in the US can have casinos, ours can have gold prospecting, mining, cattle, tourism and agricultural monoculture on their lands. Between its contempt and grotesque quality, the new indigenist policy places a *retrofit* of post-modern and post-colonial airs over an agro-industrial-evangelical reading of the Indigenous peoples.

The Bolsonaro government never made an effort to hide its detestation of the Indigenous as signs of alterity. We note frequent statements from top government officials in this regard. At a ministerial meeting held in April 2020<sup>5</sup>, then Minister of Education Abraham Weintraub presented his position - in a tone, style and language very similar to that of the president - about his unacceptance of difference.

I hate the term ‘Indigenous peoples’, I hate this term. I hate it. The “gypsy people’. There is only one people in this country. If you want it, OK. If not, back out. It is the Brazilian people, there is only one. It may be black, white, Japanese, it may be descendent from Indians, but it must be Brazilian, dammit! Enough with this business of peoples and privileges.

The minister’s statement reaffirms an understanding that appears common to this conservative right-wing. The rights of minorities, established by the Constitution or even as objects of political struggle and demands, are presented as privileges, advantages or benefits reserved for a few. Privileges that are seen as a bargaining chip of NGOs and social movements whose survival is alleged to depend on the exploitation and management of a solid “business of peoples”. In the same meeting, in which alterity was presented as a threat to the country, Minister of the Environment Ricardo Salles urged the government to take advantage of the exalted atmosphere of public opinion during the pandemic that was roiling the country to “start the stampede” and implement an extensive deregulation and flexibilization of environmental laws. The expression used by the minister also

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<sup>5</sup> The meeting has perhaps entered the history books because of the polemic and improper declarations of the ministers against the Federal Constitution and republican institutions.

describes the political action of the government in the indigenist field. As we will see, the gate was too small for the stampede that the government wanted to start.

We previously affirmed that the government that took office in 2019 implemented a consistent anti-indigenous policy, whether through the affirmation of a Brazilianness that should obfuscate alterity, or through actions aimed at destroying the public policies and regulations constructed in the period since the drafting of the constitution. To demonstrate this anti-indigenist stance we must go beyond the public declarations of the president and his ministers and review the government's concrete actions. A broad analysis of this entire indigenist policy should examine the many different actions that affect different aspects of life of the Indigenous. But this would require space that we do not have here. We thus chose to examine one topic that we understand to be central in this indigenist policy and that clearly characterizes the anti-indigenism: government initiatives concerning Indigenous Lands, with special attention to the suspension of demarcations, the dismantling of Funai and Bill PL 191/2020, which proposed opening the Indigenous lands to various economic activities.

### **The politics of “not one more centimeter”**

The federal government's actions in relation to Indigenous Lands did not bring any surprise considering what Jair Bolsonaro had promised during his electoral campaign of 2018 or his previous statements. As a federal deputy, shortly after the approval of the Yanomami Indigenous Land in May 1992, he tried to extinguish the measure by proposing a legislative decree in the Commission for National Defense of the Chamber of Deputies. Although notorious for being an unproductive deputy, his limited legislative action attacked Indigenous rights. His parliamentary work always accompanied the positions of the agricultural and evangelical caucuses in the National Congress. As President he has fulfilled his campaign promise: no Indigenous Land has been demarcated until now. As the Federal Public Ministry [a federal attorney's office with the responsibility to defend social rights and the democratic regime] has observed, there is an “organized policy” of the executive branch to obstruct the territories that are at some stage of systematic demarcation. The frequent changes of the employees and working groups responsible for the demarcation studies and the requests for reanalysis of the cases made by various federal agencies, without plausible justification, have proved to be an effective strategy for frustrating approvals of Indians Lands.<sup>6</sup> The blockage of the demarcations, however, is not unprecedented in this indigenist policy. Even the more leftist governments of the Workers Party gave little priority to Indigenous rights to their territories, particularly during the administration of President Dilma Rousseff, which in 6 years approved only 21 Indigenous Lands. With its “embargo of Indigenous Lands” a term that describes a freezing of demarcations until land conflicts were resolved on a negotiating table (Assirati, Moreira, 2019), the Dilma government was behind only that of her vice president Michel Temer, who as president demarcated only one Indigenous Land.

Under the Bolsonaro government, however, there was a resolute freezing of administrative acts needed to demarcate each of the 237 pending Indigenous Lands<sup>7</sup>, and setbacks were imposed on already concluded steps. The “myth” would enter the history of post-dictatorship governments for an absolute absence of approvals of Indigenous Lands. Indeed, he sought to reconsider many of the already existing demarcations, as he affirmed

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6 Federal attorney Yuri Corrêa da Luz, in an interview with the newspaper *El País*, in 04/02/2020, explained the situation: “To step back is not necessarily illegal, but the weak and unfounded justifications for reanalysis requested by both Funai and by the Ministry of Justice are alarming. We can deduce that it is an organized policy and not something linked to possible irregularities in two or three cases”. And more serious than the paralyzation of the process, according to the prosecutor, is the fact that they are now moving in reverse.

7 According to data from the Instituto Socioambiental, consulted on 02/06/2021, there are 73 Indigenous Lands already declared by the Ministry of Justice, awaiting only approval by the president. Another 44 Lands are identified and thus the identification study report has already been approved by the presidency of Funai. There are 120 Lands in the identification phase. The data can be found at <https://terrasindigenas.org.br/>.

at times when he tried to associate demarcation processes to fraud. “My decision is to not demarcate any more land for Indians. Those that were demarcated irregularly, if we have something concrete in this sense, is to seek the review of the lands”.<sup>8</sup> The notion that the demarcation covers suspicious interests and is based on fraudulent research and administrative acts is another theme that accompanies the phrase “lots of land for few Indians”. The reserve General Augusto Heleno, chief minister of the Office of Institutional Security of the Presidency of the Republic, and an important advisor to the president on Indigenous affairs made the following affirmation in an interview in 2016. (Haswani, 2016: 32):

The reformulation of a failed, chaotic, indigenous policy impregnated with alien ideology, led by irresponsible actions of FUNAI and the Indigenist Missionary Council cannot be put off. Demarcations of Indigenous Lands are based on forged anthropological reports. The Indians continue to be abandoned and serve as pawns in the shadowy interests of foreign NGOs. To demarcate, against historic criteria, Indigenous Lands and areas of environmental conservation along the borders, coinciding with vast reserves of valuable minerals, is a serious risk to national sovereignty.

If it were not for the correct use of Portuguese and the clarity of the argument, this declaration could be confused with one by the President himself. Two years after this statement, the country began the “undelayable reformulation” of the indigenist policy to which the general referred. The government’s strategy to stop the demarcations was also validated by the thesis of the “temporal mark”, which has been a fetish of the congressional agricultural caucus since 2009, when the Federal Supreme Court used it to confirm the Terra Indígena Raposa Serra do Sol, one of the demarcations that most stirred national public opinion since the creation of the Yanomami Territory in 2005 and also located in the state of Roraima.<sup>9</sup> Although the concept was suggested for exclusive use in that particular situation, together with 19 conditions, it was institutionalized in the administrative procedures of the demarcation of the Temer government, supported by a report from the Advocacia Geral da União [the Office of the Attorney for the Federal State] in 2017. And although the Federal Supreme Court<sup>10</sup>, in a ruling by Edson Fachin, suspended the effects of the report in an injunction, the “temporal mark” has supported the action of the Ministry of Justice of the Bolsonaro government since its early days, when the Minister was Sérgio Moro. In a manner quite suitable to government interests, and the agricultural congressional caucus that supports it, this mistaken reading of the constitutional text invalidates the demands of many Indigenous groups that had been expelled from their lands at some time prior to the fictitious and arbitrary deadline of 5 October 1988. It also creates an even more grave situation for isolated peoples, who are coerced to move from one place to another.

Among the various actions that seek to guarantee the policy of “not one more centimeter” of land to the Indigenous, it is necessary to cite the government’s tenacious efforts to limit the attributions of the National Indian Foundation, dividing its responsibilities among other executive agencies, which shifts the demarcation process from the realm of Indigenous rights to the field of economic interests of agriculture, mining, energy and transportation, thus mischaracterizing the determinations of the Constitution for official indigenist policy. Similar to the efforts to obstruct demarcations, this strategy of reducing the responsibilities of the National Indian Foundation is also not an unprecedented fact exclusive to this government. We saw the same stampede being driven in the shadows, towards a gate that began to be opened in the Dilma government, which in addition to revealing itself favorable to the thesis of a “temporal mark” on various occasions, also requested a

<sup>8</sup> Interview with the press 30/08/2019.

<sup>9</sup> The thesis of the temporal mark affirms that Indian Lands can only be demarcated on territories effectively occupied by the Indigenous, or which were under proven physical or judicial dispute, by the date of the enactment of the Constitution, 05/10/1988.

<sup>10</sup> For a criticism of the Supreme Court decisions about the issue, see Dan and Assis, 2020.

reduction in Funai's powers and for the participation of other state agencies in the demarcation process.<sup>11</sup> But on its first day of office the Bolsonaro administration boasted an unprecedented zeal to dismount the official indigenist agency. On 1 January 2019, the new president signed Provisory Measure nº 870/2019, implementing a broad reorganization of the agencies of the Presidency of the Republic. The National Indian Foundation was removed from the Ministry of Justice and placed under the Ministry of State of Women, Family and Human Rights, led by Damares Alves. Its attributions in relation to demarcation were, in turn, transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture, Husbandry and Supply (MAPA). Changes of this scope on the first day of the new government indicated the coming avalanche. The effort to transfer Funai from the domain of the Ministry of Justice to a ministry in which human rights and family are in the title, and which is led by a conservative evangelical pastor who wants to put an end to the Indigenous, who she sees as "that being, there in the middle of the woods, with a feather in their head, protected"<sup>12</sup>, is revealing.

To give the Ministry of Agriculture responsibility for conducting the demarcation process is to leave the lambs under the care of a salivating wolf, which is more than a metaphoric figure here. In a declaration to Funai employees, at the time of his departure from the presidency of the agency, General Frankglinberg Ribeiro de Freitas affirmed that the special secretary for Land Issues of the Ministry of Agriculture "salivates hate towards the Indigenous". He was referring to Nabhan Garcia, but could have been evaluating the entire Ministry, including Minister Tereza Cristina, who had been a leader of the congressional agricultural caucus.<sup>13</sup> The reference to this unbridled hate of the Indigenous in the ministry responsible for their lands would be impressive if made by an Indigenous activist, anthropologist or missionary of Indigenist Missionary Council. To hear it from a reserve Army General, who was trusted with the direction of Funai by the Bolsonaro government is even more surprising. Indigenous leaders, support organizations, militants and Indigenous researchers lament this reform.<sup>14</sup> To remove the demarcation process from Funai and Funai itself from the Ministry of Justice is a way to obstruct indigenist policy and weaken the administrative procedures needed for the minimal protection of Indigenous rights. As Manuela Carneiro da Cunha affirmed about the need for Funai to remain in the Ministry of Justice, "even if it is not perfect, it is a Ministry suitable to human rights. Indigenous peoples have special rights guaranteed by the Constitution and are in the framework of human rights."<sup>15</sup> The government was defeated in this attempted restructuring, because Congress removed it before the provisory measure was enacted as a law. This was a deception for Bolsonaro, the agricultural caucus, evangelical leaders and for Minister of Justice Sérgio Moro, who did not want Funai under his responsibility.

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11 When they were in office, Gleisi Hoffmann, chief minister of the President's Office, and José Eduardo Cardoso, Minister of Justice, to which Funai is subordinated, expressed this position at times. Kátia Abreu, an emblematic leader of the congressional agricultural caucus, and former president of the Confederation of Agriculture and Husbandry of Brazil (CAN) and who as Minister of Agriculture came to issue opinions on demarcations, was another active voice in the Dilma government who defended the new procedures that would remove the demarcation process from the Indigenist agency. Another fact that attests to the disdain of the Dilma administration was the 24 months in which the presidency of the agency was left in the hands of temporary appointees, without the government taking the effort to nominate someone. This was the longest period in the history of Funai without a formal president.

12 In the same video in which she made this declaration, published on her Twitter account, Damares Alves affirmed that drug and alcohol abuse among the Indigenous occur because they "want to escape their pain, their fear, their anxieties", refraining perhaps from saying that they wanted to escape their cultures and paganism.

13 Among the reasons that made her a heroine of Bolsonarism is her spectacular work in the approval of a bill by Senator Blairo Maggi which made flexible the use and sale of herbicides and pesticides, which practically invalidates the principle of precaution. Bill PL nº 6.299/2002 became known as the "poison package" and was criticized by various scientific associations and health and environmental agencies in Brazil and abroad. In addition to her notorious defense of the involvement of Indigenous with agribusiness, the family of Agricultural Minister Teresa Cristina has had a long land conflict with the Terena people in Mato Grosso do Sul.

14 This reform was the central theme of the Acampamento Terra Livre [Free Land Encampment], the largest annual mobilization of Indigenous leaders in the country, held in April 2019, in Brasília.

15 In an interview to the *Jornal da USP*, 11/07/2019.

The government's failure in this battle did not end its plans to transform indigenist policies. Prevented from removing the administrative procedures for demarcation from Funai's jurisdiction, and Funai's removal from the auspices of the Ministry of Justice, the government adopted the common strategy of weakening the agency by reducing its budget and staff. While it had difficulty turning Funai into the apparatus that Bolsonaro indigenist policy desired, the government saw it as imperative to make Funai inoperable, reducing it, as in science fiction, to a miniature within a giant machine. The asphyxiation of the indigenist agency has been a practical and effective method, requiring little bureaucracy, for paralyzing the state actions and its constitutional obligations to demarcation. The stroke of a pen, or the failure to use this power, allowed the federal government to not provide the funding needed for Funai to meet its budget or hire authorized employees. On many occasions President Bolsonaro made a point of reaffirming this power. "I have the pen" became his obtuse version of Louis XIV's "L'état, c'est moi"<sup>16</sup>. This politics of inaction, as we have affirmed, is more of a common strategy than a techno-political innovation of the "urgent reform" that General Augusto Heleno desired for this government. In the two preceding administrations, the weakening of the official indigenist policy took place mostly through the abandonment of Funai.<sup>17</sup> In this sense, things are not different: Indigenist Missionary Council reported record low execution of the already limited Funai budget for the first semester of 2020, particularly for protection and regularization of land rights (Santana and Miotto, 2020). Data obtained by the Brazilian news service Public Agency points to cuts of up to 90% of the agency budget at the beginning of the government, leading to the deactivation of posts and coordination of Indigenous areas (Barros, 2019).

In addition to the expressive budget cuts, it is important to note the demobilization of Funai by the failure to hire new employees, which prevents the necessary repositioning of its technical staff. While it had already been operating with only one-third of the needed employees for nearly a decade, the situation became more grave with the canceling of technical cooperation agreements with social organizations. The lack of employees especially affects the indigenist agency's work with Indigenous communities, where we see the paralyzation of decentralized structures, such as the Local Technical Commissions and the Ethno-environmental Protection Fronts. Areas marked by important land conflicts and with a strong Indigenous presence have been accompanied by only one employee, overwhelmed by tasks and functions.<sup>18</sup> The Federal Budget Court (TCU) had already questioned the Dilma government for the low frequency of public bids for Funai projects, pointing to the problems that this would have for the performance of its role. In the Bolsonaro government this has been aggravated by limited hiring, leaving Funai offices understaffed in Brasília, Cuiabá, Rio de Janeiro and cities close to other state capitals (Barros, 2019). As shown by Assirati and Moreira (2019: 11), the non-renovation of older employees contributed to the paralyzation of indigenist policy, by depleting the institutional memory at the main official indigenist agency and threatening the perpetuation of vast and complex knowledge accumulated over the years. These authors noted that the problem is compounded because the training of professionals who work daily with Indigenous peoples does not occur overnight.

In addition to ending demarcations, the government solidified its anti-indigenism by ignoring anyone outside of demarked territories from the scope of official indigenist policy. In a meeting with leaders of the Association of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil, General Heleno clearly affirmed that the government will consider simply as farmers Indigenous people not on demarcated lands.<sup>19</sup> In a clearly illegal manner, the government

<sup>16</sup> While historians say that the statement attributed to the French monarch is apocryphal, Bolsonaro's is not, as it was widely reported in the press.

<sup>17</sup> As demonstrated by Assirati and Moreira (2019: 13), "FUNAI faces unprecedented cutbacks since redemocratization. The general budget, which rose sharply from 2006 to 2013 – from R\$ 475.981.373 to R\$ 819.092.988, respectively – began to drop in 2014, reaching R\$ 553.031.192 in 2016. The budget cuts brought enormous difficulties to the execution of indigenist policy. The level of spending reached a level lower than ten years ago."

<sup>18</sup> The Indigenistas Associados (INA), an association of Funai employees, has been denouncing this situation since its creation in 2017. At the beginning of the Bolsonaro government, it created the campaign "A whole Funai and not a half" against the official indigenist policies. For information about the campaign, see <https://indigenistasassociados.org.br/publicacoes/funai-inteira/>.

<sup>19</sup> This declaration was made at a meeting of the crisis office created to deal with the grave pandemic situation among isolated groups, by order of Supreme Court Minister Luís Roberto Barroso. The general, who coordinated the meeting treated the Indigenous leaders of the Association of Indigenous Peoples



used an arbitrary criteria to distinguish between Indigenous and non-Indigenous, disrespecting the Federal Constitution and Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization, to which Brazil is a signatory. This maneuver removes an extraordinary contingent of people from the framework of indigenous policy, because as the national Census of 2010 revealed, 4 of 10 Indigenous people do not live on demarcated Indigenous lands. Indigenous peoples in contemporary Brazil are not limited to the Amazon groups or to those on demarcated territories throughout the country, but include many in urban areas and in the peripheries of large cities. This reality imposes (or should impose) new and large challenges to official indigenist policy (Varga, 2003).

A surprising fact that was not previously observed in Funai's operations is its declaration of "disinterest" in all actions to defend the permanence of Indigenous peoples on their lands that are still not approved, but objects of court injunctions. The Indigenous agency's failure to proceed with its usual actions in these cases has subjected these Indigenous to threats of eviction.<sup>20</sup> It could be expected that situations like this would arise as a result of the budget cuts and lack of employees, which impede the agency from performing its common tasks. However, the deliberate failure to act in cases where it has legal responsibility violates Funai's institutional mission and its by-laws, the second article of which expresses that the official indigenist agency should act in the name of the republic of Brazil to defend and promote indigenous rights. It seems that this is a case of prevarication by the agency, and of administrative improbity by its president.

### **The end of the "poor Indian on rich land"**

We see that the federal government is committed to a land policy that combines abandonment of its constitutional obligations with diligent anti-Indigenous positions, and rejection of instruments established to protect and defend the Indigenous. Its role in disfiguring determinations of the Constitution of 1988 is not limited to obstruction of the demarcation of new Indigenous Lands, but strives to open these territories, whether approved or not, to a variety of economic activities that strongly threaten their integrity. Mining, gold prospecting, lumbering, monocrop agriculture, the conversion of forests into pasture, the construction of hydroelectric dams and tourism are among the activities that Bolsonarist indigenism supports as a panacea for many problems.

We saw previously that General Augusto Heleno indicated the grave threat to national security raised by the location of Indigenous Lands over "vast reserves of valuable minerals". To unlock the subsoil of these territories would be like opening a large treasure chest with riches that could be immediately used, like metals and precious stones, or used in the future, such as strategic minerals<sup>21</sup>. The notion that the prohibition of mining on Indigenous Lands hides secret interests and threatens the sovereignty of the country has been

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of Brazil in a humiliating manner, as denounced by the press and the Association, which reported the episode to Judge Barroso: "The experience they lived through was disastrous, humiliating and embarrassing treatment, a situation which no citizen should undergo, particularly before Brazilian government authorities. The Indigenous reported that the meeting was organized to attack them, including accusations and profanity aimed at them. They felt they were the target of efforts to intimidate them". *Revista Veja*, 20/07/2020.

<sup>20</sup> This took place with the Guarani Kaiowá, of the Terra Indígena Nande Ru Marangatu, in Mato Grosso do Sul. For years they have faced legal suits by farmers who sought to prevent the completion of demarcation. Funai is now supporting these suits. In November 2019 the Funai president requested the termination of a judicial order that would keep the Guarani Kaiowá on the land (Santana, 2019a). The same situation affected the Kaingang da Terra Indígena Palmas, in Paraná, who had succeeded in suspending a suit for reintegration of ownership filed by a farmer who questioned the Kaingang's rights based on the thesis of the temporal mark. Funai, which before the Bolsonaro government had guaranteed the legal defense of the Kaingang and was successful in annulling the farmer's suit, now requested the "legal approval of a desistance, independently from approval from the party affected, with the consequent termination of the suit" (Santana, 2019b).

<sup>21</sup> The National Mining Plan 2030 (PNM 2030), prepared by the Minister of Mines and Energy in the first Dilma government describes three situations to qualify the "strategic minerals" for the country. Firstly, minerals that depend on imports, and for this reason harm the balance of trade, such as potassium, nitrogen and phosphorus. Then, minerals used in high technology industry and that should have increasing importance in the future, such as cobalt, lithium, tantalum and other rare earths. Finally, those that compose the menu of Brazilian exports, such as iron and niobium (MME, 2011).

widely propagated by anti-indigenous interests since the drafting of the current constitution.<sup>22</sup> But it is in the government of the “myth” that this conspiracy narrative has taken on airs of official discourse, with the president himself affirming that he is a prophet of hidden truths:

There is no Indigenous Land where there are no minerals. Gold, tin and magnesium are in these lands, especially in the Amazon, the richest region in the world. I don't participate in this nonsense of defending land for Indians.<sup>23</sup>

If I was the king of Roraima, with technology, in 20 years I would have an economy like that of Japan. Everything is found there. But 60% is inviable because of Indigenous reserves and other environmental issues.<sup>24</sup>

The theme of national security commonly appears intertwined with the discussion of economic development; which are seen to be congenerous because they share the same alleged problem, the Indigenous Lands (as well as Unidades de Conservação da Natureza or nature conservation districts). Because of the Indigenous Lands and nature preserves many states have allegedly been denied a future of wealth and prosperity, condemning them to incomplete development and in some situations to dependence on federal resources. As can be noted, there is apprehension by the federal executive, which is clearly aligned to recurring statements by anti-Indigenous politicians, who come mainly from states that have large Indigenous Lands.

To face the “problem”, the government drafted bill PL 191/2020, which aims to allow the largest “stampede” against Indigenous rights ever seen in legislation. Although it is known as the “mining bill”, the government's initiative goes far beyond this sector because if approved it would allow all types of economic activity on Indigenous Lands, in addition to gold prospecting and research and exploration of minerals.<sup>25</sup> It would open a path for oil and gas exploration, the use of water resources for hydroelectric projects, tourism, infrastructure and could also allow research and cultivation of genetically modified organisms. It is a package of measures that surpasses the entire anti-Indigenous fury of more than 30 bills presented since passage of the Constitution.<sup>26</sup> The amalgam of authorizations and permits of different types in a single law is noteworthy, revealing the flagrant intention to pass more difficult concessions by linking them to easier ones. The metaphor of the stampede used by Minister Ricardo Salles, to which we alluded, cannot be more appropriate to describe the scope of a bill that includes such a broad range of issues. It is a clearly audacious initiative because it includes regulations yet to be drafted<sup>27</sup>, but finally falls to earth in violations of Indigenous rights established by the Constitution.

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22 A memorable disinformation campaign was conducted by the newspapers *O Estado de S. Paulo*, *O Globo*, *Correio Braziliense*, *Diário de Pernambuco* and *A Crítica* (from the city of Manaus) on the eve of the preparation of the chapter of the Indians in the Federal Constitution, which sought to associate organizations that support Indigenous peoples, in particular the Indigenist Missionary Council, to interests of foreign companies and countries that would benefit from the ban on mining on Indigenous Lands (Carneiro da Cunha, 2019). In first page articles *O Estadão* was the voice of the Congressional mining caucus, combining false information, forged documents and conspiracy theories to reveal a supposed “conspiracy against Brazil”, as one first page headline affirmed.

23 *Campo Grande News*, 22/04/2015.

24 *Notícias UOL*, 06/06/2019.

25 In relation to mining, this project affects nearly half of all the Indigenous Lands in the country (315 TIs of a total of 724), according to a survey made by the Program for Monitoring Protected Areas, of the Instituto Socioambiental (ISA, 2020b).

26 This bill was drafted by a working group established by the federal government in late 2019. The participants included Funai, the Casa Civil (GSI), the Ministry of Mines and Energy and the Program of Partnerships and Investment (PPI). Among the previous initiatives that sought to open Indigenous territories to mining, what most advanced was PL 1610/96, presented by Senator Romero Jucá (MDB/RR), which was approved in the Senate but remained stagnant for 16 years.

27 Research and mining of mineral resources on Indigenous Lands, according to the Constitution, can only be conducted in exceptional conditions with authorization of the National Congress and agreement by the Indigenous communities. In addition, complementary legislation must indicate the specific conditions in which mining can take place on these lands and on the border, as determined by paragraph 1º of article 176. It is this “opening” in the constitution that this bill and other past legislative efforts seek to exploit. One threat raised by the current onslaught of the executive branch is that it seeks to regulate through an ordinary law, which is easier to pass than a complementary law, as indicated by Deputy Joenia Wapichana in an interview with the *Pública* news agency in 10/02/2020.

In terms of the regulation of the specific conditions to be respected for mining on Indigenous Lands, the bill advanced little in relation to that presented in the Constitution. That is, the purpose of the bill, what should be its *raison d'être*, is eclipsed by a scope that transforms it into something else. It is novel for its attempt to distort the legal measures for preservation and protection of these territories, mischaracterizing the determinations and understandings established in the chapters of the Constitution related to Indigenous peoples. This begins with not recognizing the need for consent from the Indigenous for construction projects, interventions, and economic activities on their lands. Although the bill concerns hearings in Indigenous communities, there is no reference to their power to veto projects and much less to the realization of already established “free, prior and informed consent” which is a fundamental measure of Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization<sup>28</sup>. We know that in previous moments, the state ignored the convention and executed high-impact infrastructure works on Indigenous Lands, such as the Belo Monte Hydroelectric Project, inaugurated in May 2016, for which construction began in June 2011. Bill PL 191/2020, however, would legalize the illegality and bury any possibility for the Indigenous peoples to decide what happens on their lands. Even the Federal Public Ministry, which is responsible for the legal defense of the Indigenous peoples, would have its range of action significantly reduced.

An especially shocking aspect of the bill is the wide range of decisions about issues, from the well-being of populations to the preservation of territories, granted to the federal government, which would be responsible for regulating more than a dozen points not specified in the measure. By means of presidential decree, the government would gain the power to establish administrative procedures, schedules and administration of remuneration and indemnifications that should be expressed in the law but that were purposely left out of the bill. This “blank check” given to the government is enormous, as indicated by a compilation conducted by the Instituto Socioambiental of the 13 federal concessions made by the bill (ISA, 2019). Among these concessions, we highlight that which concedes to the government the task of delimiting the choice of areas for research and mining, the definition of how the technical studies will be conducted to determine the viability of economic activities, the mounting of a schedule of interlocution between communities and companies, the determination of the timing and form of payment to the Indigenous for the projects, the sharing of resources among the communities, the calculation of amounts to be paid, whether for profits from the activity or in indemnifications and how the Indigenous would consent to prospecting on their land.

This leads to another aspect of extreme concern in the bill, the permission for prospecting on Indigenous Lands. The Constitution clearly prohibits this activity, because of its severe environmental, health and social impacts. Even so, Bolsonaro insists on his campaign promise and strives to convince the public that prospecting is positive for the Indigenous. In a visit to the north of the country, at the beginning of his government, the president declared: “In Roraima, there are trillions of *reals* [the Brazilian currency] under the ground. And the Indian has the right to exploit this in a rational way, obviously. The Indian cannot continue to be poor on top of rich earth”.<sup>29</sup> In this argument, to consent to prospecting goes far beyond promoting economic development of interest to the country but is presented a mechanism to free the Indigenous from poverty and dependency. It is an action to promote human rights according to Minister Damares Alves. And the bill poses even other threats. The proposal to open Indigenous Lands to gold prospecting refers not only to the Indigenous. The bill would allow prospecting by non-Indigenous third parties, which would spark a large migratory flow to the interior of these territories and a tragedy of multiple dimensions. In 2021 there was a shocking wave of intrusions in the Yanomami Indigenous Land, which were accompanied by generalized violence and aggravation of the

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<sup>28</sup> Brazil is signatory of this convention and of other important measures through which it has recognized that Indigenous peoples have the right to veto actions that affect them, such as declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations.

<sup>29</sup> Agência Brasil, 17/04/2019.

health crisis during the global pandemic. If illegal prospecting has these effects, what can be expected from the legalization of prospecting by third parties? The bill adds another trap for the Indigenous communities related to prospecting by non-Indigenous. It is the only activity about which the Indigenous can make a decision, which transfers to them the burden of a decision that the Constitution does not allow in any circumstance, leaving them alone to face the violence and bribery of heavily armed criminal organizations with vast arsenals of vehicles, soldiers and resources.

For a government whose members never understood the traditional meanings and forms of land use of the Indigenous peoples, gold prospecting (and other economic activities foreseen in the bill) would be a form of improving and developing these territories. “Why reserve a space over land that you cannot do anything to? We want the Indian doing on their land exactly what the farmer does alongside. And they can even prospect gold”.<sup>30</sup> Land, for Bolsonaro and the congressional agricultural caucus is good for profiting from or for nothing at all. In his declarations there is a clear effort to disqualify the interpretation fixed in the Constitution, which determines that the lands of our native populations are essential to their cultural and physical reproduction. Article 216 recognizes their right to exist as different beings, as living and thriving alterity in a country whose socio-diversity is its patrimony. Yet the Bolsonaro government affirms that the earth must be “productive” and that the rights of populations, even of the original peoples, must respond to this criterion. Being productive is understood as that which “the farmer does alongside” and all kinds of intensive or large-scale economic activities, designed to supply markets and often of a predatory nature.

Bolsonaro’s indigenist policy is not content with transforming the Indigenous people into rural producers. The farmer “alongside” that he offers as a model is the intrepid user of GMOs. Bill PL 191/2020 authorizes research and cultivation of genetically modified organisms on Indigenous Lands, thus aiming for them to become important players in agricultural production. This component of the bill alone should be reason for concern throughout the country, and abroad, because in addition to placing the health of the Indigenous at risk, it also threatens Brazil’s biodiversity and the food safety of the entire planet. The reason is simple and science has already shown us why: the resistance to pests by a vegetable species depends, among other factors, on the genetic diversity available, something that is supported by the variety of seeds traditionally used by Indigenous groups. So-called crioulo seeds, and their genetic varieties, are also important for helping species to adapt to climatic and environmental changes that affect the surroundings. The important contribution of Indigenous Lands to the maintenance of biodiversity makes them important partners to the Nature Conservation Districts, and if these lands contribute to our biological wealth, this is related to the use of crioulo seeds.<sup>31</sup> The planting of GMOs on Indigenous Lands is a grave threat to this diversity and studies that show the risk that they will become dominant and contaminate traditional seeds supported the law that prohibited their use (Law 11.460/2007). The policy that fights difference in the cultural realm, also fights it in the realm of nature. Under this bill, the only seed varieties permitted would be that provided by the techno-agricultural conglomerates, which in addition to having the patents and monopoly on the seeds, link them to other “goods” necessary to their cultivation, such as herbicides, and specific additives, which would make the Indigenous communities dependent on these companies. Nurit Bensusan, a specialist in biodiversity at the Instituto Socioambiental, calls attention to an issue that we cannot ignore in relation to GMOs on Indigenous Lands:

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<sup>30</sup> Declaration of the president to the press on 27/11/2019, in the Zona Franca de Manaus.

<sup>31</sup> William Balée (1993, 2008) clearly demonstrated that the Amazon Forest is anthropic and that its biodiversity owes much to the diligent actions of Indigenous groups that include the selection, cultivation and exchange of seeds among them. Other studies, increasingly numerous, show that the Indigenous territories have been crucial to the maintenance and strengthening of biodiversity. A compendium of pioneer research that reveals the importance of Indigenous Lands as important allies to the Conservation Units is the publication by ISA, *Terras Indígenas e Unidades de Conservação da Natureza: o desafio das sobreposições* (Ricardo, 2004).

Another less evident meaning is the attempt to homogenize practices and ways of life. If everyone eats the same thing and has the same crops, an important part of the culture is lost and this can lead to questionings of Indigenous territorial rights. This aspect should not be overlooked in the context of the strong offensive against Indigenous rights taking place in the country right now. (ISA, 2020a)

There is no doubt that Bolsonarian indigenism made use of this culinary homogenization to reaffirm its postulate of general and unlimited “equality” of all who live here, and as Bensunsan said, added it to the list of attacks on Indigenous Lands. Bill PL 191/2020 is eclectic and multivalent, and like a rotating machine gun (an analysis of a Bolsonaro’s policies cannot avoid a reference to weapons) fires in all possible directions to open Indigenous territories to economic developments.<sup>32</sup>

## Conclusion

Contrary to Bolsonaro’s promise of wealth, Indigenous communities freed from the “cages” of the Indigenous Lands or free from protection by the state will never find the Eldorado promised in his discourse, which sells abandonment but calls it emancipation. The Indigenous outside of their lands become invisible to the Indigenist policy that should protect them, and occupy needy communities in the peripheries of large cities. They are made equal to so many others who have been uprooted, equally invisible to public policies. The history of the departure of the Indigenous from their lands has always been accompanied by a wide variety of violence. Data compiled by the Indigenist Missionary Council (Cimi, 2020), shows that this violence has intensified and taken new forms in the Bolsonaro government, as in increased intrusions, armed attacks on communities and leaders, and criminal fires on Indigenous Lands that now take place under the protective cloak of the blind eye of the state.<sup>33</sup> The interdiction of the recognition of Indigenous territorial rights perpetuates this cycle of violence, privation and displacement, thus reviving the conditions that asphyxiate many other ways of being and living. Not even on Indigenous Lands that have been approved is difference protected. The resplendent future promised by the “new” indigenist policy for Indigenous Lands as producers of minerals, energy, cattle and transgenics is a chimera. Even the financial remuneration proposed by bill PL 191/2020 is derisive<sup>34</sup>, particularly when considering the value of natural resources in the soil and subsoil of these lands and their flora and fauna. It is also important to recognize the high impact of these economic projects on Indigenous health, food safety and ways of life.

Until now, much of Bolsonarist indigenist policy has faced Herculean resistance from the organized Indigenous movement, from organizations that support the Indigenous and from parts of civil society. But it is above all the Federal Constitution that provides a strong beacon, a firm guide and support to the republican institutions responsible for checking the insanity of a government that has presented authoritarian, intolerant, and extremist practices towards Indigenous peoples and other minorities. It was necessary for this type of political project to gain power to dissipate any questions or uncertainty about the importance of the Constitution to the protection of Indigenous rights. The plane of discourse commonly asserts a supposed disparity between the real concrete and effective world and the letter of the law – which is seen as theoretical and immaterial. Yet if not for the Constitution, the Federal Public Ministry, the Federal Supreme Court and even the National

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<sup>32</sup> There are other issues in this bill that we will not examine here, such as tourism, infrastructure works or the use of water resources for energy generation, for reasons of space and because we understand they have been sufficiently addressed by our look at the general spirit of the bill.

<sup>33</sup> At the time this article was being concluded, the press reported a large wave of new intrusions on the Yanomami Indigenous Land and TV news showed Indigenous women running from gunfire by gold prospectors. We also saw the homes of an Indigenous Mundurucu leader and his mother in flames, from fires set by gold prospectors.

<sup>34</sup> The project indicates payments of 0.7% of the value of energy produced, between 0.5% and 1% for the production of natural gas or petroleum, and royalties in variable amounts for mining. These resources would not be directly managed by the Indigenous communities, but by boards of curators, while the rules for composing the boards would be defined by presidential decree.

Congress would not have been able to impose important setbacks to the government's anti-indigenous fury. By trying to transfer the demarcation process to the Ministry of Agriculture, the government heard a first and resounding "no" from Congress. Later, upon redrafting the proposal, a "no" from the Supreme Court. Then, once again Congress determined the return of Funai to the Ministry of Justice, removing it from the Ministry controlled by Pastor Damares Alves. In turn, the Federal Public Ministry filed suits against the federal executive in various situations, like those that sought to require Funai to properly continue the systematic steps of demarcation in various parts of the country, others that question the state's inertia in protection of communities in the Covid-19 pandemic, those that challenge government interference in the structure and operation of the indigenist agency<sup>35</sup>, and those that denounce Funai's new posture towards isolated peoples.<sup>36</sup> Bolsonaro and his minions may have thought it would be easier to dismantle the Indigenous policy constructed over the past three decades. Many believed that the wall of legal guarantees of Indigenous rights would cede rapidly to the avalanche of attacks against it. The struggles by the Indigenous movement and its friends during this period, however, left a solid legacy in the Constitution, which is now undergoing its greatest historic test.<sup>37</sup>

A fight against difference and exaltation of the equal. These characteristics represent the greatest metamorphosis in the Indigenist policy of the Brazilian state since the proclamation of the Republic. This transformation is unprecedented in a country that three decades ago took a giant step towards the recognition of Indigenous rights and those of other minorities. This includes the right to territory, but above all the right to difference. We recall that difference is not presented as a trivial fact in our Constitution. The forms of expression and the "modes of creating, doing and living" of the different groups and peoples of the country are, as article 216 peremptorily states, a heritage that the state is responsible for protecting. But the Bolsonaro government's indigenist policy aspires to a radical transformation in the way that the state, and thus the country, is positioned towards alterity. The country envisioned by this policy is the country of "Brazilians" as equal people.

Nevertheless, we must ask: what equality are we speaking of if even "Brazilians" are not equal to each other? The president's discourse refers to an "imagined political community" (Anderson, 1991) in which the mutual affinity of its members is represented in the flag, the national anthem, and the moral values of a Christianity of an Evangelical and Pentecostal hue. But this vision hides the multiple forms of "being Brazilian", which the Indigenous freed from tutelage, from the "zoos" of the Indigenous Lands and from the manipulative action of NGOs and anthropologists, as the president affirms, would face. We are many and diverse Brazilians, with or without wealth, with or without rights, with or without access. In an unequal social structure,

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35 It was the Federal Public Ministry that filed suit to have the Federal Appeals Court for the 1<sup>st</sup> Region (TRF 1) invalidate Funai's attempt to name, in violation of its own bylaws, someone from outside its technical staff as the General Coordinator for Isolated Indians of Recent Contact (CGIIRC). This may be the sector that requires the most technical and specialized knowledge in the agency. The missionary Ricardo Lopes Dias, of the Missões Novas Tribos, which is now called Etnos360, had been appointed head of the CGIIRC in February 2020, under protests of the Matsés, indigenists, anthropologists and other indigenous organizations. The Federal Superior Court (STJ) overturned the decision of the TRF-1 regional appeals court, but pressure against the missionary continued and the Ministry of Justice was required to exonerate him in November 2020..

36 Artionka Capiberibe, in an article in the *Folha de S. Paulo*, mapped some of the actions of flagrant disrespect for the government towards these peoples. In addition to the already cited nomination of an evangelical missionary to work with isolated peoples, she recalled a course offered by the Federal Police, with supposedly scientific and technical content, but that was prepared by the missionary Ricardo Dias Lopes and taught by fundamentalist religious missionaries. The most serious action, however, was an attempt to permit the entrance of non-authorized persons on the lands of these isolated peoples, primarily by a failed attempt to alter decree *Portaria* 419 that established measures against the propagation of Covid-19 among Indigenous peoples, but later, by its reinsertion in law 14.021/2020, which also sought to confront the pandemic among the Indigenous. As Capiberibe reported, Bolsonaro issued 22 vetoes to the law, but not to the article that would open these territories to entrance by third-parties including missionaries: "the president preferred to veto the universal access to potable water to the indigenous" (Capiberibe, 2020).

37 François-Michel Le Tourneau (2019), in an analysis of the Bolsonaro government's attacks against Indigenous rights, foresees three possible situations of results, ranging from the least to the greatest impact on these rights. It appears that the resistance of the institutions, of the Indigenous movement and of the sectors of support to the Indigenous cause have been able to prevent the most feared situations. Although we remain at the least damaging level, we are still distant from situation 3, the massive revocation of rights, but we would advance to the second level were bill PL 191/2020 to be approved.

it cannot be expected that communities ignored by public policies or uprooted within their own country would enter a new building from the top floor. Bolsonaro's Indigenous policy is anti-Indigenous because it attacks, in the order of indigenist, the same difference that it attacks in other orders, whether in sexual orientation, religious belonging, ways of thinking or even in that which is planted and eaten.

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# Film, music and sensory experience: questions concerning a project to film participatory musical performances

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## **Abstract**

This text sets out to discuss questions arising from the work of filming Brazilian popular festivals, celebrations and rituals in which music-making involves a process of collective musical production, practices linked to what Turino (2008) has called ‘participatory music.’ By making music together, the participants take part in intense non-verbal social interactions that very often reach a collective climax or trace, an experience difficult to translate into words. How can film express and communicate this type of musical experience involving all the senses? Setting out from technical guidelines developed in a project to film participative musical performances for a documentary series, *Taquaras, Tambores e Violas*, the text aims to reflect on the potential of the audiovisual medium as an experiential mode that both apprehends the musical context and enables the spectator to access and discover the participatory performances depicted through the evoked experience and senses.

**Keywords:** film, music, participatory musical performance, sensory, ethnomusicology, visual anthropology.

# Filme, música e experiência sensória: questões em torno de um projeto de filmagem de performances musicais participativas

## Resumo

Este texto pretende discutir questões implicadas no trabalho de filmagem de festas, celebrações e rituais populares brasileiros em que o fazer musical se dá enquanto processo de produção de música de forma coletiva, práticas ligadas ao que Turino (2008) chamou de “música participativa”. Ao fazerem música juntos, os participantes tomam parte de intensas interações sociais não verbais que muitas vezes chegam a um clímax ou transe coletivo, experiência esta dificilmente traduzível em palavras. Como o filme pode expressar e comunicar este tipo de experiência musical que envolve todos os sentidos? A partir de diretrizes técnicas forjadas em um projeto de filmagem de performances musicais participativas para a série documental Taquaras, Tambores e Violas, pretende-se refletir sobre o potencial do audiovisual como um modo experiencial que tanto apreende o contexto musical como permite ao espectador acessar e conhecer as performances participativas retratadas pela via da experiência evocada e dos sentidos.

**Palavras-chave:** filme, música, performance musical participativa, sensório, etnomusicologia, antropologia visual.

# Film, music and sensory experience: questions concerning a project to film participatory musical performances

Alice Villela

## Opening: filmmaking in musical research

The interest in the audiovisual registering of Brazilian popular manifestations, rituals, festivals and celebrations with music dates back a long time.<sup>1</sup> Over the years, folklorists, ethnomusicologists, anthropologists, documentary makers, journalists, tourists and others have produced an extensive material that remains stored in diverse collections and circulates in a variety of circuits, networks and media. As a pioneering experience, we can mention the expeditions of the Folklore Research Mission coordinated by Mário de Andrade while he headed the Department of Culture of São Paulo City Hall, like the expedition organised in 1938 to various cities and localities in Brazil's Northeast with the objective of registering in audio recordings, photographs, films and notebooks the cultural manifestations hidden in diverse corners of Brazil.<sup>2</sup>

Today the popularization of mobile phone cameras means that anyone can film, document and/or publish material online, hugely expanding the possibilities available to masters and other participants of popular manifestations to produce their own records. Albeit diffusely, audiovisual records of diverse kinds show the existence in these materials of a significant distance between the lived experience of the performance and the audiovisual representation. Like filmed theatre plays, the scenic elements are there, so too the audience, musicians, costumes, context, narrative and music, but watching a filmed play is very different to attending a live show. The audiovisual result bears no proximity to the aesthetic and sensorial experiences of the people who watched the play or, in the case that interests us here, who experienced a musical performance.

This reflection explores the possibilities for using audiovisual media to capture and communicate experience in Brazilian popular festivals, celebrations and rituals in which music is made collectively, in practices linked to what Turino (2008) called 'participatory music,' in which no distinction exists between musicians and audience, just as no separation exists between the expressive domains (sonic, visual, corporeal, choreographic, musical, gestural). How can the audiovisual language be used to construct a narrative that communicates the musical experience in these participatory performances?<sup>3</sup> This was precisely the challenge taken up by the television documentary series *Taquaras, Tambores e Violas* in filming festivals, celebrations, dances and rituals in which diverse musical instruments were played, the project having also accompanied their fabrication.

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2 The archive is found at the Oneyda Alvarenga Record Collection of the São Paulo Cultural Centre. Part of the filming can be seen in the documentary *Mário de Andrade e os Primeiros Filmes Etnográficos* (27min, 1997), edited by Cinemateca Brasileira, containing the records of the Folklore Research Mission in the chronological order of the expedition. The bibliography on the mission is vast: see, for example, Toni 2008 and Sandroni 1999.

3 As the reader will see, in this article I use the term 'participatory musical performances' (see Turino 2008) to refer to what are commonly called popular manifestations or popular cultures. The reason is that I am more interested in the musical aspect of this type of performance, as so well described by the author, than discussing ideas concerning what Brazilian popular culture is, its relations to the concept of folklore and so on. For an introduction to the concept of popular culture, see, for example, Arantes 1998; for a critical discussion of anthropology and popular culture, see Segato 1991.

In total, 26 different popular manifestations were filmed, associated with 26 fabricated musical instruments, in 10 Brazilian states, representing a true immersion in participatory musical performances in Brazil.<sup>4</sup>

Accompanying the development and production of the series, this work presents an ethnography of the audiovisual production involved in documentaries produced by the film company Laboratório Cisco,<sup>5</sup> located in the city of Campinas, São Paulo, looking to reveal the methodology of capturing images and sounds and the conceptions behind the filming of participatory musical performances. The hypothesis explored here is that the concerns of the documentary project coincide with methodological questions concerning the use of the audiovisual in research on music-making, as far as its central challenge is to enable the passage between experience in musical performance and the experience that the audiovisual provides to the spectator.

It is important for the reader to know my own role as a researcher in the production of the series and the conditions under which the research was developed. Having initially been one of the researchers of the documentary project, I later brought my experience as part of the production team to the centre of a postdoctoral investigation. The ethnographic material analysed in this article comprises interviews with the team that produced the series, access to the raw material and the filmic analysis of the completed episodes, although accompanying the teams in the field during filming proved impossible. Hence, it is in this liminal zone that the research is situated, between academic investigation, audiovisual production and cinematographic critique.<sup>6</sup>

Thinking about the ability of film to communicate experience in a musical performance from an anthropological perspective is not exactly a new undertaking. Although it seems highly contemporary, discussion about the potential of the audiovisual to represent and express ethnographic contexts marked by emotional and musical intensity has taken place since the very first uses of film by anthropology. If we think of *Trance and Dance in Bali* by Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, edited in 1952 but filmed between 1936 and 1939 in Bali,<sup>7</sup> we can make various observations on the relationship between ritual, musical experience and filmic experience.

The theme of the film is the *Tjalonarang* ceremony, which re-enacts the fight between Rangda, the sorceress, and Barong, the king's emissary (the dragon). Mead's narration explains the ritual plot and sets the tone for her scientific project, for which the camera in the field functioned as a recording device capable of illustrating her theses (Mead and Bateson, 1942: 49), in this case, concerning Balinese behaviour.

Although Mead argues for the use of a fixed camera without any variation in the framing or angle, Bateson subverts this guideline through the way in which he operates the equipment during the ritual,<sup>8</sup> especially at the moment of trance when we can observe a camera that moves about, completely engaged in what happens, expressing a degree of intimacy with the event. And what can we say about the music in the film? The music was probably recorded in a studio because Mead and Bateson made no sound recordings during the ritual; at that time, there was no equipment capable of synchronized recording of images and sound. However, as Henley (2013: 98) argues, the way in which the music was edited to the visual material of the ritual seems to provoke a distinct set of feelings in the spectator and thus contributes to the narrative arc of the film.

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4 The series was directed by Hidalgo Romero and produced using resources from the Fundo Setorial do Audiovisual (FSA), a fund intended for the mutual development of the entire productive chain of audiovisual activity in Brazil, created by Law no. 11,437, Decree no. 6,299, 12 December 2007. The series is an authorial product and was shown on CINEBRASILTV, a channel dedicated to national independent audiovisual productions, available to subscribers across Brazil. The link <http://taquaras.laboratoriocisco.org/> provides more information on the series as well video clips from the films.

5 See: <https://www.laboratoriocisco.org/?lang=en>

6 I thank one of the ad hoc reviewers of this article for the suggestion to incorporate the idea of liminality to explain the research methodology.

7 The film forms part of the series *Character Formation in Different Cultures*, which explores the relations between children and their parents in different cultures. For an analysis of the films produced by Mead and Bateson, see Henley 2013.

8 Mead and Bateson disagreed over this use of the fixed camera. In a famous exchange with Mead, recorded in 1976, when the couple had already separated, Bateson defends a freer use of the camera, which in Mead's view makes the recording closer to artistic practice and more distant from its use as a scientific instrument. The debate is curious and amusing but, above all, makes us return our gaze to the images of trance found in *Trance and Dance in Bali*, in the camerawork of Bateson. See Mead and Bateson 1977.

Between the 1940s and 1950s, the American avantgarde filmmaker Maya Deren recorded footage of Vodou rituals in Haiti, later included in the film *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti* (1985), completed after her death. Displaying a special interest in the body, dance and ritual, Deren follows the Haitian bodies as they invite the gods to possess them. The camera accompanies bodies, trances and the flows of dance and music, the latter added to the footage later, in shots that were highly experimental for the period.

Another interesting experience in the history of the marriage between anthropology, the audiovisual and music, keeping in mind the relationship between ritual/musical context and cinematic construction, are the works of Gilbert Rouget made in partnership with Jean Rouch. Feld (2016 [1976]) in a seminal text on the use of film in ethnomusicological research, recognises Rouch's pioneering work with Rouget and the way in which technical innovations in synchronic cinema were used to produce films for the purposes of ethnomusicological analysis. This partnership gave rise to the film *Batteries Dogon. Éléments pour une étude des rythmes*, completed in 1964, which comprises a synchronic experiment in colour that also involved the collaboration of Germaine Dierterlen with the aim of providing support to the rhythmic analysis (Rouget, 1965).

In 1971, in another partnership, Rouch<sup>9</sup> and Rouget made the film *Danses des Reines à Porto Novo*, 35 minutes long, which is attributed to Rouget and accompanies the book by the same author, *Um roi africano et sa musique de cour*. In this production, which included Jean Rouch's work in both conceptualising the film and operating the camera, the central concern is once again the synchrony between music and movement. Enthused by the new technology that could record sound and image synchronically, Rouget proposed to conduct a technical experiment for analytic purposes in which he shows in slow motion part of a possession ritual at the Porto Novo Palace of the King in Dahomey (present-day Benin). The film presents the sequence of five dances, most of them performed by the King's wives. One of the dances is shown at normal speed and in slow motion, synchronized with the sound stretched to maintain them both synchronized.<sup>10</sup>

What is interesting here in these partnerships between Rouch and Rouget is the way in which the filmmakers convert a technical experiment in images and sounds undertaken for analytic purposes into experiments with a broader interest, as Feld (2016 [1976]: 303) observes: "audiences can also have access to seeing and hearing the fascinating decomposition and synthesis of Dogon polyrhythms, and the delicate and complex synchrony of the Porto Novo court dances."<sup>11</sup>

Rouch's pioneering work in partnership with Rouget, allying technical preoccupations to an analytic proposal expressing a concern with the form of constructing a filmic narrative, does not seem to have been the primary emphasis of ethnomusicological productions, at least until the mid-1970s when Feld published the first global study on the use of film by ethnomusicology in the journal *Ethnomusicology*, recently translated into Portuguese (see Feld 1976).

Feld argues that there is a conceptual question that needs to be addressed that involves a certain confusion in respect to what makes film interesting. Feld calls attention to the fact that many ethnomusicologists approach film as a possibility for the objective record of reality and use it to illustrate research or to assist in teaching activities, running the risk of taking the images as 'real,' ignoring the procedures of cinematographic language, such as the 'types of selection,' the aims of the filmmakers and so on. The researcher suggests to ethnomusicologists who intend to appropriate the use of film for investigation that they should take the opportunity to "tap directly into the foundation being built in the anthropology of visual communication" (1976: 316).

9 Diverse films by Jean Rouch thematize music and music-making. To cite just a few: *Yenendi de Gangel*, *Tourou et Bitti*, and the *Sigui* series (see Feld 2016 [1976]: 297).

10 For more details on the experiment, see "Une expérience de cinéma synchrone au ralenti," published by Rouget in 1971 in the journal *L'Homme*.

11 At the end of the 1970s, Claudine de France made an important contribution on the theme of filming rituals. In her book *Cinema e Antropologia* (1998), the author reflects on the use of audiovisual methods as instruments in the anthropological observation, transcription and interpretation of ritual processes and techniques, following the precepts of what she called 'filmic anthropology.'

In the intersection between visual anthropology and ethnomusicology, this fertile terrain is precisely where this reflection constructs its bases<sup>12</sup> by entering the universe of a small producer of authorial documentaries in order to capture the technical and aesthetic know-how concerning the filming of festivals, celebrations and rituals of so-called Brazilian popular culture. Based on an analysis of the methodology employed by the series in the filming of ‘participatory musical performances’ (see Turino 2008), the aim is to anthropologically problematize the use of the audiovisual in research on music and contribute to the debate on the appropriation of the cinematographic language by musical anthropology and by ethnomusicology in the construction of their audiovisual narratives.

## Film, music and the sensory

In visual anthropology, MacDougall is without doubt the main proponent of a sensory and bodily approach to ethnographic film. Taking as a key question the differential capacities of language and imagery to communicate anthropological knowledge, he sees visual anthropology as particularly suited to representing sensory and bodily approaches. MacDougall (1997) suggests that visual representation can offer pathways to the other senses and help resolve difficulties that anthropologists face when researching and communicating about emotions, time, the body, senses, gender and individual identity. We can include music on this list,<sup>13</sup> providing a language metaphorically and experimentally close to them. Because the visual has the capacity of metaphor and synaesthesia,<sup>14</sup> he proposes that “[m]uch that can be ‘said’ about these matters may best be said in the visual media” (1997: 287) in contrast to use of the written word because the former can facilitate ‘evocation.’

MacDougall suggests that the visual also offers a second path for this type of experience. Emphasizing the inseparability of the senses as interconnected perceptual fields, the author points to the particular interconnectivity of seeing and touching (see Taussig 1991), which, he argues, underlies the filmic communication of sensory experience (1998: 50). Observing studies of blind people who on recovering their vision are unable to recognize objects visually until they touch them, he argues that touch and vision share the same experiential field, each belonging to a more general faculty. Hence, I can touch with my eyes because my experience of surfaces includes both touching and seeing, each of which derives qualities from the other (1998: 51).

MacDougall describes how this can be achieved in practice through a discussion of his work at the Doon School (India), an educational world that, in his analysis, is lived through the creation of an aesthetic space possessing a singular structure of sensory impressions, social relations and ways of behaving physically (2000: 9-10). The question is how to film something so implicit and omnipresent as a social aesthetic – it is important to add that ‘aesthetic’ here is not related to notions of beauty or art but to a range of cultural patterns for sensory experience (ibid: 7). The author suggests that the social aesthetic “could only be approached obliquely, through the events and material objects in which it played a variety of roles” (ibid: 12). In so doing, he reinforces the importance of the audiovisual as a language closer to the multidimensionality of the subject itself; that is, a language that operates between the visual, the auditory, the verbal and the temporal and even between the tactile domain (ibid: 18).

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12 My individual research trajectory also expresses this intersection of interests. After training in Visual Anthropology with a doctorate from Gravi (Grupo de Antropologia Visual) at the University of São Paulo, I joined the Thematic Project in Ethnomusicology: “Local musicking: new pathways for ethnomusicology” Proc. Fapesp. 2016/05318-7) coordinated by Professor Suzel Ana Reily (Unicamp) with a postdoctoral study of the relations between the audiovisual and music in the aforementioned documentary project.

13 Rouch himself had already observed this potential when he noted: “[...] at this level, film is an absolutely irreplaceable instrument; while in the domains of prehistory, social organisation and linguistics, cinema constitutes just one ‘extra’ tool, however valuable it may be, in ethnomusicology it amounts to a **capital instrument**” (Rouch 1968: 465, free translation, my emphasis).

14 For MacDougall, metaphor is almost always present in film: “in the sense that environments and images of objects are persistently associated with feelings, actions and states of mind” [...] “Metaphor in film (as in life) can be the concretising of the self and experience in other things, not as simile or analogy, but as bodily extension” (1997: 289).

The synaesthetic capacity to evoke sensory experience is again explored by the author in the book *The Corporeal Image* (2006). In the opening chapter of the book, MacDougall evokes the bodies implicated in film: the bodies of the filmmaker and spectator, the bodies depicted in the film and the body of the film itself (the connections of the camera as part of the body). Inspired by Alfred Gell's thinking of artworks in terms of agency and effect rather than meaning (Gell 1998), he proposes a reflection that sets out from the idea that film is made to capture us, fascinate us and even confuse us. With the development of cinema, he asserts, filmmakers discovered new ways of creating physical sensations, exploring the synaesthetic potential of the image through the work with the camera and narrative.

Like MacDougall, the social anthropologist Sarah Pink also considers the use of the audiovisual important to communicating the aesthetic dimension of human experience. An enthusiast of what she calls sensory ethnography (Pink, 2009), the author speaks of the importance of valorising the audiovisual register as a method of collecting and divulging information, and of the ability of ethnographic film to represent and evoke the sensory and bodily experience of *Others* audiovisually (Pink, 2006: 48).

Pink argues that a sensory ethnography through the audiovisual does not aim “to produce a view of objective or true reality but instead seeks to offer versions of ethnographers’ experiences of reality that are as faithful as possible to the context, the bodily, sensory and affective experiences, and the negotiations and intersubjectivities through which knowledge is produced.”<sup>15</sup> This type of approach in anthropology signifies a fragmentation of the investigation, seeking to absorb information through a plethora of sensory forms and attributing all of them with the same qualitative value.<sup>16</sup>

Moving this discussion to the field of interest to us here, the potential to use the audiovisual to produce an experiential and sensorial knowledge of contexts marked by musical experience is huge. Gubner (2018) proposes what she calls sensory filming in ethnomusicology as an experiential mode (visual, auditive, evocative) of producing knowledge to contest and diversify narratives and aesthetics.

Based on her research on the tango scene in Buenos Aires and the production of short films<sup>17</sup> that aim to capture the local economies of feelings surrounding the practices of this style of music in the districts and neighbourhoods of the Argentinean capital, Gubner speaks of a sensory training in ethnomusicology, which signifies not only the idea that cultural experiences with music are multi-sensorial but that the multi-sensorial experimental knowledge allows us to ‘know’ in different ways (Gubner, 2018: 183-184).

The work of the Swiss ethnomusicologist Charlotte Vignau is produced along the same lines. The author conducted an extensive study of an instrument from the Swiss tradition called the alphorn and produced a film on the subject.<sup>18</sup> In an article (Vignau, 2015) in which she compares the musical ethnography made through film and writing, the author cites passages from the work *Transcultural Cinema* by MacDougall (1998) to argue that film, as a performative and synaesthetic production, is closer to the sensory mediation of musical experience than text and, therefore, this experience can be better captured by visual ethnography than by ethnographic writing.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Except taken from the website of the Forum of the Real Festival/ 2016, which examined sensory cinema. Available at: <https://www.portopostdoc.com/home/noticias/view?id=106>

<sup>16</sup> Along these lines, see the work of the Sensory Ethnography Lab at Harvard University: <https://sel.fas.harvard.edu/> and Nakamura's article (2013) exploring the laboratory's output.

<sup>17</sup> The researcher's films can be accessed via her website: <http://www.jenniegubner.com/>

<sup>18</sup> See the website: <https://www.alphornworldwide.net/> for more information on the research project that resulted in the book and film.

<sup>19</sup> At LISA – Laboratory of Image and Sound in Anthropology, University of São Paulo (USP), other film-related works touch on the theme of musical experience and the sensory. For examples of this output, see Mihai Leaha's work (2019) on the independent electronic music scene in São Paulo from a multi-modal perspective; the film *Tribo Planetária* (2011) by Carolina Abreu on the experience of electronic music festivals in Brasil; various works by Priscila Ermel like *O Arco e a Lira* (2002) on the Ikolen-Gavião and *O Canto das Canoas* (2007) on the *ciranda* tradition in Parati (RJ); and the film *Acontecências* (2009) which I directed with Hidalgo Romero on the field experience in the shamanistic ritual of the Asuriní of the Xingu.



## Taquaras, Tambores e Violas

*Taquaras, Tambores e Violas* (in English: Flutes, Drums and Guitars) accompanied the fabrication of artisanal Brazilian musical instruments: the *alfaia* (a drum), *viola machete* (a small guitar), *atabaque* (an Afro-Brazilian hand drum), *pifano* (fife), *gonguê* (a type of cowbell), *xequerê* (shekere, an African-origin gourd instrument), *berimbau* (Afro-Brazilian musical bow), *caixas* (snare drums), fiddles, 7-string guitars, *candongueiro* (small hand drum), *violas* (various types of guitar/lute), Brazilian tambourines, *meião* (a hand drum), *pandeirão* (large tambourine), *maraca* (Amerindian gourd rattle), *tambu* (a large drum), *tamanco* (clogs), *gaita ponto* (a type of accordion), *carimbó* (an Amerindian hand drum), *agogô de 4 bocas* (four-mouthed cowbell), *reco-reco* (a musical scraper), as well as dozens of masters and participatory musical performances in which the instruments are played. This extensive project compiled more than 300 hours of raw material between 2014 and 2019.

Figures 1-6. Photos from the series published on the Facebook page of the Laboratório Cisco film company



<https://www.facebook.com/laboratorio.cisco/>

The content of the episodes<sup>20</sup> shows the work of the artisan at each stage of making musical instruments, ranging from obtaining the raw material (wood, metal, bamboo, leather and so on) to the finishing touches and its use, when music is produced. Testimonies from the masters and practitioners of the musical performances include songs, chants, *loas* and *pontos*, as well as life stories and descriptions of their experience of these manifestations. There are no experts providing depositions or explanatory diagrams;<sup>21</sup> everything we know is provided by the images and words of the subjects possessing the knowhow associated with the specific universe being shown.

The team, composed of three professionals working as camera operator, sound engineer and director, accompanied the steps involved in the construction of the musical performances, including essays, the preparation of the space, making food for the festival, manufacturing the costumes, until reaching the musical performance properly speaking with all its nuances and intensities, from beginning to end.

<sup>20</sup> Although I had access to the completed films, only the 'promos' of the films are available to the public due to the contract with the CINEBRASILTV channel. For the purposes of the analysis in this article, these promos are sufficient for the reader to get an idea of the material in question since they always contain excerpts representative of the filming of the participatory performances.

<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the only additional information is a map of the location where the episode was filmed in the presentation of each film.

Additionally, images of the locality taken with a drone camera contextualize the narrative and are combined with close-up images of the spaces in which the actions unfold: workshops, *terreiros*, domestic interiors, associations, with the same function of describing the context.

The understanding of Hidalgo Romero,<sup>22</sup> director of the series, is that the processes involved in constructing the instruments are part of a 'productive chain' connecting persons, materials and places, culminating in the realization of the festivals, celebrations and rituals, a moment in which the finished instruments are prepared, tuned and played. In the narrative guiding the series, therefore, the focus is on the processual dimension, both in relation to the stages involved in making the instrument and to the construction of the musical performance. Following this double process, the spectator accompanies the narrative of the films.

At the end of each episode, the series invites the public to relate with the presented images and sounds through an immersion in the participatory performances. This exemplifies the strong authorial hallmark of the project, distancing it from the format usually imagined for TV documentary films with their shallow content and narratives filled with mediations to make the spectator's apprehension easier.

### The proposal to become immersed in the music

*Sambas de roda, batizados de bumba-meu-boi, rodas de tambor de crioula, saídas de maracatu* and *rodas de choro*, among many other celebrations that take as their guideline musical – but also choreographic, dramatic and plastic – forms of making are presented at the end of the films. The aesthetic proposal of making the spectator immerse in this sonic universe of colours, textures, smells and tastes was formulated by the series director based on his own lived experience in a popular manifestation, Angola capoeira, which, indeed, is one of the episodes from the first season, along with the construction of the berimbau.<sup>23</sup>

The immersion in rehearsals, *rodas*, classes, lectures and trips to Bahia – activities that formed part of the practice of Angolan capoeira in the city of Campinas, São Paulo state, at the beginning of the 2000s, in the lineage of the master Jogo de Dentro – enabled the director access to a singular bodily and musical aesthetic. The question that he asks himself in projecting a gaze that desires to become immersed in the universe of popular manifestations and understand them, in particular musical performances, is knowing what kind of experience this type of event provides to those involved in it.

The proposal, therefore, was to move away from the idea of a record, understood by the director as “an observation of a phenomenon in a distant way” and bring observation with the camera closer to the experience of someone who takes part in the musical performance and accompany it from inside. A major reference point for how the series *Taquaras, Tambores e Violas* filmed the festivals, rituals and celebrations, especially in relation to how the photography was conducted, is the work of Vincent Moon.

An independent filmmaker, Moon has a special interest in the music of the world and in a form of showing it in an accessible way outside the patterns set by the culture industry. He has undertaken diverse on-line projects of video shorts on music; one of the best known is *Coleção Petites Planètes*,<sup>24</sup> in which he accompanies artists and groups in different localities and continents. The camera is always hand-held and in movement; body and equipment are one, living the musical experience, dancing. His films dispense with interviews,

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22 Hidalgo Romero graduated in architecture and urbanism from UNESP. In 2006, by now working in communications, undertook a Scriptwriting course at the International Film and TV School in Santo Antônio de Los Baños, Cuba, and, on his return to Brazil, joined the newly-founded Laboratório Cisco – Educação e Imagem collective. I codirected the films *Acontecências* (2009), previously mentioned, and *A Briga do Cachorro com a Onça* (2013).

23 See the promo for the first season episode *O berimbau na capoeira angola*. <http://taquaras.laboratoriocisco.org/>.

24 See the website of the project <https://petitesplanetes.earth/> and also <https://vimeo.com/vincentmoon>

speech, a more rationalized and explicative understanding of the filmed contexts, and try to apprehend the life of what he films in its environment and its inner structure. Making regular use of sequence shots with frequent close-ups, Moon invites the spectator to become immersed in the musical experience. Hidalgo Romero describes Moon's work as an exercise in translation from an aesthetic experience within a musical and sensory context to the audiovisual. An exercise that the director also posed as a challenge:

Here we come to a question that interest me a lot, which is the question of translation, the experience that you have as a *brincante* [practitioner of a determined musical performance] is exceedingly difficult to record. Setting the camera up there and switching it on does not guarantee that the person watching will have the experience you had there, whether as a *brincante* or a member of the audience, it doesn't matter, even if they are different places. So you have to develop a series of techniques to try to capture this experience that is lived, that is concrete, that is physical, that has a smell, a taste, a time, a distance, a lot of things, and propose an audiovisual experience that the person watches, obviously they are not there, but so that the person who watches can, in some form, understand what you felt with that. That for me is the audiovisual challenge.<sup>25</sup>

Experience is a key word in this type of audiovisual experiment and the idea of translation is introduced by the director to help establish the type of relation that the production of images and sounds will establish with the filmed event. The proposal here is closer to creating 'equivalences' between lived experience and the audiovisual than translating *ipsis literis* specific codes present in the participatory musical performances into film. Hence, the 'translation' evoked by the director can be read following Benjamin (2008 [1923]) as a "a search for resonances and reverberations between different codes and systems." For Benjamim, a good translation is not one that values fidelity through the literality of the words but one capable of apprehending the points of resonance, of making the intention of one language reverberate in another – and here we could widen this to include translating from one system of codes into another.<sup>26</sup>

### **Music making in participatory performances: talking with Thomas Turino**

When I began this research at the end of 2017, in one of the intense dialogues with the director of the series, I presented him with Thomas Turino's concept of participatory performance (Turino, 2008). The conceptual proposal matched the way in which Hidalgo Romero was thinking about his documentary project so productively that he appropriated this reference for himself as a guiding inspiration in the construction of the film methodology.

What do *a roda de tambor de crioula* at a *terreiro* in São Luís do Maranhão, a *toré* dance in an area of recovered lands among the Kariri-Xocó indigenous people in Alagoas, a *cururu* festival on a smallholding in the rural zone of Cuiabá, Mato Grosso, and a *cantoria em roda* with an accordion in a quilombola community, located in the south of Rio Grande do Sul state, all share in common? This was the question posed by the director before starting work on the second season of films on these and other manifestations in which the fabricated instruments participate and are played by local practitioners. The question is not intended to receive a historical answer, tracing the origins and familiarities of the instruments or the manifestations, but instead is interested in the nature of forms of music making capable of providing elements for the elaboration of a methodology adequate to filming musical performances.

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<sup>25</sup> Interview given in August 2017.

<sup>26</sup> Hidalgo Romero and I reflected together on the form of filming the series in light of the idea of translation in a paper that we gave at II SIPA – Seminário Imagem, Pesquisa e Antropologia (Image, Research and Anthropology Seminar) held at Unicamp in April 2018. See Villela and Hidalgo (2019).

In this sense, the classification of the types of musical practice elaborated by Thomas Turino and described in *Music as Social Life* (2008) help precisely to understand what these practices have in common. The emphasis on the process of musical production (and not on the product) led Turino to make a classification based on the form of making music, dividing the music produced in real time into *participatory* and *presentational*, and recorded music as *high-fidelity recordings* and *studio art*. For him, music is not a unitary form of art, but distinct types of activities that meet different needs and ways of being human (Turino, 2008: 1).

The filmed musical performances resonate in what Thomas Turino (2008) calls participatory performances: "...a special type of artistic practice in which there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants performing different roles" (2008: 26). If there is something in common between all the filmed musical performances it is that in all of them the idea of participation, referring to the narrow sense of contributing actively to the sound and movement of a musical event through the mediation of dance, singing, clapping hands and playing musical instruments, is fundamental (ibid: 28). Neither is there any separation between expressive domains (sonic, visual, corporal, choreographic, musical, gestural) and this is extremely important since, although we may speak of 'musical performances,' referring to the role of music in articulating these contexts, different expressive domains are present.<sup>27</sup>

Although Turino does not explicitly refer to studies of performance, many similarities can be identified between what he understands as 'participatory performances' and the very idea of performance appearing in the works of Turner (1982, 1987), Schechner (1985) and Bauman (2014), to cite some of the main exponents in this field.<sup>28</sup> This begins with the idea of the event of performance as a 'concrete experience' and a 'unit of observation'<sup>29</sup> with a limited time span, or at least a beginning and end, an organised program of activities, a set of actors, an audience and a venue in which the processual character of the performative action comes to the fore.

In Turino's participatory performances we can observe the points of contact between theatre and anthropology elaborated by Schechner (1985), namely: the "intensity of performance"; "interactions between performers and spectators"; the "total sequence of the performance"; the "transmission of performative knowledge"; and the "evaluation of performances." However, it seems that while for Schechner, and for Turner also, the rite-theatre relation and the idea of drama are 'good to think about' social action, for Turino this place is occupied by music. The latter author shows how acoustic characteristics such as short form, melodic repetition, harmony and rhythm, dense textures, a call-response structure, common to the diverse participatory performances that he analyses, possess the participatory ethos as a central desired aim – that is, music is constructed to inspire or support participation.

The idea of participation as a value and objective of this type of performance can be exemplified by an event that occurred during a period of filming for the documentary series in question. This happened during the realization of the *tambor de crioula* dance by Master Felipe's group at a festival held by a *terreiro* linked to *tambor de mina* on the occasion of the birthday of one of the *terreiro's encantados*.<sup>30</sup> The *tambor de crioula* dance is formed by dancers, called *coreiras*, and by three drums (*meião*, which marks the beat; *crivador*, a large and

27 Here I am inspired by Menezes Bastos's work on Kamayurá music. In the Kamayurá case, the author establishes music as a pivot system that intermediates, in rite, the universes of verbal arts (poetry, myth) in relation to those of plastic-visual expressions (graphics, iconography, ornaments) and choreological expressions (dance, theatre) (2007: 297).

28 A future work might set in dialogue the ideas of Turino and his use of the notion of performance with notions from the anthropology (studies) of performance – a task that this article is obviously unable to undertake in depth.

29 The notion of a unit of experience as a unit of observation is from Dilthey. Turner turns to this analytic category in developing his approach to the Anthropology of Experience (1986).

30 This happening was recounted by the director in an interview given to me in September 2017. *Encantado* is a broad designation given to the spiritual entities that are incorporated during the *tambor de mina*, an Afro-Brazilian religion that emerged in the nineteenth century in the capital of Maranhão state. See Ferreti (2006) for a reflection on the present-day *Tambor de Mina* and the registers that the Folkloric Research Mission coordinated by Mário de Andrade made in 1938 of some *terreiros de tambor de mina* in São Luis.

high-pitched drum; and a soloist drum); one *coreira* enters the dance circle at a time, passing the invitation to dance to another via the *punga*, or navel. On this occasion, some *encantados* entered the circle along with the *coreiras* – or more precisely, people incorporated in *encantados*. For this reason, the group allowed the camera to enter the dance circle to film from inside: “if the *encantados* can enter, then the camera can too,” one of the group’s leaders remarked.<sup>31</sup>

Figures 7-9. Frames from the episode *O meio no tambor de crioula*



See the promo at <http://taquaras.laboratoriocisco.org/> (second season)

As well as the idea of participation, another aspect that pervades the different manifestations can be summarized as the singular intensity and involvement that the participatory performances provide to the participants. Turino argues that this type of performance deals with a very singular type of concentration: complete attention to the other with whom one is interacting through sound and movement is needed for the activity to unfold well. An important by-product of the high concentration on the activity of participatory music-dance is that it produces the state or experience of flow in which preoccupations, thoughts and distractions vanish and the actor lives fully in the present moment. Turino suggests that this experience is linked to a sensation of atemporality, a feeling of being outside normal time and transcending the self (ibid: 4).

Clearly for the performance to attain an intensity where the participants surrender to the state of flow, skills and training in music and dance are essential (Turino, 2008: 4). Musically speaking, Turino emphasizes the importance of synchrony and rhythm in this type of performance: the participants must pay close attention to the sounds and, especially, the movements of the others. Moving together creates a direct sense of “being together” and, when a performance is going well, many people stop reflecting symbolically: “we are really moving as one.” This is the feeling conjured during the performance and certainly what will be remembered afterwards (Turino, 2008: 43). In participatory performance, the emphasis is on the production of social relations and on the values and evaluation associated with the degree of participation of everyone involved, more than on the acoustic quality alone: “Participatory performance is like this [a game] – it is about the opportunity of connecting in special ways with others and experiencing flow” (2008: 35).

How to film this sensible aspect of the synchrony between music and movement and the intensity and flow involved in the construction of musical performances? The challenge posed to the film crew was fairly large since they filmed contexts very different to each other, compounded by what I would consider a hindrance: the brief period in the field for each episode, quite different to the time spent immersed in anthropological and ethnomusicological research. The team had three or four days to film the fabrication of the instrument, the locality, artisans, masters, and the preparation and realization of the participatory performances. To optimize the dive into each context and facilitate the team’s experience of immersion in the participatory performances, the series employed three different strategies.

<sup>31</sup> How could we not recall Jean Rouch and his *ciné-trance*? In a certain way, the invitation to enter the dance circle reinforces the proposal of the series director to become immersed in the filmed musical and sensory context. Jean Rouch formulated the expression *ciné-trance* to refer to the imagery of the film *Les Maîtres Fous*: filming as though in a trance is essential for the effect of the film to approximate the effect of the ritual (see Sztutman 2005).

The first involves the director's prior knowledge of each context: each film trip was preceded by ample research on the music making and trajectory of the filmed groups, as well as prior contact with the practitioners, masters and artisans undertaken by a specific professional: the researcher.<sup>32</sup> The second strategy involves the sensibility of the person filming to capturing "the experience that is lived," as the director put it, which relates to the professional's knowledge of his or her metier, the ability to use the equipment, the rapport among the team; in sum, to a set of factors that I would connect to the artistic and professional skills of the documentary production company.

The third strategy, the one that interests us here, is the set of technical tools conceived by the director for filming the participatory performances, which relate above all to how the photography and the sound recording are undertaken.<sup>33</sup> How to film? Which camera to use? How should the sound be recorded? The technical choices stem from the audiovisual concept and proposal that valorises the idea of proximity with what is filmed, the immersion in experience, and capturing the intensity and flow of the musical performance, which allows the spectator to obtain an experience proximate to the filmed contexts. It was especially in the second season of films that this mode of filming became consolidated.

### **Guidelines for the photography**

The production of images for the series was oriented by three aesthetic conceptions with regard to the photography: 1) framing and focal point, 2) sequence shots and dramatic triggers, and 3) the 'glorious face.' The team generally used a high-resolution digital camera to capture the musical performances; in some situations, the director used a second camera in these events.

The framing was conceived in a way similar to human perception, known as the subjective camera. A fixed, bright lens was chosen with a short focal distance, so that the spectator's attention was directed towards what the photography wanted to concentrate on. This means that only what is selected within the frame is in focus, the rest remaining blurred. There is a perception of things happening outside the range of focus, but it is impossible to distinguish what they are clearly. The lenses used (35 mm and 50 mm) function very well for close-ups, and most of the frame can be seen except when we move away from what is being filmed. The result is that the musical performances as whole only become visible occasionally.

The series opted to use sequence shots – that is, accompany the unfolding of a series of actions in the musical performances using long takes, without cuts. The choice does not privilege fixed and well-balanced framing, the outcome of a gaze concerned with image composition. Rather, the gaze tries to approximate the experience of the participant in the performances. Brusque movements, shaking and framing adjustments are absorbed into the same take. The director's conception is that the experience of the sequence shot provides a sensation similar to real experience and the presence of a subjective gaze, which effectively wanders through space, becomes enchanted with certain things, approaches, moves away, looks from other angles, giving the impression of a lived and – for this very reason – imperfect experience.

The choice of sequence shots approximates the conception informing the documentary series to the work of some visual anthropologists; it is worth remembering the extensive use of this kind of shot in the films of Jean Rouch and the celebrated *Tourou et bitti, les tambours d'avant* (1971), which features a possession ritual in Niger, recorded in one single nine-minute take. MacDougall describes the virtues of sequence shots:

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<sup>32</sup> It should perhaps be made clear that this is research aimed towards film production and, objectively speaking, should inform a series of practical decisions: what will be filmed, where, who the characters will be (artisans and masters), which festivals the instruments are related to, what the festival calendar is, and so on.

<sup>33</sup> Editing is an extremely important element in this cinematic construction; however, the director did not establish such definitive guidelines for this stage, which is why I shall not approach the topic in this article. I focus solely on the technical methodology created for the filming stage.

Sequence-shots restore to the audience something of the continuity of perception of an individual observer. They are also probably the key feature of a camera style which seeks to sever itself from the imagery of fiction and tie itself to the specific historical act of filming. [...] It attempts to narrow the distance between the person who makes a film and the person who views it. There is no longer a compulsion to occupy an advantageous camera position at any cost; a 'bad' shot which nevertheless contains useful information, and which would once have been removed as 'unprofessional,' is now preserved. (MacDougall, 1982: 10)

In the documentary series, what triggers movement in the sequence shots are the 'dramatic triggers.' In participatory performance, there is an intense dialogue between the diverse participants. Frequently, within the internal logic of a participatory musical performance, a certain action triggers a new process, as in the call-response of the singer and choir. Depending on the intensity of the collective music making, the internal and external elements involved and the diverse interferences, the actors alternate, the protagonism changes, the focus is switched. Thus, the camera tries to follow this path.

Setting out from the singer's face, the camera searches for someone in the audience who is fully in a trance, responding to the chorus. The camera then tracks a drunk man as he staggers towards one of the musicians playing his instrument in virtuoso style, before, seconds later, passing calmly among the legs and feet of the dancers as they move around in the middle of the *terreiro*. Then the camera, prompted by the beauty of an item of clothing, rises from foot to head of one of these dancers, before then searching for another object to capture its gaze and finding the master of the *brincadeira*, who begins a new song. The camera never tires: it is constantly called to dive into the performance in search of textures, colours, movements and sounds.<sup>34</sup>

The third and final photographic guideline can be described as the search for the 'glorious face,' a reference to the book *Anthropology of the Glorious Face* by Arthur Omar (1997). The work of a contemporary Brazilian artist, trained in anthropology, the "anthropology of the glorious face is a project of exhaustive exploration of the human face in its carnivalesque trance. [...] These are faces that live transient attitudes, corresponding to feelings that are above the normal, evocations of mythic and savage periods." The book contains 161 enlargements of faces in black and white, photographed during the Brazilian carnival from 1973 to 1996.

In the case of the filming for the documentary series, the aim is for the camera and audience to be swept up by the intensity of the performances. The camera seeks out the face of someone singing at the top of their lungs with eyes half-closed, unconcerned with being seen. The teeth exposed, the muscles of the face contorted, the gaze fixed, glazed, distant. The photography seeks in the audience and the performances an overflowing of musical intensity, the transfiguration of the face in trance.

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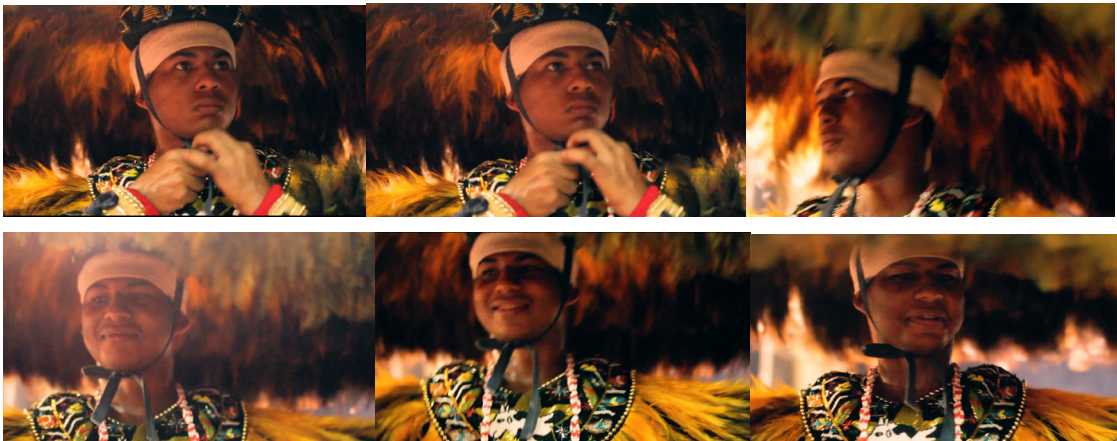
<sup>34</sup> A contradiction inherent to this proposal to use sequence shots in the documentary series is that, as the films have a duration of 26-minutes predefined by the contact with the TV channel, the final edit of the musical performance in each episode is very short and the sequence shots could not be explored in the same depth as they were at the moment of recording.

Figures 10-12: Images from the book *Anthropology of the Glorious Face*. Omar (1997).

Left: photo on the book cover. Centre: "The dragon disconnecting his own shadow." Right: "Torturers and aesthetes unite."



Figures 13-18: Frames from the episode *O pandeirão no bumba-meu-boi. Caboclo de pena* in the *Boi de Maracanã*, São Luis, MA



See the promo film <http://taquaras.laboratoriocisco.org/> (second season)

Figures 19-24: Frames from the episode *O pandeirão no bumba-meu-boi. Matraca player*





## Sound recording

The sound recording was a major challenge given the different variables to be considered in each context: outdoor location, indoor location, spatial disposition of the participants, number of instruments, movement of the performers, and such like. The general guideline was to capture the collective production of the music. Special attention was therefore given to recording the chorus and the ambient sound, as well as the synchrony between music and movement. Technically, the director based the recording strategies on two elements: (1) the spatial disposition of the performers/instruments, and (2) sound sources. The team's kit included 8 microphones: 2 directional, 3 surround (uniformly recording all the surrounding sounds) and 3 lapel microphones.

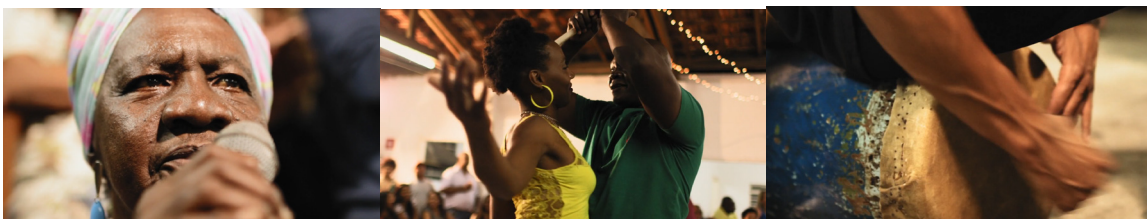
In terms of spatial disposition, most of the musical performances occur within a circumscribed space containing defined locations where the participants remain playing and dancing, and the audience joins in to varying degrees. One common form of spatial organization is the form of a circle, as in the *tambor de crioula*, the *toré* of the Kariri-Xocó and in *samba de roda*, or in the space of a hall as in a ball, in *batuque de umbigada* and in *carimbó*. But the performance can also take the form of a parade in which the participants (dancing group, instrumentalist and singers) travel from one place to another, as in the case of the emergence of the *Boi de Maracanã*, which travelled through the streets of São Luís's city centre, and the route taken by the *Folia de Reis* group from Fidalgos in Minas Gerais, moving between the houses and the church.

With respect to the sound sources in these types of performances, the director divided them into: 1. instruments, 2. main singer, 3. choir, and 4. ambient sound. Below I present in systemized fashion the guidelines for sound recording in each case.

1. Instruments: For percussion instruments, the team usually sets up a directional microphone at a short distance from this sound source and, in the majority of cases, manages to record everything. On other occasions, the best strategy is one microphone for each drum, as in the case of *batuque de umbigada* (Figures 25-27).

If recording with fixed microphones in front of the percussion instruments proves impossible owing to the risk of disrupting the performance, the team's alternative option was to ask someone to hold the microphone close to the drums and other percussion instruments. In the case of string instruments – fiddles, guitars, *cavacos* and *violas* – the musicians themselves usually miked the sound with leads plugged into the mixing console. In these instances, the team could record the sound source directly from the mixing console. Otherwise someone from the team would record these instruments using a directional microphone.

Figures 25-27: Frames from the episode *O tambu no batuque de umbigada*



See the promo film <http://taquaras.laboratoriocisco.org/> (second season)

2. Main singer: In the majority of cases, the musicians themselves miked the voice of the main singer; the team could then record this sound source directly from the mixing console. Alternatively, the team recorded the main singer with a lapel microphone or, if this too proved impossible, with a directional microphone.

3. Choir: The recording of the choir followed a number of guidelines. If the choir was small, meaning roughly ten people at most, the team used a directional microphone. When the choir contained a lot of people, the ideal was always to have more than one microphone recording this collective singing. The form in which this was done varied considerably, depending on the spatial disposition and movements of the performers.

If the performance took place in an enclosed space, the team always tried to set up a surround microphone, hanging from above, in collective agreement with the practitioners of the groups. Another alternative was to distribute various directional microphones in the corners of the hall or the *terreiro*, supported on pedestals. In the case of *bumba-meu-boi*, which takes a parade form, the team asked people from the community and the musical group already known to them to hold microphones to record the choir, moving along with the parade as they did so.

4. Ambient sound: Recording the ambient sound was especially important to transmit the acoustic environment of the musical performances. Generally, the festive ambient was strongly present in the recording of all the directional and surround microphones; thus the team was not especially concerned about recording this sound source in isolation.

The most tricky situations for sound recording occurred when the group – percussion, main singer and choir – moved about together. In the case of one of the *torés* filmed among the Kariri-Xocó people, recording the main singer proved extremely difficult, as he led the song moving around in a circle (Figures 28-30). The most obvious solution in this case would have been to use a lapel microphone, but since the indigenous leader danced bare-chested, there was nowhere to attach it. This led the team to record with a directional microphone and get the sound engineer to dance at a certain distance, tracking the singer but not so close as to enter into the frame captured by the camera.

Another demanding situation was recording the *cururu* of Mato Grosso. This was because the *viola de cocho*, an instrument with an entire episode dedicated to it, has a very low sound and, during the *desafios* (musical duels) of the *cururu*, in the filmed festival, the *violas* (lutes) were not amplified by the players, while the sound of the instrument and the songs was swamped by the metal *reco-reco* (scraper), which in fact forced the team to lower the recording volume to avoid sound distortion. In this case there was no solution and the recording of the *viola de cocho* came out poorly (Figures 31-33).

Figures 28-30: Frames from the episode *A maraca no toré Kariri-Xocó*. The recording of the choir came out well in this performance



See the promo film <http://taquaras.laboratoriocisco.org/> (second season)

Figures 31-33: Frames from the episode *A viola de cocho no cururu*



See the promo film <http://taquaras.laboratoriocisco.org/> (second season)

## **(Dis)entangling: from technique to experience**

Having described the technical guidelines employed by the series to record the participatory performances, one key question that arises is how far the use of this technical device, conceived by the director and put into practice during the filming, results in an experience for the spectator. The question is not simple and here, rather than provide a reply, I wish to problematize it. Instead of a disentanglement to tie up these reflections, I present the entanglement of new questions from the point at which we have arrived.

There is no doubt that the experience in the musical performance lived by the practitioners from the local contexts differs from the experience of the film crew and will differ too from the experience of someone watching the films. Far from intending to substitute for musical experience *in loco* – something indeed impossible – the series seeks to create bridges, equivalences with the experience of the team, guided by the filter of the director, during the participatory performances. In fact, the director conceives this work of passing from one to the other as a translation and an artistic creation, since it translates that which arouses empathy and sympathy in us as a primary quality of meaning, in the sense defined by Plaza (2013).

Here the field in which audiovisual production moves makes all the difference: it comprises a product conceived as artistic rather than an outcome of academic research context. Hence, the intended translation assumes an authorial character and adheres to a certain sensibility of the filmmaker, rather than a theoretical framework or a methodological concern, even though the series is also the outcome of the theoretical-methodological dialogue with this research, as I have sought to demonstrate in the conversations with Thomas Turino's work.

On the other hand, subjectivity is not something that bypasses the work of anthropology, and this observation is far from being a novelty. However well informed by theoretical and methodological questions the research may be, experience in the field is always individual and subjective, and can only apprehend the experience of the *Other* if it is re-lived and made one's own. In the case of use of the audiovisual, in a sensory proposal, this is clearly assumed, as Pink (2006) has ably shown.

For the resonances and reverberations of the musical performance to be constructed audiovisually, I emphasise how productive the partnership between anthropology and the field of the arts can be, especially the visual arts and cinema, in terms of potentializing the audiovisual. As an expressive form, film approximates ritual, festivals and participatory performances in a more effective – or we could say more affective – way than ethnographic writing since its meaning is propositional and performative (MacDougall, 1998). Additionally, it allows us to explore sensory experience through images and sounds, or in other words, make the passage from experience in participatory performance to an experience with the audiovisual.

However, as in all manifestations of participatory music, the intensity of the performance is not given from the outset of the musical practice but is constructed little by little. This intensity needs to be built audiovisually. More to the point, if we are to go beyond aestheticized images of bodies in motion and music being sung and played, the performance must be contextualized in order for the spectator to be guided in the proposed experience.

For a determined performance to reach the spectator, the latter needs other information about the context, people and locality. This entire construction revolves around the narrative form of the film as a whole, which is born, in fact, at the editing stage. For an adequate evaluation or reflection concerning the efficacy of the audiovisual experience, it would be necessary to analyse the editing process and the content of the episode as a whole – an undertaking that this article has not set out to do. The focus here has been on the filming stage, involving the capture of image and sound, as well, of course, as the conception of the project that guided the recording in the field.

In any event, there are certain limits to this proposal. Rigorously speaking, the spectator's involvement must be individual, yet there is something culturally ordered that acts as a limit so that the comprehension of the film can be shared. I recall the Asuriní do Xingu watching the film that I directed with Hidalgo Romero, *Acontecências* (2009), how much the final editing with a song by Don Cherry and Naná Vasconcelos with excerpts from the indigenous shamanic ritual made no sense to them. They wanted to see the raw footage with the complete sequences of song and dance in the rituals, which, for a non-indigenous spectator, even if interested, would seem extremely repetitive; ultimately, the comprehension of the film is always localized (and also contextual).

Let us return to the series. The entire production was conceived for a specialized public: scholars and musicians, but also for an average television audience; in truth, the audience of a very specific channel interested in authorial contents made by small producers that depict diverse dimensions of Brazil.<sup>35</sup> The option of the series was to bring the spectator, whether a specialist or an average viewer of the channel, close to the filmed object through the sensory experience with images and sounds. Here we inevitably approximate a subjective testimony of the experience lived in the performances; the project of the documentary series thus assumes its artistic and authorial force.

Feld and Williams (1975), in a fundamental article for ethnomusicology, suggest that researchers-filmmakers should elaborate a specific cinematographic language for the research and adapt the filming strategy to the social and scientific context, as well as to the unfolding of the event to be filmed. They reject the scientific pretension of an immobile camera filming a fixed shot and a conventional cinematographic language.

Transposing the challenge set by the authors for the documentary project in question, we can speak of a cinematographic language that connects to the filmed social context, the participatory and artistic musical performances, the director's proposal to approach musical experience in all its intensity, the flow and synchrony between music and movement and between the participants of the music making. Concerning the specific audiovisual language and the filming strategies, both of which I have looked to reflect on, the series did not seek an ideal form in which the participatory musical performances should be seen, but instead offered the spectator a way of seeing them through film, whose value resides in shedding light on the intensity and quality of these performances.

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<sup>35</sup> The production company that made the series defines itself as a producer of documentaries and the partnership with the TV channel aims to ensure the authorial content of the producer. On the channel's website we can read: "CINEBRASILTV brings to the general public a refined cinematographic language. Here it is the gaze of the author, aware of the image's communicative force, that leads the critical spectator to reflect on Brazilian cultural transformations." The channel presents "investigative authorial documentaries that give the spectator what the mass media shies away from making. Innovative fictional series that reflect on behaviours, conflicts and human relations. Documentary series that recuperate traditions from the meandering depths of Brazil."

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## Filmography

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- A briga do cachorro com a onça*. Direction: Alice Villela and Hidalgo Romero. Campinas: Laboratório Cisco, 2013. (58 min.), colour, HDV.
- Batteries Dogon*. Direction: Gilbert Rouget, Jean Rouch and Germaine Dieterlen. Comité du Film Ethnographique, 1964. (26 min.), colour, 16 mm.
- Danses des Reines à Porto Novo*. Direction: Gilbert Rouget. Comité du Film Ethnographique, 1971 (35 min.). colour.
- Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*. Direction: Maya Deren, Cherel Ito, Teiji Ito. 1985 (52 min.).
- Mário de Andrade e os Primeiros Filmes Etnográficos*. Cinemateca Brasileira, 1997 (27min).
- O Arco e a Lira*. Direction: Priscila Ermel. São Paulo: LISA, 2002. (18 min), colour.
- O Canto das Canoas*. Direction: Priscila Ermel. São Paulo: LISA, 2007. (25 min), colour.
- Petites Planètes*. Direction: Vincent Moon. 2010-present.
- Signi* (series of 7 films). Direction: Jean Rouch and Germaine Dieterlen. Comité du Film Ethnographique, 1968-1974. colour, 16 mm.
- Taquaras, Tambores e Violas* (first and second seasons). Direction: Hidalgo Romero. Campinas: Laboratório Cisco, Fundo Setorial do Audiovisual and CINEBRASiLTV, 2015. (23 episodes of 26 min.), colour, HDV.

*Tourou et Bitti*. Direction: Jean Rouch. Comité du Film Ethnographique, 1972. (10 min.), colour, 16 mm.  
*Trance and dance in Bali*. Direction: Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, 21 min, 1952.  
*Tribo Planetária*. Direction: Carolina Abreu. São Paulo: LISA, 2011. (37min), NTSC, colour.  
*Yenendi de Gangel*. Direction: Jean Rouch. Comité du Film Ethnographique, 1973. (40 min.), colour, 16 mm.

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# Introduction

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This new Section of VIBRANT focuses on anthropology around the world and is scheduled to be a regular section of VIBRANT. Co-edited by Carmen Rial (Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Brazil) and Virginia R. Dominguez (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA), it takes on the work of the WCAA (World Council of Anthropological Associations) and aims to make it visible to all, both in Brazil and elsewhere. While many anthropologists in Brazil and around the world have heard the phrase “world anthropologies,” we do not know exactly what meaning people attribute to it. We take it as more than a comment about diversity, multiplicity, and geographic distribution. Many of us consider it a question of change and power in the distribution of knowledge around the world, and we want to participate in the articulation of such a vision.

In fact, we take “world anthropologies” to be something to discover, to promote, and to embrace. This Section in many ways aims to know --and to show--much more about the practice of anthropology outside the metropolitan settings where it was developed originally, where it thrived, and where it was frequently privileged since the mid-nineteenth century. There are bigger countries, like Brazil, China, Russia, and Canada, and they are obviously important to Anthropology and to the many readers of VIBRANT, but there are also smaller countries in the mix, countries with extensive research and teaching practices (like Serbia, New Zealand, Kenya, Portugal, South Korea, and Cuba) that we also choose to highlight because they are part of the practice of anthropology around the world and we can learn from them as well.

This first “issue” of this Section of VIBRANT features some wonderful examples of that mix. Under the leadership of Vesna Vucinic and Chandanna Mathur, as heads of the WCAA, colleagues in Australia who proposed such a thing were given approval to carry out a *Global Survey of Anthropological Practice*. There was much consultation in 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018, and a report was officially submitted to the Wenner-Gren Foundation (which contributed generously to the project) once the data-gathering was completed and helped to finance the travelling of a number of colleagues to present their results in Florianópolis, Brazil, in 2018. That report appears in full on the WCAA website<sup>1</sup>, but we include here an essay that summarizes the results and

<sup>1</sup> At [https://www.waunet.org/downloads/wcaa/mtgrpts/WCAA\\_biennial\\_2018\\_Reports.pdf](https://www.waunet.org/downloads/wcaa/mtgrpts/WCAA_biennial_2018_Reports.pdf)



reflects on the limitations and successes of the survey. We also include several other essays that shed light on the survey in a different way, putting the survey in historical and geographic perspective. In some cases, like the essay by Lia Ferrero on anthropology in Argentina, the GSAP looks less useful or insightful than other surveys done in Argentina itself. In some cases, like the essay by Fang Ke on anthropology in the People's Republic of China, the GSAP is not even the basis for the discussion, though it was an important impetus for it. In the cases of Uruguay and Hong Kong (with essays by Lydia de Souza and Gordon Matthews), we see two very different pictures of anthropology in small settings. And in the case of Brazil, as depicted by Carmen Rial and Lia Zanotta Machado, the GSAP was useful and insightful, but still warranted analysis and explanation. The weight of the GSAP data in each essay depended on the representativeness of the participants - in some countries we had many responses, in others few. It also depended on the potential capacity of the categories employed in the survey - that were necessarily very broad categories - to reflect the realities of local practices.

We have also chosen to include two other items because they add to the mix in important ways. One is a substantive interview on anthropology in South Korea (done via email with Virginia Dominguez asking the questions and Hyang-Jin Jung responding). The other is an essay on precarity by two of the leaders of the WCAA's Task Force on precarity - Vinicius Kaue Ferreira (Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro) and Georgeta Stoica (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Mayotte)

Altogether some questions emerged from the GSAP and are worth listing here:

(1) Why is so much of the profession of anthropology around the world made up of women? Where are the men? This was not always the case, but it is now.

(2) Why is so much of the profession of anthropology around the world centered on university teaching? What is the impact of this on anthropology itself, and on society at large?

(3) Why is so much of the profession of anthropology around the world experiencing challenges in employment? European anthropologists are very concerned about precarity in employment but they are clearly not alone.

(4) Why do so many anthropologists in the world publish in English or believe that they are expected to publish in English? And,

(5) Do ideological differences exist in the practice of anthropology, and do they matter to us? Virginia remembers that one Editor in Chief of *American Anthropologist* with whom she worked wanted her Section of AA to be titled *World Anthropology*, but the subsequent Editors in Chief preferred to call it *World Anthropologies*. The difference may seem minute but really is not. Are we really talking about a profession of anthropology around the world, or what Ludwig Wittgenstein (2001) [1953] called "family resemblances" in the conception of anthropology and the practice of anthropology? Like the example cited by the philosopher, can't we see in anthropology "similarities crop up and disappear". And "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and cross-crossing: sometimes overall similarities"?.

## Reference

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# The WCAA Global Survey of Anthropological Practice (2014-2018): Reported Findings

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## Abstract

The *Global Survey of Anthropological Practice (GSAP)*, the first of its kind, was undertaken by the *World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA)* to provide insights about anthropology as a transnational profession, the ongoing relevance of the discipline in addressing global problems, issues in employment and gender equity, and the range of anthropological practice and expertise. Respondents to the survey were living in 113 different countries. This article summarizes some of the GSAP's most general global findings. The GSAP data suggest that within the discipline of anthropology, woman-identified practitioners predominate, except in archaeology and linguistics; yet, women were more likely to report being under-employed and/or not fairly compensated for their work. Universities were the largest employers of anthropologists, but public policy work and public engagement featured centrally in many respondents' work. The social and cultural anthropology subdisciplines appear to be the most widely practiced the world over, but many respondents also engaged in applied anthropology. However, social media platforms, which might allow anthropologists to reach broader publics, were under-utilized by respondents, who were more likely to publish in closed, internal, and disciplinary specific forums. The GSAP illustrated the global mobility of respondents, including for higher education (and the data on this reflected the hegemony of North Atlantic centers of higher education); yet, many anthropologists around the world have expertise and undertake research in their home countries. Finally, the GSAP found that respondents published their work predominantly in English, although not exclusively, and documented a diversity of languages in which anthropologists publish.

**Keywords:** World anthropologies, anthropological practice, gender disparity, labor, employment, academic precarity, language hegemony, education.

# A Pesquisa Global de Práticas Antropológicas da WCAA (2014-2018): Resultados Encontrados

## Resumo

O *Global Survey of Anthropological Practice* (GSAP), o primeiro de seu tipo, foi realizado pelo Conselho Mundial de Associações Antropológicas (WCAA) para fornecer insights sobre a antropologia como uma profissão transnacional, a relevância da disciplina na abordagem de problemas globais, questões sobre emprego e equidade de gênero, e a gama de práticas e conhecimentos antropológicos. Os participantes da pesquisa viviam em 113 países diferentes. Este artigo resume algumas das descobertas globais mais gerais do GSAP. Os dados do GSAP sugerem que, dentro da disciplina de antropologia, predominam profissionais identificados como mulheres, exceto em arqueologia e linguística; no entanto, as mulheres foram mais propensas a relatar estarem subempregadas e/ou não remuneradas de forma justa por seu trabalho. As universidades foram as maiores empregadoras de antropólogos, mas o trabalho de políticas públicas e o engajamento público tiveram um papel central no trabalho de muitos participantes. As subdisciplinas de antropologia social e cultural parecem ser as mais praticadas em todo o mundo, mas muitos pesquisados também se dedicam à antropologia aplicada. As plataformas de mídia social, que podem permitir que os antropólogos alcancem públicos mais amplos, foram subutilizadas pelos entrevistados, que eram mais propensos a publicar em fóruns específicos fechados, internos e disciplinares. O GSAP mostrou a mobilidade global dos pesquisados, inclusive para o ensino superior (e os dados sobre isso refletiram a hegemonia dos centros de ensino superior do Atlântico Norte); ainda assim, muitos antropólogos ao redor do mundo têm experiência e realizam pesquisas em seus países de origem. Finalmente, o GSAP descobriu que os pesquisadores publicaram seus trabalhos predominantemente em inglês, embora não exclusivamente, e documentaram uma diversidade de idiomas nos quais os antropólogos publicam.

**Palavras-chave:** Antropologias mundiais, prática antropológica, disparidade de gênero, trabalho, emprego, precariedade acadêmica, hegemonia linguística, educação.

# The WCAA Global Survey of Anthropological Practice (2014-2018): Reported Findings

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## **Introduction**

The Global Survey of Anthropological Practice (GSAP), the first of its kind, was undertaken by the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA) to provide insights about anthropology as a transnational profession, the ongoing relevance of the discipline in addressing global problems, issues in employment and gender equity, and the range of anthropological practice and expertise. Although it was not possible to make the GSAP a census of anthropologists practicing worldwide, the overall data are indicative of certain trends and aspects of the profession globally.

Among its most general findings at the global level, the GSAP suggests that within the discipline of anthropology, women predominate; yet, data on employment from the GSAP also suggest that women are more likely to report being under-employed and not being fairly compensated for their work. Overall, around three-quarters of respondents reported paid employment; however, almost one-third of all respondents reported they were under-employed. The GSAP found that universities were the largest employers of anthropologists, but also that public policy work and public engagement feature centrally in many respondents' work. However, social media platforms, which might allow anthropologists to reach broader publics, were under-utilized by respondents. The social and cultural anthropology subdisciplines appear to be the most widely practiced the world over, but many respondents also engaged in applied anthropology. The GSAP illustrated the global mobility of respondents, including for higher education; yet, the data also suggested that many anthropologists have expertise in their home countries. Finally, the GSAP found that respondents published their work predominantly in English, although not exclusively, and documented a range of other languages of publication.

As the brief history of the GSAP project, also included in this issue, evaluates some strengths and limitations of this survey, including biases in statistical representation among respondents, as well as analyzing the opportunities and constraints in the process of carrying out the GSAP, this article explores in further detail the salient findings introduced above and suggests some future avenues of possible analysis based on GSAP data. This article is meant to provide a global baseline of results that can also be used together with other writings on the practice of anthropology in specific countries, such as those in this issue, to highlight both the uniqueness and generality of some specific trends in those countries and regions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the development and implementation of the GSAP, see "A Brief History of the First Global Survey of Anthropological Practice and Lessons Learned" in this issue.

## Salient Findings

### “Feminization” of Anthropology

The GSAP suggests that there is a disproportionate representation of women participating in the profession of anthropology around the world, especially among younger cohorts.<sup>2</sup> It is estimated that, overall, there are slightly more men than women in the world, with the number of men rising gradually each year since 1960,<sup>3</sup> but 61% of the respondents to the GSAP were women. Among the GSAP respondents, men outnumbered women only in the oldest age brackets (70+ years). The predominance of women is most apparent among the youngest respondents, with more than twice as many women as men in the 21-29 and 30-39 age brackets. As noted in context below, women outnumbered men in all subdisciplines, except archaeology and linguistics. Notably, the survey’s options for respondents to report their gender were woefully limited (an issue complicated by the global variability of terms for gender, discussed in the article on the history of GSAP conceptualization and implementation and lessons learned elsewhere in this issue), leading 27 respondents to select “Other” as their gender.

### The Global Movement of Anthropologists

The geographic distribution for responses to “country of residence” (n=3777)<sup>4</sup> was very similar to the geographic profile of responses to “country of birth” (n=3811), but it is worth looking at the divergences between them. Collectively, the Americas were significantly represented, with well over one third of respondents born in countries located in either North or South America. Just over a quarter (1011) of respondents (n=3811) indicated they were born in the USA. Fewer respondents (985) were residing in the USA at the time, and fewer than that (940) held citizenship there. Just about 10% (377) of respondents were born in Brazil; more respondents (390) were residing there, and fewer (368) held citizenship there. Germany was the birthplace of 5.04% (192) of respondents (and an equal number of respondents held citizenship there), and the country of residence for 4.47% (169). Australia was the birthplace of 4.4% (166) of respondents, but the residence of 6% (227), and an even greater number of respondents held citizenship there (233). Spain and Canada shared the place of the fifth most reported country of residence, with 147 respondents each (or roughly 3.89%), albeit the eighth and ninth most reported countries of birth, respectively. Italy was the birthplace of 3.78% (144) of respondents, but the residence of just 3.07% (116). As in Australia, a greater number of respondents (156) held citizenship in Italy than resided or were born there. The United Kingdom slid from the sixth most reported place of birth to the eighth most reported country of residence. Portugal was the seventh most common place of birth and residence. Following the United Kingdom, in descending order, Italy, Mexico, South Africa, Argentina, Sweden, Serbia, and France rounded out the list of 15 countries of residence most reported by GSAP respondents. The most reported 15 countries of birth made up a similar list (yet in a different order), except that the Philippines

<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that studies have found that women are more likely to respond to surveys than are men, and that survey participation tends to skew toward younger people (Smith, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> For a useful online tool describing the current geographical distribution of men and women worldwide, see ‘See where women outnumber men around the world (and why)’, *The Washington Times*, August 19, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/08/19/see-where-women-outnumber-men-around-the-world-and-why/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.344841004c98](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/08/19/see-where-women-outnumber-men-around-the-world-and-why/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.344841004c98).

<sup>4</sup> Not every respondent answered every question. Whenever possible, we list the number of valid responses to any given question (“n”). Percentages, when possible, are figured based on the number of responses to a given question.

was the 15<sup>th</sup> most reported country of birth, and Sweden was not among the most common 15, indicating that fewer respondents (43) were residing in the Philippines than were born there (53) and more respondents were residing in Sweden (65) than were born there (43).

Overall, these data suggest that anthropologists who responded to the GSAP have moved away from the USA, Germany, Italy, Argentina, France, the UK, and the Philippines, and respondents have moved to Brazil, Australia, Spain, Canada, South Africa, and Sweden, perhaps suggesting global shifts in opportunities for anthropologically related employment. Mexico, Serbia, and Portugal's numbers suggested less movement to or away (or more parity between emigration and immigration). There was also significant migration to and from countries that were less represented on the survey. Hong Kong was reported as their place of residence by 48 respondents, while just 22 were born there. India was reported as a place of residence by just 11 respondents, while 22 were born there. Zimbabwe was the country of birth of 14 respondents, but only 4 respondents were living there.

The above data indicate some of the directions in which anthropologists move to live and work, but we also know that anthropologists sometimes migrate for education. Overall, just under two-thirds of respondents (58%) declared they hold a PhD in anthropology (n=3788). Another 24% held a master's degree as their highest qualification.<sup>5</sup> The GSAP data also suggest that anthropologists tend towards multidisciplinary practice, with over a third of respondents indicating that they have post-graduate training in another discipline, 10% of which are PhDs (n=2743).

However, as for where respondents received their highest degree (and thereby training) in anthropology, the responses were concentrated among a smaller number of countries, namely the USA,<sup>6</sup> Brazil, the UK, Australia, and Germany, reflecting to some degree the hegemonic pattern of global anthropological knowledge production (Lins Ribeiro, 2014), as opposed to the more distributed pattern of birth and residence. Collectively, 1821 respondents, or 59% of those who answered this question, were awarded their highest qualification in these five countries. However, the data suggest that among these countries, the UK may attract more education migration among anthropologists because it was neither in the top five for country of residence nor birth among respondents. In fact, 219 respondents received their highest qualification in the UK, while just 134 respondents were living there (and 139 were born there). France also drew more education migration, with 102 respondents having received their highest qualification there, while just 57 respondents reported living there (and 65 were born there).

## Diversity of Expertise

The GSAP asked respondents about their sub-discipline, thematic foci, and countries of expertise. Social/cultural anthropology was by far the most common sub-discipline selected by respondents (1114 respondents or 44%, n=2517), followed by applied anthropology (424 respondents or 17%), then ethnology (308 or 12%), folklore (113 or 4%), and linguistics (95 or 3.8%).<sup>7</sup> The "Other" option was used 350 times, with respondents listing more than 86 different sub-disciplines. Respondents wrote in "medical anthropology" as a response 77 times. "Visual anthropology" (including film) was written in 26 times. Close behind it was "ethnohistory" or

<sup>5</sup> One aspect of this data that could be analyzed is the proportion in each country of PhDs relative to master's degrees, and this could be evaluated against the data on employment in each country. This might give a sense of the relative values of degrees around the world, but this is not information we can glean only from the GSAP.

<sup>6</sup> Almost one third of (or 978) respondents received their master's degree or PhD in the USA, although this is fewer than the 1011 respondents who were born in the USA.

<sup>7</sup> We did not undertake any analysis on the geographical distribution of sub-disciplines, for example, on how they relate to country of birth, residence, or expertise, but that could be a fruitful area for future investigation.

“historical anthropology”, which 24 respondents entered under “Other.” In keeping with the predominance of women in anthropology, female respondents predominated in every sub-discipline, with the exception of archaeology and linguistics – the only sub-disciplines selected by more male than female respondents.

Selecting from among 30 thematic foci or areas of expertise listed on the GSAP, 870 respondents identified expertise in ethnicity and social identity, 848 identified social change, 784 cultural heritage, 747 indigenous peoples and colonialism, 722 political anthropology, 720 medical anthropology, and 661 urban anthropology. The list of 30 options was clearly inadequate to cover the diversity of expertise, with 466 respondents listing alternatives in the “Other” option for this question, among which “education” was the most popular, with 69 write-ins. The write-ins were very wide-ranging, with very few written-in categories of expertise attracting more than 10 individual responses.

Ambiguity about whether applied anthropology was a subdiscipline or an area of focus meant that it was, inadvertently, included on both the list of subdisciplines and as a thematic focus. Nevertheless, it is clear that applied anthropology features strongly, regardless of whether it is considered a sub-discipline or a thematic focus. Over one thousand respondents indicated expertise in applied anthropology. This significant finding is qualified only by the fact that a precise definition of applied anthropology was not provided by the survey instrument.

Other significant findings relate to the gendered nature of some areas of thematic focus: male respondents are proportionally over-represented in political anthropology (where they outnumber women), as well as in the areas of state and society, environmental anthropology, religion and ritual, and ethnohistory. Male respondents were significantly less likely to list medical anthropology or gender and sexuality as areas of expertise.

Examining the reported areas of thematic focus in the top ten countries of residence illustrates some of the apparent differences in the interests of anthropologists living in different countries around the globe and allows us to identify a few interesting trends. For instance, “cultural heritage” was particularly popular among Europe-based respondents. Furthermore, there appears to be a greater focus on themes such as “Indigenous peoples and colonialism” among respondents residing in settler states, such as Australia, Canada, and Brazil. However, “Indigenous peoples and colonialism” was a less popular thematic focus in the USA, despite also being a settler state, where “applied anthropology” and “medical anthropology” were among the most prevalent areas of expertise among respondents.

The geographic spread of respondents’ area expertise is much more diverse than that of their birth, residence, and qualification. The GSAP allowed respondents to list multiple countries in response to this question. Here, in descending order, were the countries of expertise most often listed. A substantial 981 respondents (or 26% of the total number of respondents to the survey) listed the USA as the country (or one of the countries) of their expertise, a number very similar to the 985 respondents who reported residing in the USA. Brazil was listed by 609 (16%) respondents, substantially more than the 390 respondents residing in that country. Mexico was listed by 394 (10%) respondents (also substantially more than the 111 residing there). Spain, Australia, or the United Kingdom were listed by around 7% of respondents to the survey. However, comparing the figures with the data on country of residence paints a more complex picture when we consider: there were 266 respondents with expertise in Spain, yet 147 respondents residing there; 259 with expertise in Australia with 227 residing there; and 250 with expertise in UK while 134 were residing there. Canada or France was listed by 6% (233 and 217 respondents, respectively). Argentina, Portugal, South Africa, Italy, India, or Germany were listed by 5% (between 201 and 180 respondents, listed here in descending order). Peru or Indonesia was listed by 4% (158 and 144 respondents, respectively). Guatemala, Colombia, the People’s Republic of China, Chile, Japan, Bolivia, Serbia, or Papua New Guinea were listed by 3% (between 133 and 98 respondents, listed in descending order). Ecuador, the Philippines, New Zealand, Croatia, Ghana, Sweden, Kenya, Greece, Costa Rica, Romania, Turkey, Ireland, Morocco, or the Netherlands were listed by 2% (between 95 and 58 respondents, in descending order).



Hong Kong, Thailand, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Israel, the Russian Federation, Bulgaria, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Haiti, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Paraguay, Nigeria, the Republic of China (Taiwan), Honduras, Nepal, Belize, the Czech Republic, Austria, Cuba, Denmark, Malaysia, Cameroon, Egypt, Poland, or Uruguay were listed by 1% (between 56 and 39 respondents). In a list of 195 countries, only four had no experts among respondents: North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea), Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, and San Marino.

Notable is the fact that the USA and Brazil top the locations for country of expertise among respondents and are also the two countries most often identified as countries of birth, residence, and highest qualification of respondents<sup>8</sup>. When considered alongside responses to earlier questions about where anthropologists live and train, these findings raise some interesting questions about the extent to which anthropologists were doing anthropology “at home” even before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, these data also suggest that the USA may be proportionally less studied than other countries, as almost every other country was the subject of expertise for more GSAP respondents than it was the place of residence. Further analysis of these findings about country of expertise may shed light on the extent to which the geographical footprint of anthropological expertise globally may no longer predominantly reflect and be shaped by the political and economic relationships of Empire, as the rough correlation of countries of birth and residence with countries of expertise suggests that now the practice of anthropology in almost all nation-states is more oriented to “nation-building” than “empire-building” (Stocking Jr., 1982).<sup>9</sup>

## Employment, Underemployment, and Fair Pay

The GSAP has considerable potential to allow us to learn more about the differences in the working conditions of anthropologists globally. The overall findings indicate that among respondents, around three quarters of respondents had one or more paid positions related to anthropology.<sup>10</sup> A significant finding is that male and female respondents report similar levels of paid employment in positions related to their training and skills in anthropology; however, this statistic masks a more complicated picture in terms of underemployment and pay.

The survey used the term “underemployment” rather than “unemployment” in order to reflect the fact that underemployment – with the global spread of the “gig economy” (Friedman, 2014) increasing the number of professionals stuck in the precariat – is a growing challenge, particularly in university settings (Mulligan; Danaher, 2021). Findings indicate that 31% of respondents are underemployed (n=3475). Broken down by male and female gender, the data suggest that female anthropologists face underemployment at higher rates than their male counterparts. Among female respondents who answered this question, fully one third (34%) reported being underemployed, compared to one quarter (25%) of male respondents. When asked about fair pay,<sup>11</sup> fewer than half (44%) of those who responded to this question (n=3339) reported they believe they are paid a fair wage, and 39% reported they feel they are underpaid (with the remaining 17% “uncertain”).

8 The USA and Brazil are also the two countries having national anthropological associations with the first and second largest membership respectively.

9 This distribution of research expertise certainly reflects the differential funding opportunities for conducting anthropological research. However, the fact that more funding, most of it public, may be available for conducting research in one's country of residence is also a reflection of governmental priorities upon nation-building, reflecting contemporary trends in many post-welfare nation-states toward 'turning inward' (i.e. political and economic nationalism) (Garten, 2009).

10 It is difficult to know whether our survey was able to reach a representative proportion of unemployed anthropologists in the world, as some might be disconnected from anthropological associations through which most of these surveys were distributed.

11 Given the obvious issues with attempting to assess global pay conditions in terms of a single monetary scale, the question of remuneration was dealt with by allowing respondents the opportunity to self-assess whether they feel they are remunerated fairly for the work that they do.

However, among female respondents to this question, 40% reported they believe they are paid a fair wage, whereas the figure for male respondents was almost 50%. Overall, a greater proportion of female respondents than male respondents indicated they are underpaid, and the same pattern was evident in reporting they are uncertain whether they are paid enough.

## Employer and Professional Activities

Universities were by far the single biggest employer of respondents, with 2299 respondents (or just about 60% of the total number of respondents to the survey) reporting a university as their employer. Domestic NGOs (employing 380, or 10% of, respondents to the survey) were the next largest employers, and almost 9% (or 333) of respondents were self-employed. When looking at the data on employer types by country of residence (using only the 12 countries with the greatest representation among respondents), some notable differences are apparent that likely relate to the particular governmental and educational structures of individual countries. For example, respondents living in Argentina reported employment by federal government agencies substantially more than anthropologists in other countries, which reflects the fact that the Argentinian government has established and funds a number of non-university research institutes where anthropologists are employed. On the other hand, a very small proportion of respondents reported employment by the federal government in South Africa. The federal governments of Canada, Italy, and the UK employed only a slightly larger proportion of respondents. The highest proportions of respondents employed by a university lived in Canada, the UK, and Germany.

The GSAP asked respondents to report their work activities on a three-tiered scale of time spent: “a lot”, “some”, or “a little”.<sup>12</sup> The top ten activities on which respondents reported spending a lot of time reflect the predominance of our employment at universities. These activities were academic administration, presenting at conferences and seminars, field research, meetings (internal), peer review of articles and grants, writing for peer review publications, teaching (at the undergraduate level), convening conferences and other professional development events, supervision of post-graduate students, and applying for grants and other funding. Notable here is the relative lack of external engagement – the primary focus of efforts is internal to the university system.

While the list of ten activities on which respondents were most likely to report spending no time had some overlap with the list of activities on which respondents spent the most time, the three activities that appeared only on the list of ten activities on which most respondents reported spending no time were desktop/archival research, business administration, and community service and leadership. Business administration was also the least often selected activity for any time spent. Following business administration, respondents were least likely to report spending any time on teaching in nonaccredited settings (e.g. professional development), facilitation and/or mediation, stakeholder engagement, and public advocacy. This is consistent with the finding that many respondents did not report spending any time doing community service or leadership. It is important to note, however, that 1673 respondents reported spending any time, whether a lot, some, or a little, doing public advocacy and 1685 doing policy development and/or implementation, compared with 1923 respondents who listed academic administration, suggesting that policy work and public engagement do make up significant parts of the work of anthropologists.

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12 . There were 24 activities listed that aimed to capture the full range of research, management, teaching, promotional, and advocacy-related tasks that an anthropologist might conceivably undertake across the spectrum of different kinds of employment and employers. The question also included a free-text “Other” box, which attracted 238 responses, many of which provided comment on respondents’ current work activities and demands on their time. This question, along with the one that followed it about use of different communication channels, was the most problematic in terms of analysis. Among other things, many respondents did not fully complete the question, leaving the scale for some activities blank.

## Communication Channels

The GSAP also asked respondents about how they share and communicate the results of their research to others. We asked respondents to indicate on a three-tiered scale how often they use 21 different kinds of communication channels to share information about their research.<sup>13</sup> The top six “frequently” used channels were academic conferences and seminars, subscription only peer-reviewed journals, books (in print), open access peer-reviewed journals, published reports, and unpublished reports. The top six “sometimes” used channels were academic conferences and seminars, open access peer-reviewed journals, community events, newspaper or magazine articles, subscription only peer-reviewed journals, and books (in print). Perhaps most intriguingly, the top six “never” used channels were video blogs, Instagram, submissions to government reviews of law and policy, Twitter, public “town hall” meetings, and a personal webpage or blog.<sup>14</sup>

There are some interesting trends emerging in the data about communication channels that relate to research audience and social impact that may warrant further exploration. For example, the fact that so few respondents use social media to communicate the findings of their research, despite the platforms having over 3 billion users worldwide,<sup>15</sup> suggests that many anthropologists at the time of the survey were missing out on significant opportunities to promote the value of their research to non-academic audiences. Conversely, academic conferences are by far the most frequently used communication channel across the board. This suggests not only that the main audiences for anthropological research are anthropologists themselves, but also that the most favored channel for communicating with this audience is also one of the most ephemeral and performative ones.

## Language of Publication

The final question of the GSAP asked about the languages that respondents use to publish peer-reviewed research findings. This yielded some rich data that illustrate both the dominance of English as an academic language within anthropology, as well as the extent to which some anthropologists are utilizing other languages. The question was structured using the top twenty most frequently spoken languages around the world and allowed for multiple responses. English was by far the most frequently used publication language, with 2847 (or 74% of total) respondents reporting publication in English. By contrast, the next most widely used language of publication was Spanish, with 703 (or 18% of total) respondents reporting its use. Portuguese was used by 537 (or 14% of total) respondents, and 415 (or 11%) had published in French. A smaller number of respondents had published in German (199 or 5% of total respondents) and Italian (169 or 4%). While at lower rates, respondents also reported publishing in Japanese, Indonesian, Russian, Chinese, Dutch, Arabic, Hindi, Korean, Bengali, Urdu, Vietnamese, and Punjabi/Lahnda. One key observation is that the languages respondents reported using for publishing are not the most frequently used languages in the world generally, of which Chinese (i.e. Mandarin) tops the list.

The question included a free-text “Other” option that elicited a further 54 languages that respondents use to publish peer-reviewed research outputs. When these responses are taken into consideration, they indicate that, among the GSAP respondents, Serbian was the eighth most frequently used language for publishing, after Japanese, and Catalan the eleventh most frequently used, after Indonesian and Russian.

<sup>13</sup> This question was structured in a similar way to the question about professional activities, and the responses were similarly difficult to analyze.

<sup>14</sup> It is likely that any update on the GSAP would find more emphasis upon using online channels such as an online webpage or blog due to trends in what universities have begun accepting as countable outputs (i.e. for the purposes of tenure and promotion, as well for promoting university community engagement) for publicly engaged research since the administration of the GSAP.

<sup>15</sup> <https://wearesocial.com/blog/2018/01/global-digital-report-2018>

This obviously has much to do with the relatively high number of respondents from Serbia and may not accurately reflect language use patterns in anthropological publications worldwide.

Yet, there are a few interesting observations one can derive from the results obtained. When broken down by country of residence, the responses to this question help illustrate the extent to which certain local anthropologies are more multilingual than others. For example, respondents living in Australia and South Africa are publishing almost exclusively in English. However, for those living in Argentina, Brazil, France, Mexico, Portugal and Spain, English is less dominant. These patterns in the language of publication suggest a linguistic and geographical silo-ing of anthropological work that may be a considerable barrier to the development of a global bank of anthropological knowledge.

## Conclusions

The GSAP data begin to illustrate how anthropologists move through the world in their professional lives. It is also a data set that urges us to ask what, where, and why anthropologists do what they do in their intellectual and professional endeavors. Overall, the first ever Global Survey of Anthropological Practice has yielded some interesting if not always surprising findings, which include:

- The predominance of female respondents to the survey, and perhaps the “feminization” of the discipline of anthropology, except in archaeology and linguistics;
- The predominance of the social and cultural anthropology subdisciplines, and applied anthropology as both a subdiscipline and an area of expertise;
- The large variety of thematic and geographical expertise among respondents;
- The large number of respondents doing “anthropology at home”, suggestive of the possibility that contemporary anthropology is more orientated to nation-building than empire-building;
- The global mobility of respondents for work and education, yet considerable continuity in the hegemony of Atlantic centers of learning for higher degrees;
- The concentration of respondents residing in the USA, Brazil, and Australia, but also the fact that respondents to the survey were living in 113 different countries overall;
- The fact that three quarters of respondents reported having paid employment that utilizes their anthropological skills, with universities being the largest employers of anthropologists;
- The fact that almost one-third of respondents self-reported being under-employed;
- A gender disparity disadvantaging female anthropologists in rates of underemployment and perceptions of fair pay;
- The tendency to publish, share, and communicate anthropological knowledge in relatively closed, internal, and disciplinary specific forums; and
- Both the dominance of the English language in publishing as well as the diversity of publication languages used by respondents.

Of course, we cannot vouch for the representativeness of these trends in the global population of anthropologists, given the biases generated by recruiting respondents through member associations of the WCAA. For example, the degree of underemployment and indeed unemployment in work related to anthropology for those who have received their degrees in this field is most likely greatly underreported, given that the under- and unemployed in anthropology are less likely to have participated in the survey.

Another of the important lessons learned from the GSAP is the amount of time, expertise, and resources required to undertake a survey of this scale. This was, in the end, a project that was extremely difficult for a few volunteers to undertake in their spare time and achieve globally representative and significant results. There are some significant issues in the design, distribution, and analysis of the survey, as well as in resourcing, that limit its immediate utility. Most significantly, the low participation rate of anthropologists from countries across Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and in some parts of Europe is particularly problematic in terms of establishing a global picture of anthropological practice. In addition, a detailed communications and promotions plan was not developed prior to the launch of the GSAP, and we now believe that such a plan would have helped increase participation. While the WCAA provided the best possible platform for achieving some measure of global representation in the survey, there are also national anthropological associations that are not members of the WCAA and that therefore may not have known about or circulated information about the survey, and, of course, not all practicing anthropologist belong to these associations.

Nevertheless, despite all the caveats regarding representativeness and other shortcomings of this survey, the GSAP dataset has the potential, especially with further analysis of the data, to yield many more interesting findings about geographical distinctions and global trends in the present-day practice of anthropology by anthropologists in all parts of the world. More complex analysis of the dataset will require a team with the requisite skills in advanced quantitative analysis and the time to devote to the endeavor. The GSAP data set will, the authors suggest, yield the greatest insights in the hands of knowledgeable individuals who can interpret the findings alongside contextual information about the specific political, intellectual and economic frameworks that are shaping how anthropology is practiced in particular countries or regions around the world. The GSAP dataset can also be used as a baseline with which the results of future surveys of comparable scope might be compared. It would be interesting to see how the GSAP results might compare with future trends with regard to the emergence of such relatively new subdisciplines as design anthropology, the use of blogs and other social media to publicize results of anthropological research as universities move to prioritizing wider social impact rather than just academic citations of academic research articles and monographs as criteria for job retention and promotion, and possible shifts to new forms of external engagement and employment as universities shift their academic structures and priorities away from traditional disciplines, as opposed to prevalence of university employment and participation in closed, internal, and disciplinary specific academic forums evident in the GSAP results. Assembling the articles of this special issue represents one step towards this wider contextualization and analysis of the data that the GSAP provides and will hopefully also stimulate subsequent surveys that can redress the methodological and analytical deficiencies of this pioneer endeavor.

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# Brazilian Anthropology as seen in ABA data for the Global Survey of Anthropological Practice: From an imaginary nation to a defense of rights

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## Abstract

The article explores the characteristics of Brazilian anthropology identified by analyzing the response of more than 300 Brazilian anthropologists to the GSAP. Even if there is a movement towards internationalization, the data shows that majority of anthropologists in the country conduct research in Brazil and are employed by universities. The article argues that the thematic foci most often chosen are due to the anthropologist's public role in combining research with defense of rights since the 70's. Social or cultural anthropology are the topical expertise of the majority of Brazilian anthropologists, followed by ethnology. The thematic foci most often cited are: ethnicity and social identity; urban anthropology; political anthropology; Indigenous peoples and colonialism; gender and sexuality. In a Brazilian society where democracy is not consolidated, an anthropological study rarely fails to raise a political debate, either among anthropologists, as it was the case for racial quotas or, either, confronting segments of society or government. In this sense, Brazilian anthropology's focus on national social and political issues cannot be considered from the European or American point of view to be the same as "anthropology at home". The voices of Anthropologists are present in the public arena and in many cases have influenced state practices.

**Key Words:** Brazilian Anthropology; Public intellectual; Human Rights; Unconsolidated Democracy; Internationalization.

# A antropologia brasileira vista nos dados da ABA coletados na *Pesquisa Global de Práticas Antropológicas*: De uma nação imaginária à defesa de direitos

## Resumo

O artigo explora as características da antropologia brasileira identificadas ao analisar a resposta de mais de 300 antropólogos e antropólogas no Brasil ao GSAP. Mesmo que haja um movimento de internacionalização, os dados mostram que a maioria dos antropólogos e antropólogas realizam pesquisas no Brasil e trabalham em universidades. O artigo argumenta que os focos temáticos mais escolhidos se devem ao papel público da antropologia em aliar a pesquisa à defesa de direitos desde a década de 1970. A antropologia social ou cultural são as classificações por especialidade tópica identificadas pela maioria dos antropólogos brasileiros, seguidas pela etnologia. Os focos temáticos mais citados foram: etnia e identidade social; antropologia urbana; antropologia política; povos indígenas e colonialismo; gênero e sexualidade. Em uma sociedade brasileira onde a democracia não está consolidada, um estudo antropológico raramente deixa de suscitar um debate político, seja na Antropologia, como foi o caso das cotas raciais, seja, confrontando segmentos da sociedade ou do governo. Nesse sentido, o foco da antropologia brasileira nas questões sociais e políticas nacionais não pode ser considerado do ponto de vista europeu ou americano como o mesmo que “antropologia em casa”. As vozes dos antropólogos e antropólogas estão presentes na arena pública e, em muitos casos, influenciaram as práticas estatais.

**Palavras Chave:** Antropologia Brasileira; Intelectual Público; Direitos Humanos ; Democracia não consolidada; Internacionalização.



# Brazilian Anthropology as seen in ABA data for the Global Survey of Anthropological Practice: From an imaginary nation to a defense of rights

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The aim of The Global Survey (GSAP), proposed and realized in 2017 by the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA), was to compile information on the contemporary state of anthropology as an international profession. Differences and similarities between national anthropologies are also important to make them visible. The survey collected information about the demographic characteristics of anthropologists, their qualifications and employment status, the nature of their work, and the thematic and regional focus of their expertise. Because the survey was not a census (i.e. It did not include all anthropologists from all societies), the results are not representative. However, we consider, in view of the data for Brazil, that they are illustrative of how anthropologists work in the specific situations of our society, although some of the categories in the survey do not precisely fit anthropology in Brazil, while responses in other categories may have been misleading due to an overlapping of items. Additional categories that would provide a better image of our anthropology were absent in the GSAP. In Brazil, 324 members of the Brazilian Anthropology Association (ABA) responded to this survey. At the time, there were 1,305 active associates.<sup>1</sup>

We will try to explore the significance of strong characteristics of Brazilian anthropology that we can identify by analyzing the GSAP data: the majority of anthropologists in the country are born and trained in Brazil and are conducting research in Brazil mostly concerned with Brazilian social, cultural and political issues. The data show how significant it is for Brazilian anthropologists to be able to offer superior quality anthropological education (undergraduate and graduate) in their own country, and combine theoretical concerns with political defense of the rights of various identity groups, ethnic rights and in support of gender and race equality.

However, in comparison with northern anthropologies, Brazilian anthropology's focus on national social and political issues cannot be considered to be the same as an "anthropology at home" conducted in the central countries, which produced the ideal of an anthropology of otherness conducted "away from home" or "overseas". The anthropologies of peripheral countries are anthropologies exercised in countries that were colonized by national states in past centuries by those now known as central countries.

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<sup>1</sup> The Survey includes responses from 4,643 members of 50 associations from around the world. The largest number of respondents (1,103) were from the American Anthropological Association (AAA), followed by the Society for Applied Anthropology (605), the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) (462), the Associação Brasileira de Antropologia (ABA) (324) and the Australian Anthropological Society (AAS) (214).

We have produced an anthropology that authors from European and American metropolitan centers (or those rooted in them) have qualified as *at home*, an expression that only makes sense when there is the colony-metropolis (home) dichotomy of (neo)colonial-colonies empires. We believe that the situation of countries arising from European expansion in modernity is very different from the trajectories of those nation states that emerged from the anti-colonial struggle of the 19th and 20th centuries. Furthermore, if we consider the internal colonization of Brazil in light of the knowledge that contemporary Brazilian historiography brings us, little or nothing can be recognized about such labeled centers and peripheries: are we at home in relation to who and to what? (SOUZA LIMA e DIAS: 2022, p.9)

Based on these considerations, we must remember that, to a large extent, the Brazilian nation state was organized in subordination to the central countries, producing subordinate practices. These practices, although with modernizing effects, were to a great extent, internally reproducing colonial perceptions of the country's most vulnerable segments. When making an international comparison, it is therefore necessary to remember that the challenges for anthropological practices in the southern regions, including Brazil, differ from the challenges posed by anthropological practices in the northern regions.

Yet Brazilian anthropology has not distanced itself from international social and political issues and has recognized the rich diversity of anthropological work in nations from the North and South. Undergraduate and graduate training in the country is based on national and international historical anthropological production, considering both the literature of anthropologists from the North and those from Latin American countries, as well as postcolonial and decolonial anthropological production.

In our undergraduate courses, we tend to assign texts in Portuguese, but sometimes use English-language texts as well. For graduate students, Spanish, English and French are also used fairly regularly. Many of the English-language texts are by United States or British anthropologists. At times we use English translations of French and German texts.

We understand that the GSAP data collected in 2017 reveals the central characteristic of Brazilian Anthropology: its long tradition of public engagement and intense participation in the field of national politics. Brazilian anthropology took up this work more vigorously with the country's redemocratization movement of the seventies, although the path began in the 1950s.

In different ways and with distinct intensities, since the period of the military dictatorship (from 1964 to 1985), through the governments of the Workers' Party (2003 to 2016), Brazilian anthropologists had strong influence in the decision-making of public agents or have been present in the political arena in defense of new rights. Since 2016, under the governments of Presidents Michel Temer and Jair Bolsonaro, Brazilian anthropologists have lost their influence in decision-making about public policies, but are resisting in the political arena in defense of human rights and diversity of identities.

It should be remembered, however, that the characteristics of Brazilian anthropology in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century were very different from the period between the 1950s and '70s, and especially different from the period after the 1970s.

The anthropologies of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century were born in imperial or colonizing nation states. Marks of colonizing thought shaped anthropological theories and concepts not only in the central countries but also in the new nation-states. Rethinking and moving away from colonizing theories and concepts was a task that began in the central anthropologies of the 1920s and 30s, and required constant and intense efforts by anthropologies of the central nations and anthropologies of the ex-colonial nations throughout the twentieth century. These efforts intensified in the twenty-first century, given the persistence of globalized inequalities.

Only in the nineteenth century did Brazil gain independence (1822), abolish slavery (1888) and establish a Republic (1889). Only in the 1920s and 30s was there a departure from evolutionary anthropological theories, an assertion of respect for cultural diversity, and emphasis on the study of alterity and a methodology to transform the familiar into alterity.

To highlight differences between these periods we will present some characteristics of Brazilian Anthropology before the 1950s, and then those of the 1950s and '70s. We will then present the results from the GSAP in 2017, beginning with demographic issues.

While presenting the GSAP data about choice of thematic social foci and countries of expertise, we will conduct a simultaneous historical reconstitution since the 1970s to give context to the main quantitative characteristics. Considering the broad period since the 1970s, we will examine the main political differences that have changed how anthropologists' defense of rights and public policies have been heard by governments.

It was also in the 1970s that the new university system was created and consolidated including a new model for graduate studies, which is still in operation<sup>2</sup>. This new system allowed the integration of research, teaching and extension, establishing the foundation for the growth of anthropological research and education in universities.

### **Brazilian Anthropology before the 1970s:**

Brazilian anthropology began with the ambiguous challenge of trying to imagine the future of Brazil as a modern society, as sculpted in the molds of developed Western nation states with majority white populations. The most striking societal differences between Brazil and developed modern societies were the magnitude of Indigenous peoples, their traditional modes of social organization, and the magnitude of the rural and urban Black population.

There was strong interest among foreign and Brazilian anthropologists in the Indigenous groups and racial types that compose Brazilian society. On one hand, French and American anthropologists came to Brazil and contributed to the institutionalization of Brazilian anthropology. On the other hand, physical anthropology as it was practiced in the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century, influenced Brazilian studies of racial types.

Brazilian anthropology's relations with central anthropologies<sup>3</sup> have a long past. Our protohistory includes German naturalist Teodor Koch-Grünberg, one of the first travelers to explore the Amazon (1906). Another German, Curt Unkel (known as, Nimuendajú – who was regarded as the first anthropologist to study Brazil and “make house”, which is the meaning of the name he adopted when he became a naturalized Brazilian) – not only traveled widely but did ethnographic studies of Amerindians, following the same route taken by Grünberg. We could go even farther and quote the Frenchman Jean de Lery, who in the Introduction to *Tristes Tropiques*, Lévi-Strauss credits as being an important inspiration.

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<sup>2</sup> Sociologist Carlos Benedito Martins analyzes the impact of the National Guidelines and Bases Law (Law no. 5,540/1968) on university education. “The University Reform of 1968 produced paradoxical effects on Brazilian higher education. (...) Favorable conditions were created for certain institutions to start articulating teaching and research activities, which until then - with rare exceptions - were relatively disconnected. Lifetime professorships were abolished, the departmental regime was introduced, the academic career was institutionalized, the pertinent legislation coupled teaching admission and progression to academic degrees. (...) A national graduate policy was created, expressed in the national graduate plans and efficiently conducted by the development agencies of the federal government.” (Martins, 2009, p.1) And he adds: “With the establishment of the military regime, the repressive measures unleashed by the new governors, in relation to the student movement, and the strict surveillance of teachers were combined with proposals for modernization and expansion of higher education.” (Martins, 2009, p.15)

<sup>3</sup> The following paragraphs related to historical international relations rely on Rial (2017a) and the next paragraphs concerning the historical path of the race studies rely on Seyferth (2020).

Brazilian anthropologists studying racial types in Brazil were influenced by “Physical Anthropology, which, in the 19th century, was defined as the branch of Natural History dealing with man and human races, with the objective of discovering the permanent characteristics that would allow them to be distinguished as ‘biological types’. (...) Techniques for measuring the human body are included and the phenotypic characteristics (are) identified as relevant for racial classifications”. (Seyferth, 1995 and 2020, p.94) The physician and anthropologist Raimundo Nina Rodrigues (1862-1906), in his studies published in 1894 and 1898, presented miscegenation in Brazil as a degeneration according to the then-current Lombrosian European understanding of the mental inferiority of “inferior” races.

However, Brazilian anthropologist João Batista Lacerda, who was director of the National Museum from 1895 to 1915, affirmed, as Seyferth discusses (1985), that the development of Brazil as a civilized nation would take place through miscegenation among whites, Blacks and Indigenous peoples. This, marked a change from racist European theories: which had considered miscegenation a path to degeneration. The assumption and condition of this civilization for Lacerda, however, was that miscegenation would involve “whitening”.

Lacerda by adapting European theory to his thought, modified it. Miscegenation could only lead to the evolutionary path of civilization through whitening, indicating that he maintained a racist theory that affirmed a Black inferiority and the danger (not determination) of degeneration. His intent was translated, in our view, only into a mythological narrative of the nation. At the time, nothing was proposed for the effective process of nation-building, citizenship or racial equality.

Gilberto Freyre, from Brazil’s Northeast, had already studied in the United States, where, with a scholarship from the Baptist Church, he went at the age of eighteen for undergraduate studies at Baylor University. He did not complete a PhD, but he holds a bachelor’s degree in liberal arts, from this school in Texas. Freyre then went on to study at Columbia University where he met Franz Boas, who remained an intellectual reference throughout his life. In 1922, Freyre published his M.A. thesis *Social Life in Brazil in the Middle of the 19th Century* in the *Hispanic American Historical Review*.

The impact of his main work “Casa Grande e Senzala” (1977 [1933]), according to Seyferth (1989; 2020): “(...) was considerable, even abroad, but, if on one hand it can be considered as the predominant reaction to racism in our academic environment, on the other hand, the way that he interpreted race relations also became the origin of the illusory idea that Brazilian society is a racial democracy – although he was not an isolated spokesman for this position in the decade in which it was published”.(2020, p. 54)

For Freyre, miscegenation is the proof of racial democracy, when, in fact, the illusion of racial democracy served to hide racism and affirm that prejudice based on color was derived exclusively from class inequality and not from racial discrimination. It was thus a narrative of the nation different from Lacerda’s, but equally mythological and imaginary.

Lévi-Strauss was part of the French mission head by Roger Bastide (1934) that led to the founding of the University of São Paulo (1934), where Levi-Strauss would become a professor between 1935 and 1938.

Herskovits came to Brazil, visiting Recife in 1941, Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, where he stayed for six months. He “had a certain impact, due to his view of possession in Afro-Brazilian cults as a cultural fact and not a pathological one. This approach changed the orientation of studies carried out so far and attracted the attention of René Ribeiro” (Maio, 1999).

Some political events mark the change in trends in Brazilian anthropology in the 1950s and 60s.

The first Congress of the Brazilian Black People took place in 1950, with the presence of black activists and scientists. Guerreiro Ramos (1950) and Abdias do Nascimento (1982) stood out for unmasking racial discrimination and criticizing the fallacy of racial democracy, although many anthropologists continued to term the racial issue as color prejudice rather than racial discrimination<sup>4</sup>.

In 1951, a broad project on Black people was sponsored by UNESCO – and had the participation of Brazilian, North American and French social scientists including: Roger Bastide, Florestan Fernandes, Oracy Nogueira, Costa Pinto, René Ribeiro, Thales de Azevedo, Charles Wagley, and Marvin Harris. Fieldwork was carried out in Brazil's Northeast, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

In 1953, the first meeting of the Brazilian Anthropology Association (ABA) was held, chaired by Roquete Pinto. ABA was formally created in 1955 during the second meeting, which was chaired by Luiz de Castro Faria, Darcy Ribeiro and Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, who were all recognized Brazilian anthropologists and largely responsible for the institutionalization of anthropology in Brazil, at various museums and universities. In 1968, the first master's degree program in anthropology (*stricto sensu* graduate course) was created at the National Museum of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. Research on Indigenous groups became the main topic of anthropological research in the 1960s.

British scholar David Maybury-Lewis - professor at Harvard for many years- who came to Brazil for the XXXI Congress of Americanists, helped to found the Graduate Program of Anthropology at the National Museum and coordinated the *Harvard Central Brazil Project*, to study the Gê groups, financed by the Ford Foundation, in the 1960s (Garcia, 2009). Some students of the National Museum went to the United States, which was the main foreign destination for PhD students at the time. In the 1970s, more anthropologists turned to Europe, especially England and France.

In the fifties and sixties, Arthur Ramos (1956, 1962), René Ribeiro, Manuel Querino, Edison Carneiro, Manuel Diegues Jr. and others, analyzed and described aspects of Black cultures introduced in Brazil through slavery. Their theoretical references included the concepts of culture and acculturation, and they were no longer seeking to interpret the Brazilian nation.

However, the problem of Black people for Arthur Ramos was the problem of the poor classes, and the color line did not exist or was attenuated by the widescale intermarriage. For Ramos, “the formation of a mulatto people collaborated with Blacks and Whites in the common work of creating our nationality” (Ramos, 1956, p. 184).

Wagley had an important role in the project on race relations undertaken in Bahia, in the *Bahia State – Columbia University Community Study Project* (1951–52) in collaboration with Bahian anthropologist Thales de Azevedo. This comparative research project resulted in Wagley's book *Race and Class in Rural Brazil* (1952), and in *Minorities in the New World: Six Case Studies* (1958), which he wrote with US anthropologist Marvin Harris.

Questions and criticisms about the notion of “racial democracy” and research on racial discrimination in the 1950s paved the way for the recognition of racial prejudice in Brazilian society in later years. (Nogueira, 1985 e 2006)

Studies after the 1950s by anthropologists and sociologists established bases for questioning the supposed Brazilian racial democracy, including work by Roger Bastide (1898-1974), Thales de Azevedo (1904-1995), Charles Wagley (1913-1991), Oracy Nogueira (1917-1996), René Ribeiro (1914-1990), Florestan Fernandes (1920-1995), Luiz Costa Pinto (1920-2002), and Marvin Harris (1927-2001) (Seyferth, 1985)

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4 While color prejudice and racial prejudice are generally understood to be synonymous in the American social context, Brazilian intellectuals, at that time, understood that color prejudice in Brazil was largely derived from social inequality and was weakened by miscegenation.

Thus, we can say that the first generations of Brazilian anthropologists turned to the North to dialogue with theories and mainly to understand our specificity as a nation. But, unlike the Europeans and North Americans who came to Latin America to meet Indigenous groups or study race, we also looked to the North for theories and ethnographies that would contribute to the analysis of various issues in our complex urban and rural societies. By going North to study and by receiving foreign scholars, Brazilian and foreign anthropologists achieved a cooperation in institutionalizing anthropology in universities.

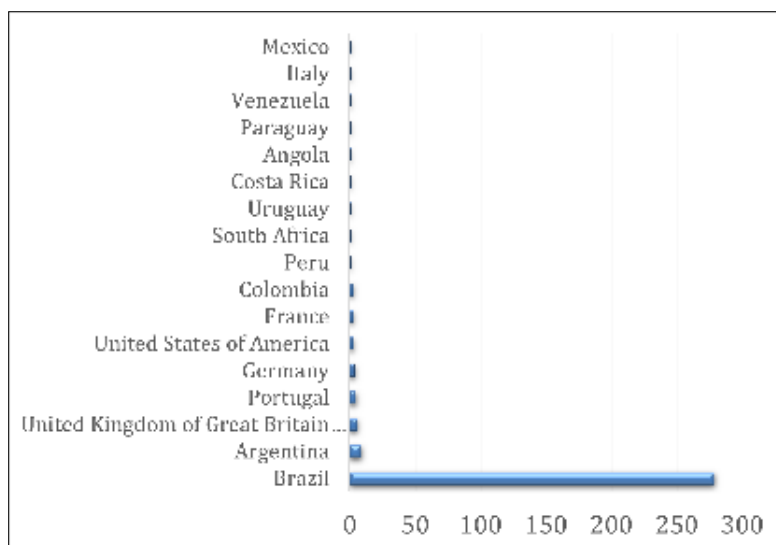
It is important to note that the international training of Brazilian anthropologists took place simultaneously with the professionalization of the field, that is, students trained abroad found jobs on their return to Brazil, given the expansion of graduate studies that began in the 1970s.

We will now examine the GSAP data on Brazil, discover what the data shows and, to offer meaning to the quantitative characteristics, review the historical path taken by Brazilian anthropology since the 70s.

### **Brazilian Anthropology as shown by the GSAP 2017 data on Brazil.**

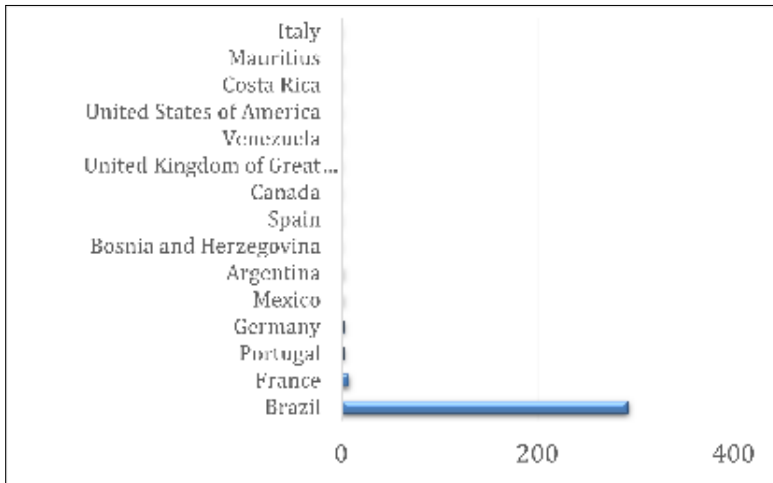
Most anthropologists working in Brazil were born, lived in and obtained their highest degree in anthropology in Brazil. Brazil is the country of birth for 86.92% of the Brazilian GSAP survey respondents (figure 1), and is the country of residence for 91.56% of respondents (figure 2).

**Figure 1:** Country of Birth



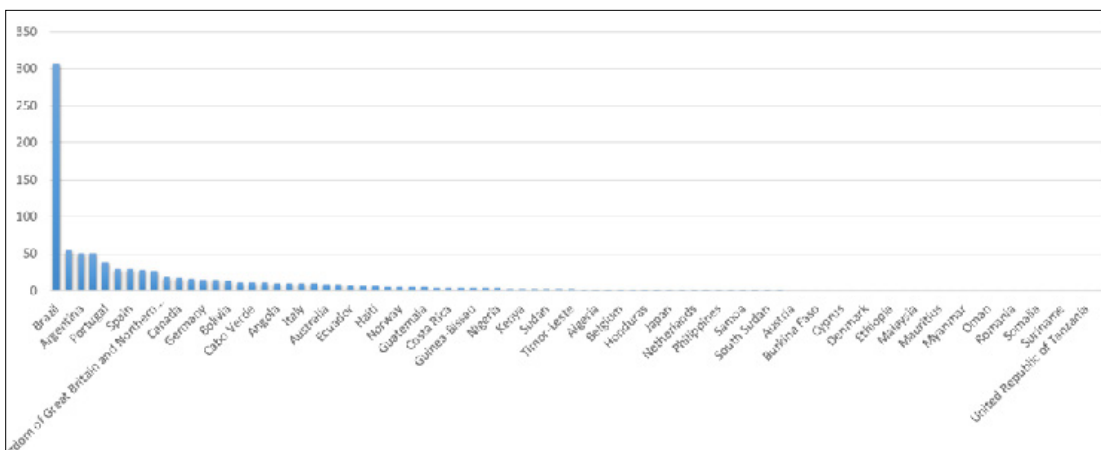
Outside Brazil, the next most common countries of birth and residence vary. Brazil's neighbor, Argentina, is the second leading place of birth of anthropologists in Brazil (2,80%), followed by countries of the North, considered central western countries: the United Kingdom (1.87%), Portugal, Germany, the United States and France, and only then by a second South American country, Colombia (Figure 1). The countries of residence of Brazilian respondents outside Brazil include three countries of the North, considered central western countries: France (2.50%), Portugal (0.94%) and Germany, and then a Latin American country, Mexico. (Figure 2).

**Figure 2:** Country of Residence



Brazil is the country of expertise (Figure 3) for those working in universities and in government and international institutions, as well as those working as consultants.

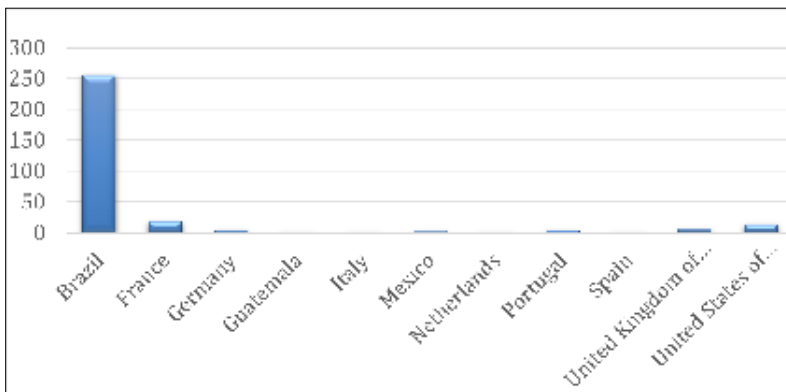
**Figure 3:** Country of expertise



Brazil is the main country of expertise for the majority of Brazilian anthropologists, but not the only one. We will be back to this subject, when analyzing the movement towards internationalization.

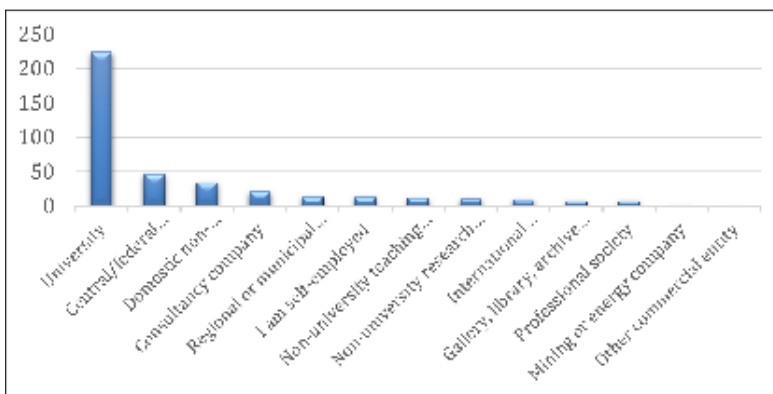
Brazil is also the country where most respondents received their highest degree in anthropology, or 83.93%. Countries from the global North are responsible for most of the highest degrees earned outside Brazil: they include the central western countries France (5.90%), the United States (4.26%), the United Kingdom (1.63%), Germany and Portugal. The decision to study in these central western countries represents long-term relations in Brazilian anthropological production. Only one Latin American country, Mexico, is among those where Brazilian anthropologists received their highest degree (Figure 4).

**Figure 4:** Country of qualification



The GSAP data show that universities and other educational institutes employ most of the anthropologists: 73.21%. Another substantive share (21.18%) is employed by government, including federal, state, municipal and international agencies. But here we located a possible error due to the overlapping of two categories: since many teach at federal public universities, they may have responded that they are government employees and not employees of educational institutions. Research institutes and museums employ 5.29%, slightly less than commercial consultancies, which account for 6.54% (Figure 5).

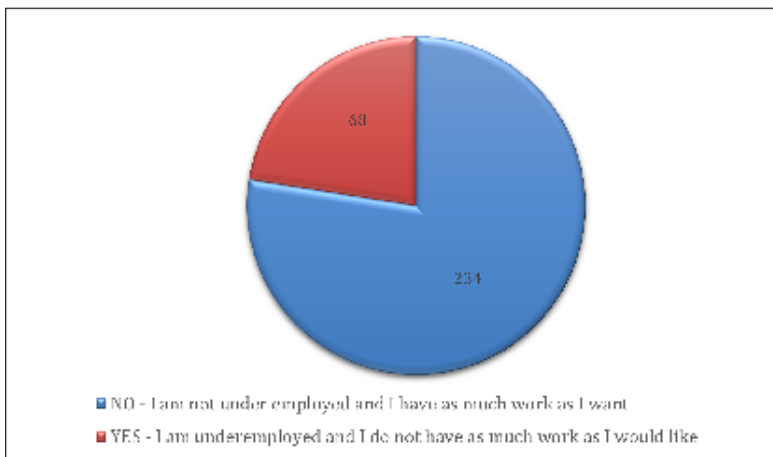
**Figure 5:** Employer



Most Brazilian respondents, 73.04%, said that they had permanent full-time employment and 18% said that they had permanent part-time employment. 72% considered themselves to be working as much as they wanted and 28% indicated that they did not work as much as they wanted and considered themselves to be underemployed. (Figure 6).



**Figure 6:** Employment



Let us examine the issue of gender and age in the survey. The gender gap in favor of women in Brazil (52%), is lower than in other countries as a group (62%). A higher proportion of the women are over 50 (23%), compared to 16.5% of the men, among the 321 Brazilian respondents.

**Figure 7:** Gender Distributions: ABA vs. **Figure 8:** Global Sample



It is important to note that Brazilian anthropology is institutionally strong at graduate level research and teaching.

Since the 1970s, there has been a systematic increase in the number of graduate degree programs in anthropology at Brazilian universities, and especially during the Worker’s Party governments from (2003-2016).

In 2016, there were 32 graduate degree programs (*Programas de Pós-Graduação*) that, according to recent CAPES data, will produce 900 new PhDs in anthropology in the next four years. CAPES (*Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior*), the Coordinating Agency for Personnel Improvement in Higher Educational, is linked to the Ministry of Education and administers the expansion and consolidation of graduate studies (masters and doctorates) throughout Brazil. Most anthropologists are employed in graduate studies departments at universities, although some hold government positions (as in the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), the Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), the National Historic and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAN), and the Public Ministry [federal prosecutor’s office]) and in non-governmental agencies.

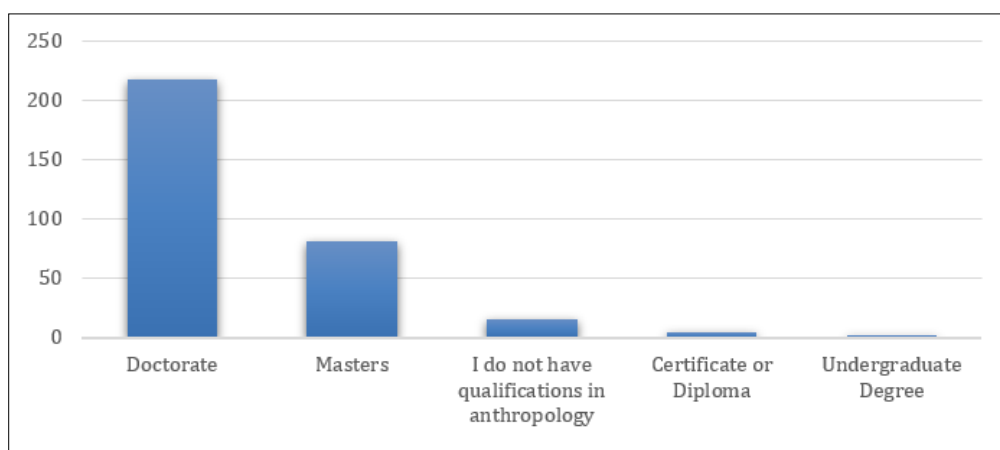
Others work as independent professionals. Anthropologists who work in governmental and non-governmental bodies complain of the lack of regulations for the profession in Brazil, something which has long existed for sociologists and recently implemented for archaeologists (Sprandel e Barretto Filho, 2018).

While anthropological research can be and is conducted outside universities, it is particularly within them that research and the range of themes that it covers are growing and attaining high quality, but always in interaction with anthropologists in government institutions.

The degree programs of Anthropology and Archeology are placed under the same coordination area of evaluation in CAPES. According to data collected by CAPES in the fields of anthropology and archeology degree programs, nine of our graduate programs encompass only archeology, 24 only social anthropology and 4 include both lines of study. Among the social anthropology programs, 20 work exclusively with social anthropology; 4 others include social anthropology and archeology together, and another involves the four fields of anthropology, social anthropology, archeology, bioanthropology and linguistic anthropology in an integrated approach. In the past four-year period, three more programs have been approved and are in the initial process of opening, thus reaching a total of 32 programs. In summary, at the end of 2016, there were 21 master's programs and 12 doctoral programs in anthropology; and 5 master's and 4 doctoral programs in archeology<sup>5</sup>. At the end of the four-year period that concluded in 2016, there were 444 anthropologists and archeologists working as tenured professors and teaching in the universities evaluated. This represented an increase of some 2% per year, rising from 416 in 2013 to 444 in 2016, due to the opening of three new programs. All of these programs are at federal and state universities, none at a private university. The field also has a significant and oscillating number of collaborating and visiting professors, coming from these and other institutions. In late 2016 there were 1,212 matriculating master's students and 993 doctoral students, with an average of 41.8 master's students per program and 47.3 doctoral students per program. From 2013 to 2016, 1,226 master's dissertations and 432 doctoral theses were defended in these Brazilian anthropology and archeology programs, 92% of which were supervised by permanent professors in the programs.

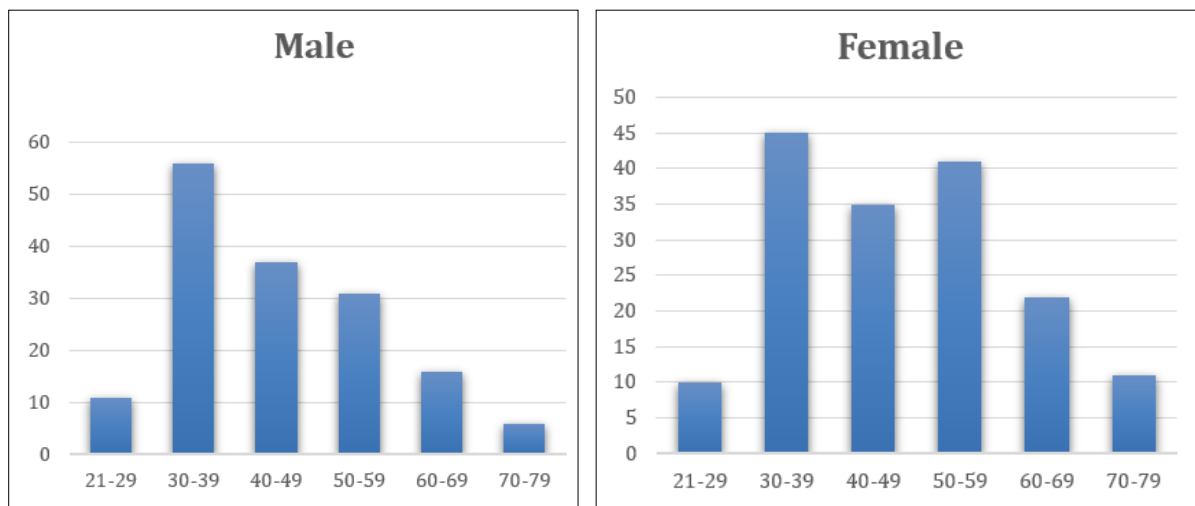
According to GSAP data, anthropologists with PhDs account for 68% of the anthropologists surveyed, 25% are masters and 4.7% have degrees from another field, which in Brazil is frequent among older anthropologists. Those with a certificate or diploma and those who said they were graduate students total 1.9%.

**Figure 9:** Highest Qualification in Anthropology



<sup>5</sup> See: Relatório da Pós graduação da área de Antropologia e Arqueologia, Capes, 2018 [https://www.academia.edu/35853108/2018\\_Relat%C3%B3rio\\_da\\_Coordena%C3%A7%C3%A3o\\_da\\_%C3%81rea\\_de\\_Antropologia\\_e\\_Arqueologia\\_na\\_CAPES\\_sobre\\_a\\_Avalia%C3%A7%C3%A3o\\_Quadrienal\\_2013\\_2016](https://www.academia.edu/35853108/2018_Relat%C3%B3rio_da_Coordena%C3%A7%C3%A3o_da_%C3%81rea_de_Antropologia_e_Arqueologia_na_CAPES_sobre_a_Avalia%C3%A7%C3%A3o_Quadrienal_2013_2016)

**Figure 10 and 11:** Age By Gender



The age distribution of the anthropologists surveyed shows that 6.54% are younger than 29 and 31.46% are from 30 to 39. The incidence of low age respondents is one reason that there are not more PhDs in the group. The other reason is that in non-university forms of employment, it is often not necessary to have a doctorate. Employment as a university professor accounts for 69.78% of the respondents, which is very close to the percent of those with PhDs: 68%.

### **Brazilian Anthropology: Topical Expertise and Thematic Foci**

The classification by topical expertise (Figure 12) identifies social and cultural anthropology as the focus of the majority of Brazilian anthropologists, followed by ethnology and applied anthropology. In Brazil, ethnology and applied anthropology are normally considered to be encompassed by social and cultural anthropology. Few references are made to archaeology and bioanthropology. This is explained by the history of anthropology in Brazilian universities, which began, developed and expanded as social anthropology, without the idea of the four fields, and without incorporating physical anthropology, biological anthropology or linguistics. Linguistics and archaeology developed autonomously in Brazil, organized as autonomous disciplinary fields at universities and within independent scientific societies. Biological anthropology has developed in strong relation to archaeology. Both the idea of “four fields” and of joint formation between anthropology and archeology are very recent - after 2000.



## Brazilian Anthropology after the 1970s: combining research with a defense of rights

To understand these choices of research subjects and of Brazil as the main country of expertise, as the GSAP data reveal, we must explain some historical and current data about the development of anthropology in Brazil. As Machado and Motta affirm:

The world's first anthropologists set out to encounter distant alterities in order to understand and commit to the groups they studied. In the Brazilian context, however, these alterities were often not distant, but literally “right next door” – making up, in fact, the body of the nation that Brazilian national elites sought to construct. In other words, from the beginning of anthropology in Brazil, the understanding, incorporation, and protection of the “Other” has been a political and national question. (Machado and Motta, 2019:3)

However, anthropology focused on national construction and state formation in Brazil cannot be understood to be equivalent to the “doing anthropology at home” found in central countries, considering the different positions of nations and states in relation to the history of colonization processes. (See Souza Lima and Dias, 2022).

In a Brazilian society where democracy is not consolidated<sup>6</sup>, an anthropological study rarely fails to raise a political debate about rights or public policies concerning the people studied, either among anthropologists, or with segments of society or government. We understand that democracy is not consolidated in Brazil considering that civil society organizations do not find guarantees to compete and be heard in the public policy arena. The political elites present the greatest challenges to a deeper acceptance of commitments to democratic institutions and to democratic mechanisms for conflict resolution.

In the context of anthropological practices in Brazil, the social issues perceived and chosen for study often respond to questions raised by social movements, approaching them, or moving away from them. The studies may also be affected by government actions, either through support, or confrontation.

There are both agreements and disagreements among anthropologists about how to deal with issues, rights and public policies that affect the populations studied. Some themes are the object of greater agreement among anthropologists engaged in the defense of rights, while other issues are more controversial.

There is greater agreement among anthropologists about the importance of defending the rights to ethnicity associated with the traditional ways of life of Indigenous peoples, *quilombolas* (maroons) and riverine communities and rubber tappers, among other groups.

In our view, traditional ways of life consciously or unconsciously invoke what we call the “primal ethics” of anthropology in relation to respect for “otherness”. Traditional ways of life are perceived as if they were “full otherness” or “radical otherness”, whose right to be (as they are) is directly recognized by an anthropological perspective and anthropological ethics. However, while it is easier to unite anthropologists around the defense of Indigenous rights, *quilombolas*, traditional communities and environmental rights, there are constant confrontations with the executive and legislative powers over development proposals that threaten the environment and over interests that hinder the demarcation of Indigenous lands and *quilombola* territories.

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<sup>6</sup> According to Russell J. Dalton and Doh Chull Shin, in *Reassessing The Civic Culture Model* (2011), democratic consolidation is the process by which a new democracy matures, in such a way that it becomes unlikely to revert to authoritarianism without an external shock, and democracy is regarded as the only available system of government within a country. This is the case when: no significant political group seriously attempts to overthrow the democratic regime, the democratic system is regarded as the most appropriate way to govern by the vast majority of the public, and all political actors are accustomed to the fact that conflicts are resolved through established political and constitutional rules.

Lorencini (2020) understands that in today's Brazil: “the masses maintain trust in the model for political interaction, although the players are not trusted. The optimistic interpretation that can be drawn from this scenario is that the popular feeling about democracy is not that it should be replaced but that it should be improved. (...) “The greatest risk is in the elite layer, no properly because its adherence to authoritarianism is proven, but rather due to the absence of data and elements that demonstrate the effectiveness of its democratic commitment”

Black, mestizo, or immigrant ethnicity may not be linked to clearly traditional ways of life. Likewise, studies of gender identities or identities constructed around sexual diversities in modern societies are not associated with traditional community modes. They generate new lifestyles, but can be perceived as having nothing to do with the assumptions of “cultural relativism” learned from research in Indigenous studies.

Studies on racial identities, as well as gender and sexuality, are highly ‘delicate’ and controversial topics in society at large, especially in recent periods when conservative sectors of society and the political world have gained prominence. These themes are those that diverge most from the different perspectives and places of enunciation of anthropologists. Gender and race thus seem to be subjects much more open to controversies and confrontations among anthropologists. They do not generate the same conformity among anthropologists as when it comes to defending indigenous rights.

When there are debates, they generally take place in the academic field where interpretations are disputed. Within the scope of the Brazilian Anthropology Association, there may be disputes over votes about motions in the biannual meetings. In rare cases they may become public. This was the difficult and tense case of the dispute over the introduction of racial quotas for entry into universities in undergraduate and graduate courses. We will return to this case.

One academic debate related to gender concerned the understanding of what is conceptually violence against women. Luis Cardoso de Oliveira (2005) and Daniel Simião (2005) referring to East Timor, discussed the concept of violence (against women): “In the absence of moral violence, the existence of physical violence would be an abstraction. (...) While hitting had a moral justification and the victim’s suffering was essentially physical, the practice was accepted (Cardoso de Oliveira, 2005, p.12). Faced with this “provocation” (a word used by Cardoso) the debate is accepted and answered by Machado (2010): “(...) I do not consider it possible that physical aggressions do not form part of disputes around consideration/disconsideration, hierarchy and differentiated degrees of gender powers. Especially in family spaces. (...) How can the intentional act of physical aggression be rendered meaningless?” (Machado, 2010, p. 80).

Not all anthropologists take positions as individual public intellectuals in defense of rights, but many stand individually and collectively.

ABA’s collective and public voice is increasingly defined by the defense of rights in various spheres. The guiding themes for ABA’s biannual meetings have regularly been related to the defense of rights and respect for diversity.

In turn, the specialized committees of the Association are spaces where consensus is sought. The committees strive to immediately raise their voice publicly in response to an attack on the rights of social segments, groups or communities. It is up to the specific committees for thematic areas to pronounce themselves in favor of specific rights. We will only list the specific committees of thematic areas and related rights. Currently they are: the Indigenous Affairs Commission (CAI); the Human Rights Commission; the Committee on Education, Science and Technology; the Secularity and Democracy Commission; the Citizenship, Violence and State Management Committee; the Anthropology and Health Committee; the Committee of Black Anthropologists; the Committee of Indigenous Anthropologists; the Disability and Accessibility Committee; the Gender and Sexuality Committee; the Committee on the Professional Insertion of the Anthropologist; the Anthropological Reports Committee; the Migration and Displacement Committee; the Heritage and Museums Committee; the Traditional Peoples, Environment and Large Projects Committee; and the Quilombos Committee.

The academic debate among anthropologists about racial quotas in universities “began after the publication of the article “Politics of racial quotas, the ‘eyes of society’ and the uses of anthropology: the case of the entrance exam at the University of Brasília (UnB)”, written by sociologist Marcos Chor Maio and anthropologist Ricardo Ventura Santos (Maio, Santos, 2005). It was published by the journal *Horizontes Antropológico*, n. January 23-June

2005. The article was part of the Espaço Aberto section of the magazine, which invited researchers from different areas and universities to comment on the points raised by Maio and Santos. Eighteen comments were included and a rejoinder. (Lisboa, 2020, p. 121)

In 2006, the debate entered the public arena with anthropologists and other academics taking each of the opposing positions. The manifesto “All have equal rights in the Democratic Republic” was presented to the presidents of the national Chamber of Deputies and Senate on June 29, 2006, establishing a position against racial quotas signed by more than 100 people, most of them academics, at a time when the National Congress was discussing the Racial Equality Statute. Five days later, another manifesto was delivered and presented to the legislative bodies, the “Manifesto in favor of quotas and the Racial Equality Statute”. (Lisboa, 2020).

In 2008, a book on race was organized by Pinho and Sansone stimulated by the Committee of Racial and Ethnic Relations. In its preface, Sansone affirms that there is anti-racism on both sides – in the defense and the opposition to racial quotas (Sansone, 2008, p. 7).

Although each side based its positions on rights, the disagreement was because one of the sides did not agree that affirmative action is necessary to achieve rights. In the Brazilian case, from our perspective, the need is glaring: not only because of the history of slavery, but because of the understanding that racism and sexism are structural problems, producing inequality.

We understand that the position taken against quotas derives from the strength of the myth of “racial democracy” and from the non-acceptance that it is important to differentiate between “formal equality” and “material equality.” Affirmative action is fundamental to attaining “material equality”.

Since 2004, racial quotas<sup>7</sup> have been combined with quotas based on economic and social criteria and each university has the autonomy to set them through approval by their university councils. With Law 12,711 of 2012, they became guaranteed and generalized.

In 2018, a group of Brazilian Black anthropologists proposed to the Brazilian Association of Anthropology the creation and organization of a Committee of Black Anthropologists. In 2019, the Committee was created. To a large extent, the increase in the number of Black anthropologists was due to racial quotas for entry not only in undergraduate degree programs, but also in graduate degree programs.

In its “Letter of Presentation” the Committee declares:

The Committee of Black Anthropologists was born in 2019 in the oldest of the national scientific associations in the field of the Social Sciences, the Brazilian Anthropology Association - ABA. Considering this history, this Committee can be understood as a new one that is linked to the anthropological work of Black researchers. The most general understanding is that Black bodies occupied the status of objects of study in the scientific tradition, but not of producers of knowledge. On the one hand, this reality began to change in public universities, with the advent of affirmative action and the entry of Black students. On the other hand, the presence of Black professors is still a challenge to be overcome, as well as the impact on the production of knowledge in a more plural and visible way. (<http://www.portal.abant.org.br/2019/05/03/comite-de-antropologas-os-negras-os/>).

Recognized names such as Kabengele Munanga (1985, 2004), Lilia Schwarcz, (1987, 2017), Giralda Seyferth (1985, 2020) Osmundo Pinho and Livio Sansone (2008), among many others, have been working on the study and defense of the rights to racial equality. Many others are dedicated to defending the rights of Black women. Lelia Gonzalez (1982) was a pioneer. Angela Figueiredo, Laura Moutinho, Maria Elvira Diaz and Ana Paula Silva, among many others, are studying and acting in defense of racial and gender rights. The creation of the Committee of Black Anthropologists will encourage the presence of Black anthropologists in multiple areas of activity. They are and will be fundamental to the expansion and innovation of anthropology.

<sup>7</sup> The exception was the state universities of Rio de Janeiro where racial quotas were implemented by state provincial law in 2001.

Likewise, the increasing inclusion of Indigenous students and anthropologists will help to expand and innovate studies and expand rights, such as the work of Tonico Benites and Luiz Henrique Eloy Amado, among many others. The creation of the Committee of Indigenous Anthropologists will encourage innovation.

We can say, despite many difficulties, that anthropological practices in Brazil today are combining research with the defense of rights. This path that Brazilian Anthropology began in the 1950s has been solidified since the 1970s and continues until today.

Since its creation in 1955 the Brazilian Anthropology Association has played a prominent role in defending human rights in the public sphere and in maintaining the quality of anthropological science and gathering its associates in biannual scientific meetings. During the military regime (1964/1985), anthropologists studied ethnic groups and social minorities and played a role in the defense of these populations. In spite of the many restrictions placed on university activities by the military regime, the first graduate programs (masters and doctorates) in anthropology were created during these years: first at the National Museum in Rio in 1968, followed by USP in 1970, Unicamp in 1971, and UNB in 1972, and have since spread in different regions.

During the Constituent Assembly in 1986/1987, anthropologists representing the Brazilian Anthropology Association have been interlocutors in discussions about and in defense of Indigenous rights, quilombolas, traditional rural populations and cultural rights (Carneiro da Cunha, 2018).

Then, anthropologists' presence in policy-making continued to grow (especially) under the progressive governments led by Lula (2002-2010) and Dilma (2011-2016), (...). During this time, the Brazilian Anthropological Association (ABA) was institutionally invited to reflect, formulate, and underwrite public policies in multiple fields of action (Rial; Grossi, 2017: 234-5).

It can be said that Brazilian anthropologists have turned to the study and research of the cultural diversity and social problems that permeate and present themselves within the Brazilian nation state. The defense of fundamental rights of Indigenous people, minorities and identity policies as well as racial and gender equality, and sexual and cultural diversity is a main objective. Brazilian anthropologists, through their research and political activity in defense of rights, have a strong presence in the public sphere. (Ramos, 2003; Machado, 2018; Tamasso, 2019). Their collective voice, through the Brazilian Anthropology Association (ABA) has had an important role.

Thus, it can also be said, that, within the typology used by Stocking (1982), and as Mariza Peirano (1981 and 1999) affirmed, Brazilian anthropology has examined the "nation-building" process in all its complexity. It has focused on understanding and criticizing the process of state formation and has consistently analyzed social movements. Moreover, it has defended human rights (cultural and social identities) and democracy in Brazilian society (Silva, 2002; Grossi et al. 2002; Trajano and Ribeiro, 2004; Grossi et al. 2006; Eckert and Godoi 2006; Scott et al. 2014; Oliveira 2016; Simião and Feldman-Bianco, 2018; Souza Lima, 2018).

The public role of anthropologists in defending minorities and human rights in Brazil has influenced state practices, and even when their proposals are not implemented, their presence in the public arena is visible and their criticisms are registered in the national media. If the voices of anthropologists have not always been heeded by governments and the technobureaucracy, the qualification of anthropological knowledge has been recognized not only in the academic world but also in the political and legal world.

While the GSAP 2017 data show how Brazilian anthropologists have given emphasis to social and political issues, they do not reveal that in the years 2014 to 2017, conservative political movements had begun to increasingly censor and criticize the political performance of anthropologists. (Machado, 2020) Nevertheless, they continued to defend not only the rights of Indigenous and traditional peoples, but also rights to gender equality, sexual diversity and racial equality.



Since the parliamentary and corporate media coup d'état of 2016<sup>8</sup>, Brazilian anthropologists have faced new challenges. Certainly, in recent years, political support for basic rights has receded. The defense of basic rights by ABA and anthropologists, supported by their studies, has become increasingly vigorous, although their ability to be heard in political debates has decreased.

### Challenges for internationalization of Brazilian anthropology at universities

Brazilian anthropology does not focus exclusively on Brazil as shown by the GSAP 2017 data about Country of Expertise (Figure 3). An internationalization of the research contexts of Brazilian anthropology began in the late 1980s. A group of anthropologists decided to change the focus and began to study societies outside Brazil. In fact, before that, Ruy Coelho (1920-1990), who had conducted fieldwork in Honduras for his doctoral thesis *The Black Caribbean of Honduras*, had inaugurated work in distant fields in America.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, within a movement that Peirano (2006) described as that of a “post-exotic anthropology,” Cornelia Eckert (1992) studied miners in the Grand-Combe; Rial studied fast foods in Europe (1985, 1992); and Clarice Peixoto (1993) old age in Paris. In the United States, Luis Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (1989) studied small claims courts; Gustavo Lins Ribeiro (1988), a dam located in Argentina and Paraguay; Bela Feldman-Bianco the Portuguese from New Bedford, USA (1981); and Trajano (1998), musicians from Guinea-Bissau. These are some of the few theses based on fieldwork abroad. This profoundly changed and expanded in the twenty-first century.

In more recent years, efforts have been made to internationalize locations of field research and cooperate with researchers from other countries in their research and publications. An increased number of researchers have focused on the study of cultural diversity in other regions and countries. (Ribeiro, 2018; Machado, 2018).

Brazil, as the country of expertise, is followed by Argentina and then by countries of the Global North: Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, Canada and Germany (Figure 3). These countries may have been where Brazilian anthropologists conducted graduate research or postdoctoral studies.

The subsequent countries identified as the country of expertise follow a different logic. With the exception of Italy and Norway, the countries of expertise are concentrated in South and Central America; Bolivia, Ecuador, Haiti, Guatemala and Costa Rica. The research in Latin American countries indicates efforts to deepen reciprocal relations. These countries of expertise are followed by those in Africa: Cape Verde, Angola, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria, Kenya, Sudan, and also by Australia and East Timor. This indicates efforts to establish South-South research relationships. The references to Asian countries indicate their incipient phase as countries of expertise. This allows us to speak both of South-South studies: from Brazil to Africa, and from Brazil to Latin American neighbors, and even some Asian countries, as well as South-North research and reflections, in particular about Portugal, the United States, France and England, countries where Brazilian anthropologists have often earned their degrees or conducted post-doctoral research.

The public system of evaluation of graduate programs is conducted by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), which is subordinate to the Ministry of Education. In recent years, CAPES included “internationalization” as an objective that a program must attain to reach

8 On May 12, 2016, President Dilma was removed from the presidency by the Senate, and Vice President Michel Temer (PMDB) became interim president. Dilma Rousseff's impeachment began with the acceptance, on December 2, 2015, by the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Eduardo Cunha, of a complaint that she was guilty of the crime of responsibility, which had been filed on October 15, 2015. The charges alleged she was responsible for “fiscal pedaling” (“pedaladas fiscais”), a term that refers to budget operations carried out by the National Treasury, not permitted by law, which consist of delaying the transfer of funds to public and private banks to alleviate the government's fiscal situation in a given month or year, presenting better economic indicators to the financial market, specialists in public accounts and Congress. The three previous presidents had conducted these maneuvers without being impeached, which was the result of political articulation against the Dilma presidency. That is why Dilma's impeachment has been called a “coup d'état”. Conservative parliamentary fronts brought together the conservative interests of the elites of Christian religious organizations and the interests of the agricultural, industrial, and financial business elites who felt that their demands were no longer being met. We will return to this subject.

the highest evaluation scores. Multiple meanings can be attributed to internationalization. In the evaluation of anthropology, an internationalization of research contexts is required, an international flow of professors and students between graduate programs, and the scientific recognition of academic production published in international academic journals of impact. South-North relationships were important for the Worker's Party (PT) Governments as they are today (2021). South-South relationships were emphasized only by the PT governments (2003 to 2016). Nevertheless, South-South relationships continue to be a priority for Brazilian anthropologists.

During Lula's period,

substantial investment in research, graduate fellowships, and post-doctoral positions in anthropology, guaranteed continued research training for doctoral students, which allowed many from that generation to take some time abroad (as doctoral students or as post-docs (or sabbaticals), expanding their linguistic and theoretical knowledge (Rial, Grossi, 2017).

CAPES and the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) provided grants for doctoral research abroad (the sandwich grants) and for international postdoctoral research. The majority of the "sandwich scholarships" (which is a one-year study abroad period during the doctoral) and pos-doc scholarships (or sabbaticals) involve some research in a foreign country. These financing modalities grew a lot under the Workers Party governments, but they now suffer from the deep budget cuts that affect education and science in the country. CAPES continues to be guided by policy that proposes the internationalization of Brazilian sciences, but no longer provides the support academics need to conduct research abroad. Funding for these programs has been cut dramatically.

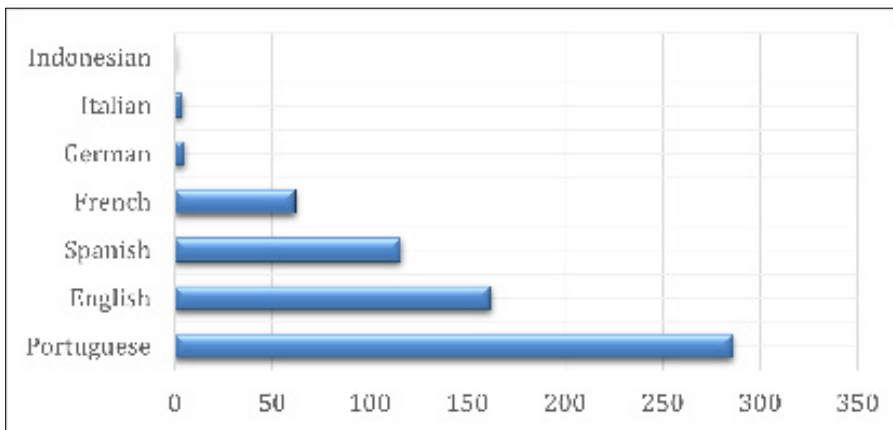
One main difficulty for the internationalization of Brazilian anthropology is the growing lack of resources and funding for studies outside Brazil as well as the fact that Portuguese is not considered an international language.

Our highly qualified studies published in Portuguese cannot be read by anthropologists throughout the world. From a global point of view, most of the anthropologists from different countries surveyed by WCAA report a preference for English, followed at a large distance by Spanish, Portuguese, French, German, and Italian.

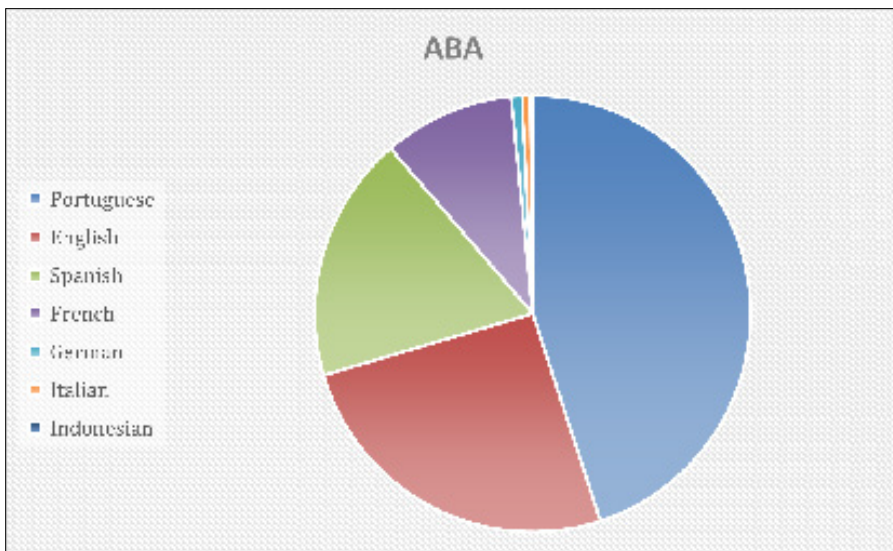
GSAP data show that the languages used by Brazilian anthropologists for publications are, in order, Portuguese, followed at a certain distance by English, Spanish and French. Numerically insignificant, German, Italian, and Indonesian are also cited (Figure 14). The responses allowed multiple choices.

It is important to recognize that the cost of good translations or editing is necessary yet extremely high if we Brazilians want to expand our publications in English.

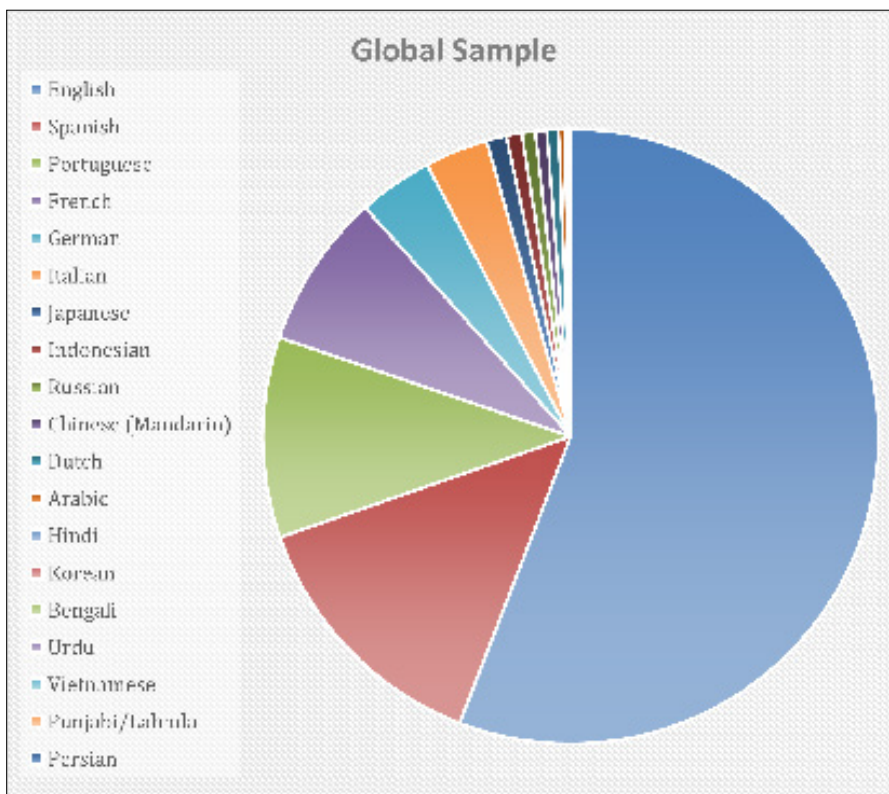
**Figure 14:** Language of Publication ABA



**Figure 15:** Language of Publication ABA



**Figure 16:** Language of Publication Global Sample



In conclusion, we would like to offer some reflections about the future of internationalization, as a goal for Brazilian anthropology. Although the international circulation of Brazilian anthropological production is limited because in Brazil articles are most often published in Portuguese, this survey reveals that English has become the second language in which Brazilians publish.

From a global perspective, most of the anthropologists from different countries surveyed by WCAA have a preference for English, followed at a large distance by Spanish, Portuguese, French, German, and Italian. It is auspicious to find that Spanish and Portuguese are the second and third preferred languages in world anthropology, within WCAA. We are tempted to seek incentives and partnerships to broaden the circulation of publications in these languages.

### **Growing tensions in the anthropological field in times of authoritarianism**

When Brazilian anthropologists speak with foreign colleagues, our colleagues tend to show their admiration for Brazilian anthropology because of its political engagements.

In fact, we have often participated in roundtable discussions with state agents, prosecutors, ministers and ambassadors. And it is true that anthropologists in Brazil have been able to influence decisions made by public agents. We have been heard in important national issues such as the drafting of the current Constitution. But when Brazilian anthropologists speak among each other, we do not always share this optimistic view, we are more pessimistic and affirm that our expertise is not properly valued. This is more true in recent years, considering the country's authoritarian government.

Indeed, for a few decades our anthropology was respected for its outreach, and highly regarded by our foreign colleagues. Obviously, it was recognized not only for its political commitment but also for its theoretical contributions, within a particular theoretical framework, related to certain empirical and theoretical issues.

Let's return to political outreach. Since the coup d'état of 2016, Brazilian anthropologists have faced new challenges. For example, we can consider pressure from ideologies that support national development, such as those used to justify construction of large hydroelectric dams, the accelerated advance of mining companies in the Amazon, and other projects that threaten Indigenous and neighboring populations.

Dam construction policies in Brazil date back to the 1970s during the military dictatorship when the official concept of "development" had priority over the environmental dangers posed. We now know the process was rife with kickback schemes involving all the major political parties and construction companies. Belo Monte (the largest dam constructed in the country) as well as the accelerated advance of mining companies in the Amazon and other development projects that threaten Indigenous and traditional populations have been monitored by anthropologists. At times, development projects have been fought by the Brazilian Anthropological Association (ABA), which although it is an academic association, has a history of political action in defense of the population studied by its members. This is not because the ABA is naively opposed to development. But because we believe that it must be sustainable in terms of biodiversity and have the effective consent of the people potentially affected. Biodiversity was also not a central concern of the Workers Party governments of Lula and Dilma, which promoted "social development" (*desenvolvimentismo social*), based on alliances with the leading capitalist financial and industrial corporations. So even under governments self-defined as promoters of "social justice", the consent of Indigenous people was not always a priority. Today the situation is even worse.

Not surprisingly, there have been many Indigenous uprisings in Brazil recently. More than a thousand erupted in 2016, a record high since 1985 when the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) began maintaining records. Land is at the center of important political conflicts and not only in Brazil. Capitalist mega-companies are buying territories the size of countries throughout the global South. The territories recognized as the native lands of Amerindians and descendants of traditional communities are considered by the Brazilian Constitution to be outside the real estate market and, precisely for this reason, are especially coveted by capital. Agribusiness, particularly involving soybeans and cattle, has demanded ever increasing space. Landowners are seeking the abolition by Congress of the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), which is responsible for protecting Indian rights. There is also intense pressure from the agricultural lobby to reduce areas protected for environmental conservation and to relax environmental regulations.

Events in 2014 and 2015 marked the strengthening of two large and extremely conservative caucuses in the national congress: the Frente Parlamentar Agropecuária [the Agricultural Front] and the Frente Parlamentar Evangélica [the Evangelical Front]. The Agricultural Front was responsible for the creation of two congressional investigative commissions (CPIs) that focused on the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) and on the National Institute for Agrarian Reform and Settlement (INCRA) in 2015 and 2017, as part of efforts to block demarcation of Indigenous lands and quilombos. Meanwhile, the Evangelical Front sought to prevent use of the word gender and education policies opposing discrimination by gender and sexuality in the National Education Plan for 2014-2024 (Machado, 2020).

While these two conservative fronts had applied pressure during the Lula and Dilma governments, and contributed strongly to Dilma's impeachment, they attained extraordinary power with the installation of the Temer Government in 2016<sup>9</sup>, given that their political interests were deeply linked and they had the same perspective on the future of the nation and the Brazilian state.

Independent of each representatives' party affiliation (or religion), the Agricultural Front votes in bloc on certain legislative proposals. Known as the "ruralist front", it had a leading role in the impeachment of Dilma, accounting for more than 80% of the votes in favor of the coup d'état. The "ruralist front" has three

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<sup>9</sup> On May 12, 2016, Vice President Michel Temer (PMDB *Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro*) became interim president. On August 31, 2016, he definitively took power as president of the republic. On January 1, 2019, elected candidate (PSL *Partido Social Liberal*), Jair Messias Bolsonaro became president. He has defended far-right policies, but is currently without a party affiliation.

other powerful congressional allies: a block that advocates the right to bear arms (the “security front”, known as the “bullet caucus”, *bancada da bala*), neo-Pentecostal deputies (Almeida, 2020) and, last but not least, the “football front” (*bancada da bola*), which is composed of conservative deputies from the world of football. It is a sinister pact. Their actions suppress social gains and support a moralist policy. Finally, while the situation was already difficult under the Dilma government, it was much more serious under the highly unpopular government of Mr. “Fora” Temer<sup>10</sup> and the extreme right won catastrophic gains with the election of Bolsonaro in 2018 (Machado, 2020; Miguel, 2018).

The “ruralist front” and its allies created a parliamentary inquiry commission (CPI) which approved a report of more than 3,000 pages, calling for the prosecution of 67 people, including anthropologists, missionaries, Amerindians, employees of FUNAI and INCRA, federal prosecutors and even the former Minister of Justice Eduardo Cardozo - a ministry that had often called on ABA to hear anthropologists’ opinions about projects involving Amerindians and traditional populations (Rial, 2018a).

Anthropologists were accused of lacking objectivity when providing evidence about demarcation of Indigenous lands, and serving as activists in support of Amerindian causes because the anthropologists have prior knowledge of communities. However, when anthropologists are accused of having prolonged contact with the groups they study, the very methodology of our discipline is a target. Agribusiness interests not only threaten the anthropologists directly named by the CPI, but threaten the work of anthropology, which is based on close intersubjective relations with its interlocutors, who are often precisely those at the margin of society. Anthropology as a whole has also been attacked through questioning of a study on the sociability of gays, and when public research agencies have been criticized for funding research on topics of sexuality, as was recently the case in Rio de Janeiro, where a study on homosexual sociality had its funding terminated.

Meanwhile, the social situation in Brazil is worsening in various aspects: Brazil is back on the United Nation’s map of hunger and a proposal is circulating in Congress to change the Constitution to limit the right to access land by Amerindians and traditional populations - despite the fact that Brazil is signatory to international conventions that defend these rights. Congress has also weakened laws against slave labor and is discussing the prohibition of abortion in the few situations where it is now permitted (in cases of rape and when a pregnant women’s life is at risk). A bill that would criminalize homophobia has been dropped from consideration, and the law against domestic violence, to which feminist anthropology made important contributions, is being considered for “flexibilization”. To complete setbacks in all three spheres of government, the judiciary has approved the possibility of “psychiatric treatment” to “cure” homosexuals, while it has censored art, theater and museums -and we will not discuss cases of judicial abuse in Brazil because that would take another 20 pages (Melo, 2020; Leite, 2019).

Finally, we want to mention serious threats to science and technology, most particularly those caused by the 20-year freeze on public spending approved soon after Temer replaced Dilma. It should be remembered that under the Lula government there was an expansion of the university system<sup>11</sup>. Some anthropology departments doubled in size. Challenges and difficulties are increasing under the Bolsonaro government.

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<sup>10</sup> “Fora Temer”, which means “Out with Temer”, was the slogan used by demonstrators calling for the ouster of the new president, who left office with approval ratings under 5 percent. Due to the slogan’s widespread presence, it is at times used in place of his name, as did one Chinese businessman by mistake.

<sup>11</sup> From 1998 to 2017, the number of courses increased by 214% while the number of students enrolled grew 265%. In training, the increase in titles was in the order of 307%. Regional asymmetries in Brazilian postgraduate courses were reduced: there was an internalization of postgraduate programs (PPGs), even those considered of excellence. For an analysis of the challenges of the Financing and Evaluation Policies of Graduate Studies in Brazilian Anthropology, see Miranda, 2018.

In 2021 some universities are facing closure. The threat is greatest at two universities that were formed through international partnerships. One is the Federal University for Latin American Integration (UNILA), located in Foz do Iguaçu on Brazil's border with Argentina and Paraguay. The other involves partnerships with African countries, the University for Integration of Afro-Brazilian Lusophony (UNILAB), located in Ceará and Bahia. Despite this catastrophic situation, we do not believe that Brazilian anthropology will reach the position faced by other colleagues in the world, whose departments are dying out or are encompassed by departments of sociology, history or others.

It is not only in Brazil that the current political situation imposes the need to reconcile academic work with political work. Yet this has been a historical feature of Brazilian anthropology.

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# History, Practice, Limitations, and Prospects: Anthropology in China

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## Abstract

Anthropology in China has a century long history. This article examines its origin, development, practices, and limitations throughout history briefly. It is argued that the history of anthropology in China has always been influenced by the state politics; its ups and downs has been determined by the state policy, and thus lacks academic autonomy. In the era of reform-open, however, Chinese anthropology received its spring. Several fields of new were developed along with international anthropology; the discipline has produced many PhDs. Many universities and colleges have established their own programs or departments. There are some problems, however, are underneath. Nonetheless, all negative conditions would push Chinese anthropologists forward to learn more, strengthening theoretical and critical thinking and searching for new subjects and new problems.

**Key terms:** anthropology, ethnology, history, China, state, ethnic minorities.

# História, Prática, Limitações e Perspectivas: Antropologia na China

## Resumo

A antropologia na China tem um século de história. Este artigo examina brevemente sua origem, desenvolvimento, práticas e limitações ao longo da história. Argumenta-se que a história da antropologia na China sempre foi influenciada pela política do estado; seus altos e baixos foram determinados pela política estadual e, portanto, carece de autonomia acadêmica. Na era da reforma aberta, no entanto, a antropologia chinesa floresceu. Vários campos novos foram desenvolvidos junto com a antropologia internacional; a disciplina produziu muitos PhDs. Muitas universidades e faculdades estabeleceram seus próprios programas ou departamentos. Existem alguns problemas, no entanto, subterrâneos. No entanto, todas as condições negativas impulsionariam os antropólogos chineses a aprender mais, fortalecendo o pensamento teórico e crítico e buscando novos temas e novas questões.

**Palavras-chave:** antropologia, etnologia, história, China, estado, minorias étnicas.

# History, Practice, Limitations, and Prospects: Anthropology in China

*Ke Fan*

This essay is an extension of the project called the Global Survey of Anthropological Practice (GSAP), which was carried out by anthropologists in different countries under the leadership of the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA).<sup>1</sup> The CAS (the Chinese Anthropological Society) received the task of this survey, but for some sensibility under the political condition the questionnaire was distributed to “the friend circles”, a popular social self-media called WeChat. It turned to be very informal. Its result was of course unexpected as one can imaged. As instead, for preparing the GSAP panel of WCAA in Brazil, July 2019, we had to collect data through personal contact and literature survey, which resulted in this essay.

This essay examines anthropological practice in China, especially in recent decades. After a brief description of the history of anthropology in the country in the following pages, I provide a discussion of the general practice of anthropology in China. I argue that the practice in question has always been impacted by current politics, both before and after 1949. This is a legacy or a tradition from early generations of Chinese anthropologists. However, comparing the discipline before and after 1949, we note that political approaches are quite different. As to anthropological practice in China today, I argue that anthropology has been in an awkward position in China because the system of higher education in China is still highly centralized. This situation is an obstacle to the development of the discipline in China, even though revitalization of anthropology in China was already taking place in the first part of the 1980s. Despite some obstacles, anthropology is increasingly welcomed and getting popularized in the country. In recent decades with contributions from those who were trained in foreign countries, Chinese anthropologists have engaged in many programs, from theoretical to applied. Therefore, the progress of the discipline cannot be underestimated.

## **A Brief History of Chinese Anthropology**

Anthropology as a discipline was introduced to China before the 1920s. In the very beginning, books by Lewis Henry Morgan, Edward A. Westermarck, and Michael Haborandi were partially translated and published as series in newspapers or as book chapters. In 1916 SUN Xuewu published an article entitled “Summarization of Anthropology.” This is possibly the first time that the name of anthropology was made known to the public. This article, however, is basically a description of what anthropology was at the time and how it was coming about in the West (see Chen, 1985: 3).

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<sup>1</sup> For this essay, I did not use any part of the questionnaire. Much material used in this essay was collected through a survey of the literature. I, however, have contacted more than 20 anthropologists or ethnologists at several elite Chinese universities in different venues. I have interviewed them and I paid attention to their suggestions and the information they provided. I did not get detailed information about the job market but, given my impression and the information I had, chances for students who study anthropology are quite good. Most of them go to work with media agencies or other organizations that are regarded as part of the cultural industry; some of them become self-employed doing what they like to do. There are many going on to graduate schools to get higher degrees. As to Ph.D.s, as far as I know, over 90% look for jobs in universities, and almost everyone ended up with positions there. Though this situation seems bright for anthropology, we cannot ignore the fact that China produces less than 100 Ph.D.s in anthropology (sometimes much less) and is not currently set up to produce more.

Today, scholars in general agree on that the founder of Chinese anthropology should be CAI Yuanpei. His article “On Ethnology” (*shuo minzuxue*) was published in 1926. In this article he argued, ethnology is a discipline focused on investigating ethnic cultures, recording and comparing them. Being trained in Germany Cai tended to make a distinction between anthropology and ethnology but argued that the two shared a lot in common. Nonetheless, he pointed out that culture (*wenhua*) concerns ethnology more. Since he was the first to systematically introduced ethnology and anthropology, he has been recognized as the founder of Chinese anthropology.

Started in 1927, with the Republic government settled down in Nanjing, institutes related to anthropology were established. From the early 1930s on, there were a few anthropological institutes established in China. Two institutes considered to be the most important in the history of this discipline in China were, respectively, established in 1930. One was the Research Institute of Social Sciences, in which ethnology was one of its four divisions (or, departments so to speak) and CAI Yuanpei was the head of this division. The other one is the Institute of History and Philology, Academic Sinica. Anthropology was the fourth division established under the leadership of LI Chi, an archaeologist and Harvard Ph.D. in anthropology. Several programs were then established. This includes anthropology programs in universities such as Peking, Sun Yat-Sen, Zhejiang, Xiamen, Fudan, Zhongyang (Central University), and Sichuan.

Before these programs were established in the late 1920s, however, a few scholars had already carried out field research. YANG Chengzhi, Fritz Jager and SHANG Chengzuo went to Guangxi. These Sun Yat-Sen University scholars carried out their research project among ethnic minorities in Guangxi Province. Many projects were carried on later, too. Scholars from Zhongyang University and Institute of History and Philology did their ethnographic research projects among the indigenous people in Taiwan (LIN Huixiang), Heilongjiang (Lin Chunsheng), Hunan (RUI Yifu), Yunnan (TAO Yunkui), among several others (see Chen, 1985; Wang, 1999).

Scholars in north China did their ethnographic research among the majority Chinese (Han), for which they called “community study” (*shequ yanjiu*). Before the rise of community study, however, influenced by Sergei Shirokogoroff, a Russian ethnologist teaching at Peking University, a couple of them (FEI Xiaotong and WANG Tonghui) went to study the Yao in Guangxi.

For the scholars of this camp what a community means is different from that of Ferdinand Tönnies. According to Tönnies, a community means a face-to-face society tied by blood or geographic condition. But for these scholars a community is actually a segment belonging to a larger society. Such a conception was borrowed from the Chicago school of sociology. In the late 1930s and early 40s, Robert Park and Radcliffe-Brown visited Tsinghua University in Peking (Beijing) respectively. Radcliffe-Brown was a colleague of Park at the University of Chicago at that time. Both of them suggested to Chinese scholars to use the concept of community in their study (Wang Mingming, 2016).

Since scholars in the southern and northern parts of China had different subjects (minority vs majority), they were divided into camps (Wang Jianmin, 1999). The northern camp was under the leadership of WU Wenzao, a Columbia University Ph.D. in sociology. Most scholars of the north did their doctoral study in the U.S. and the U.K. Because of this background they had close connections with anthropology and sociology in these two countries. Interestingly, quite a few of the leading scholars in the south had their doctoral degrees from France, under the supervision of Marcel Mauss, such as LING Chunsheng, XU Yitang, and YANG Kun, among others.

The southern camp was more often engaging in projects required by the state. What concerned the state then was the frontier which, in Chinese, means regions connecting with neighboring countries. Ethnic minorities have largely lived in these areas. So, the study of ethnic minorities reflects the fact that sovereignty was the priority of China as a modern state and that it wanted information on people living at its borders, such as their

livelihood and other social conditions, for example. In contrast, the northern camp was not so involved with the state agenda. It paid more attention to issues such as people's livelihood, the rural economy, and social change. What they did was pragmatic, engaged, and theoretical.

Shortly before and after the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) the issue of frontier policy (*bianzheng yanjiu*) turned out to be a hot topic in both camps. What was conspicuous at that time was the debate on the unity of the Chinese people--"Chinese nation is only one" (*zhonghua minzu shi yige*). The debate attracted several nationally known scholars. Anthropologists in this debate argued that China was a country of multiple nationalities and that the government should emphasize this. Nonetheless, as FEI Xiaotong, a student of Malinowski, confessed later on, he didn't realize that addressing the Chinese nation as only one mobilized people to revolt against the Japanese invasion (Fan Ke, 2019: 159).

After 1949, anthropology, ethnology, and sociology came to be regarded as bourgeois disciplines (*zichangjieji xueke*) and were quickly abolished as part of a movement to restructure higher education system in 1952. Following the Soviet model, many anthropologists and ethnologists became incorporated in a field under the name of ethno-study (*minzu yanjiu*). In addition, other anthropologists and ethnologists were assigned to other disciplines such as history and language. Many famous scholars were sent to a newly established college, the Central College (now university) for Nationalities (*Zhongyang minzu daxue*).<sup>2</sup> They were all asked to do research on ethnic minorities. Since the majority of the population of ethnic minorities lived in the frontier areas, this reality, again, concerned the state because the issue of sovereignty was centered in the process of state-making at that time.

Anthropology did not return to universities in China until the post-Mao era. A sign of such reconstruction was the establishment of the Chinese Anthropological Society in May 1981. Several universities, such as Xiamen and Sun Yat-Sen, were resuming anthropology programs. Anthropology started to develop again. From 1981 to 1983, three anthropology departments were established, respectively, in the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Sun Yat-Sen University, and Xiamen University. This was the other sign that anthropology was being restored in China. However, for some reason, currently in mainland China, only two universities, Sun Yat-Sen University and Xiamen University have maintained a 4 fields style of American anthropology. Most elite universities in the East China have anthropology or ethnology programs one way or the other. Most other universities have a few anthropologists working in different schools and departments. In addition, there are more than 23 schools, universities or colleges, for nationalities (*minzu yuanxiao*). Each of them has its own team of anthropologists (see Fan Ke and ZhangYunan, 2020).

## Practice, after 1949

After the establishment of the PRC (the People's Republic of China), in the 1950s, there were two projects carried out under state supervision: ethnic identification (*minzu shibie*, 1953-1987) and the investigation of ethnic sociohistory (1958-1964). The ethnic identification campaign amounted to a categorization of populations along ethnic lines. The reason for such a categorization was the huge engineering of state-making at the time. The state wanted to have all levels of government bodies include ethnic representation so that it could present a state of all people. However, such a representation would not be achieved if no categorization of people was carried out. But what caused the state to carry out this campaign was a result from the 1953 state census. It was the first state census after the Communists attained power in 1949. One problem encountered in this census is that more than 400 identities appeared. To the state, this was technically unacceptable. It was just too many.

<sup>2</sup> China has its own preferential policy toward national minorities. Considering that most national minorities are classified as economically and culturally "backward" (*luohou*), the state has established a particular system of higher education in order to help them. Some universities or colleges were established particularly for students from ethnic minorities. However, they have also accepted students from the Han majority.



Accordingly, the central government decided to group them. This is the reason that ethnic identification came about. In the end, more than 400 identities were incorporated into 56 *minzu*. Ethnic configuration of present-day China was thus changed and fixed (Fan, 2012, 2016).

The other campaign, the investigation of minorities' sociohistory, was initiated and carried out between 1958 and 1964. This was a political task also assigned by the state to scholars. For the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the PRC (1949-59), the central government wanted to show its achievements in all aspects, including how and in what ways ethnic minority people's livelihood was improved under the leadership of the Chinese Communist party. In addition, policymakers decided to carry out a preferential policy toward ethnic minorities. To do this, they would need to know the stage of social evolution of every separate ethnic minority (a concept borrowed from the Soviet Union). For these purposes, the central government decided to have an exhibition or display in the National Palace (*minzu wenhuagong*). The government of every region was asked to collect data. Several thousand scholars were involved into this project.

As a result, this investigation collected a lot of data in terms of ethnic minorities' social structure, subsistence, and livelihood, producing a systematic knowledge about ethnic minorities in general. Such a situation never happened in the historical past. However, since this knowledge was produced within the framework of Marxist's-five stages of social evolution (primitive, slavery, feudalism, capitalist, and socialist),<sup>3</sup> it was hampered by a lot of wrong information, misunderstanding, and even misrepresentation. Two projects in question also resulted in many publications that appeared in print before the Post-Mao era. Almost all scholars with a background in anthropology, ethnology, ethnohistory, linguistics, and even sociology had to work in these projects and had no individual choice. Such research is obviously very ideologized, but ironically it did lead something considered to be positive to come about:

First, at least the basic situation of China's ethnic minorities, though not perfect at all, are known by the public at large. This is a new thing. Second, and this lasted for years, the two projects in question actually provided opportunities to train anthropologists and to hire more scholars to do ethnographic research as well.

Starting in 1978, "reform-open" policy was carried out, leading to changes taking place in Chinese society. Against this backdrop, anthropology resumed its position but with many new characters. Let me summarize these changes from 1978 to the present as follows:

1. Although ethnic minority is still the emphasis in ethnological and anthropological studies, Scholars have paid more attention to the complexity of how each separate *minzu* has been connected—interweaved—in the construction of Chinese nation, and how the Chinese nation could be seen as a unity in diversity.

2. Revisiting old ethnographic sites was hot throughout almost two decades from the late 1980s to the 1990s. Several scholars returned to sites of ethnographic studies done by scholars of earlier generations, either Chinese or foreigners. For example, ZHUANG Kongshao (2000) revisited the site his advisor wrote an anthropological novel about titled *The Golden Wing: A Sociological Study of Chinese Familism* (Lin 1948); ZHOU Daming (2006) went to the site in which D.H. Kulp did his ethnography (Kulp, 1925); many times, FEI Xiaotong went back to the village he did the fieldwork for his famous book, *Peasant Life of China* (Fei, 1939), PAN Shouyong (2004) did research in a village Martin Yang wrote about in his *A Chinese Village: Taitou, Shantung Province* (Yang, 1945), and so on.

3. Nativization of anthropology (*Renleixue bentuhua*) became a hot topic to people in the academic enterprise by the middle of the 1990s. Some scholars felt that there were a lot of Western terminologies imported from outside China and, therefore, worried about the subjectivity of Chinese scholarship (see Xu Jieshun, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Marx never outlined social evolution as such. The five-stage doctrine was first outlined in chapter 4 of *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course*, edited by a Commission of the C.C. of the C.P.S.U.(B), authorized by the C.C. of the C.P.S.U.(B.)1938 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1951).

Later on, scholars came to agree on what scholars should deal with as questions and problems. But I think that no matter where terminologies and theories come from, as long as they are helpful, we should use them.

4. In recent years, some scholars have explored the concept of civilization, sometimes called the anthropology of civilizations. They want to have a better understanding of cultural complexes within a civilization, looking into “hybrid phenomena” as something able to surpass the social system (see Wang Mingming, 2015).

5. HIV and its social impacts became a social issue in China by the middle of the 1990s, and anthropologists have followed these issues and done some significant studies in this area (SHAO 2016, 2006; ZHUANG Kongshao, 2007, among several others).

6. Identity politics is a topic for students of anthropology that is completely new to anthropologists in China. Although the state social policy toward ethnic minorities has benefitted the people and assigned them identities along with ethnic lines, it has awakened people’s self-consciousness and identity politics thus takes place. This is a paradox of ethnic identification based on categorization of populations along with ethnic lines. Not only does it alert people to think about who they are, some of them thinking they could be separate nationalities, or *minzu*, while others may manipulate their identities as assigned by the state in order to collect symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1990) for their own good (FAN Ke, 2015). Some ethnic elites think that the identity their people have from the state could be wrong and that they should belong to another nationality. And some argue that they should be different nations, thereby subscribing openly to national separatist movements (see FAN Ke, 2019).

7. Globalization and its consequences have received a lot of academic attention. Students focus on migration, either domestic or trination. Mobility itself has become a subject of research. There is much theoretical discussion and ethnographic examination on this subject (see FAN Ke, 2015, DUANG Ying, 2020, MA, Guoqing 2016, among others)

8. Accordingly, anthropology of tourism has become a subdiscipline in anthropology of China. Many students study cultural or ethnic tourism, arguing about the authenticity of ethnic culture or cultural heritage is (PENG Zhaorong, 2005; SUN Jiuxia, 2007).

9. Anthropology of education is a relatively large field. The development of this field is certainly a consequence of a social policy that favors ethnic minorities. Students want to find why, after this policy was carried on for so many years, level of education in minority areas is still much lower than elsewhere and how such a situation may have anything to do with culture (TENG Xing, 2017, 2006, among others).

10. The frontier study is also hot especially among those who are teaching in universities located in minorities areas. I have, in fact, written several articles criticizing the problem in this field (for example see FAN Ke, 2016, among others) but I am not alone.

11. Medical anthropology has had very good development in recent years (see JING Jun, 2010). Professors JING Jun and PAN Tianshu were important in this field. They did their Ph.D.s at Harvard. They have engaged in several issues such as psychological health, aging, and hospice care in China. In recent decades one of their Harvard supervisors, Arthur Kleiman, visited China quite often. In addition to delivering lectures, he has also trained Chinese scholars inviting them to Harvard as visiting scholars or exchange students. Lai Lili (2016) has done good research, analyzing how hygiene, sociality and culture are interconnected in contemporary rural China. ZHANG Wenyi looks into how Christian prayer has its role in animal sacrifice by examining healing through states of consciousness among the Kachin in a south China village (ZHANG, 2016).

12. Many scholars are carrying out projects that are more applicable and practical such as aging, spiritual health, and public health. The leading scholars in this part are JING Jun, a Harvard returnee based in Tsinghua University and PAN Tianshu, also a Harvard returnee from Fudan University.

13. Rural issues have traditionally concerned anthropologists in China and in numerous other countries. Today, anthropologists treat issues in question as a problem of development. Many scholars argue that rural

issues are unseparated from the process of rapid urbanization pushed by the governments of different levels, as they are so demanding to rise GDP.

14. Nuclear anthropology is now an important program at Fudan University. The leading scholar is JING Li. His team has published some articles in journals such as *Nature* and *Science*. WANG Chuanchao, one of JIN's students, has built a laboratory at Xiamen University. He and his team have published quite a few excellent articles and one of them was published in *Nature* this year (See WANG, 2021).

15. Overseas ethnography is now being advocated by a few scholars, especially GAO Bingzhong of Beijing University. Several Ph.D. students have done their dissertation research in foreign countries. However, this tendency seems congruent with an atmosphere that is so-called "rise of China," a slogan officially supported the government and intentionally heated up years ago. Nonetheless, going abroad for field study has been pushed forward by many younger scholars, no matter whether or not they like this slogan.

16. Anthropology of Disaster is now also a hot topic after China has suffered several natural disasters especially since the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Anthropologist LI Yongxiang (LI Yongxiang, 2012) in Yunnan, started to study in this field and has brought many scholars to work on this issue. Since the COVID -19 pandemic, anthropologists are also engaged in research related to this pandemic. But what problem is, the governments of different levels only wanted to have things that could show their performance. It is not an overemphasis to say that the government knows the problems and discourage research on what the state selected to do or favors to exercise in the current pandemic.

## Limitations

Anthropology has gained its popularity due to at least two facts: (1) ongoing scholarly exchange between China and abroad over last decades, and (2) the fact that publications in Chinese have reached a level never accomplished before. But there are still limitations, too, because of the social political conditions:

1. The discipline has not yet had its appropriate position in the official curriculum, because of the structure of disciplines in the system of higher education. Because the state ministry of education is an apparatus controlling all resources for education, how to allocate these resources is, to a great degree, still highly "centrally planned." This is the reason why the disciplinary categorization (xueke huafen) has been established. Based in the categorization of disciplines all disciplines are arranged in a hierarchical structure. Except for a few disciplines considered to be the first division (yiji xueke), all others are secondary. As a consequence, for the secondary disciplines, chances such as getting funding, setting up graduate programs, and hiring faculty members are much less than for the "first division."

Figure 1. The structure of social sciences in Chinese higher education system

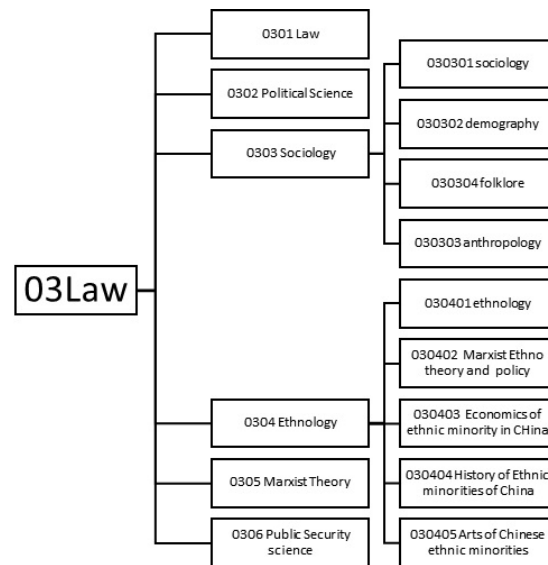


Figure 1 shows that in the structure of the disciplines of the social sciences, which are all under the category of the law (faxue men),<sup>4</sup> there are four first divisions, and anthropology is subordinated to two of the first ones, sociology and ethnology. Such a position makes anthropology marginal in the overall education curriculum (FAN Ke and ZHANG Yunan, 2020).

2. Because anthropology is not a discipline in the first division, most anthropology programs are not allowed to have undergraduate students (in China, whether or not a discipline is allowed to have an undergraduate program is related to favorability in the job market). Currently, there are more than 20 universities having anthropology programs but only a few of them have anthropology departments that are allowed to have undergraduate students. Others are only for graduate training. This situation limits the growth of anthropology students.

3. Since several tragedies have happened in a few ethnic regions and their complexity in politics and international relation can be significant, the government has increasingly strengthened its domination in these areas. Writings related to these areas and subjects such as religion or ethnic issues are frequently censored by the government. For example, works on religion are deemed unfavorable by the government, so they have to be inspected seriously before publication. The same goes for works on border issues, minority life and politics, and citizenship. Unfortunately, most of these issues are what anthropologists in China have traditionally engaged.

4. The state is organizing publication of textbooks for all disciplines and anthropology is, of course, not exceptional. All of these textbooks get put under the title of “Marxist Engineering” and downplay any influence from Western academia. This is certainly a limitation to the development of anthropology in China.

5. There is also limited financial support for anthropology in China, and there are few professional anthropology journals. I consider this to be an important factor preventing anthropology from further progress in China.

<sup>4</sup> There are several phyla, and law is listed third. This categorization of disciplines is a legacy that has been maintained since the era of the Republic, even though there are a lot of differences under each phylum.

## Prospects

Though the development of anthropology in China is not as smooth as in many countries, there are some good things happening in recent years.

1. Because of self-media (WeChat, for example) so popular among people, a huge space opens to anthropology. All anthropology programs in China register their own platforms, through which people can present their own research, exchange information, and publish or not publish. Anthropological knowledge has been brought to the public as something attractive to younger students. Application for anthropology programs of different levels are increasing every year.

2. A number of anthropologists are carrying out projects involving practicing or applied anthropology outside universities, in institutions taking care of the elderly, social charity, and business.

3. MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) becomes a way to deliver lectures, which is favored by college students. Anthropology lectures are highly welcomed. This is an important way to attract students to enter the fields of anthropology.

4. Because the state strengthens its control and censorship in publication, many anthropologists spend more time training themselves theoretically. There are a lot of discussions in contemporary China on recent developments in anthropological theory, such as “ontological turn,” for instance and, in the meantime, there are significant articles published in China (see ZHU Xiaoyang, 2021, 2015, among others). Accordingly, I argue, this could be a juncture for Chinese anthropology, a moment to grow to be a much-matured discipline, since scholars would learn to be more able to raise questions and write things more theoretically, and scholars in anthropology could deal with social problems with more sophistication.

In sum, the current situation in China is not so positive toward anthropology, but it indeed may lead Chinese anthropologists to learn more things. The world has been changed a great deal. Even though the state in China puts a lot of pressure on academia, scholars are able to use their skills to make themselves grow and mature, and the whole discipline will certainly accomplish more, one could say achieve maturity, in terms of academic matters.

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# ¿Antropología internacional o Antropologías del Mundo?

## La encuesta mundial de práctica antropológica-GSAP vista *desde* Argentina

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### Resumen

El Consejo Mundial de Asociaciones de Antropología (WCAA sus siglas en inglés) realizó entre 2017 y 2018 una encuesta global (Global Survey of Anthropological Practice-GSAP) para dar cuenta de la práctica antropológica en aquellos países que cuentan con asociaciones miembro de WCAA.

En el siguiente artículo se compartirán los resultados de la GSAP para Argentina, enmarcados en una encuesta previa realizada por el Colegio de Graduados en Antropología de la República Argentina en 2016 que nos ayuda a iluminar los resultados arrojados por la GSAP, no sin antes explicitar las razones que me llevan a tomar recaudos no solo ante los resultados para la Argentina, sino y sobre todo, sobre los fundamentos mismos de la encuesta.

**Palabras clave:** Encuesta mundial de práctica antropológica-GSAP, Argentina, antropologías del mundo, antropología internacional.



# International anthropology or World Anthropologies?

## The global survey of anthropological practice-GSAP, an analysis from Argentina

### **Abstract**

The World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA) conducted between 2017 and 2018 a global survey (Global Survey of Anthropological Practice-GSAP) to account for anthropological practice in those countries with WCAA member associations.

In the following article I will share the results of the GSAP for Argentina, framed in a previous survey conducted by the Argentinean Association of Anthropologists (CGA) in 2016, which helps us to shed light on the results of the GSAP, not without first explaining the reasons that lead me to be cautious not only about the results for Argentina, but also about the very foundations of the survey.

**Keywords:** Global Survey of Anthropological Practice-GSAP, Argentina, world anthropologies, international anthropology.

# Antropologia internacional ou antropologias do mundo?

## A pesquisa mundial de prática antropológica- GSAP vista a partir da Argentina

### **Resumo**

O Conselho Mundial de Associações Antropológicas (WCAA, em inglês) realizou entre 2017 e 2018 uma pesquisa global (Global Survey of Anthropological Practice-GSAP) para dar conta da prática antropológica nos países que contam com associações integrantes do WCAA.

O presente artigo apresenta os resultados do GSAP para a Argentina, enquadrados em uma pesquisa anterior conduzida pelo Colégio de Licenciados em Antropologia da República Argentina em 2016, que nos ajuda a iluminar os resultados do GSAP, não sem antes explicar as razões que me levam a ser cautelosa em relação aos resultados para a Argentina, mas acima de tudo, em relação aos próprios fundamentos da pesquisa.

**Palavras-chave:** Pesquisa mundial de prática antropológica-GSAP Argentina, antropologias do mundo, antropologia internacional.

# ¿Antropología internacional o Antropologías del Mundo? La encuesta mundial de práctica antropológica-GSAP vista *desde* Argentina

Lía Ferrero

## Sobre la GSAP

El Consejo Mundial de Asociaciones de Antropología (WCAA sus siglas en inglés) realizó entre 2017 y 2018 una encuesta global (global survey of anthropological practice-GSAP) para dar cuenta de la práctica antropológica en aquellos países que cuentan con asociaciones miembro de WCAA. Más allá de los países donde finalmente se aplicó la GSAP, las pretensiones eran planetarias. Una encuesta diseñada para ser aplicada en cualquier lugar del mundo donde hubiera práctica antropológica, por quienes se auto identificaran como antropologxs, con el objeto de producir información para que WCAA demostrara como lxs antropologxs se desenvuelven en sus vidas profesionales, y a su vez como el mundo es interpretado por el trabajo de estxs.

El instrumento que se utilizó para la encuesta global se basó en otro previamente utilizado por la Sociedad Australiana de Antropología para recabar información sobre la antropología en ese país en 2016. La encuesta se llevó a cabo de manera autoadministrada, en formato virtual, en idiomas inglés y español.

La distribución de la encuesta fue a través de la propia WCAA y sus asociaciones miembro, aunque en la medida en que era una encuesta autoadministrada y virtual, no había un control previo sobre quienes la respondieran.

En el informe final elaborado por los responsables de la GSAP (McGrath, Acciaioli, Millard, 2018) se advierten ciertos recaudos prácticos y metodológicos en cuanto a representatividad que se deben tomar en cuenta antes de hacer uso de los datos que se produjeron. Se aclara que si bien hay información valiosa, no se puede considerar a la misma como una muestra cuyos resultados se puedan proyectar a la manera de una encuesta estadística.

También se toma nota de algunas diferencias a nivel internacional respecto por ejemplo de las nomenclaturas y estructuras que revisten los programas de grado y/o posgrado y las variaciones en las subdisciplinas dentro de la antropología. Más allá de esas advertencias, el resto del informe se explaya a través de los resultados cuantitativos que arrojó la encuesta.

100 personas que manifestaron haber nacido en Argentina respondieron la encuesta, de ese total, 77 continúan viviendo en ese país. Solo 29 marcaron como asociación de pertenencia al Colegio de Graduados en Antropología de la República Argentina-CGA; por lo que fue solo con ese pequeño universo con el que el CGA contó para construir datos. Dado lo pequeño de la muestra, y muy probablemente debido a los recaudos metodológicos que lxs mismxs coordinadorxs marcaban para la GSAP en general, es que los datos arrojados para Argentina hacían pensar en la necesidad de enmarcarlos o contrastarlos con otros<sup>1</sup> para que resultaran significativos.

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<sup>1</sup> Previamente contruidos a partir de una encuesta realizada por el CGA sobre perfiles profesionales un año antes, más información contextual relativa a las antropologías en el país.

## Problemas de pensar de manera global a la/s antropología/s

Considero importante antes de avanzar con los resultados de la GSAP para Argentina, explicitar las razones que me llevan a tomar recaudos no solo ante los resultados para ese país, sino sobre los fundamentos mismos de la encuesta. Para ello voy a recurrir a cierta bibliografía, que pone el foco en las relaciones de poder entre las antropologías.

Ya en 1982 George Stocking Jr. en la revista *Ethnos* se preguntaba por la posibilidad de pensar una “antropología internacional” y las consecuencias de hacerlo. Como punto de partida establecía que la antropología conlleva una gran diversidad ya que es una fusión imperfecta de diferentes tradiciones de investigación; y los resultados de esa fusión varían a su vez en las diversas tradiciones intelectuales nacionales. Esto tanto para las antropologías euro-americanas (a las cuales va a definir como centrales) como para las otras antropologías, a las que define como periféricas.

Desde esas antropologías periféricas es posible entender a las centrales como unificadas u homogéneas, de todos modos el autor se encarga de aclarar a partir de ejemplos históricos que esto no es así, sino que la diversidad de sentidos, tradiciones y perspectivas implícitas en el término “antropología” son el resultado de condicionamientos históricos, también en el “centro”.

De todos modos, hay cierta antropología euro-americana que se ubica en el lugar de la “antropología internacional” a partir de mediados del siglo XX. Los puntos en común que tienen y que la llevan a definirse como tal son el interés por un *otro* radical y una aproximación metodológica al mismo a través del *trabajo de campo*. Quienes son señalados por Stocking como los que establecieron lo “internacional” en/para la disciplina son la antropología cultural norteamericana por un lado y la antropología social británica por el otro.

Esa antropología internacional, fundamentalmente euro-americana no incorpora a su esquema las relaciones centro-periferia que se desarrollaron en el mismo periodo de su emergencia, en la medida en que la dominación colonial directa europea estaba llegando a su fin y por lo tanto la relación con los otros radicales también estaba en proceso de transformación.

Esa serie de eventos históricos provocó modificaciones en las antropologías centrales y le imprimieron un sello particular a las periféricas, siempre según Stocking. Más allá de esas modificaciones o cualidades, lo cierto es que si seguimos la idea de antropologías centrales y periféricas, ya no podemos pensar en términos de una antropología con criterios comunes que la homogeneicen. Lo que está en duda es entonces la posibilidad de un conocimiento antropológico universal/universalizable. Estamos ante una heterogeneidad y unas variaciones que hacen que para poder abordarlas, sea necesario reconocer esas diferencias y pensarlas desde sus especificidades.

En el mismo número de *Ethnos* Tomas Gerholm y Ulf Hannerz (1982) introducen la noción de *antropologías* -en plural- para referirse a una antropología de las antropologías pensando en la unidad y la diversidad en el “orden mundial de la antropología”. Uno de sus intereses está en las desigualdades en la antropología internacional, considerando que las más fuertes (léase las británica, norteamericana y francesa) influyen a las -en relación- más débiles. Van a hablar de centro y periferia al igual que Stocking, o de metrópolis y satélites (esto último considerando el tipo de vínculo que se establece entre ellas).

La diferencia la marcaría el hecho que las antropologías metropolitanas están centradas en sí mismas, mientras que las satélites o periféricas además de llevar la atención sobre sí mismas, lo hacen sobre las metropolitanas, sumado a que el dialogo entre colegas en su seno, es escaso. La influencia del centro en la periferia se da a través de las publicaciones, mayormente en inglés y menos en francés. En ese plano se da la disputa por las formas hegemónicas de la antropología y se moldean las formas de lo argumentable (Restrepo, 2006). El tema del idioma no es menor, porque siempre posiciona a las antropologías que no son anglo o franco parlantes en un lugar de desventaja. No se trata solo de escribir en inglés o francés, sino que también se trata de unas maneras de pensar, imaginar, organizar contenidos y estructurar la escritura, de unos criterios y unas expectativas que se transforman -en no pocas ocasiones- en barreras (y en dispositivos disciplinadores).

Por otro lado, el inglés fundamentalmente se ha transformado en un idioma “universal” que permite la comunicación entre las antropologías satélite, y de esto puede dar cuenta WCAA que lo tiene como *lingua franca* para su funcionamiento. Y aunque *de facto* permite la comunicación, deja en clara desventaja a quienes no lo tienen como lengua primaria.

Además de las publicaciones editoriales y la formación en los programas de antropología, “los alineamientos políticos internacionales, los acuerdos concernientes al intercambio académico y cultural, y las políticas y decisiones de las fundaciones científicas” (Gerholm y Hannerz, 1982: 10. Mi traducción) también deben ser consideradas a la hora de pensar las influencias centro-periferia<sup>2</sup>. La resultante suele ser un centro que produce y exporta teoría y unos satélites que cuando producen teoría innovadora, esta se transforma en una *commodity* que se exporta y ubica a lxs antropólogxs locales en el centro, sin afectar mayormente al satélite en sí.

Eduardo Restrepo (2006) retomando esas argumentaciones entre otras, en su artículo “Diferencia, hegemonía y disciplinación en antropología” se pregunta por las posibilidades de dialogo y conversabilidad entre lo que él llama “comunidad antropológica transnacional”. Para ello recupera también la noción de antropologías centrales y periféricas, pero en su caso de Cardoso de Oliveira. Allí la centralidad está referida a una cuestión histórica, por lo que centrales serían las antropologías donde ésta se desarrolló en primer lugar: Estados Unidos, Inglaterra y Francia, y periféricas las que las suceden en el tiempo. Mientras que las primeras tienen la pretensión de universalidad, las segundas están orientadas a sus contextos particulares, por ende son particularizantes. Esa cualidad lleva a Cardoso de Oliveira a desarrollar la noción de “estilo”, lo que sería una característica de la periferia.

El problema con esa noción establece Restrepo, retomando a Esteban Krotz (2016), es que en la medida en que esencializa el origen de la antropología en el Norte Global, constituye una matriz disciplinaria única y universal para la antropología que no permite el desarrollo o la búsqueda de antecedentes propios para las antropologías periféricas. Y así se construye la hegemonía “[...] en disputas permanentes por la definición de los términos, formatos, valoraciones y terrenos no sólo de lo que constituye lo antropológico en un momento determinado con respecto a acciones particulares, sino también de quiénes en concreto se benefician de los recursos materiales y simbólicos que circulan en [el] establecimiento antropológico” (Restrepo, 2006: 59).

Lo que permiten todas estas ideas es poner en el centro la supuesta unicidad de la antropología que aparece en los manuales o en los programas en los que se enseña la disciplina. Las nociones de antropologías periféricas, satélites, del Sur interrumpen esas narraciones mitológicas y “suponen [...] un nuevo sujeto epistémico, pero también una actitud diferente frente a los sujetos antropológicos con los cuales se comparten horizontes y destinos en el marco de las comunidades nacionales” (Restrepo, 2006: 27).

Pero no alcanza con caracterizar a ese nuevo sujeto epistémico, o a las antropologías del Sur, periféricas, satélite, “otras”, sino que en el mismo movimiento es necesario “provincializar Europa” (Restrepo, 2016). Esto implica aplicar una lógica que la antropología se arroga como propia, esta vez a sí misma. O sea, desnaturalizar la idea según la cual el conocimiento producido en el Norte no posee marcación de origen, historicidad, contextualidad, no está marcado por los sujetos que lo producen desde unas condiciones y biografías determinadas. Desplazando del centro a Europa se puede volver a la idea de Esteban Krotz (en Restrepo, 2016) de construir historicidades y genealogías propias para las antropologías del Sur, sin depender o estar tuteladas por unas genealogías del Norte tomadas como universales.

También pensando desde una geopolítica del conocimiento es importante conocer el lugar desde el que se produce conocimiento, con qué objetivos, por quienes y para quienes. Esto nos permite pensar en el conocimiento siempre como situado, en oposición al conocimiento aséptico, sin marcas de origen, porque

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<sup>2</sup> Esto se traduce en ciertas antropologías que directamente son silenciadas e invisibilizadas al punto de quedar encapsuladas, e incluso bajo sospecha moral y ética, con muy pocas posibilidades de diálogo más allá de sus fronteras nacionales.

como nos advierte Restrepo “El conocimiento está siempre anclado y marcado por los sujetos que lo producen, independientemente de sus capacidades reflexivas para comprender y cartografiar estas improntas” (2016: 64).

WCAA en su constitución misma refleja estas discusiones, en la medida en que es resultado de las conversaciones sobre las *antropologías del mundo*. Esta propuesta política y académica estipula que “siempre han existido conexiones muy estrechas entre los sistemas-mundo de poder, el desarrollo de la teoría social y los cambios en disciplinas particulares como la antropología” (Lins Ribeiro y Escobar, 2008: 18), lo que nos permite entender el eurocentrismo a la hora de reconstruir la historia y el devenir de la antropología. También trae al centro de la escena lo que venimos desarrollando, las relaciones desiguales de poder que hacen que algunas antropologías se impongan como *centrales*, y otras aparezcan como *alternativas, diversas o periféricas*.

Los autores remarcan la paradoja según la cual una disciplina que tiene como objeto la diversidad tiene un proyecto científico que ha sido el de la uniformidad. Por ello en su propuesta de las antropologías del mundo argumentan que la diversidad en la producción del conocimiento es central, por una cuestión de quehacer profesional y porque la diversidad es lo que permitirá mayor creatividad a la hora de construir teoría explicativa disciplinar.

La noción de *sistema-mundo* también permite entender ese fenómeno, en la medida en que devela las relaciones de poder producto de la expansión del capitalismo eurocéntrico que se replican hacia el interior de las ciencias sociales y de la academia. Las nociones de antropologías del Sur y antropologías periféricas por ejemplo, ponen de manifiesto esa desigualdad a partir del argumento geopolítico.

Como contrapropuesta a la estrechez histórica y de *locus* de enunciación<sup>3</sup> que pone al descubierto los problemas de abordar a la antropología como única y universal, las antropologías del mundo proponen la *diversidad*. Este neologismo permite comprender a la antropología como un universal y a la vez como una multiplicidad (Lins Ribeiro y Escobar, 2008).

Dicho todo esto, y considerando entonces que los sentidos, maneras de ser, hacer y habitar las antropologías son heterogéneas y desiguales, y responden a historicidades localizadas, nos preguntamos por la relevancia de la GSAP -paradójicamente en el seno de WCAA-. No solamente en función de la representatividad o no que puedan tener sus resultados, sino sobre todo en función de las preguntas que se formulan, en base a que definiciones sobre la disciplina se realizan, y más aún, las preguntas que no se hacen. Los resultados entonces, como cualquier resultado, dependen de cómo se los interprete, pero en este caso no podemos dejar de resaltar la violencia epistémica que supone establecer unos criterios universales para pensarnos como disciplina.

Por todo lo antedicho, y considerando que el objetivo de este dossier es compartir “datos” sobre las antropologías en el mundo, voy a compartir en los siguientes apartados, información sobre las antropologías hechas en la Argentina, elaborados desde Argentina para Argentina, que me servirán de contexto para referirme a los datos arrojados por la GSAP para ese país.

## La/s antropología/s que se hacen en la Argentina

Siguiendo el informe sobre la enseñanza de la antropología social y el contexto de las ciencias antropológicas para Argentina coordinado en 2007 por el fallecido Leopoldo Bartolomé, podemos decir que en Argentina, los programas de grado en antropología toman entre 5 y 6 años e implican la escritura de una tesis o tesina. Los posgrados se dividen mayormente en maestrías (2 años más una tesis) y doctorados (4 años más una tesis). Por lo que la formación en total toma alrededor de 13 años.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Mignolo habla de geopolítica del conocimiento para destacar la noción según la cual el *locus* de enunciación de las disciplinas está geopolíticamente marcado (Ribeiro y Escobar, 2008).

En los últimos 10 años la antropología como programa de grado en el país tuvo un crecimiento importante con la creación de carreras nuevas, siempre en Universidades Nacionales, públicas, gratuitas y laicas. Antropología se dicta en 11 Universidades Nacionales en todo el país. 2 de ellas emiten títulos intermedios al finalizar el 3º año de estudios. El lapso temporal entre la primera carrera y la última es importante, ya que la primera se creó en 1958 y la más nueva en 2016.

Las titulaciones varían en función de los programas, pero los más comunes son licenciadxs, profesorxs y sus orientaciones (social, sociocultural, arqueológica o biológica)<sup>4</sup>. La formación tanto de grado como posgrado en su mayoría está orientada a la investigación básica. Muy pocas instituciones ofrecen formación orientada a lo que se conoce como “gestión”, que puede ser llamada también “antropología aplicada” o “antropología para/en la gestión”.

Bartolomé caracteriza a la antropología argentina como intradisciplinaria. Con ello refiere a “un campo académico definido por una unidad internamente diversa y reconocida como tal por sus cultores. En la Argentina, y pese a su origen común, ya desde la identificación de asignaturas en “Antropología” y “Arqueología” se establecían algunas diferencias internas que respondían a especialidades que se institucionalizaron con la creación de los Institutos de investigación, y de las primeras licenciaturas. Cabe señalar, sin embargo, que esta intradisciplina, reconocida en su diversidad como “antropológica”, difiere de los “four fields” de los EE.UU. (arqueológica, cultural, biológica y lingüística), ya que en la Argentina, el contenido de la intradisciplina varía de una a otra localización.” (p. 9)

La antropología como carrera/programa de grado en las Universidades más antiguas de Argentina tiene su origen en los Museos de Ciencias Naturales o Etnográficos, que la preexisten, como resultado de la articulación entre Antropología Física, Arqueología y Etnología. La orientación social o sociocultural es introducida con posterioridad, en los 60-70, y más afianzadamente luego de la última dictadura militar, en 1983/84.

Hacia su interior, el campo de la antropología si bien puede tener similitudes, también tiene diferencias marcadas en función de la trayectoria que haya seguido cada plan o programa en cada Universidad. Esto responde no solamente a las tradiciones que se afianzaron en cada establecimiento antropológico, sino también a los contextos en que éstos se desenvuelven/insertan.

La antropología social particularmente se ofrece en 4 modalidades, “a) como carrera autónoma desde el nivel de grado; b) como orientación antropológica en el nivel de grado; c) como postgrado autónomo; d) como orientación antropológica en el nivel de postgrado” (p. 11). A diferencia de lo que sucede en países de la región (y otras partes del mundo) la habilitación profesional, o sea, la posibilidad de ser reconocido como antropologx y trabajar como tal en cualquier ámbito, se obtiene con el título de grado. Aunque siguiendo tendencias que responden al sistema mundo académico, la formación de posgrado es cada vez más un requisito insoslayable, sobre todo en el sistema científico y universitario.

## Las encuestas

### Perfiles profesionales para la antropología en la Argentina

La 2º encuesta sobre perfiles profesionales-2016 fue una iniciativa del Consejo Directivo del CGA con el objetivo de mapear y explorar los nichos donde se practica/ba la antropología en Argentina, sus puntos de convergencia y divergencia, en el marco del contexto local.

4 Para mayor información sobre la formación de grado y posgrado en antropología en la Argentina ver: Guber y Ferrero, 2020: “Antropologías hechas en la Argentina”, Volumen I, Introducción: [https://www.asociacionlatinoamericanadeantropologia.net/images/AntropologiasHechasEn/ANT\\_ARGENTINA\\_VO-LUMEN\\_1\\_FINAL\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.asociacionlatinoamericanadeantropologia.net/images/AntropologiasHechasEn/ANT_ARGENTINA_VO-LUMEN_1_FINAL_WEB.pdf)

La encuesta respondió a un interés del CGA, en el marco de una iniciativa histórica de la asociación por conocer el perfil de sus asociadxs. No se trató de una muestra probabilística –la encuesta fue respondida por 217 profesionales- aunque consideramos que los resultados aportan información significativa sobre los ámbitos y campos particulares donde en ese momento se desempeñaban lxs profesionales de la antropología. La encuesta fue distribuida desde el CGA a una lista de antropologxs con la que la Asociación contaba, la mayoría de ellxs socios actuales o históricos de la misma.

Como primer paso, vemos que tal como decía Bartolomé en 2007, la antropología en el país es intradisciplinaria; nuestros encuestados identificaron a la antropología con la antropología social o sociocultural, con la arqueología y con la antropología biológica<sup>5</sup>. O más bien, la antropología social o sociocultural es tan una orientación dentro de la disciplina, como la arqueología<sup>6</sup> o la antropología biológica. Y como en algún momento supo serlo el folclore.

Como era de esperarse, casi  $\frac{3}{4}$  partes de lxs entrevistadxs son mujeres, una constante en la disciplina. La mayoría de lxs encuestados se ubican en la provincia de Buenos Aires y lo que se denomina Área Metropolitana de Buenos Aires, que incluye la Capital Federal y el Conurbano Bonaerense. Si consideramos que allí se encuentran 4 de las 11 Universidades con carreras de grado en antropología del país -entre ellas las dos más antiguas y con mayor trayectoria y matrícula- y 5 de las 8 instituciones que ofrecen programas de posgrados en la disciplina esto no llama la atención. En consonancia con eso, si miramos las pertenencias institucionales de quienes producen antropología (en formato tradicional, me refiero a artículos, papers, etc.) vamos a ver que hay un marcado declive en el país, que termina en el Río de la Plata (Guber y Ferrero, 2020).

Respecto de las titulaciones, considerando que los títulos comunes a casi todos los programas de grado son el de Licenciadxs y el de Profesorxs, no llama la atención que entre ambos sumen más del 90% de los encuestados. Esto también se explica por los alcances de la encuesta, ya que como veremos más abajo, gran parte de la población objeto es egresada de la Universidad de Buenos Aires, que otorga ambos títulos. Las Incumbencias Profesionales<sup>7</sup> para ambos títulos se solapan, por lo menos para esa Universidad<sup>8</sup>, aunque en organismos públicos no suele estar incluido en el nomenclador oficial el título de profesxr, situación que se sortea con gestiones puntuales de lxs interesadxs y en las que mayormente interviene el CGA.

El mapeo de las instituciones otorgantes de los títulos de lxs encuestadxs responde a dos cosas, por un lado lo que decíamos arriba sobre el declive hacia el Río de la Plata, al centralismo propio/histórico de la disciplina en el país, y por el otro, aunque en menor grado, al alcance del CGA como institución convocante. O sea, si bien la asociación tiene como objetivo ser federal e interpelar a lxs colegas de todo el país, en tiempos en los que la virtualidad no era moneda corriente como en la actualidad producto de la pandemia por COVID-19, ese desafío era complejo de lograr. A su vez, la multiplicación de carreras de grado y/o posgrado en antropología en diferentes puntos del país, fueron configurando unas situaciones, demandas y discusiones locales y localizadas, que se fueron en algunos casos consolidando en colectivos provinciales; o en distancias difíciles de sortear desde un CGA con pretensiones nacionales.

Como decíamos más arriba, la necesidad de cada vez mayor formación para mantener los criterios del sistema mundo académico, nos devuelve que casi el 74% de los encuestados eligen realizar un posgrado. La mayoría de ellos directamente realiza el doctorado sin pasar por maestría primero. Esto tiene que ver con las características de la oferta de grado, que habilita ese tipo de tránsito académico. Ello nos deja con un 26% que no contesta o no realiza estudios de posgrado. En este último grupo ubicamos al 40% de los profesores

5 También a la antropología forense, aunque no aparece representada en esta encuesta.

6 Esta es una discusión recurrente, sobre todo en programas de formación que se dividen en orientaciones, pero que no revisten programas autónomos. Hasta donde son parte de una misma disciplina y hasta donde son dos disciplinas autónomas.

7 El Ministerio de Cultura y Educación de la República Argentina aprobó por Resolución N° 1584/93, resultado de gestiones del CGA las Incumbencias Profesionales para la antropología.

8 Esto está en proceso de modificarse en la UBA.

y el 20% de los profesorxs y licenciadxs, más la mitad de los técnicos en antropología. Esxs profesorxs muy probablemente estén dictando clases en el nivel medio o secundario, donde la formación de posgrado no es un requisito destacado en el nomenclador, como lo son otro tipo de pos títulos. Las tecnicaturas por su parte no son titulaciones que habiliten la posibilidad de acceder a un posgrado, ya que no cuentan con los 4 años de formación mínimos necesarios.

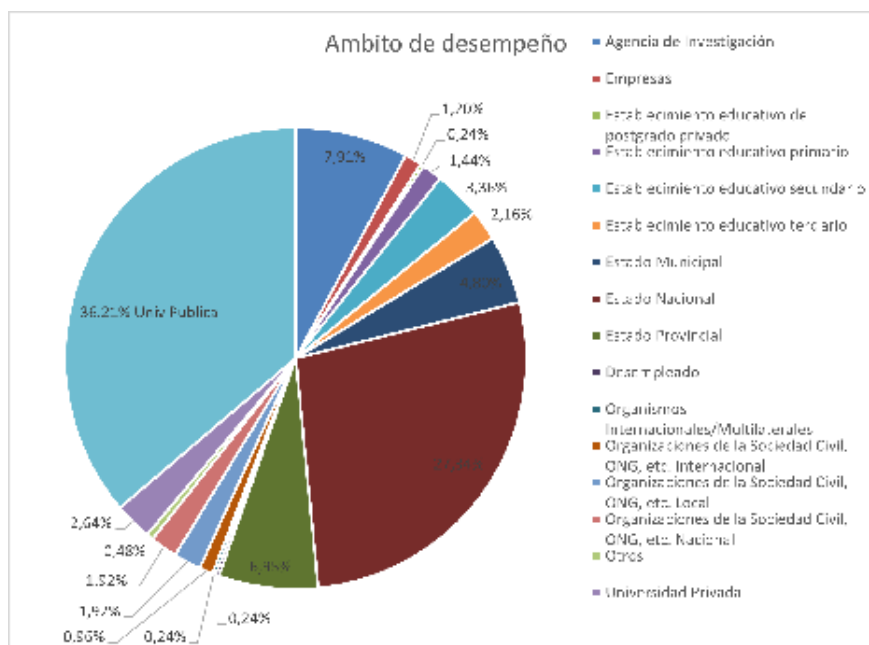
### ¿Dónde trabajan esxs antropologxs?

El pluriempleo es la característica sobresaliente, 2/3 partes de los encuestados declara tener más de un trabajo. Y una cuarta parte declara 3 ámbitos de desempeño profesional. Para aquellos que declaran un solo ámbito de inserción laboral, no debemos confundirlo con una única tarea desarrollada en ese ámbito, ya que según las encuestas en esos espacios se combinan la investigación básica con la aplicada, la docencia, extensión, capacitación, gestión, etc.

En cuanto al espacio/ámbito de desempeño profesional de la antropología, aparecen como más significativos el Estado Nacional, la Universidad Pública y en tercer lugar las Agencias de Investigación. Si consideramos que los 3 espacios se pueden subsumir en la categoría Estado Nacional, nos da como resultado que el 70% de los empleos ocupados por antropólogos se encuentran en la órbita del Estado Nacional. Si a eso le sumamos a los estados provinciales, la cifra se eleva a un 77% aproximadamente.

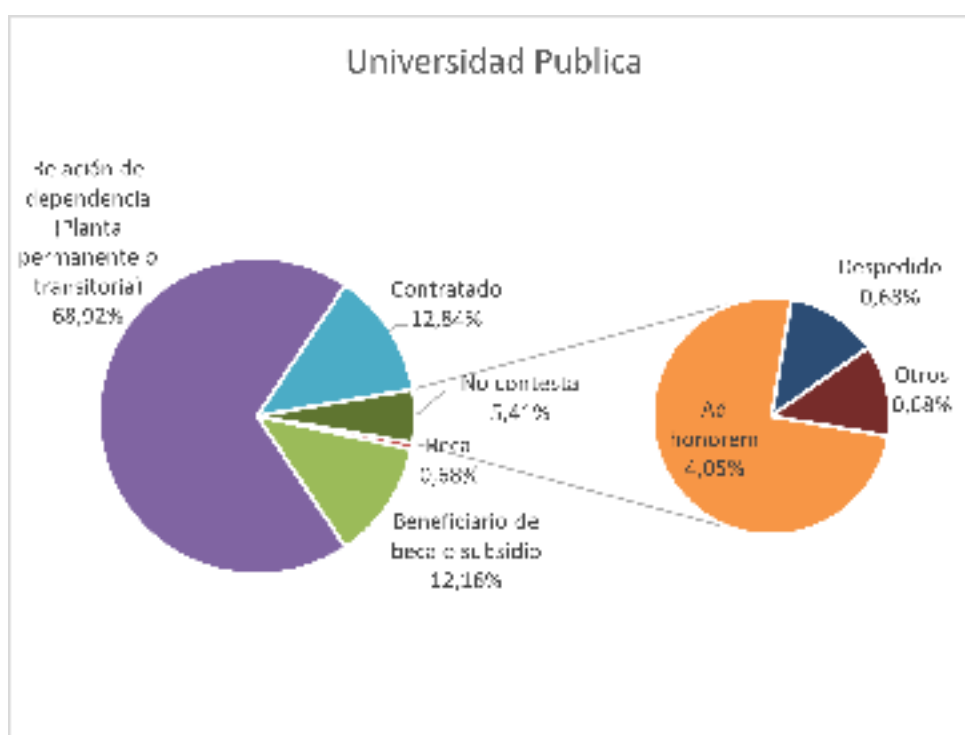
Una posible explicación para esto se puede encontrar en el crecimiento que tuvo el Estado Nacional en los últimos 10/12 años, y el importante aumento en los presupuestos universitarios y dedicados a la investigación en esos mismos años (Perelman, 2015). Más allá de eso, podemos decir que aunque muchas veces la antropología se hace *en contra* del Estado, esta no sería posible sin ese mismo Estado.

Las Organizaciones No Gubernamentales (ONG) también son un nicho donde se reproduce la labor antropológica, incluso hay quienes hablan de oenegización de la antropología y del discurso antropológico.



Sin embargo vemos que, a pesar de ser el mayor empleador, el Estado Nacional, la Universidad Pública y las Agencias de Investigación crean/ofrecen trabajo precario en un alto porcentaje. La Universidad Pública es la que cuenta con un mayor porcentaje (casi 70%) de trabajo registrado. En cambio en las Agencias de Investigación y el Estado Nacional solo un 45% y un 52% respectivamente lo es.





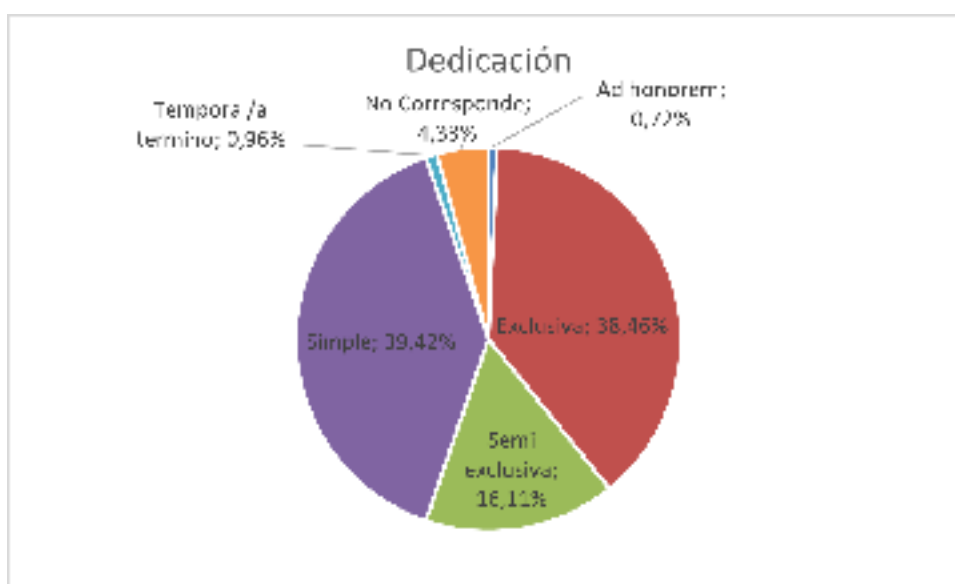
Incluyendo todos los ámbitos y viendo el gráfico referido a las remuneraciones, un poco más de la mitad de las inserciones laborales cuenta con todos los derechos y garantías de un trabajo estable. El otro 45% puede considerarse trabajo precario o inestable.

Otra variable a tener en cuenta a la hora de evaluar el tipo de trabajo creado por las Instituciones, es su dedicación (exclusiva, parcial, simple<sup>9</sup>). En la Universidad Pública las dedicaciones simples duplican a las exclusivas. Esto produce lo que se conoce como “profesor taxi”, o sea, un docente que debe repartir su tiempo en más de una institución educativa, y por lo tanto el tiempo dedicado a la investigación o la preparación de clases, por ejemplo, disminuye o llega a ser inexistente, a no ser que se realice a costa del tiempo personal.

En las Agencias de investigación por el contrario, las dedicaciones exclusivas priman. Lo mismo sucede con otras agencias del Estado Nacional.

Si sacamos un promedio, veremos que sobre la totalidad de los ámbitos profesionales disciplinares, solo alrededor de un 40% tiene dedicación exclusiva, sumado a un 17% de dedicación semi exclusiva, deja a casi la mitad con una dedicación simple.

De todos modos es importante poner de relieve que el trabajo ad honorem es casi inexistente, a diferencia de lo que sucedía hace no muchos años, en la década de los ‘90, inicios de los 2000, cuando la Universidad Pública se sostenía en base al trabajo ad honorem de sus graduadxs.



En concordancia con lo que venimos diciendo, nos vamos a encontrar con que los cargos concursados, que son aquellos que aseguran continuidad y estabilidad laboral, son proporcionalmente solo 1/3 de los cargos totales. Y si focalizamos en el Estado Nacional como empleador, el porcentaje se reduce a un 25%.

En cambio en la Universidad Pública este porcentaje crece hasta un 43%. Esto es también resultado de una política de estado llevada adelante durante los gobiernos conocidos como “kirchneristas<sup>10</sup>” que jerarquizaron la ciencia, la tecnología y la Universidad a partir de aumentar la inversión pública allí (Perelman, 2015).

Ahora bien, aunque lxs antropologxs desarrollen sus trabajos en espacios a los que fueron convocados en tanto tales, o sea, en tanto antropólox, no siempre esa expertise es reconocida en la práctica. Entonces mientras casi el 85%<sup>11</sup> de lxs encuestadxs refiere que su título en ciencias antropológicas es formalmente reconocido<sup>12</sup>, y este porcentaje en dependencias del Estado Nacional y la Universidad Pública es inclusive

9 Una dedicación exclusiva supone 40 hs semanales de trabajo, una semiexclusiva 20 y una simple, 10.

10 Gobiernos de Néstor Kirchner y Cristina Fernández. Entre 2005 y 2015 aproximadamente.

11 Sin embargo cuando desagregamos según ámbito de desempeño laboral, vamos a encontrar con que en establecimientos educativos primarios, secundarios y terciarios, así como en el estado provincial y municipal y en ONG's, el reconocimiento formal se reduce a un rango que va desde un 55 a un 75%.

12 Refiere a si la titulación es condición para concursar o acceder a un cargo (trabajo).

mayor, paradójicamente cuando preguntamos por el reconocimiento del título en la práctica profesional<sup>13</sup>, los porcentajes bajan. El título de antropólogo es reconocido en la práctica solo en un 61%, en oposición al casi 85% del reconocimiento formal.

Y cuando aislamos al Estado Nacional y la Universidad pública como espacios de desarrollo profesional, el reconocimiento en la práctica también disminuye. En el Estado Nacional disminuye de un 84 a un 62%. En la universidad pública, de un 91% a un 62%. Aquí resuenan los comentarios sobre el desconocimiento acerca de lo que la antropología es o lxs antropologxs hacen como profesionales, más allá del estereotipo de la vinculación con lo exótico.

### ¿En qué áreas trabajan lxs antropologxs?

Además de desempeñarse como docentes, lxs antropologxs establecen que sus áreas de interés son: educación, patrimonio, salud, ciencia y técnica, cultura, desarrollo social, derechos humanos, medio ambiente, pueblos originarios, proyectos de desarrollo, identidades, folklore y culturas populares, niñez y adolescencia, economía social, género, vivienda social, peritajes judiciales, mediaciones comunitarias, desarrollo rural, trabajo y conflictividad social, antropología urbana, turismo, deporte, fuerzas de seguridad, registro arqueológico, forense, etc.

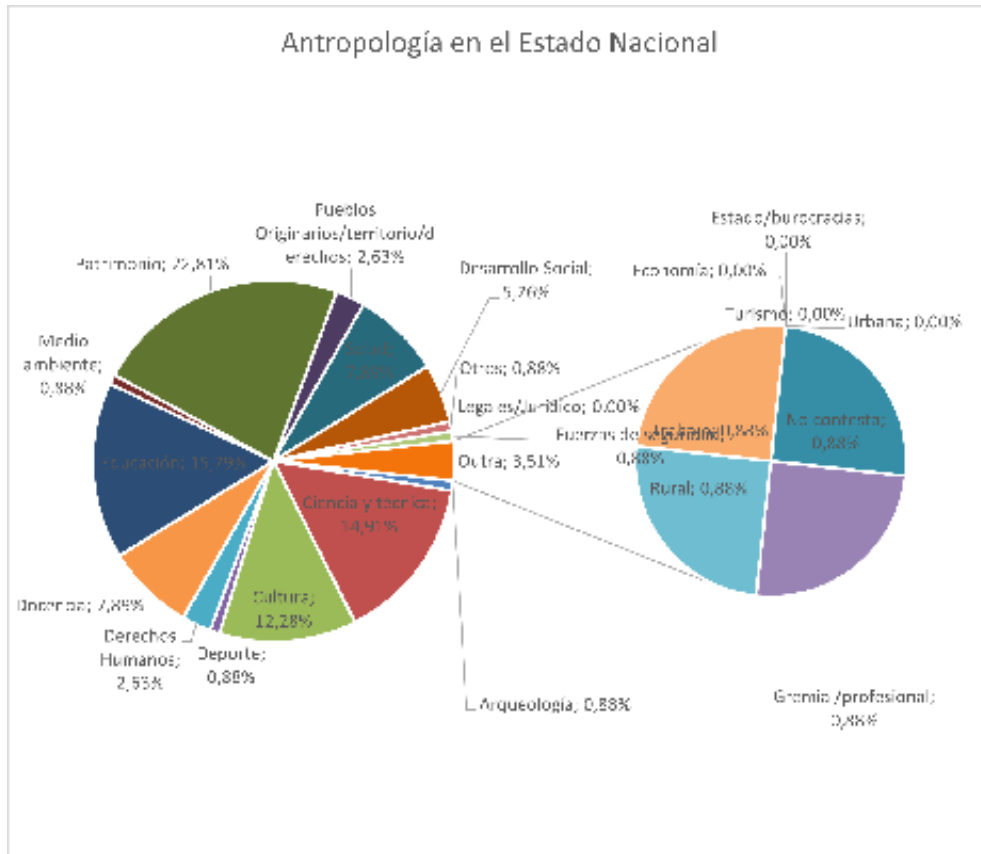
Estas áreas de desarrollo profesional son más o menos significativas en función de procesos y necesidades locales; por lo que es difícil aventurar una jerarquización a nivel nacional. Pero lo que sí podemos decir, es que eso relativiza la noción que liga a la antropología con lo exótico lejano en el tiempo y el espacio<sup>14</sup>.



<sup>13</sup> Refiere a si en la práctica profesional los conocimientos en antropología son reconocidos como específicos y si gravitan como tales en el desempeño laboral.

<sup>14</sup> Claro que esto se puede matizar si pensamos que lo exótico o el exotismo está en la mirada o perspectiva, o sea, en la misma antropología. Entonces no depende de cual sea el referente empírico, sino de cómo se lo aborde.

En áreas del Estado Nacional, que podríamos entenderlas como divisiones ministeriales, por su parte nos vamos a encontrar con que los espacios donde mayormente se desarrolla profesionalmente la antropología son: patrimonio, educación, ciencia y técnica, cultura, salud y docencia, desarrollo social, derechos humanos, pueblos originarios, deporte, medio ambiente y arqueología.



La docencia por su parte parece tener cierta autonomía con respecto al resto de las áreas o campos disciplinares, siendo la principal inserción laboral para lxs antropologxs. De la totalidad de los trabajos en docencia (en todos los niveles, desde el primario hasta posgrado) un 62% se dedica exclusivamente a ello. Vale aclarar que dentro de ese 62% tenemos a quienes cuentan con el privilegio de tener una dedicación exclusiva, lo que les permite además de dar clases, dedicarse a la investigación y la extensión, y también quienes solo cuentan con dedicaciones simples (en el caso de la universidad) o con “horas” en instituciones del nivel medio y/o terciario, lo que lleva a la sobrecarga de horas docentes para poder sobrevivir, en un país donde la docencia no está jerarquizada, por ende está mal remunerada.

El pluriempleo es otra cualidad excluyente. La mayoría de lxs antropologxs manifiesta desempeñarse en 2 y hasta 3 ámbitos laborales diferentes. Esto cruzado con la precariedad de algunos de ellos, más las dedicaciones simples de la mayoría de las asignaciones docentes, nos puede estar hablando de grandes diferencias hacia el interior del colectivo disciplinar en Argentina.

Como veremos en el siguiente apartado, este escenario que puede resultar poco prometedor por lo fragmentario, precario y/o insuficiente, en comparación con lo que sucedió a continuación con el cambio de signo político del gobierno nacional, se transformó en un pasado deseable al que querer volver.

## GSAP en Argentina

La encuesta GSAP fue respondida por 3,836 personas en todo el mundo que se autoidentifican como antropologxs. 1011 nacieron en EEUU, de ellos 985 viven allí. 1/3 del total de los respondentes de GSAP se formaron en EEUU. 100 manifiestan haber nacido en Argentina y 77 continúan viviendo en ese país.

En 2018, año de aplicación de la encuesta, Argentina estaba viviendo un retroceso en la inversión en ciencia, técnica e investigación, producto de sendos recortes del gobierno neoliberal encabezado por Mauricio Macri. Esto tuvo un impacto directo en la antropología local, lxs antropologxs, la posibilidad de hacer investigación y/o insertarse laboralmente.

Como veíamos en la encuesta anterior, el principal agente de fomento de la ciencia y técnica en el país es el Estado Nacional. En los últimos 3 años (previos a 2018) los recortes y reasignaciones presupuestarias en el área golpearon de pleno al sistema científico y universitario del país.

En 2013 había sido lanzado el Plan *Argentina Innovadora 2020* por la entonces presidenta Cristina Fernández y su ministro de Ciencia. El Plan, que nunca fue dado de baja, establecía que a finales de 2017 debían ingresar 1150 investigadores a la Carrera de Investigador-CIC del CONICET<sup>15</sup>. Sin embargo, fueron sólo 600. Las principales damnificadas fueron las ciencias básicas: en el caso de ciencias sociales y humanidades sólo entraron 75 investigadores a CIC. En 2018 fueron recortados a la mitad los subsidios a la investigación y se restringieron al ingreso a la carrera del CONICET a 300 personas.

El presupuesto nacional aprobado para 2018 redujo la inversión en ciencia y tecnología, pasando del 1.52% del total nacional en el año 2015 al 1.22%, marcando así una profundización del recorte realizado en el año 2016, donde ya había descendido al 1.4%. El peso de la ciencia en la inversión del Estado Nacional se redujo más de un 20% en menos de dos años.

A través de una carta pública, tres prestigiosos investigadores del CONICET<sup>16</sup>, denunciaron la política de “ciencia cero” que llevaba adelante el gobierno nacional. En la carta denunciaban:

“En 2018, no habrá ninguna incorporación de científicas/os al CONICET. Las convocatorias a ingresos al CONICET suelen hacerse cada fin de año, pero en 2017 no hubo llamado. El 19 de abril pasado se abrió la esperada convocatoria, cuyo resultado se conocerá en abril de 2019, cuando comenzará el lento proceso de ingreso formal. En 2018 no habrá, pues, nuevos ingresos a la Carrera de Investigación del CONICET.”

También denuncian la “Disminución del número de becas doctorales, el congelamiento salarial y el retraso y reducción de los fondos para investigación”, denunciaban allí mismo que el presidente del CONICET “tras haber declarado la “inviabilidad” del organismo [...] impuso un plan de ajuste que ha sido rechazado por la comunidad científica en su conjunto, acompañada por gran parte de la sociedad”.

Previo a los recortes en Ciencia y Tecnología y como estrategia para lograr acompañamiento de la opinión pública, desde las redes sociales se lanzó una campaña de desprestigio dirigida a los investigadores, especialmente a aquellos de las ciencias sociales y humanas.

Particularmente una colega antropóloga sufrió una serie de agresiones y continuas formas de hostigamiento que se hicieron públicas en distintos medios de comunicación y redes sociales, las cuales apuntaban a denigrar su figura en tanto trabajadora de la ciencia y de la universidad pública, así como sus temas de investigación. A través de esos mecanismos no sólo se desprestigiaba su labor, su condición de trabajadora, su línea de investigación, sino centralmente, el hecho de ser investigadora del CONICET. En este sentido, se ponían en duda la institución donde desempeñaba sus funciones y las condiciones bajo las cuales había ingresado a la carrera CIC.

<sup>15</sup> Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas.

<sup>16</sup> Alberto Kornblihtt, Mario Pecheny y Guillermo Neiman. <https://www.tiempoar.com.ar/nota/se-postulan-al-directorio-del-conicet-y-denuncian-la-politica-de-ciencia-cero>

Los ataques si bien estaban dirigidos a personas particulares, tenían como objetivo desprestigiar a la investidura del CONICET ya que ponían en duda sus procesos de evaluación, la ética de la institución, las líneas temáticas que desarrolla, así como la pertinencia y el compromiso de las investigaciones que se realizan dentro de la misma.

La situación de las Universidades Nacionales no era mucho mejor: un Informe de la Federación Nacional de Docentes Universitarios -CONADU señalaba que el retroceso del porcentaje del PBI destinado a las universidades públicas —que ya en 2016 había descendido del 0,87% al 0,81%, y llegó en 2017 al 0,77%— implicaba un ajuste real del -11% con respecto al año 2015.

Además de la reducción presupuestaria en abril de 2018 el Ministerio de Educación confirmó un recorte de 3% del presupuesto del sector y el congelamiento de las obras de infraestructura. Ello respondía a “re adjudicaciones de fondos” que estaba realizando el Poder Ejecutivo respecto del presupuesto votado por el Congreso de la Nación.

Las Universidades Nacionales creadas durante los gobiernos anteriores<sup>17</sup> también sufrieron el ataque de los medios masivos de comunicación, quienes cuestionaron su relevancia, su calidad académica e incluso la necesidad de la existencia de la formación superior. La entonces gobernadora de la provincia de Buenos Aires<sup>18</sup>, la provincia más grande y con mayor población del país declaró: “¿Es de equidad que durante años hayamos poblado la Provincia de Buenos Aires de universidades públicas cuando todos los que estamos acá<sup>19</sup> sabemos que nadie que nace en la pobreza en la Argentina hoy llega a la universidad?”<sup>20</sup>.

O sea, el contexto de expansión que marcó la encuesta de 2016, se había transformado en uno de retracción para 2018, año de la GSAP.

De la GSAP, el CGA recibió información de 29 respondientes, quienes marcaron como asociación de pertenencia al CGA. Con esa información muy escueta, se elaboraron algunos datos.

Una primera cuestión a destacar es que de 100 argentinos que contestaron el formulario de GSAP, solo 29 manifestaron pertenecer a CGA. Aunque muy probablemente tomaron conocimiento sobre el mismo a partir de la difusión que le dio esa Asociación, prefirieron no identificarse con ella. Eso sólo algo nos dice sobre la dispersión de lxs antropólogxs en Argentina, en el contexto de que arriba describíamos como antropologías periféricas. A veces aparece como “más beneficioso” pertenecer a una asociación que nuclea antropologxs noratlánticos que al CGA por ejemplo.

La relación entre mujeres y varones es de 3 a 1; la totalidad de los varones que contestaron tienen entre 30 y 50 años, en cambio las mujeres están representadas en todas las franjas etarias. Todos nacieron en el país y de los que participaron en la encuesta casi 1/3 vive fuera del país. Es temerario asegurar que 1/3 de lxs antropologxs graduados en el país se encuentran en el exterior. Es más probable que quienes viven en el exterior estuvieran sobrerrepresentados en las respuestas.

En cuanto a los estudios de grado y posgrado, excepto un porcentaje pequeño, la mayoría realizó grado y posgrado en Argentina. Los países que aparecen como destinos de estudio por fuera de Argentina son Brasil, España, Reino Unido, Estados Unidos y Japón (este último destino es muy menor en comparación con los anteriores).

Es interesante que solo 1/4 de los posgrados sean en disciplinas que no son la antropología. Es mucho más común encontrarnos con profesionales de otras disciplinas que realizan sus posgrados en antropología, que el camino inverso.

17 Gobiernos de Néstor Kirchner y Cristina Fernández (2005-2015).

18 María Eugenia Vidal, del mismo partido de derecha que el entonces presidente, Mauricio Macri.

19 Se refería a una reunión del Rotary Club.

20 De esa manera desprestigia y deslegitima el proyecto de las *Universidades del Bicentenario*, que irrumpen en el escenario de la educación superior en Argentina entre 2007 y 2015 con un mandato específico: “inclusión con calidad”. Son Universidades emplazadas en territorios postergados, cuya población es mayormente primera generación de estudiantes universitarios.

Con respecto a las áreas de expertise, si bien la mayor concentración está en etnicidad e identidad social, hay que señalar que no se puede tomar esto como un dato, dado el bajo número de respondentes y sobre todo comparando esto con los datos de la encuesta de 2016.

Respecto de la categoría “experticia por país” Argentina aparece en 1º lugar claramente, y eso tiene que ver con las características propias de las antropologías del Sur, que hacemos antropología “en casa”. En segundo lugar aparecen países latinoamericanos, esto probablemente en virtud de la realización de posgrados o estancias en esos países, o producto del intercambio regional/continental que mantenemos entre nuestras antropologías.

Como ya se adelantó, el principal empleador de antropólogos en Argentina es el Estado en sus diversas formas e instancias, incluidas Universidades Públicas, Agencias de Investigación, divisiones administrativas, etc. Y el hecho que aparezcan más registros que respondentes habla del multiempleo, característico de nuestra profesión en el país según vimos en la 2ª encuesta de perfiles profesionales.

Sobre el tipo de empleo, el hecho que casi el 70% tenga empleo *full time* permanente da cuenta de que entre los respondentes no hay graduados recientes o colegas en sus primeros años de desempeño profesional. También da cuenta de la apertura de nuevos cargos y la regularización de muchos otros que hubo durante el gobierno precedente, situación que se empezó a deteriorar en el momento de la realización de la encuesta.

Casi el 80% manifiesta estar mal pagados o no saber si lo está o no. Dos cuestiones para decir allí, la mayoría de los antropólogos se desempeña como docentes en diferentes niveles, y la docencia en todos sus niveles está mal paga en Argentina, por lo que muy probablemente una cosa vaya de la mano con la otra. Por otro lado, en la medida en que no somos una profesión con ley de ejercicio profesional, no tenemos estandarizado nuestros ingresos, y muchas veces dependemos de negociaciones paritarias de otras profesiones, o de recomendaciones de colegas (en el caso de consultorías, peritajes por ejemplo) para ponerle un precio a nuestro trabajo profesional.

Finalmente, el castellano/español es el idioma mayoritario de publicación, seguido del inglés y el portugués. El castellano y el portugués responden a nuestra inserción continental, y el inglés a las reglas actuales del sistema mundo universitario/académico/editorial que impone el inglés como lengua ponderada por sobre cualquier otra.

## Conclusiones

En este artículo, más que llegar a conclusiones que puedan cerrar una discusión o conversación, se presentan algunos escenarios que pretenden argumentar las razones por las que una encuesta a nivel global, elaborada con criterios únicos es, en varios sentidos, cuestionable.

En las primeras secciones de este artículo se discutió la viabilidad misma de un proyecto de las dimensiones de la GSAP, en función de la pretensión de universalidad del mismo, en concordancia con el proyecto político-académico de las antropologías centrales. Esa pretensión de universalidad invisibiliza no solo las relaciones de hegemonía-subalternidad entre las antropologías del mundo, sino los contextos de producción y desarrollo de cada una de ellas, y hacia el interior de las mismas. Sin reflexionar sobre el posicionamiento geopolítico de nuestras antropologías, es difícil dar cuenta de datos producidos desde una posición supuestamente global, que se imagina neutral/obvia.

Los datos de la GSAP para el caso argentino (y esto aplica a todos los casos) se pueden interpretar solamente a la luz de la historia de la/s antropología/s argentina/s, de su actualidad, de su inserción en el marco de la nación, de su posición geopolítica y de su condición de antropología del Sur y periférica. Parte de ese marco lo da la encuesta previa de 2016, que respondía a unos intereses locales y estaba diseñada desde esos intereses, a partir del conocimiento del campo local, de allí su incorporación en este trabajo.

Volviendo a la propuesta de las antropologías del mundo, cabe preguntarse hasta qué punto es posible o incluso deseable producir datos “universales”, hasta donde esas propuestas no aplanan/invisibilizan las relaciones de poder entre las antropologías y en ese mismo movimiento, refuerzan la hegemonía claramente noratlántica.

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# Anthropology in Hong Kong According to the GSAP: A Celebration of Public Outreach

*Gordon Mathews*

The Hong Kong Anthropological Society, China

## **Abstract**

This paper examines what the Global Survey of Anthropological Practice reveals about anthropology as practiced in Hong Kong, and notes that the statistical data offered by Hong Kong Anthropological Association members does not reflect professional anthropology in the city. This is because the Hong Kong Anthropological Society is a non-professional association dedicated to bringing anthropological knowledge to a larger public, with an astonishing diversity of members from all walks of life. The paper suggests that this motley society, in its implicit repudiation of anthropological professionalism, may offer a modest lesson in how, even in a society in which the number of anthropologists is too tiny to create a viable professional organization, bringing anthropology to the public may nonetheless be eminently achievable.

**Keywords:** Global Survey of Anthropological Practice, Hong Kong Anthropological Society, public outreach, Hong Kong, anthropological professionalism.

# Antropologia em Hong Kong de acordo com o GSAP: Uma celebração de atuação pública

## Resumo

Este artigo examina o que a *Pesquisa Global de Práticas Antropológicas* revela sobre a antropologia praticada em Hong Kong e observa que os dados estatísticos oferecidos pelos membros da Associação Antropológica de Hong Kong não refletem a antropologia profissional na cidade. Isso ocorre porque a Sociedade Antropológica de Hong Kong é uma associação não profissional dedicada a levar o conhecimento antropológico a um público maior, com uma diversidade surpreendente de membros de todas as esferas da vida. O artigo sugere que essa sociedade heterogênea, em seu repúdio implícito ao profissionalismo antropológico, pode oferecer uma modesta lição de como, mesmo em uma sociedade em que o número de antropólogos é muito pequeno para criar uma organização profissional viável, trazer a antropologia ao público pode no entanto, ser absolutamente alcançável.

**Palavras-chave:** Pesquisa Global de Práticas Antropológicas, Sociedade Antropológica de Hong Kong, atuação pública, Hong Kong, profissionalismo antropológico.

# Anthropology in Hong Kong According to the GSAP: A Celebration of Public Outreach

*Gordon Mathews*

## **The GSAP and Hong Kong**

The Global Survey of Anthropological Practice has provided some fascinating data concerning anthropology in Hong Kong. There were 49 members of the Hong Kong Anthropological Society who took the survey, of remarkably diverse national origins. Respondents were born in 15 different societies in all, with 16 born in Hong Kong, and 4 in mainland China, but also 10 born in the US, 3 in the UK, 2 in Canada, 2 in Pakistan, and 2 in the Philippines; Brazil, Germany, and Japan were also represented, as were Taiwan, Albania, Australia, Spain, and Ireland. The countries in which respondents obtained their anthropological education, whether undergraduate or graduate, were also diverse: 10 in all, including not just Hong Kong (13 respondents) or the US (9 respondents), the UK (5 respondents), or mainland China (3 respondents) but also Switzerland, Taiwan, Italy, France, Ireland, and Spain. Only 21 respondents, well under half, were employed by universities, with many of the remainder working for international NGOs, consultancy companies, research institutes, government agencies, or were self-employed. Since in Hong Kong all research graduate students receive a salary from universities, this indicates a separation from universities by the majority of respondents. Probing further, the survey reveals that of 49 respondents to the survey, only 36 have degrees in anthropology at either graduate or undergraduate level; 11 say that they have no training in anthropology at any level and are thus anthropologists not in terms of objective qualifications but in terms of their own self-identification.

When I examine the GSAP survey results for Hong Kong, I cannot square the data with my own knowledge of anthropology as practiced in universities in Hong Kong. Until recently I have been chair of the only anthropology department in Hong Kong, with twelve members. There are also anthropologists working in other departments in most of Hong Kong's eight publicly-funded universities: some 25 university-based anthropologists in all. If I were to catalogue the situation of academic anthropologists in Hong Kong, I would provide a picture of precarious but comparatively well-paid employment under a Hong-Kong-wide university system that is extraordinarily competitive and always desperately trying to rise in university rankings—something at which the system is relatively successful, but at considerable human cost (see Bosco, 2017). I would also mention the National Security Law, implemented in 2020, which makes it potentially dangerous for anthropology teachers in Hong Kong to criticize the Chinese Communist Party, although we have not yet seen any anthropology teacher prosecuted for this. If I were also cataloguing the situation of anthropology graduate-degree holders who work for museums, as consultants, in NGOs, or as archaeologists in the commercial sector, I would add to the above portrayal a picture of anthropologists struggling to maintain their professional identities in a bureaucratic Hong Kong world that may have very different aims from theirs, to their frustration. With the GSAP data, however, I cannot fully make these analyses, for the people answering the survey seem widely variegated, united only by their self-definition as anthropologists.

I don't think that this makes the data from the GSAP survey invalid, however; the data of the survey seem accurate as a reflection of the Hong Kong Anthropological Society's members. The clearest way to understand the unusual GSAP data is to understand the unusual nature of the Hong Kong Anthropological Society.

## The Hong Kong Anthropological Society

Almost all anthropological associations in the world are made up primarily of professional anthropologists and their students: they are professional organizations.

The Hong Kong Anthropological Society is unusual among anthropological societies in the WCAA and in the world, in that it is not a professional organization but is designed to bring anthropological knowledge to a larger audience. The society has no dues or formal membership but rather an e-mail list of some 540, made up of anyone who wants to be on the list; monthly talks at the Hong Kong Museum of History, generally by university-based anthropologists from around the world, bring in audiences ranging from 30 to 140. Among the people who attend these talks (with whom one may become acquainted in large part through a self-paying dinner after the talks that all attendees at the talks are invited to, at least up until the emergence of covid-19), some are academic anthropologists and their students; some are anthropological degree holders at some level who work in Hong Kong government-funded-museums, or in NGOs, consultancies, or marketing; and many are people from all walks of life, including teachers, newspaper reporters, freelancers of all different sorts, lawyers, and civil servants, who have been consistently coming to talks of the Hong Kong Anthropological Society for years, and because of this, may identify themselves as anthropologists in the GSAP Survey. The majority of the attendees at talks are typically of Chinese ethnicity but are highly fluent in English. The Society has sometimes had talks in Cantonese, the native language of most Hong Kong residents. However, it has generally focused on English as the language of its lectures, emphasizing a diverse audience at the expense of not having many attendees from among less-educated Hongkongers who may speak little English. The diversity of respondents so apparent in the survey data, as well as the comparative under-representation of Hong Kong Chinese in the data, no doubt reflects this linguistic choice.

The Hong Kong Anthropological Society has evolved into this structure partly because of demographics. With the slowly growing number of academic anthropologists in Hong Kong over the years and their graduate students, there are simply not enough academic anthropologists to create the trappings of a professional organization. Well-attended monthly talks or conferences could not take place with this limited number of potential professional participants; in this environment, an anthropological society could survive only through public outreach. Indeed, from the founding of the Hong Kong Anthropological Society in 1978, the aim has been to present anthropology to a larger public. Hong Kong is a particularly suitable place to do this, because there is a large lay population of people, both locals and foreigners, who are well-educated and interested in a wide array of topics, including anthropological topics. For the past forty years, this is what the Hong Kong Anthropological Society has done, with a range of monthly speakers, from well-known luminaries in the field, such as Sidney Mintz, Ulf Hannerz, Danilyn Rutherford, and Michael Herzfeld, to graduate students presenting their ethnographic findings. These talks have long been held at the Hong Kong Museum of History free of charge, which has made the Hong Kong Anthropological Society's ongoing existence possible—without the Museum's and the Hong Kong Government's largesse, the Hong Kong Anthropological Society could not have existed. By the same token, there has been a small degree of political self-censorship: I could not invite a friend who is an advocate of Hong Kong localism to give a talk, for example, for fear of alienating the authorities who provide us with a free venue for talks.

The Hong Kong Anthropological Society has changed over the years. In the 1980s and 1990s, it always had an academic, from anthropology or a related field, as chair; it had formal dues and a yearly publication, *The Hong Kong Anthropologist*. In that era, it generally struggled to have a membership of 100 or 120 people. As Hong Kong academia became more and more professionalized in the 1990s and 2000s, the motivation for producing the journal diminished, since academics could gain no credit for publishing a journal for a general audience, and general audiences had little interest in reading academic anthropological publications. Eventually, after various twists and turns, *The Hong Kong Anthropologist* became a student publication,

and, in 2011, dues for the Hong Kong Anthropological Society were abolished, since the organization had no more need for money. Membership became defined simply by being on the e-mail list for notices about monthly talks, a number which swelled to 540, as earlier noted. Average talk attendance also went considerably up—average attendance per monthly talk is now 60, as opposed to some 30 a decade ago. The Society does continue to have an Executive Committee, meeting once every two months, consisting of a president (a layperson), a vice-president, (an academic), and 10-12 members, a mixture of professors, graduate students, and laypeople, whose single responsibility is planning upcoming talks for the Society (and who typically drink a great deal in the course of such planning; this is a social event as much as a professional obligation).

The Hong Kong Anthropological Society brings no professional credit to those involved in it; one earns no brownie points for tenure through involvement in its activities, and one gains little or nothing in credit in one's yearly activity reports for one's university. It seems likely that the only person in the history of the Hong Kong Anthropological Society who has gained professionally from its activities is me. I have been able to sit side by side with presidents of the American and Indian and Japanese Anthropological Associations at the WCAA meetings, getting to know them well, largely because of my presence at Hong Kong Anthropological Society Executive Committee Meetings over the years, who have chosen me as their representative to WCAA; I am now Deputy Chair of the World Council of Anthropological Associations, despite the perhaps dubious background of the anthropological society I represent. The members of the Hong Kong Anthropological Society Executive Committee over the years have included such diverse people as a former editor of *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine, a teacher of Latin correcting papal proclamations as reported in the local newspaper, a lawyer for Hong Kong strip joints called whenever a police raid is imminent, a somewhat likely but unproven CIA agent, a possible drug dealer, and a number of professional anthropologists. I have written several articles about world anthropology on the basis of my involvement in the Hong Kong Anthropological Society, but my key sense over the years of my involvement in the Society has not been how it has helped my career, although no doubt it has, but rather how much fun it has been to deal with a such a variety of really, really unusual people.

## Implications

The structure of the Hong Kong Anthropological Society, whereby anyone who wants to can join regardless of their background, has led the GSAP Survey to provide a picture of what anthropology is like in Hong Kong that is based on self-ascription rather than professional qualifications as an anthropologist. A question that this profile may suggest is this: Should the Hong Kong Anthropological Society even belong to the WCAA? After all, it now has no formal membership, and professional anthropologists make up only a small fraction of its informal membership. It is apparently not dedicated to increasing anthropological knowledge but rather to popularizing anthropological knowledge. In this sense, it may be unique in the World Council of Anthropological Associations, and perhaps, like a fish among fowl or an apple among oranges, it should not belong. My argument in the brief remainder of this paper is that, rather than expelling the Hong Kong Anthropological Society from its august ranks—which, in all honesty, no one has ever suggested except for me—the WCAA should consider the Hong Kong Anthropological Society as an exemplar and perhaps a harbinger of a flourishing future for the discipline.

Anthropology, reflecting the ongoing professionalization of the academic world in general, has become more professionally defined throughout much of the world, with anthropologists often considered to be only those who make a living from the discipline, and, ideally, those working at universities. Anthropologists employed by universities have in many societies been under increasing pressure to write for one another rather than for any larger public, in peer-reviewed journals and academic presses. Anthropologists in earlier eras, such as Ruth Benedict (1934) and Margaret Mead (1928), indeed wrote for the general public.

Today, because of the professionalization of anthropology, far fewer anthropologists (with the exception of the late David Graeber [2011]) can effectively do this. This turning away from any larger public is regrettable—if, for example, surgeons or engineers do not write intelligibly for a larger public, the public can still benefit from what they have discovered, through the surgeon’s medical operations or the engineer’s building projects. But if anthropologists do not write for a larger audience, then their findings may be buried in professional obscurity, and may never reach any larger public. Today, in an era when anthropologists no longer devote themselves to explications of “culture,” most people have no idea what anthropologists do and what the discipline consists of (see Mathews, 2019). This, I believe, is a global problem for the discipline: if larger publics do not understand what anthropologists do, then why should their tax dollars fund what anthropologists do? Why bother with anthropology?

Anthropology as presented in the Hong Kong Anthropological Society, and as reflected in the GSAP survey, is a repudiation of this stance. The anthropologists who present their findings to the Hong Kong Anthropological Society get little professional credit for it but do indeed serve to bring anthropology to a broader public audience. This has apparently led some non-professional anthropologists who attend these talks to nonetheless identify themselves as anthropologists: this is in effect an affirmation of this larger public anthropology. Of course the Hong Kong Anthropological Society is hardly alone in this endeavor—journals such as *SAPIENS* (2021) are among many such efforts today. But among anthropological societies, the Hong Kong Anthropological Society is perhaps unique in its repudiation of anthropological professionalism.

At a time when professional anthropology’s relevance is increasingly questioned in many parts of the world, I view this as a very positive thing. The survey results I have discussed in this paper are apparently the result of anthropology’s public outreach in Hong Kong through the Hong Kong Anthropological Society. I wonder if the example of Hong Kong might not hold some lessons that other anthropological societies might consider following, in terms of how to interact with and engage a larger public audience, in showing them what anthropology has to offer, and in convincing them that they themselves, in their lay interests, might also be anthropologists. It amazes me to be saying this, but this little pipsqueak anthropological society to which I belong, without even any formal membership, and whose executive meetings are basically no more than an occasion to get drunk, just might be an exemplar to the anthropological world as a whole.

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# La práctica profesional y el espacio laboral: un aporte desde la Asociación Uruguaya de Antropología Social y Cultural (AUAS)

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## Resumen

El presente trabajo pretende ser un aporte desde la antropología social uruguaya a partir del intercambio generado en el simposio por la Encuesta Global de Práctica Antropológica Profesional (Global Survey of Anthropological Practice-GSAP), organizado por el World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA) en julio de 2018 (IUAES, Florianópolis, Brasil), que buscó poner en diálogo diversas realidades locales. Con el fin de llegar a describir algunas de las características de la práctica profesional de la antropología en Uruguay -desde un enfoque básicamente cuantitativo-, recuperé el registro de los antecedentes que formaron parte de relevamientos realizados en 2014 por la Unidad de Egresados de la Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación (FHCE) de la Universidad de la República Oriental del Uruguay (UdelaR), y realicé algún cruzamiento de datos de la encuesta GSAP levantada en 2018 por la Asociación Uruguaya de Antropología Social y Cultural (AUAS), actualizando, en forma preliminar, los datos obtenidos por otros relevamientos en progreso.

**Palabras clave:** GSAP, encuesta, práctica profesional, antropología uruguaya, Asociación Uruguaya de Antropología Social (AUAS).

# Professional practice and the workplace: a contribution from the Uruguayan Association of Social and Cultural Anthropology (AUAS)

## Abstract

This work aims to be a contribution of uruguayan social anthropology from the exchange generated at the symposium for the Global Survey of Anthropological Practice-GSAP, organized by the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA) in July 2018 (IUAES, Florianópolis, Brazil), which sought to put in dialogue various local realities. To describe some of the characteristics of the professional practice of anthropology in Uruguay -from a basically quantitative approach-, I recover the record of previous data that were part of surveys conducted in 2014 by the Graduate Unit of the Faculty of Humanities and Educational Sciences (FHCE) of the University of the Republic (UdelaR) and I cross-reference data from the GSAP survey conducted in 2018 by the Asociación Uruguaya de Antropología Social y Cultural (AUAS), updating, in a preliminary way, those data obtained by other ongoing surveys.

**Keywords:** GSAP, survey, professional practice, uruguayan anthropology, Uruguayan Association of Social Anthropology (AUAS).

# Prática profissional e espaço de trabalho: uma contribuição da Associação Uruguiaia de Antropologia Social e Cultural (AUAS)

## Resumo

Este artigo pretende ser uma contribuição da antropologia social uruguiaia a partir do intercâmbio gerado no simpósio do *Global Survey of Anthropological Practice-GSAP*, organizado pelo World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA) em julho de 2018 (IUAES, Florianópolis, Brasil), que buscou colocar em diálogo diversas realidades locais. Para descrever algumas das características da prática profissional da antropologia no Uruguai - a partir de uma abordagem basicamente quantitativa -, recupero o registro dos antecedentes que fizeram parte das pesquisas realizadas em 2014 pela Unidade de Pós-Graduação da Faculdade de Humanidades e Ciências da Educação (FHCE) da Universidade da República Oriental do Uruguai (UdelaR), e cruza os dados da pesquisa GSAP realizada em 2018 pela Associação Uruguiaia de Antropologia Social e Cultural (AUAS), atualizando, de forma preliminar, os dados obtidos por outras pesquisas em andamento.

**Palavras-chave:** GSAP, pesquisa, prática profissional, antropologia uruguiaia, Associação Uruguiaia de Antropologia Social (AUAS).

# La práctica profesional y el espacio laboral: un aporte desde la Asociación Uruguaya de Antropología Social y Cultural (AUAS)

*Lydia de Souza*

## **Introducción**

El propósito de esta mirada hacia la práctica profesional de la antropología en Uruguay es presentar un mapeo del estado de situación, en el contexto ineludible de la historicidad de la disciplina, su trayectoria y experiencias registradas desde la Asociación Uruguaya de Antropología Social y Cultural (AUAS).

En esta oportunidad pondremos en diálogo un enfoque más cuantitativo con un marco histórico documental.

El desafío propuesto por el World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA), a partir de una propuesta presentada y coordinada por el Presidente (2017) de la Australian Anthropological Society, Greg Acciaioli, lo asumimos no solo por su interés global evidente, sino, también, porque nos permitía conocer las realidades de otras comunidades profesionales de la región y del mundo.

Las características locales pueden no ser contrastables, sin embargo la sola posibilidad de conocernos fuera de fronteras y pensar nuestra profesión desde otros ángulos, ya convierte a la Global Survey of Anthropological Practice (GSAP) en un instrumento a tener en cuenta para el intercambio y desarrollo de posibilidades futuras.

Los respondientes en Uruguay fueron 74 personas, durante un período aproximado de cinco meses (2018), entre los que estuvieron socios/as (40) y no socios/as de AUAS (34).

Es pertinente puntualizar que AUAS agrupa solamente antropólogos/as sociales y que en ese momento la cantidad de socios/as ascendía aproximadamente a 100, lo que significa que de la misma asociación respondieron el 40% de los socios/as.

Si, desde otro lado, tomamos el total de egresados de antropología convocados (socios/as y no socios/as, antropólogos de las tres ramas), la respuesta a la GSAP fue de aproximadamente un 26,5%,<sup>1</sup> abarcando grado (67%), maestría y doctorado. Como luego se verá, la mayoría se identificó con el género femenino (64,38%).

Es claro que un relevamiento de estas características no puede dejar de lado una puesta en consideración del medio en el que se levanta, su trayectoria y estructura. Es por ello que expondré el contexto histórico la disciplina, su creación, desarrollo y evolución. Es de subrayar que algunos/as colegas ya se han preocupado por el tema en trabajos e investigaciones anteriores, los cuales han sido de suma utilidad al momento de encarar un análisis de resultados de la GSAP levantada en Uruguay, tanto en esta ocasión como hacia futuros abordajes y/o diagnósticos.

Los resultados obtenidos podrían ser un aporte de interés en dicho sentido, a la hora no solo de reconocer sino de fortalecer la práctica profesional de la antropología uruguaya en relación con el ámbito laboral, tanto local como en su vinculación regional e internacional.

Sin duda ha existido un crecimiento sostenido de la disciplina, por lo que investigaciones como la propuesta a través de la GSAP se hacen imprescindibles para que la Universidad de la República a través de la facultad encargada de impartir la licenciatura se involucren en los procesos de inserción laboral de los egresados.

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<sup>1</sup> Tomando la cantidad de 279 egresados de antropología, registro último anterior de 2016, que fueron convocados.

## Antropología social en Uruguay. Breve aproximación histórica

Son reconocibles en Uruguay diversos momentos hasta la consolidación de la disciplina como licenciatura académica y profesional.

Si bien los temas antropológicos están presentes en la intelectualidad de la sociedad uruguaya desde el siglo XIX, como señalan Pablo Gatti y Gregorio Tabakian en su detallado recorrido por el “devenir de la antropología en Uruguay”, es promediando el siglo XX donde las humanidades en general y las ciencias antropológicas en particular, comienzan a institucionalizarse a través de la creación en 1945 de la Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias (Gatti y Tabakian, 2020:13-31).

Como citan estos autores, siguiendo la publicación del profesor Leonel Cabrera, “ya en 1948 se crea la “Asociación de Lingüística y Antropología de Montevideo”, por iniciativa del profesor Olaf Blixen, apuntando a jerarquizar a la antropología dentro de la enseñanza superior, y aún antes, en 1945, se funda la “Sociedad Folklórica del Uruguay” que tendrá entre sus impulsores a Daniel Vidart.

La llegada en 1954 del etnólogo Paul Rivet, organizando el “Coloquio de las Ciencias del Hombre” y cursos extracurriculares de Antropología social y Arqueología (Diconca, 2007), sumado a los perfiles de investigadores como Daniel Vidart y el creciente interés por la arqueología, van generando el terreno para el desarrollo disciplinar de una antropología más perfilada. En el año 1961, a instancias del propio Vidart, se funda el “Centro de Estudios Arqueológicos y Antropológicos Americanos Dr. Paul Rivet”.

El profesor Daniel Vidart (1920-2019)<sup>2</sup> tuvo un peso fundamental en la antropología uruguaya de nuestro país, con un rol destacado como docente e intelectual de fuste en nuestra sociedad y máxime por esa época. Las publicaciones de entonces y las que siguieron hasta su fallecimiento, dieron cuenta de su preocupación incesante por la construcción identitaria local, abordada desde múltiples temáticas. Un recorrido que deja a la vista parte de su aporte, es el que rescata y publica el profesor Renzo Pi Hugarte al exponer sobre la antropología en el Uruguay (Pi Hugarte, 1997: 36-61).

En este mismo artículo, Pi Hugarte recupera la memoria de “proto antropólogos”, y “padres fundadores”, aquellos que fueron autodidactas y no tuvieron demasiado reconocimiento en el área, ya que la temática que desarrollaban era “generalmente englobada dentro de la de la Historia” (Pi Hugarte, 1997: 38).

El autor señala, por otra parte, un momento que considera de importancia, cuando en 1923, interactúa dentro de la comunidad académica uruguaya el investigador Paulo de Carvalho Neto, primer antropólogo formado profesionalmente, proveniente de la antropología científica brasilera (Pi Hugarte, 1997).

Unas décadas después, en 1964, la presencia de Darcy Ribeiro en Uruguay, antropólogo brasileño exiliado por el golpe de Estado liderado por el General Castelo Branco contra el presidente João Goulart, genera un fuerte punto de inflexión para el desarrollo de la antropología en nuestro país.

Darcy Ribeiro, que permanece por cuatro años en Uruguay, ejercerá como docente invitado en la Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias, dictando cursos introductorios en antropología cultural y publicando trabajos de importancia que afirman la institucionalización de la antropología social a través de fructíferos intercambios con docentes de fuerte perfil antropológico, de la talla, por ejemplo, del ya referido Renzo Pi Hugarte, quien ya contaba con una experiencia muy marcada por su trayectoria vital y de formación en el exterior.

En la década del 70, Uruguay ingresa en el oscuro período dictatorial que duraría hasta 1985, con las implicancias de intervenciones de los sitios universitarios, cierres de facultades, expulsión y exilio de docentes.

<sup>2</sup> AUAS tiene el privilegio de contar hoy con un profuso acervo de temática antropológica, que formó parte de la biblioteca personal del profesor Daniel Vidart, donada por su viuda Alicia Castilla.

Sin embargo, es en este período –más precisamente en 1976–, y paradójicamente, que se crea la Licenciatura en Ciencias Antropológicas en la Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias, dentro de una Universidad de la República aún bajo dura intervención y represión. Como señala Nicolás Guigou, muchas especulaciones se han hecho sobre los motivos que llevaron a la creación de la Licenciatura en este período regresivo (Guigou, 2016). Tal vez no fuera desacertada la opinión de Pi Hugarte, cuando a la hora de interpretar ese momento de creación de la licenciatura, señalaba: “la Sociología podía ser considerada peligrosa por el abordaje de los problemas sociales, pero el estudio de los pueblos primitivos, remotos y/o exóticos, no podía aparejar ningún jaque severo al régimen instaurado” (Pi Hugarte, 1997). Constituida, entonces, la nueva licenciatura, el arqueólogo Antonio Austral, proveniente de Argentina, nunca residente en Uruguay, toma la dirección de la misma, con la integración de Olaf Blixen y Vicente Giancotti como docentes en antropología cultural y etnografía. No obstante, sus perfiles, el devenir de la licenciatura por esta época y el contexto político social, no podían hacer fluida su orientación, optándose por la invitación de investigadores o especialistas extranjeros que dictaban diferentes seminarios con perfil de antropología de la religión, lingüística, etnografía, etc., y quienes “circunstancialmente residieron en Montevideo” (Diconca, 2007).

La carrera, en este primer plan de estudios, completaba cuatro años y veintisiete asignaturas, aunque sin contenidos actualizados a los conocimientos antropológicos del momento.

El Museo Nacional de Antropología, creado en 1981, abre otras posibilidades, ya que recoge importantes registros y acervos arqueológicos e implementa alguna investigación etnográfica, aún dentro del período dictatorial.

Finalizada la intervención de la universidad y la dictadura, la licenciatura busca rearmar su carrera bajo la dirección del Departamento de Antropología asumida por el profesor Daniel Vidart, efectivizando llamados docentes con la integración de docentes que retornaban del exilio.

Claro que el camino de esta antropología uruguaya tuvo que superar la dificultad de su falta de investigaciones sistemáticas que se apoyaran desde el medio local, una licenciatura en ciernes y recursos muy acotados.

Es recién a comienzos de este siglo XXI que la antropología social logra estabilizarse como profesión en Uruguay, con una tradición etnográfica que “comienza a madurar a partir del año 2000” (Guigou, 2016), desafiando, no solo las dificultades referidas, sino una etiqueta social de “exotismo” de la que no le fue -y aún no le es- fácil deshacerse.

Con lentitud comienzan a implementarse programas de posgrado -primero una maestría (en Ciencias Humanas, focalizada en la “Cuenca del Plata”) en 2001 y luego un doctorado en 2014- y líneas de investigación orientadas específicamente.

Uno de los costos de este lento proceso fue la emigración estudiantil o de egresados para cursar posgrados en otros países. Y aunque esto, si bien se constituyó en una debilidad que recayó sobre la disciplina, fue redundando en un intercambio que aportó a su actual solidez.

Actualmente el Instituto de Ciencias Antropológicas de la Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación (FHCE) de la Universidad de la República (UdelaR),<sup>3</sup> comprende los departamentos de Antropología Biológica, Antropología Social y Arqueología. La formación en antropología social puede continuarse en Maestría y Doctorado.

La dirección del Departamento de Antropología Social, desde la salida del proceso dictatorial, ha sido asumida por los profesores Daniel Vidart, Renzo Pi Hugarte, Sonia Romero Gorski, Nicolás Guigou y Susana Rostagnol, quien ocupa actualmente dicho cargo.

<sup>3</sup> La coordinación actual del Instituto de Antropología está a cargo del Profesor José López Mazz. En <https://www.fhuce.edu.uy/index.php/ciencias-antropologicas>, puede consultarse la estructura y funcionamiento del instituto en sus tres Departamentos.

En cuanto a las líneas de investigación que se fueron perfilando, los antecedentes antes expuestos (especialización en el exterior, por ejemplo) han incidido de la misma forma en las investigaciones de los antropólogos y las antropólogas sociales locales. Muchos concentraron su ejercicio en Montevideo en sus inicios y hoy se encuentran más vinculados con el interior del país, siguiendo, además, a una descentralización universitaria reciente. Por supuesto que esto no implicó que algunos trabajos de campo, ya desde tiempo atrás, hayan abarcado y abarquen todo el territorio nacional.

Entre las áreas de investigación o ejercicio reconocibles, citamos las señaladas por Gatti y Tabakian: “Actualmente, jóvenes investigadores y docentes desarrollan nuevas líneas de investigación sobre diversos temas como ser: poblaciones urbanas, identidades, migrantes, medioambiente, turismo, matriz energética, violencia, salud, educación, procesos políticos, memoria, derechos humanos, religión, relaciones de género, drogas, fiestas populares, sexualidad, gauchismo, afrodescendencia, etnobotánica, etnología, etc.” (Gatti y Tabakian, 2020:24). La profusión temática da cuenta del crecimiento experimentado en los últimos años.

Los mismos autores detallan los programas y grupos de investigación que actualmente se llevan a cabo: “Programa de Antropología y Salud; el Programa de Género, Cuerpo y Sexualidad; el Núcleo de estudios migratorios y movimientos de población, Programa de Investigación en Antropología Visual, de la Imagen y las Creencias; líneas de trabajo sobre Matriz energética nacional; Etnobiología y Etnobotánica; entre otros” (Gatti y Tabakian 2020:24).

Por otra parte, desde el año 2000, el Instituto de Antropología, bajo la coordinación editorial de Sonia Romero Gorski (Directora del Departamento de Antropología en esa época), publica en versión impresa artículos inéditos en el *Anuario de Antropología Social y Cultural*, publicación que es recogida en la web de publicaciones UNESCO. En el año 2016, esta publicación se convierte en *Revista Uruguaya de Antropología y Etnografía*, revista semestral, arbitrada e indexada en Scielo, en versión *on line* y versión impresa.<sup>4</sup>

Como señala Susana Rostagnol, las antropologías latinoamericanas han ido posicionándose en su contexto específico, y eso hace que, también en Uruguay, “la antropología llevada a cabo en la Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación plasme armoniosamente instancias de investigación de corte más estrictamente académico con otras ligadas a la acción, más cercanas a la investigación coparticipativa, desarrollando así distintas modalidades de extensión universitaria, aunando las distintas funciones universitarias” (Rostagnol, 2016).

Este somero repaso de la formación de la antropología social como licenciatura en Uruguay, es imprescindible para interpretar los datos arrojados por los relevamientos y encuestas llevados a cabo, tanto por la UdelaR como por AUAS. ya que esas condiciones y características incidieron directamente en la práctica profesional laboral de la antropología social y la antropología en general.

La Licenciatura en Ciencias Antropológicas que hoy se dicta en la FHCE, tiene un plan de estudios del año 2014 (antes 1991) que consta de cuatro años. Esta licenciatura de la UdelaR es la única que se imparte en nuestro país y su titulación tiene tres opciones: Antropología Social, Arqueología y Antropología Biológica.

## **El hito colectivo: la Asociación Uruguaya de Antropología Social y Cultural (AUAS)**

En el año 2005, luego de previas reuniones e intentos preliminares, se funda en Montevideo la Asociación Uruguaya de Antropología Social y Cultural (AUAS), con personería jurídica, en cuyos estatutos (Art. 2) señala como objeto social: “1. Dar visibilidad profesional y consolidar la Antropología Social y Cultural en la República Oriental del Uruguay; 2. generar marcos de referencia para el ejercicio de la labor profesional de antropólogos y antropólogas sociales y culturales asociados, ya sea que ésta sea desempeñada tanto en la esfera pública como en

<sup>4</sup> <https://ojs.fhce.edu.uy/index.php/revantroetno> <http://www.scielo.edu.uy/revistas/ruae/eedboard.htm>

la privada, buscando contemplar todos los aspectos gremiales, bregando por sus derechos y obligaciones como socios, ya sea que se encuentren en el país o en el exterior”, entre otros de promoción y apoyo de investigaciones antropológicas, actividades académicas, formación técnica, relacionamiento institucional, asesoramiento y apoyo al profesional en general.<sup>5</sup>

Esta asociación viene a contemplar un vacío existente en la práctica profesional, reuniendo a antropólogos y antropólogas sociales no solamente del medio académico, sino a quienes ejercían su actividad fuera del ámbito universitario o de enseñanza.

Se busca, así, fortalecer el camino colectivo desde una mirada gremial más que científica, sin dejar de lado -vale la pena aclararlo- la misma, como surge de su objeto social ya descripto.

AUAS imprime un fuerte impulso para el reconocimiento de la carrera en general (traza un perfil, concreta un código de ética) y fortalece el apoyo a la práctica profesional no académica, marcando un espacio constante de encuentro con lo académico.

Ya en el año 2007, bajo la presidencia de Aurora Defago, la asociación organiza un Seminario de carácter regional “Orígenes y perspectivas de la antropología social y cultural. Recorriendo el pasado desde el presente de la antropología en Uruguay”, en el Museo Nacional de Historia Natural y Antropología de Montevideo. Se recuperan allí los antecedentes de la formación de la Licenciatura, los “precursores”, los “primeros pasos”, con distintas aproximaciones.

Al decir de Guigou, la asociación de egresados tiene “*incidencia real en la sociedad*”, permitiendo, al amparo de una mayor cimentación disciplinaria en el ámbito universitario, colaborar con una mayor ocupación en los espacios públicos y privados (Guigou, 2016).

En sus más de quince años de actividad, la distintas directivas electas cada año primero y cada dos años después, han desarrollado, con solo el capital de sus asociados/as (una cuota anual baja), encuentros en seminarios, simposios, foros en jornadas académicas, con invitados/as referentes en diversas temáticas antropológicas, locales y extranjeros. Además, por supuesto, de encuentros por intereses gremiales en Asambleas y otros.

El Seminario “Orígenes y perspectivas de la antropología social y cultural” ya citado, que se lleva a cabo en Montevideo en el año 2007, cuenta con la participación de Daniel Vidart y Renzo Pi Hugarte (referentes cuya impronta ya señalamos), así como la presencia de representantes de las asociaciones de Argentina, Brasil y Chile, constituyéndose en fuerte convocatoria para la antropología nacional y regional.

En el año 2012, AUAS co-organiza y participa en el II Encuentro con la Antropología Social y Cultural en Uruguay, que se realiza en la FHCE, UdelaR, (III Jornadas de AUAS), con el auspicio y financiamiento de la Comisión Sectorial de Investigación Científica (CSIC). En este evento de tres días, se recorren las trayectorias de investigación desde la antropología académica y no académica, incluyendo miradas de políticas públicas.

En el año 2015, el Departamento de Antropología de la FHCE (Presidente Nicolás Guigou, director del Departamento de Antropología Social), co-organiza con AUAS la XI Reunión de Antropología del Mercosur (XI RAM), en Montevideo, lo que representa un importante aporte a su crecimiento. Concurren a dicho evento más de 3000 personas. Entre sus múltiples actividades, se presenta allí un simposio con un intercambio muy rico de las antropologías del mundo, por coordinación de distintas asociaciones (WCAA/IUAES/CGA, ABA y AUAS).

Esto le permite desplegar diversos proyectos, editoriales, audiovisuales, concursos fotográficos, consultorías<sup>6</sup> y apoyar a socios y socias en emprendimientos laborales, entre otras cosas. Proyectos en los que siempre se vincula con colegas de toda la región, a través de la integración de miembros de tribunales o evaluadores.

<sup>5</sup> En la página web [www.auas.org.uy](http://www.auas.org.uy), se encuentra información más amplia y documentación de la actividad de AUAS, así como sus estatutos e integración de comisiones directivas por períodos.

<sup>6</sup> Es de gran importancia la consultoría contratada por AUAS para la “Recuperación y Sistematización de las ediciones I a XI de las Reuniones de Antropología del Mercosur” (Betty Francia y Zuleika Crosa) presentadas en el año 2019 en ocasión de la XIII RAM.

AUAS es representada en la Asociación Latinoamericana de Antropología (ALA), participando desde su segundo congreso en el año 2008 y formalizando su inserción hasta integrar la directiva en el 2017.<sup>7</sup> Hoy en día ALA comparte sede estatutaria con AUAS en el proceso de formación de la personería jurídica de dicha asociación latinoamericana, cuya directiva sigue contando con delegación uruguaya.<sup>8</sup>

Co-organiza con ALA en 2018 un evento de singular importancia en la Universidad de la República Oriental del Uruguay (UDELAR), poniendo en diálogo a las antropologías latinoamericanas de siete países, dando por resultado la publicación “*Diálogos con la antropología latinoamericana*”, de gran interés disciplinar, co-editada en Montevideo, Uruguay y coordinada por los entonces presidente y vicepresidenta de AUAS (Gatti y de Souza, 2018)

En el año 2020, AUAS co-organiza, como país sede, el VI Congreso ALA,<sup>9</sup> el que de presencial hubo de reconvertirse en virtual debido a la pandemia por COVID-19. Baste decir, a efectos de este trabajo, que dicho congreso se constituyó en un hito de importancia para la comunidad antropológica uruguaya, contando con un total de 5400 inscriptos. En la estructura y conformación de las mesas, grupos de trabajo, simposios, conferencias, se buscó la representatividad de América Latina y el Caribe, en interacción con AUAS.

Nuestra asociación es miembro formal del World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA),<sup>10</sup> desde el año 2015, e intercambia activamente con su delegación desde sus inicios en el año 2006.

La expansión de la representación de AUAS como colectivo uruguayo incluyó diversos eventos regionales y mundiales.

Entre sus instrumentos más sólidos se encuentra el proyecto editorial de *Revista Trama*, que surge en el año 2009, como proyecto premiado por los Fondos Concursables para la Cultura, por el Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, bajo el nombre de *Revista Trama: Cultura y Patrimonio*, con el objetivo de contribuir a la difusión del conocimiento antropológico a nivel nacional y regional. El comité fundacional estuvo coordinado en sus contenidos culturales por la profesora Beatriz Diconca. Como revista anual, hasta el año 2013, publica cuatro números en formato impreso. En el año 2014 pasa a formato digital *on line*, como *Trama* (plataforma Open Journal System), concretando su número 11 en el año 2020. En esta segunda etapa la revista se vuelve arbitrada (con evaluación extrema de sus artículos originales) y se encuentra indexada en Latindex.<sup>11</sup>

En ese mismo año 2020, en el marco de su integración en la directiva de ALA, la asociación se involucra en el proyecto editorial colectivo latinoamericano “Antropologías Hechas en”, coordinado en forma general por Eduardo Restrepo<sup>12</sup> y editado en Uruguay por Pablo Gatti y Gregorio Tabakian. Es así que *Antropologías Hechas en Uruguay* se publica en formato *on line* lo que constituye un hito de importancia relevante para la visibilidad de la producción de la comunidad antropológica uruguaya y como parte de su inserción en la comunidad antropológica latinoamericana.<sup>13</sup>

AUAS, en fin, ha crecido en forma constante y continua, contando a la fecha con 145 socios y socias, egresados/as docentes y no docentes.

7 Comisión Directiva ALA (2017-2020): Eduardo Restrepo (presidente), ACANT, Colombia/Lydia de Souza (vicepresidenta). AUAS, Uruguay/Ricardo A. Fagoaga (secretario). CEAS, México/Pablo Gatti. (tesorero). AUAS, Uruguay **Vocales** Alhena Caicedo. ACANT, Colombia/Annel del Mar Mejías Guiza. Red de Antropologías del Sur/Antonio Motta. ABA, Brasil/Gonzalo Díaz Crovetto. Colegio de Antropólogos de Chile/Lía Ferrero. CGA, Argentina/Maritzza Andino Picado. Red Centroamericana de Antropología/Fernando García. Antropólogo ecuatoriano.

8 Comisión Directiva ALA 2021-2023 Lía Ferrero (presidenta). CGA, República Argentina/Martha Patricia Castañeda (vicepresidenta). CEAS, México/Julián Montalvo (secretario). ACANT, Colombia/Betty Francia (tesorera). AUAS, Uruguay. **Vocales** Annel Mejías Guiza. Red de Antropologías del Sur/Gonzalo Díaz Crovetto. Colegio de Antropólogos/os de Chile/Lizeth Pérez Cárdenas. CEAS, México/Diana Lenton. CGA, República Argentina.

9 <http://alaz2020.com.uy/>

10 <https://www.waunet.org/wcaa/> Hoy parte de la WAU, conjuntamente con IUAES

11 <http://www.auas.org.uy/revista-trama/>

12 Eduardo Restrepo ha sido presidente formalmente electo de ALA en el período 2017-2020. Entre sus proyectos editoriales coordinó la colección *Antropologías Hechas en*, con ediciones en Argentina, Colombia, Perú, Uruguay y Venezuela, presentadas en el VI ALA y publicadas en la web de ALA. <http://www.asociacionlatinoamericanadeantropologia.net/index.php/publicaciones/coleccion-antropologias-hechas-en-america-latina>

13 <http://www.auas.org.uy/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Antropolog%C3%ADas-hechas-en-Uruguay.pdf>



Contar con una asociación de antropología en el Uruguay ya consolidada ha permitido integrarse con equidad en las redes institucionales regionales e internacionales de la disciplina, además de fortalecer la integración a los espacios laborales y ampliar la perspectiva de la práctica profesional en todos los ámbitos.

### **Algunos datos antecedentes de relevamiento de la práctica profesional en Uruguay**

Los antecedentes en relevamientos del tema, se encuentran en el trabajo del equipo integrado por Lucía Abbadie, Alicia Erro, Pablo Gatti, Carlos Serra y Blanca Vienni, que investigan las “Trayectorias de egresados de la FHCE en período 1996-2010”, cuyos resultados parciales (relativos a la Licenciatura en Ciencias Antropológicas) fueron publicados en el número 6 de la Revista *Trama* (Abbadie *et al.*, 2015:57-67).

A diciembre de 2016, relevados los datos, los egresados en antropología en la Facultad de Humanidades de la UdelaR (único lugar, como ya referimos, donde se imparte la Licenciatura en Ciencias Antropológicas), conformaban un total de 279, esto es un 18,97% de los egresos totales de las seis licenciaturas de esa facultad (Letras, Lingüística, Filosofía, Historia, Antropología y Educación). Solamente en el período 1996-2010, los títulos de egreso de grado en antropología fueron de 186. Casi un 52% de la muestra de esos 186 (96) respondieron al formulario de relevamiento de 2014.

Según se consigna en los resultados de esta investigación, “más de la mitad de los egresados tienen un desempeño técnico profesional y en casi igual proporción se dedican a la docencia, donde prima la docencia universitaria” (Abbadie *et al.*, 2015).

En ese período el 2,8% de los egresados antropólogos encuestados, declaraba estar desocupado frente a un 86,46% que manifestó tener trabajo. La ocupación principal (62%) correspondía a empleo público, 15,63% a empleo privado y un 8,33% manifestó trabajar por cuenta propia.

Algunos datos que de este relevamiento que vale la pena tener presentes como indicio para el cotejo global de datos: “El 72.9% de los egresados de Antropología declara tener un solo empleo, 17.7% dice tener dos empleos y el 9.4% 3 empleos o más. El 54.1% declara tener desempeño técnico profesional. Del total de antropólogos, un 27.1% dice tener un cargo público profesional, 20.8% realizan consultorías, 11.4% declaran ejercicio libre de la profesión y 8.3% declaran ser técnicos de alguna organización. Estos porcentajes refieren a actividades que los egresados desempeñan en forma simultánea o como única ocupación” (Abbadie *et al.*, 2015).

Posteriormente, en el año 2018, Vienni, Abbadie y Gatti abordan el mundo del trabajo de los graduados en Ciencias Antropológicas, basados en los resultados obtenidos en ese mismo relevamiento que había sido realizado entre 2014 y 2015, relativo al período citado 1996-2010 (Vienni *et al.*, 2018, 2020). Toman para ese momento 72 encuestados que corresponden a egresos en antropología social específicamente.

Señalan allí la cantidad de egresados con este perfil (265 en antropología social) que en 2018 -el año de realización de la GSAP- ejercen la docencia dentro de la Facultad de Humanidades: “12 se desempeñan en el Departamento de Antropología Social del Instituto de Ciencias Antropológicas de la Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación (FHCE) y otros 10 trabajan en el marco de la facultad (esta misma) en otros institutos o unidades” (Vienni *et al.*, 2018, 2020).

Al término del relevamiento de egresados en general, ya se anotaba que en “las respuestas obtenidas con respecto a la docencia universitaria, se destaca que las licenciaturas donde pesa más la docencia universitaria, o al menos donde comparativamente tiene un mayor peso es en la licenciatura en ciencias antropológicas” (Abbadie *et al.*, 2018).

De las preguntas que guiaron ese relevamiento, interesa acercarnos a las respuestas de la que indagaba ¿Cuál es el desempeño profesional y académico de los antropólogos que no tienen un espacio laboral dentro de la facultad? Como se dijo, algunos se ubicaban en otros servicios universitarios de la UdelaR, donde se imparte antropología como parte de la formación.<sup>14</sup>

En este sentido, se registra que varios colegas, en el ejercicio liberal de la profesión, se integraron a varios ministerios y otras dependencias del Estado “(Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, Ministerio de Educación y Cultura; Ministerio de Ganadería, Agricultura y Pesca; intendencias, entre otros)”, así como en equipos de evaluación de impacto sociocultural (Vienni *et al.*, 2018, 2020).

Entre las dificultades planteadas al egreso, la “inserción laboral” registraba el 40% de las respuestas.

A pesar de todo, en el contexto de las seis licenciaturas en humanidades, eran los/as egresados/as en Ciencias Antropológicas los que parecían lograr una mejor inserción laboral y mejor remuneración (Vienni *et al.*, 2018, 2020).

Es curioso el dato de que en los primeros cinco años posteriores al egreso, para el período investigado (1996-2010), de los 72 antropólogos sociales relevados, solo 16 tenían trayectorias vinculadas a la carrera en lo laboral. Esta situación ha sido mejorada, sin embargo, en la última década debido a la mayor posibilidad de formación académica en el país (maestría y doctorado).

Por último, me parece pertinente subrayar que en estos relevamientos se registra la mejora de situación que se presenta a raíz de la presencia de AUAS en el colectivo disciplinar.

## **Resultados AUAS y cruzamientos en el marco de la Global Survey of Anthropological Practice (GSAP)**

Enfocada en la encuesta global, cabe realizar tres precisiones. La primera es que llevada la encuesta a la Asamblea General de AUAS, no pudo ser aprobada en los mismos términos que estaban propuestos por el WCAA, por lo que fue reformulada por la Comisión Directiva, agregando un módulo específico de AUAS y respetando la pauta general, teniendo en cuenta la importancia de este instrumento a efectos de establecer un diálogo global.

Se insiste, entonces, en la estrategia original y se procura conservar la estructura planteada, lo cual era necesario para poder proceder, eventualmente, al cotejo y/o al cruzamiento de datos. Optamos, así, por agregar un módulo referido al ámbito local y apenas algún ajuste de ítem cuando encontramos que no contemplaba la realidad de la disciplina en Uruguay, para mayor comprensión del encuestado.

De esta forma la encuesta GSAP pudo llevarse a cabo con muy buena respuesta por parte de la comunidad antropológica local.

La segunda precisión es que en el módulo agregado (local) se procuró tener en cuenta los relevamientos anteriores del período 1996-2010, de la Unidad de Egresados de la FHCE, UdelaR, ya que en dichas instancias se focalizó en la profesionalización de la antropología en Uruguay, considerando la profesión dentro de la práctica laboral y los antropólogos como sujetos integrales de ella, así como en el contexto de las trayectorias académicas de los otros egresados de esa Facultad. Los egresados en Ciencias Antropológicas correspondieron a las tres ramas de Arqueología, Biológica y Social, aunque en el último trabajo con estos datos se focaliza en Antropología social.

<sup>14</sup> “Licenciatura en Comunicación de la Facultad de Información y Comunicación (Udelar), en la que se dicta la asignatura Antropología Cultural en forma anual; la Licenciatura en Trabajo Social de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales (Antropología Social); el Centro Universitario Regional Este y el de la Regional Norte, en los que se dictan asignaturas en la Licenciatura en Turismo. Fuera de la Universidad, en el Consejo de Formación en Educación en la carrera de Educador Social, la asignatura Antropología Cultural se dicta en forma semestral. Y en el Consejo de Educación Técnico Profesional dentro del Tecnólogo en Diseños de Circuitos Turísticos y la Tecnicatura en Conservación y Gestión de Áreas Naturales” (Abbadie *et al.*, 2015).

La tercera cuestión que se consideró fue a la Asociación Uruguaya de Antropología Social y Cultural (AUAS) en sí misma, en cuanto a su realidad y proyecciones, a fin de conocer la realidad de los asociados, circunstancia ésta que se ha seguido monitoreando con distintas herramientas, incluso foros de intercambio. Volvemos a puntualizar que AUAS se integra exclusivamente con egresados en antropología social.

En esos términos, y siguiendo las instrucciones planteadas, la encuesta GSAP, con dicho “módulo anexo AUAS”, fue llevada a cabo desde febrero de 2018 y finalizada el 6 de julio de 2018, por la Comisión Directiva AUAS 2017-2018,<sup>15</sup> contando con respuestas de socios/as y no socios/as de AUAS, ya que se involucró a la totalidad de los egresados en el medio, habiéndose divulgado a través de la Unidad de Egresados de la FHCE y de AUAS.

Las respuestas fueron anónimas. Se respondieron 74 formularios, lo que teniendo en cuenta la cantidad de egresados en esa época, corresponde a una muestra de aproximadamente un 26,5%, de los cuales el 54% correspondieron a socios o socias de AUAS.

Siguiendo los items planteados en la GSAP, y con la misma plataforma de aplicación propuesta por el WCAA, esto es la *Survey Monkey*, los resultados fueron los siguientes:

### Quiénes somos. (Who we are)

**Género.** El 64, 38% se identificó con el género femenino, el 34,25% con el masculino y un 1,37% con otro género.

**Edad.** La franja etaria se ubicó mayoritariamente entre 40-49 años (40%) y entre 30-39 (37%).

**Asociación.** El 67% de respondentes manifestó pertenecer a una asociación, siendo el 77% de AUAS (40), un 6% socios/as de IUAES, 2% de ABA. Aclaremos que las opciones no son excluyentes, por lo que una misma persona pudo consignar pertenecer a más de una asociación. Aquí tomamos en cuenta membresías individuales y no como miembro de asociación, es decir que el 4% que consideró pertenecer a ALA, debió hacerlo como miembro de otra asociación, ya que ALA no recibe afiliaciones individuales por ser una asociación de asociaciones.

Sin embargo, aclaremos que se especificaron solamente seis opciones, incluyendo un item “Otra. Especificar”, en lugar de todas las propuestas en la estructura original de la GSAP.

**Lugar de nacimiento.** Uruguay es el lugar de nacimiento del 88%, seguido de Argentina en un 4%. Los restantes seis países (Australia, Francia, Guatemala, México, Montenegro y EEUU) se distribuyen en otros lugares de nacimiento en un 1% aproximadamente.

**Nacionalidad.** El 99% de los encuestados manifiesta tener nacionalidad uruguaya.

**Residencia.** En este caso se colocó una ventana relativa a opción de “ciudad”, pues entendimos que solamente podíamos llegar a residentes en Uruguay. El 65% respondió vivir en la capital, 7% en el exterior y el resto en distintas ciudades del interior del país.

### Nuestras calificaciones (Our califications)

El mayor nivel alcanzado en el estudio de la antropología corresponde en un 56% a nivel de grado (la ya referida Licenciatura en Ciencias Antropológicas de 4 años), un 20% dice haber adquirido un nivel de maestría y un 14% el de doctorado. Hay un 7% de diplomados y algo más de 1% en posdoctorados.

Nos pareció interesante relevar el país dónde se alcanzó la mayor calificación, de acuerdo a lo que ya señalábamos en la historia de formación de la licenciatura, es decir, cómo algunos egresados buscaron calificarse en otro país. Así, si bien el 78% alcanzó su mayor calificación en Uruguay, un 7% lo hizo en España, un 4% en

<sup>15</sup> Comisión directiva de AUAS (2017-2018): Pablo Gatti/Presidente, Lydia de Souza/Vicepresidenta, Fernanda Olivar/Secretaria, Aurora Defago/Tesorera, Javier Taks, Emmanuel Martínez, Martín Dabezies.

Brasil, un 4% en Argentina y siguen Reino Unido, Estados Unidos, Chile y México, los que, en la población manejada, representan a una o dos personas de los respondentes.

El 49% de los encuestados tiene otra calificación en carrera académica además de la antropología, calificación otra que en un 43% puede llegar a nivel de maestría.

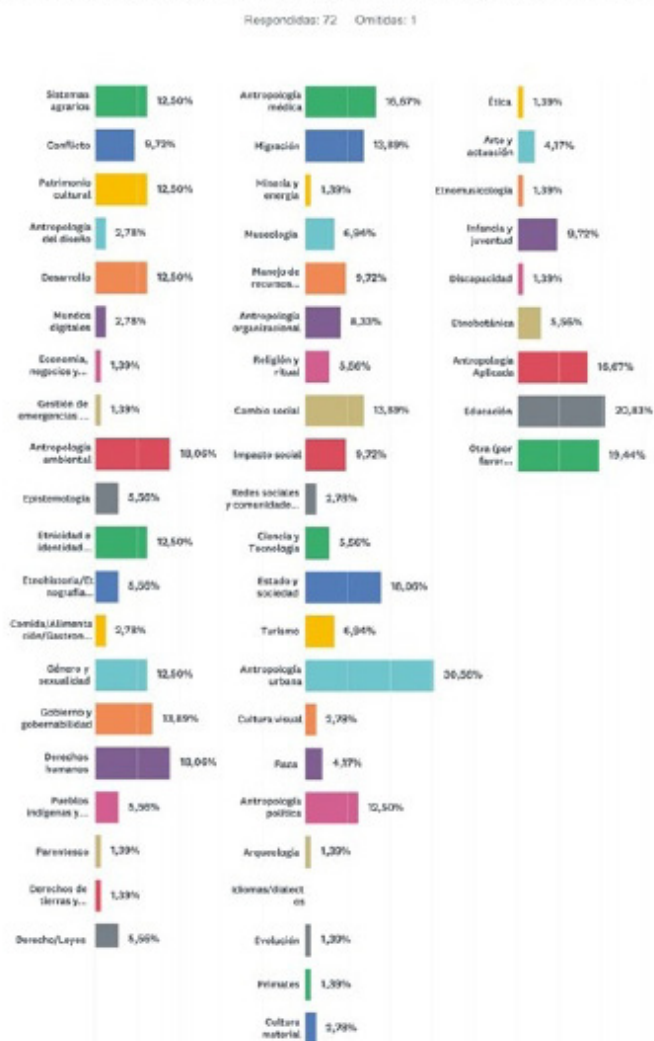
### Nuestra especialización (Our expertise)

En su gran mayoría, esto es, un 79% señala como su gran área de especialización (sub disciplina) la antropología social o cultural, un 9% antropología aplicada, seguidos de antropología biológica, etnología, lingüística y otros. Esto coincide con el sesgo que apuntábamos de tratarse en su mayoría de respondentes antropólogos/as sociales.

En cuanto a la sub disciplina a la que se adscriben los respondentes, agregamos una serie muy ampliada de items, descartando “Forense”, cuya línea en nuestro país deviene de la carrera de Derecho. Logramos aquí un panorama muy diverso, liderado por Antropología urbana con 31%, seguido por Educación con casi un 21%, Antropología Medioambiental 18%, Derechos Humanos 18%, Aplicada 16% (Ver en Gráfico 1). Se trata de una pregunta con opciones no excluyentes.

Gráfico 1

Q13 ¿Cuál de las siguientes opciones describe mejor los focos temáticos de su experiencia? (marque todos los que sean relevantes)



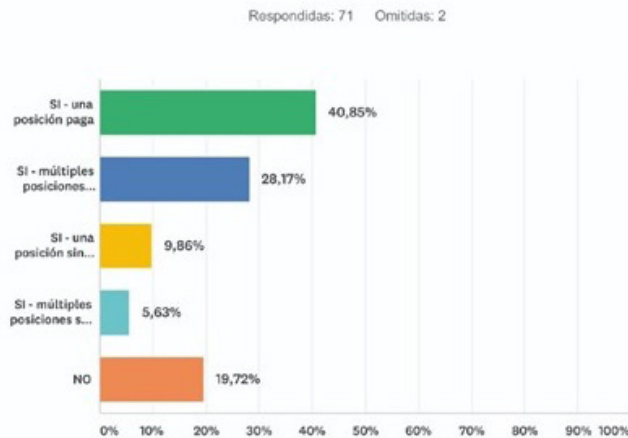
En cuanto a la región de experticia (que ajustamos como “país”) un 96% señala tenerla en Uruguay, seguido de Brasil (19%), Argentina (9%), España (7%) y México (4%).

### Nuestras carreras (Our careers)

Al hacer foco en el empleo o práctica profesional laboral basada en la experticia en antropología, se abren opciones. Casi un 41% manifiesta tener una posición remunerada, el 28% múltiples empleos y el 20% se encuentra en posiciones no remuneradas. Entendemos que muchos/as colegas se desenvuelven en trabajos voluntarios, en ONG’S u otros. Un 20%, evidentemente, tiene empleos que no involucran su experticia. Hacemos hincapié en que se trata de una pregunta guiada hacia empleos en los que se aplique su conocimiento antropológico (Ver en Gráfico 2).

Gráfico 2

Q15 ¿Actualmente tiene un empleo u ocupación donde utiliza sus habilidades antropológicas, conocimiento y experiencia? (marque dos casillas si corresponde)

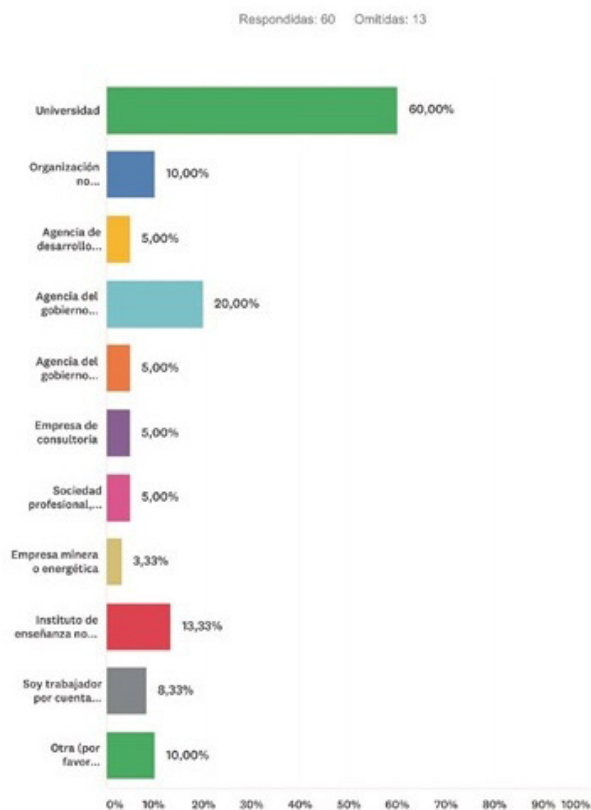


### Nuestro empleo (Our employment)

Esta pregunta fue mínimamente ajustada en atención a nuestra conformación del área laboral en cuanto a su denominación local. El empleador principal del trabajador profesional en antropología, en Uruguay, es la Universidad con un 60%, lo que coincide con anteriores relevamientos si agregamos los porcentajes arrojados para el empleo en otros institutos de enseñanza (13%). En el ámbito de la Administración Pública (Government agency) encontramos un 20% de profesionales. Y en las Organizaciones sin fines de lucro (ONG), se emplean un 10% de los encuestados (Ver en Gráfico 3).

Gráfico 3

Q16 Si actualmente tiene un empleo relacionado con la antropología (ya sea remunerado o voluntario), ¿quién es su empleador/a? (seleccione múltiples donde corresponda)



Recordemos, además, que la pregunta está referida al empleo que aporta el “salario principal”, lo que es a tener en cuenta en caso del multiempleo.

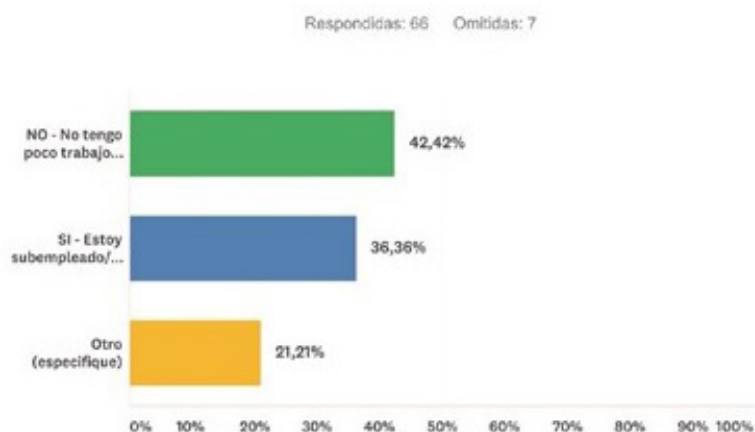
La jornada laboral se distribuye en tiempo parcial en un 32% y un 28% dedicación total o full time, con un 7% de trabajo voluntario.

Es fundamental el ítem relativo al sub empleo, ya que esto hace a la percepción del encuestado. Sin embargo, la contrastación global se dificulta, ya que las realidades socio económicas locales son diversas. Es más que probable que el respondente tenga diferentes parámetros de medición en su percepción.

Un 42% consideró no encontrarse sub empleado y un 36% sí se consideró sub empleado. El 37% manifestó que su remuneración no era suficiente. El 23% señaló que es suficiente, con un porcentaje de incerteza del 26%. Estos datos solo permiten concluir una aceptación bastante positiva de su situación en algo más de una tercera parte de los profesionales (Ver en Gráfico 4).

Gráfico 4

## Q18 ¿Se considera profesionalmente "subempleado/a" como antropólogo/a?



### Nuestras actividades (Our activities)

Se trata de una pregunta con items no excluyentes, por lo que la distribución del tiempo puede ser múltiple. En estos resultados, un 38% va dedicado a la docencia, un 35% a la investigación de campo, un 32% a la investigación de escritorio. La exploración de este item sería un punto interesante para desglose a futuro, teniendo en cuenta el teletrabajo. Más aún en el contexto global de pandemia que hemos venido atravesando y que trastocó nuestra distribución del tiempo en forma radical, sin tener referencias certeras de lo que sucederá en la pos pandemia. Todo ello más allá de los cambios en la tecnología de las comunicaciones.

### Cómo nos comunicamos (How we communicate)

Se entiende por forma de comunicación la de canales de vinculación e intercambio disciplinar y, no siendo una pregunta de items excluyentes, podemos entender que los eventos académicos -en igual medida que el acceso a los repositorios abiertos-, son las vías de “puesta en común” privilegiadas por los y las colegas uruguayos/as, en un casi 30% (29% para cada una de estas opciones). Se privilegia el intercambio presencial y editorial.

En la pregunta relativa al idioma en el cual realizamos nuestras comunicaciones, publicaciones, dio por resultado que el 97 % opta por hacerlo en español y un 31% en inglés, sin ser respuestas excluyentes.

**Módulo de preguntas anexo AUAS.** Como ya comentara, al tratar el relevamiento a través de la GSAP en Asamblea General de AUAS, se resolvió que, de llevarse a cabo, sería preferible incluir un módulo/anexo cuyas preguntas contemplaran aspectos más locales relacionados con el colectivo antropológico uruguayo, como forma de incentivar la respuesta a la totalidad de la encuesta.

Es así que se agregaron ocho preguntas (alguna otra se incluyó antes) a fin de explorar las necesidades y expectativas del colectivo en relación con el proyecto de asociación que lleva adelante AUAS, y cuyas respuestas pueden, también, ser de utilidad al WCAA.

En este sentido se consultó acerca del interés en pertenecer a una asociación, arrojando por resultado que

el 82% considera afirmativamente esta posibilidad.

En cuanto al modo de participación, un 65 % propone que la asociación sirva de apoyo a las actividades de la comunidad antropológica, un 48% entiende que deben desarrollarse grupos de trabajo y un 48% propone el fortalecimiento de los proyectos editoriales. Las respuestas no tienen items excluyentes.

De la misma forma, las opciones relativas a las expectativas de los socios y las socias, tampoco fueron excluyentes, a fin de conformar una serie de propuestas que permitieran beneficiar la gestión social. En su gran mayoría (91%) entendieron que una asociación de profesionales debe tener por objetivo aportar información, desarrollar el apoyo laboral (67%) y capacitar a sus miembros, por ejemplo, en la redacción de proyectos (57%).

En un 57% los/as asociados/as se sienten representados/as por la asociación local, aunque un 31% rara vez asiste a las reuniones y un 28% nunca lo hace, lo cual implica contar con una asociación cuya gestión recae con peso total sobre la directiva.

Para cerrar, se entendió pertinente evaluar la utilidad de una encuesta de este tipo, a lo que el 50% respondió afirmativamente y un 46% manifestó no tener seguridad de su utilidad. Esto hace que se perciba como necesaria la estrategia de conocer el estado de situación en el ámbito laboral profesional y fortalecer las vías de apoyo.

Cabe señalar que AUAS, en principio, no aportó los datos para la publicación final de la GASP porque en ese momento entendió que no eran relevantes en forma cuantitativa. No obstante, sí efectuó su presentación en el Simposio organizado en el año 2018 en Florianópolis (de Souza; Gatti, 2018). Sin embargo, posteriormente, entendimos (en conjunto con AUAS) que la encuesta desplegada en forma local pudo y puede aportar, inclusive, a la mirada global, a fin de conocer algo más de la comunidad antropológica uruguaya y su desarrollo.

### **Cotejo de los datos globales obtenidos por la GSAP16 con los datos de la GSAP levantada en Uruguay por AUAS**

En este punto se puede decir que:

1. El porcentaje de respuesta en la GSAP-Uruguay fue medio, un 26.5% de la población disciplinar, Similar al de la ABA, asociación de fuerte impronta en la comunidad profesional.

2. Sigue la tendencia global mayoritariamente femenina en profesionales y la franja etaria se ubica en una franja levemente superior. Esto último posiblemente tenga relación con el tiempo que insume la finalización de la carrera en Uruguay (muchas veces el doble que los consignados en el plan de estudios, según antes fue explicado).

3. El peso de la mayor calificación difiere notoriamente, en tanto se ubica en el grado, por las razones que anotaba de la creación reciente de los posgrados, equilibrando esta característica el hecho de tener diferente estructura disciplinar de nuestro país, en comparación con otros donde antropología es más un posgrado de especialización.

4. El país de especialización conserva una tradición más bien iberoamericana y regional, en contraste con los datos generales de la GSAP.

5. En lo que hace a la sub disciplina, los datos de Uruguay son coincidentes en cuanto al ejercicio de la antropología social y cultural, si bien el foco está puesto con mayor énfasis sobre lo urbano.

6. Referidos al empleo, los datos parecen seguir la tendencia general, esto es, una o más posiciones remuneradas y mayoritariamente en la Universidad, en la docencia universitaria.

Además Uruguay comparte con los países de la región la ocupación del espacio público como un ámbito preferente para el ejercicio profesional, con datos que pueden acompañar una similitud con Brasil.

Aunque hay mucho mayor incertidumbre en cuanto a estar correctamente remunerados, se invierten los

<sup>16</sup> Acciaioli et al., 2018.



datos con un mayor porcentaje de mala remuneración para los profesionales uruguayos.

7. En la percepción del sub empleo parece seguir la misma tendencia general de opiniones distribuidas de la misma forma.

8. La distribución del tiempo en actividades y la elección de los canales de comunicación en Uruguay, mantienen gran similitud con la medición global.

9. Las tendencias en el lenguaje de publicación resultan más cercanas a las de México, mayoritariamente en idioma español.

## Intento de actualización del estado de situación de la práctica profesional uruguaya

Actualmente AUAS<sup>17</sup> se encuentra llevando a cabo una encuesta con la inclusión de preguntas abiertas, de corte cualitativo, que contengan también propuestas, con el objetivo de “conocer la situación laboral de nuestros/as socios/as para analizar y sistematizar el trabajo en conjunto sobre el desarrollo de la profesión en sus diversos niveles”, así como “mejorar la gestión y las acciones colectivas de AUAS y su relación con la comunidad antropológica a nivel nacional y regional” (Formulario de encuesta AUAS 2021).

De los resultados parciales (la encuesta aún se encuentra en etapa de ejecución), elegí los ítems más cotejables en relación con la práctica profesional que se viene relevando. En este sentido, resulta que:

a. A la pregunta “¿Se encuentra actualmente trabajando?”, un 15% de los encuestados responde encontrarse sin empleo. Convengamos que el contexto socioeconómico y sanitario se encuentra en un momento crítico, debido, entre múltiples factores, a la coyuntura global a la que Uruguay no es ajeno. Se han multiplicado los y las colegas que realizan trabajo voluntario en ONG’s o en ollas populares. Espacios laborales de vinculación con la comunidad han sido desarticulados, y las posiciones de práctica profesional en el país se han reducido notoriamente.

Esto viene a interrumpir un camino de inserción que llamamos “extra académica”, que tuvo un aumento en los últimos años. Se abrieron convocatorias para ocupar espacios públicos y no públicos que parecían vedados a otras profesiones, debido no solo al trabajo colectivo de la asociación, sino a la investigación realizada por generaciones más jóvenes, sostenida y reconocida por la academia y la sociedad. Situación esta que ahora se encuentra en riesgo, en parte por la deriva de las decisiones políticas.

b. A la pregunta “Según su percepción: A grandes rasgos, ¿cómo considera que son sus ingresos?”, un 65% lo coloca en la franja media y dentro de estos la mayoría en franja media-baja. Esto tiene que ver con la valoración que se realiza de la práctica profesional de la antropología, situación que no es del todo ajena a las concepciones que pesan sobre todas las ciencias sociales en un país que privilegia las profesiones liberales tradicionales.

c. A la pregunta “¿Dónde trabaja actualmente?”, el 35% de los hasta ahora encuestados se desempeña en la UdelaR, distribuyéndose los restantes entre otras instituciones de enseñanza o privadas. Es decir, que si cruzamos esta pregunta con la primera, queda de manifiesto un importante porcentaje de colegas que se desempeñan en organismos estatales o no estatales, sin olvidar aquellos que se encuentran desocupados (15% de los encuestados).

d. A la pregunta “¿Cómo considera que es la situación laboral de la antropología en el país? Las respuestas fluctúan entre “mala” y “precaria”.

En lo que refiere a preguntas relativas a las expectativas y acciones para mejorar esta situación, las respuestas pueden englobarse -en una simplificación breve a efectos de este trabajo- en tres conceptos generales a manera de propuestas o demandas: **visibilidad, divulgación y trabajo colectivo**. Lo que constituye, en definitiva, el objetivo de AUAS.

<sup>17</sup> Comisión Directiva AUAS 2021-2023: Presidenta María Noel Curbelo, Vice-Presidente Inti Clavijo, Secretaria Fernanda Olivar, Pro-Secretaria Antía Argüñarena, Tesorería Laura Ferdinand, Pro-Tesorería Lucía Abaddie, Vocal Betty Francia.

Ante la inquietud de si *¿Considera que la AUAS podría hacer algo para ayudar su situación laboral o la de algún colega en particular?*, las respuestas son contundentes al entender que la asociación ha significado un hito de importancia en lo que refiere al posicionamiento laboral. Los esfuerzos por darle a la disciplina su lugar real en la Agencia Nacional de Investigación e Innovación (ANII), las demandas de reconocimiento en su *expertise* para los llamados concursables en la Administración Pública (en especial el Ministerio de Desarrollo Social), la inserción a nivel regional e internacional a través de su representación en eventos, la organización de congresos regionales y latinoamericanos (como el amplio intercambio de miles de colegas en el VI ALA), el apoyo voluntario y económico puntual al actual contexto crítico, son todos aspectos que se expresan cualitativamente como positivos en la encuesta.

A la hora de dar cierre a este artículo, consultamos, además, los datos más actuales que nos aportan desde la Unidad de Egresados de la FHCE, UdelAR. Los egresados en la Licenciatura de Ciencias Antropológicas, siempre en sus tres opciones (Antropología Social, Arqueología y Antropología Biológica), suman 359. Según datos de la encuesta actualmente abierta, un 40% de egresados de Humanidades trabajan en docencia en distintas facultades y servicios, teniendo como primer ámbito laboral el sector público y docente, y dentro de éste la docencia universitaria, con menor porcentaje de inserción en el ámbito privado y en ejercicio libre de la profesión. Los egresados en antropología siguen la tendencia general. Para el próximo año se planifica la actualización de la información al año 2020, utilizando un marco metodológico similar a los relevamientos ya referenciados, como forma de buscar fortalecer los perfiles profesionales y facilitar una mejor inserción en el ámbito laboral en tanto práctica profesional (Consulta verbal UE).

## Conclusiones

En lo que refiere a los antecedentes e historia general de la antropología social en Uruguay, a efectos de contextualizar, he seguido, entre otros, la introducción al trabajo de reciente publicación de la Asociación Latinoamericana de Antropología Social (ALA), relativo a su serie “Antropologías Hechas en”, coordinada por el Dr. Eduardo Restrepo y editada el pasado año en el número de Uruguay por Pablo Gatti y Gregorio Tabakian, por considerar que se trata de una obra actualizada y de importancia para la profesión en nuestro país, así como en América Latina. Obra que expone una muestra de los trabajos de investigación desde la antropología uruguaya.

Los momentos que allí reconocen los autores son varios, los cuales he sobrevolado haciendo énfasis en los puntos que creí de interés para este trabajo, ya que los considero esenciales a la hora de enfocarnos en el panorama laboral y profesional local de la disciplina y sus características o puntos de articulación.

Vimos cómo una tradición etnográfica aportada desde el exterior encuentra el espacio ya explorado a nivel local para institucionalizarse, y cómo incidió este aporte en razón del momento histórico en que se desarrolla la disciplina.

Es clara la influencia de la antropología brasilera en la formación de la carrera en Uruguay, algo de lo cual pude exponer recientemente en el Simposio Especial “Dilemas en la internacionalización de la antropología brasilera”, en la sesión “A antropologia brasileira vista desde a América Latina”, en el marco del 32 RBA llevado a cabo en modalidad virtual en noviembre de 2020, coordinado por WCAA y ABA.<sup>18</sup>

La aparición de AUAS en el escenario antropológico uruguayo constituyó y constituye, sin lugar a dudas, una marca de importancia y empuje para el colectivo.

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.32rba.abant.org.br/trabalho/view?ID\\_TRABALHO=3467](https://www.32rba.abant.org.br/trabalho/view?ID_TRABALHO=3467)

La antropología uruguaya se ha diversificado, en especial la antropología social, que ha buscado áreas cada vez más específicas. Si bien, en este sentido, las herramientas de experticia académica son positivamente valoradas por los egresados, aún es clara la debilidad para lograr la inserción laboral desde la práctica profesional, en especial para los más jóvenes.

A la luz de los temas abordados, se ha podido observar un crecimiento de la antropología uruguaya que se mantiene y afirma, aunque las inscripciones al inicio siguen superando en mucho a los egresos. Es decir, el interés por la disciplina existe, pero por alguna razón no se mantiene, o no puede mantenerse.

Según los datos manejados por la Unidad de Egresados, en 2015 eran 279 los egresados y hasta agosto de 2021 llegan a 359, lo que denota un lento avance en egresos, aunque sabemos que la inscripción es altamente superior y que tenemos dos años de ritmos irregulares por la situación sanitaria ya conocida. Es aún difícil de evaluar el impacto y la huella dejados por la pandemia.

La práctica profesional de la antropología en Uruguay aún no ha logrado la estabilidad que necesita. Si bien la inserción laboral ha hecho avances, en muchas ocasiones esa inserción no se corresponde con la aplicación de los conocimientos o experticia antropológica, sino que más bien coadyuva a un *curriculum*, aunque siempre es un elemento de aporte en los hechos.

Sería interesante que a futuro fueran sopesadas las preguntas que tienen que ver con la distribución del tiempo de actividad profesional y la elección de los canales de comunicación, pues considero que se trata de puntos álgidos a la luz de los nuevos escenarios que marcan el momento global y local actual, donde la investigación “de escritorio” se volvió -tal vez transitoriamente- casi una necesidad y no una opción. El ámbito espacio-temporal de investigación, laboral o de aprendizaje, así como el de intercambio disciplinar, se mide con otros parámetros, no siempre manejables con libre albedrío.

Los nuevos “protocolos” de interacción nos marcaron rutas y nuevas metodologías en la práctica profesional, Las formas de la comunicación desafían el trabajo de campo y la vinculación disciplinar. La evidente crisis social y económica global, con agravantes locales, marca una ruptura que debemos procesar y evaluar.

Fortalecer el perfil práctico profesional de nuestra disciplina es una forma de avanzar, convencidos del aporte social que podemos realizar desde la antropología, estableciendo un intercambio permanente, absolutamente necesario con la época que transitamos.

Nuestras sociedades contemporáneas, a la luz de pandemias, conflictos -armados o no- y crisis globales dramáticas, requieren de la consideración de otras dimensiones, de repensar hacia dónde enfocarnos en una comunidad global, globalizada y globalizante que nos exige nuevas categorizaciones, las que, como ya en algún momento enunciara -y hoy se vuelve particularmente notorio-, resultan cada vez más provisorias (de Souza, 2018).

Si bien otras encuestas se han realizado a nivel internacional<sup>19</sup>, no es menor que sea un colectivo mundial de asociaciones, en este caso, el que vehiculiza la posibilidad de acceder a datos necesarios a través de las asociaciones que forman parte de la misma. Esto redundaría en beneficio de las propias asociaciones locales, permitiendo evaluar sus características propias y cotejar experiencias regionales e internacionales de la comunidad antropológica.

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<sup>19</sup> Señala el equipo del año 2018 al relevar antecedentes: “Entre los diferentes estudios y proyectos mencionados destaca sobre el resto de las propuestas la investigación desarrollada a finales de la década de los 90, conocida como CHEERS (Careers after Higher Education – a European Research Survey), cuyo alcance, objetivos y metodología sentaron las bases para la constitución de diferentes observatorios universitarios o nacionales, que consistió en una encuesta internacional y con carácter comparativo que abarcó mil profesionales de 12 países europeos” (Abbadie *et al.*, 2018).

Al decir de Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, al abordar “otras globalizaciones”, se trata de que las antropologías mundiales apunten a la “creación de ´nuevas condiciones de conversabilidad´, que permitan fertilizaciones cruzadas más ricas y heterogéneas dentro de una comunidad global de antropólogos que, de contrario a los días de Tax, hoy es mucho más grande fuera del núcleo del sistema global de producción antropológica” (Lins Ribeiro, 2018).

Por fin, quisiera agradecer al WCAA, a su equipo de trabajo GASP, y en especial a Carmen Rial -bajo cuya presidencia se culminó el proyecto-, el interés por publicar los resultados de esta encuesta que aporta un elemento relevante de conocimiento en favor de nuestra práctica profesional en Uruguay. Esto deja de manifiesto, insisto, la importancia de las asociaciones, en tanto proyectos político institucionales a la hora de visibilizar la disciplina e insertarse en el medio laboral, académico y, en especial, el no académico, para abrir otros caminos en el ejercicio profesional.

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# Precarity in Global Anthropology: Reflexions on the margins of the Global Survey of Anthropological Practice

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## Abstract

In this essay, we draw primarily on the 2018 Global Survey of Anthropological Practice in order to develop a series of considerations on the issue of precarity in Anthropology. Other reports and available literature are also taken into consideration in the proposed analysis. We start by introducing the issue of precarity in Anthropology as both a trending research topic and an empirical reality in the very practice of our discipline. Then, we analyse the WCAA Global Survey by focusing on its findings regarding employment and salary. In the third and fourth sections of the article, global differences in anthropological practice are taken into account from the perspective of a South-North divide. The fifth section is devoted to reflections on the epistemological dimensions of precarity, neoliberalism and anthropology. We conclude by highlighting ongoing actions and pointing to possible horizons. The main purpose of this essay is, by drawing on available data on anthropologist's working conditions, to address specificities and challenges that discipline must face when it comes to precarity.

**Keywords:** Precarity, Neoliberalism, Scientific Policies, World Anthropologies.

# Precariedade na Antropologia Global: Reflexões nas margens do Global Survey of Anthropological Practices

## Resumo

Neste ensaio, baseamo-nos principalmente no 2018 *Global Survey of Anthropological Practice* a fim de desenvolver uma série de considerações sobre o tema da precariedade na Antropologia. São também tomados em consideração outros relatórios e literatura disponível na análise proposta. Começamos apresentando a questão da precariedade tanto como um tema de reflexão em ascensão na Antropologia quanto uma realidade empírica que marca a própria prática da nossa disciplina. Em seguida, analisamos o WCAA Global Survey concentrando-nos nas suas conclusões em matéria de emprego e salário. Na terceira e quarta secções do artigo, as diferenças globais na prática antropológica são tidas em conta a partir da perspectiva de uma divisão Sul-Norte. A quinta secção é dedicada à reflexão sobre as dimensões epistemológicas da precariedade, do neoliberalismo e da antropologia. Concluímos destacando as ações em curso e apontando para possíveis horizontes. O objetivo principal deste ensaio é, com base nos dados disponíveis sobre as condições de trabalho do antropólogo, abordar as especificidades e desafios que a disciplina deve enfrentar quando se trata de precariedade.

**Palavras-chave:** Precariedade, Neoliberalismo, Políticas Científicas, Antropologias Mundiais.

# Precarity in Global Anthropology: Reflexions on the margins of the Global Survey of Anthropological Practice

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## **Precarity in Anthropology: empirical and theoretical issues**

There is no doubt that precarity has become a major concept for contemporary anthropology worldwide, being employed to describe and theorize experiences as ethnographically situated as homelessness and as philosophically vast as the very nature of human life. Like many other concepts, this one also has a history that shows us how a given word, with a specific meaning can become a polysemic, all-encompassing category in a relatively short time. In this context, precarity seems to have acquired a semantic common ground in anthropology in order to describe insecure and dead end forms of existence. The term has become a conceptual tool that translates the substantialization of a neoliberal *geist* in an epistemological movement that Sherry Ortner (2016) named “dark anthropology”, i.e. the fact that since the 1980s anthropological analysis has seen the world through the dark lenses of neoliberalism. The result was, argues Ortner, a pessimistic perception of the social world.

No wonder that our scholarly appropriation of the term precarity concerns now academic life itself, including anthropological practice and career. The reason for this is that neither anthropology knowledge or its disciplinary organization are exempted from the global societal transformations studied by us, although carrying out ethnography of our own professional milieu is a much more complex and delicate analytical movement than we probably are willing to admit because it implies ethical, moral and institutional critiques that are not always well-received by our own community, nor are exactly beneficial for their authors’ careers. Nonetheless, we can find noteworthy initiatives that have contributed to shed new light on academic precarity at large and, more recently, precarity in anthropology.

In this paper, we draw on the findings of the 2018 Global Survey of Anthropological Practice (Mcgrath, Acciaioli & Millard, 2018), carried out on behalf of the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA), in order to develop a set of reflections on the issue of precarity within our discipline. For that end, we compare that report’s data on precarity with others reports, such as the EASA Report on the anthropological career (Fotta et al., 2020), the OECD Report on precarity in science (2021) and the Wellcome Report (2020) on the scientific career. The aforementioned surveys are analysed in the light of available theoretical discussions and ethnographic material on precarity.



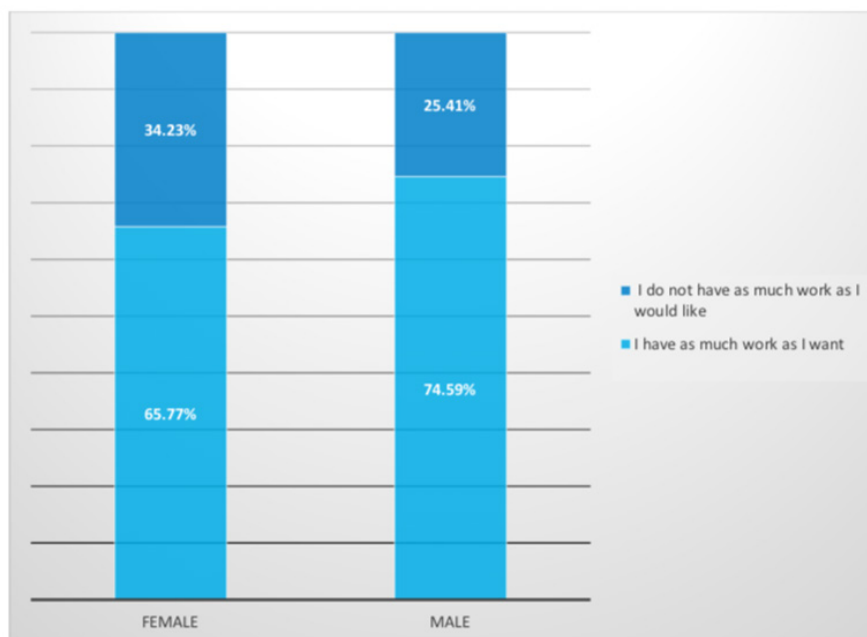
## The Global Survey: findings, gaps, and overtures

As explained in its final report, the WCAA Global Survey of Anthropological Practice was a global effort carried out between October 2017 and February 2018, available in the English and Spanish languages, and had 3,836 responses from self-identified anthropologists all over the world. In order to make sure that the collected data was as globally representative as possible, WCAA national anthropological associations from different continents were asked to divulge the survey amongst their individual members. The result was an uneven but interesting enough global distribution of respondents across the world, whose methodological and epistemological implications we discuss in the next section of this article. For now, it is important to highlight that this pilot survey - as it is described by the authors themselves - allows us to draw preliminary conclusions and point out possible horizons for further debate on the issue of precarity in anthropology.

Regarding working conditions, the report reveals that the anthropology profession is equally occupied by women and men, who have either one paid position (just above 60% for both genders) or more positions (10% for men, 15% for women) as anthropologists. They are primarily employed at universities (48%), while the other half is evenly distributed among Domestic NGOs, self-employment, government structures, consultancy companies, research institutes, museums and others. Although these numbers vary internationally, they attest to the predominance of universities and other scientific institutions as privileged professional settings for the practice of the discipline.

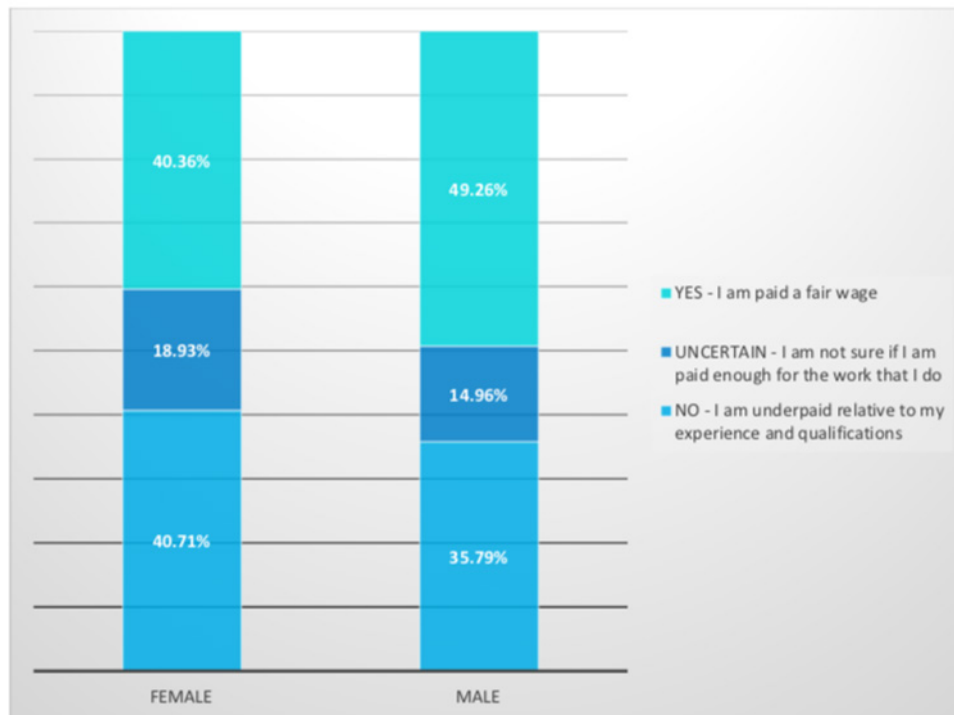
Still, the survey adopts two categories that require special appreciation: “underemployment” and “fair pay”. In the graphic below, we see that 25% of men and 34% of women report underemployment, i.e. “do not have as much work as they would like”. The term underemployment, explains the report, is preferred over “unemployment” in order to cover part-time work as a choice. When it comes to payment, the survey asked the respondents if they feel that are properly paid for their work. The result is that 36% of men and 41% of women consider to be underpaid. The GSAP also reveals a slight gender gap in terms of pay equity and availability of opportunities, a finding that is consistent with what different reports on the scientific field have pointed out (Fotta et al., 2020).

Underemployment by gender



Source: Global Survey on the Anthropological Profession, 2018.

## Fair pay by gender



Source: Global Survey on the Anthropological Profession, 2018

Although important, those questions are insufficient to analyse precarity because we are not informed about the type of contract held by those who are currently “employed”. This is a fundamental question because precarity as a new kind of regime of labour is characterized by the proliferation of short-term positions in detriment of a model based on permanent ones. Having “as much work as I want” is a rather vague formulation as a professional can have many although precarious “opportunities” - to use the emic language of the neoliberal academia. Working in various projects, and often for reasonable wages, is precisely what many precarious scholars experience. Precarity is not defined by underpayment (although poor wages are very common amongst precarious workers), but rather by the pervasiveness of a model of insecure labour relations that create a detached and mobile workforce that, in the context of science, has to build a live under the uncertain conditions of indefinite mobility (Ferreira, 2017).

One could argue that many people would prefer short-term contracts over permanent employment for either professional or personal reasons. Although not impossible, that is not what recent research has shown (Ferreira, 2021). Ethnographic scholarship states that, in general, the period following PhD training is marked by an aspiration to settle and create long-lasting institutional and personal bonds. That is so not only because having a permanent position is a credential of professional success and a necessary condition for recognition, but also because durable and meaningful relations demand accumulation and reasonable horizons of time. That said, it would be interesting indeed to inquire not only on the type of contract held by people, but also if they prefer permanent or temporary ones. Beyond institutional changes on the knowledge economy (Wright, 2016), that would give us material to think about ideological traits of a younger generation of colleagues. As already said above, although ethnographic research has shown that open-ended contracts are generally resented, statistical data on the matter could be very enlightening.

Different reports (OECD, 2021) and articles (Teixeira, 2017) on the scientific precariat have rightly noted that precarity is largely under-reported in official documents published by governments. That is the case, for instance, of France, where official data informs that about 30% of teaching in higher education is assured by temporary modalities of teaching, such as *ATER*<sup>1</sup> and *Lecteurs*, while the *vacataires*<sup>2</sup>, who represent over 100,000 high-skilled teachers in the French higher education are roughly estimated only in secondary notes published by the French Ministry of Higher Education (France, 2018). Thus, the lack of appropriate data on the subject makes a more complete global survey on the profession even more important.

## Global mobility and precarity

The GSAP shows a relatively mobile universe of anthropologists. By means of a Global Mobility App, the survey connects three major variables concerning global circulations: country of birth, country of training, and country of residence after training. Below, we can see the data regarding South Africa, which we chose because of the high rate of response of the ASnA membership (76%).

The first map shows the destination of South African students who left for training purposes. Amongst 82 South Africa-born respondents, 11 studied abroad (we are not told at what level), essentially in the Global North: the UK (5), Ireland (1), the Netherlands (1), Switzerland (1), the USA (1), Australia (1), and New Zealand (1). On the other hand, in this same map, the interactive tool shows that a considerable number of foreign students went to South Africa for their studies, notably from Southern Africa: Zimbabwe (11), Malawi (2), Namibia (2), Angola (1), Botswana (1), Cameroon (1), Mozambique (1), and Swaziland (1). Only 8 students came from the Global North, notably the USA (4), the UK (2), Canada (1), and Ireland (1). This finding shows that (a) the North still is an educational destination for Southern anthropologists, but also that (b) some peripheral countries act as major regional academic centres of training.

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<sup>1</sup> The abbreviation *ATER* stands for *Attaché Temporaire d'Enseignement et Recherche* and refer to a temporary position under a fixed-term contract for a period of one year. The *ATER* is in charge of teaching and conducting research within the department in which the researcher is employed. The *ATER* position may take place during the PhD period or soon after.

<sup>2</sup> The *vacataire* is a still more precarious position than the *ATER*. The *vacations* are six-months, hourly-paid contracts meant for teaching only. Teachers are commonly PhD students and paid after the end of the semester on the basis of the national minimum wage (considering 3 hours of preparation for each hour of teaching, which means that every hour of class is paid the equivalent to 4 minimum wages). French law limits the *vacations* to 96 hours per year (the equivalent to around 5 undergraduate courses), which means that yearly gains through this form of teaching is inferior to 4,000 euros per year.

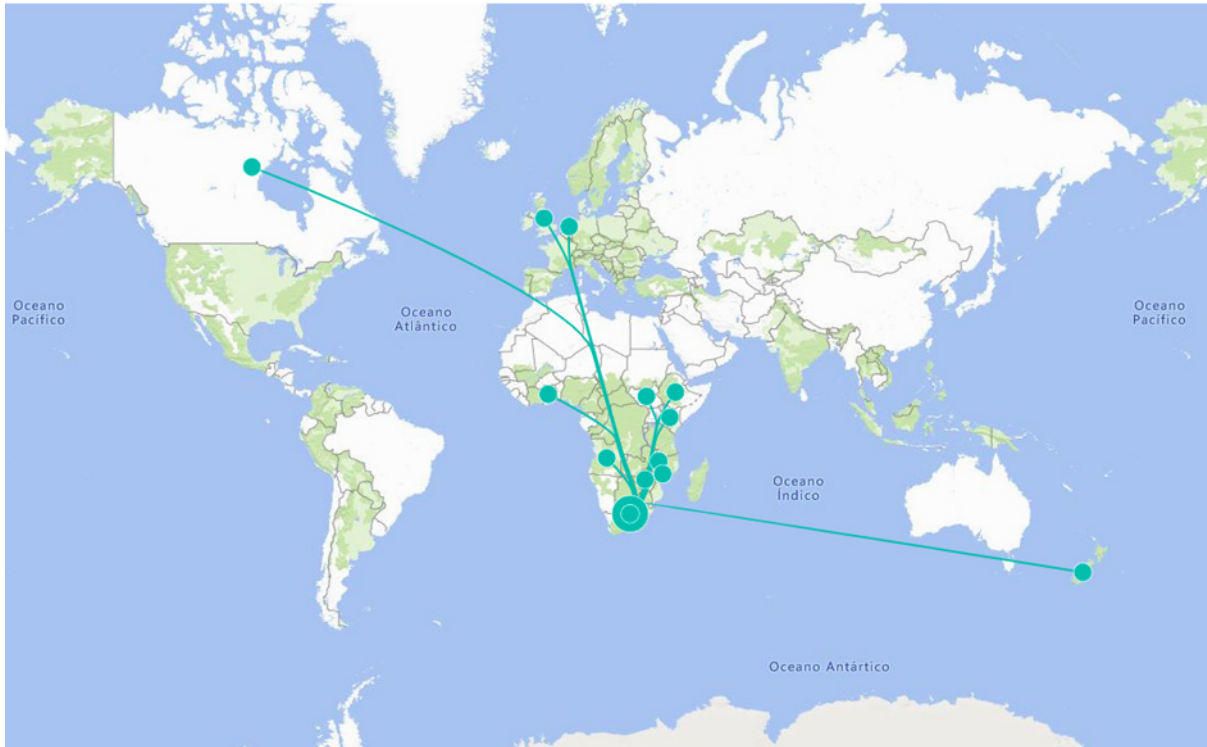
Country of birth to country of qualification. The South African case.



Source: Global Survey on the Anthropological Profession, 2018

The second map shows the current residence of colleagues trained in South Africa. We verify that amongst 14 expatriated South African anthropologists, 10 are distributed over Africa, notably in Anglophone countries such as Ghana, Ethiopia and Kenya, besides some neighbouring countries. The rest of them (4) are evenly distributed over the USA, the Netherlands, the UK and New Zealand. Equally important is the number of students (whose nationality is not informed) currently residing in South Africa holding Northern diplomas (12) from: the UK (6), Germany (3), the USA (2), and the Netherlands (1).

Country of qualification to country of residence. The South African case.



Source: Global Survey on the Anthropological Profession, 2018

Although we are informed about the birth-qualification and qualification-residence relations, we have no data about the birth-residence connections, which represents a limitation for consistent conclusions on global circulations, especially when it comes to the possibility of Southern colleagues building academic careers in the North and vice-versa. That said, we can draw a few conclusions essential for a truly global perspective on precarity. First, the Northern countries continue to be valued destinations for academic training. Second, the South has its own regional centres, such as South Africa for the African continent and Brazil for Latin America. Those countries have consolidated not only higher education and science systems, but also long-standing anthropological traditions.

But what has global mobility to do with precarity? Recent ethnographies have shown how international mobility of scholars is convenient for institutions working on the basis of short-term contracts, such as the Max Planck Institutes studied by Vita Peacock (2016). As we have argued elsewhere (Ferreira, 2019), although mobility is a precious scientific value for science, neoliberal practices of precarization have appropriated it in order to create a mobile workforce of cheap high-skilled workers of science. Both ethnographic literature and reports (Wellcome, 2020) point out to the fact that early career scholars feel that mobility, which is widely sold as an enriching and adventurous life, has become an inescapable stage of the career that is experienced by many as something that postpones indefinitely the construction of stable personal, professional and family lives.

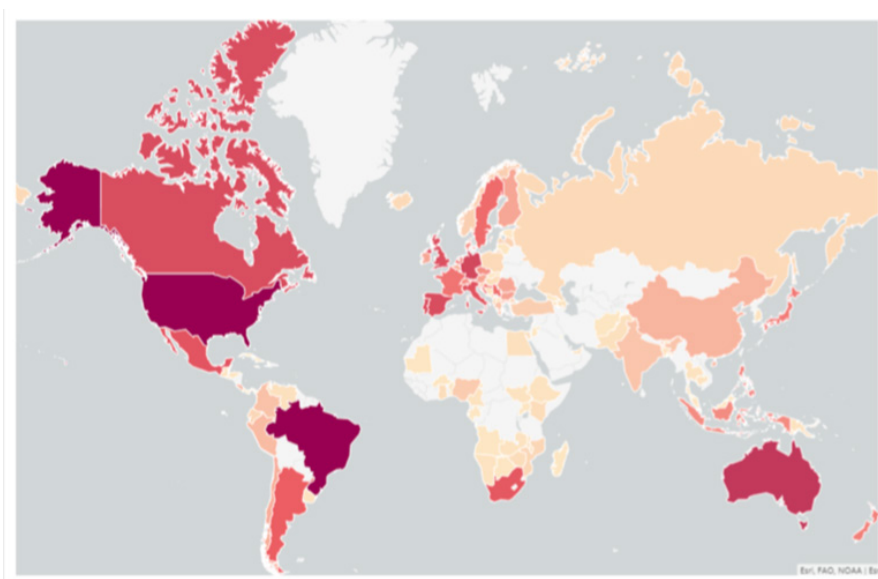
Moreover, it is now widely accepted that insecure labour relations in science reinforce subalternization and other types of power relations that are common to highly hierarchical institutions. In this context, such a fundamental right for any worker like unionization becomes an exotic element vis-a-vis the logic of patronage and concentration of resources that come with the shrinking of permanent positions. The academic precariat relies heavily on invitations, indications, benevolence, and charismatic power not only for the scientific visibility of his work, but fundamentally for having the next job that will make ends meet.

Now, imagine this very same situation for an African or Latin American colleague whose visa depends on those relations and on finding another contract. Precarity, in these cases, has not only financial and emotional repercussions, but also juridical as he must be able to convince a national state's bureaucracy why he should be allowed to stay there. Many foreign scholars based in Europe, for instance, even after having spent 10 years of their lives there have no right to a permanent residency because their professional situation is not stable enough. Moreover, being in a precarious position does not help when it comes to challenging stereotypes and even racism. Although the GSAP does not address experiences of prejudice, and that diversity appears only in terms of gender, the recent EASA precarity report (Fotta et al., 2020) helps us to put things in perspective. It reveals that 53% of its respondents faced some sort of discrimination, being citizenship/nationality the second most mentioned kind (14%), just after gender (21%). The same document asked if people had witnessed discriminatory treatment. Positive responses were as high as 63%, with 31% mentioning such treatment on the basis of gender and 18% on the basis citizenship/nationality. Such a scenario needs to be analysed in its complexity, which involves not only the moral economies that feed power inequality in academia at an interpersonal level, but also in geopolitical terms as we would like to address in the next section.

### North-South circulations: mobilities and inequalities

In spite of the fundamental effort to make of this a global survey, the majority of the respondents were born and live (both variables having very similar rates) only in three regions of the world: North America (30%), Europe (25%), and Latin America (15%), giving us little information especially about Asian and African contexts. On the other hand, amongst the best response rates (i.e. the percentage of associations' members who responded the survey) are precisely those associations representing regions with a low absolute number of respondents: the Anthropological Southern Africa (ASnA, 76%), the Anthropological Association of the Philippines / Ugnayang Pang-Aghamtao, Inc. (UGAT, 61.2%), the International Association for Southeast European Anthropology (InASEA, 50.7%), and the Pan African Anthropology Association (PAAA, 32.7%). A possible conclusion is that the uneven numbers can reflect the unequal presence of the discipline and its practitioners around the globe, since the consolidation of anthropology as a discipline is stronger in some countries than in others. Alternatively, we can wonder about the capillarity of WCAA actions in different regions of the world.

Respondents' country of residence



The geographical coverage and global representativeness of the survey is important because precarity is not only a global phenomenon, but also relies on unequal global dynamics of knowledge production and circulation. Even though precarity is increasingly a worldwide issue, it does not take the same shape everywhere and, most importantly, exposes geopolitical hierarchies between national scientific communities. That is so because to understand academic precarity requires taking seriously the intricate and often elusive relations between coloniality of power and knowledge (Quijano, 2005) and neoliberalism in anthropology. Empirically, that can be seen through the regimes of global mobility in anthropology, which as we argue here play a role in contemporary precarity.

As a vast postcolonial literature has shown (Hall, 1997), leaving from colonial and postcolonial settings for academic training in Europe and the US is, rather than as individual choice, a social project embedded in strongly rooted imaginaries concerning intellectual prestige and status. And beyond symbolic capitals - which are not in themselves secondary in intellectual contexts -, leaving for the North means also the possibility of having adequate, or even luxurious resources to conduct research in ideal terms. Furthermore, colonial legacies still determine Southern careers as traditional hierarchies - now partially translated into the language of rankings - foster forms of “credentialism” largely based on prestige (OECD, 2021). In other words, contemporary tools of ranking reiterate the illusion of best-quality research in Northern institutions that use those rankings to get more resources through neoliberal practices fostering precisely the ranks that continue to legitimize their primacy now through supposedly meritocratic and impersonal (for instance, bibliometrics) criteria.

Those “resources” are not only financial, but also, and especially, human and symbolic. Given that the main capital in neoliberalism is not tangible goods anymore, but abstract forms of commodities (Dardot & Laval, 2010), universities acquire a growing social, political, and especially economical relevance. The weight of what has been called the “knowledge economy” (Wright, 2016) in the general economy is not based solely in the potential connections between universities and the productive system (industry, commerce, technology etc.), but above all the capacity that universities have to generate their own internal value systems that can be convertible into financial capital. In this context, knowledge is not the only - and perhaps not even the main - capital generated by universities. As diversity becomes a watchword for an academia in which scientific and cultural overlap, Southern scholars become the symbols of this novel neoliberal, precarious economy in which diversity is a commodity with high exchange value.

## **Precarity and epistemological inequalities**

To say that anthropology has a colonial history is nowadays quite a commonsensical idea, but it might cause some controversial reaction to state that contemporary anthropology continues to rely on neo-colonial, or imperial (Ribeiro, 2011) structures of power/knowledge. As we have argued elsewhere (Ferreira 2017, 2021), such articulation has been undertaken under the cover of the contemporary lexicon of globalization, transnationality and, more recently, decoloniality. In other words, neoliberal science and higher education re-appropriate colonial and postcolonial histories of intellectual circulations between colonial and metropolitan regions - and the imaginaries that make people move (Hall, 1997) – by re-signifying them through a globalizational semantics that euphemize precisely those postcolonial legacies.

In recent years, we have seen these neoliberal ideologies swallow even supposedly contestatory discourses, such as decoloniality. In this context, decolonial perspective becomes a form of commoditization of diversity, while draining the term out of its epistemological and political force. Not only Northern appropriation of the term erases its Latin-American origins - and therefore expropriates Southern colleagues’ ideas - but it also ignores the political critique of structural inequalities in the geopolitics of knowledge - and what is more preoccupying is that anthropology has played a major role in that. What we are saying is that those global

inequalities are reinforced, both in financial and epistemological terms, by precarity as well as the other faces of neoliberal models of science. If it is true that over the past decade European universities have been recruiting more Southern scholars, who before were summarily sent home, this apparent openness should be critically analysed through the lens of a political anthropology of neoliberalism. That is why it is crucial to further existing research on the complex articulation between precarity and inequalities in the geopolitics of knowledge.

One of our main findings of previous ethnographic research (Ferreira, 2019) is that the postdoctoral period is experienced as a moment of adjustment to certain logics of scientific ethnophilia. In other words, in order to get permanent positions, Southern scholars must fit into stereotypes largely shared by their local peers, including anthropologists, such as being a good representative of his region of origin. It is very clear that Southern scholars who do not study their own country are not nearly attractive in the commodified academic market, not to mention that they are hardly taken seriously (Ferreira & Pinheiro, 2020). Since the period that academic scholars have to face can easily represent 10 years of insecure positions, this is more than enough time for scholars looking for integration to abandon their real intellectual interests, which are very often critical of mainstream eurocentric research. Many are the cases of Indian early career scholars who in order to build an academic career in Europe ended up switching their research subject from Europe-related to “more Indian” topics (Ferreira, 2020a).

Moreover, when a scholar circulates, many things circulate with him: expertise on a certain world region, language skills, cultural capital, and last but not least financial capital. And all those things are very important for anthropology. Ultimately, well-off anthropological centres in the North benefit very much from a neoliberal model of science in which they fit perfectly – because they are endogenous to that system – and that promotes unhealthy competition and intense productivity. When a Southern scholar circulates, what goes with him is not only valuable research skills, but also its connections with a specific fieldwork in his country as well as his diversity-value at the hosting institution. In the long run, finding a permanent position means adapting to the local environment which requires, in general, writing about your own country, preferably on certain topics (human rights for Latin America, development for Africa, nationalism for India etc.), and keeping good academic relations in these regions but citing Northern anthropology.

### **“Shared responsibilities” in a world of growing precariat**

In this context, at the level of different national and international learned societies, the actions concerning precarity have multiplied recently with the aim of having a panorama concerning the precarity status and try to find solutions. These actions have been sought in terms of “shared responsibilities” (Strasser et al., 2019) in reference to scholars that are in “power” positions and often employ (young) scholars on short-term contracts. It might be argued that the mobility of (young) scholars is considered as a sign of research excellence and recently it has become a request in order to improve the young scholar curriculum vitae. Moreover, geographic mobility is seen as an opportunity for professional and personal development that can help scholars expand their network of researchers. But, we should question ourselves on the conditions in which mobility can take place and what might be the consequences on the personal life of the scholars that move in a short period of time from one country to another as it has been showed by the aforementioned EASA precarity report. The questions that might arise are many and refer to what Sautier (2021) called “hidden mobility experiences”. Without pretending to be exhaustive, we will remember here some of the actions that have been realized at a European level and mainly by the European Association of Social Anthropologists (Fotta et al., 2020).



As Stefan Voicu (2021) writes in his Introduction to EASA's "Precarity Report": Reflections, Critiques, Extensions: "every day across of Europe hundreds of social anthropologists wake up knowing that their precarious employment conditions may one day force them to leave the discipline. Still, they keep the discipline going across the continent by teaching, providing vital research data for high-profile research projects and a substantial share of the annual publication output. They also apply for grants and jobs while balancing the tightrope of overtime work and personal life. All for the glimmer of hope of a permanent position".

A never ending hope that is also embraced by the scholars that are active members of *PrecAnthro*, a pressure group that contribute to the development of anti-precarity initiatives at European level. One of the initiatives of *PrecAnthro* has been the close collaboration between their members and the EASA precarity officers. Several meetings have been organized within EASA such as a seminar on the topic of precarity entitled *On politics and precarities in academia: anthropological perspectives* (Bern University, 2017), an *Early Career Scholars Forum on in/mobility, uncertainty and hope* (Stockholm, EASA Conference 2018) and a *Precarity Survey* that was conducted among EASA members in 2018. These first results are important for the scientific community and are available online in a report, sadly called 'precarity report' (Fotta et al., 2020). We would like to highlight here two of the recommendations of the report to be kept in mind by our colleagues, namely:

i) the development of a career framework that "should standardize the progression towards tenure for anthropologists across the continent, starting with guidelines like those of the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development for Researchers. [...] an EU-wide monitoring process and award could be developed for best employment practices in hiring and permitting career progression for precarious faculty members"

ii) The increasing responsibilities of EASA and other professional associations that "could and should prioritize lobbying activities aimed at mitigating the effects of multiplicity of economic, ecological and social crises – exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic – on their members.

Such recommendations should be made public at the level at all the national and international learned societies of anthropology in order to avoid bad practices of employing precarious young scholars. It is in this context that the WCAA Task Force on precarity was created. This Task Force is thought as a platform for conversations on the experiences, meanings, and tensions of academic precarity in different national, regional or international contexts of the anthropological associations. More than ever, there is an urgent need to envision concrete action, on both political and institutional levels, in response to a pervasive and endless process of precarization. In order to create synergies, the Task Force intends to put up and start a precarity survey following the EASA model with the aim of questioning the status of precarity within the anthropological associations that are members of WCAA and that will cover different parts of the world.

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# Vibrant Interview:

## Hyang Jin Jung in South Korea

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**(1)** What are the main topics of anthropological research and teaching in South Korea today? And what, if I may, are you using as data or evidence of them?

In the newest trend in research and teaching in Korean anthropology, I find topics like queer, animal rights, caring and welfare, gender and feminism, mental health, digital finance, and social media and online sociality, all of which reflect the latest social and cultural changes, both local and global. Alongside with these topics, there is a robust current of critical anthropology addressing social issues, such as urban redevelopment, neoliberalism, youth and unemployment, migration, and social disaster, while research studies about the COVID19 are beginning to be published. Historical ethnographic studies of the Japanese colonial rule and related contemporary issues have also made a strong presence in Korean anthropology in recent years.

For my evidence, I primarily used the two (Korean-language) anthropology journals in South Korea, *Korean Cultural Anthropology* (한국문화인류학) and *Cross-Cultural Studies* (비교문화연구), and anthropology course syllabi from several different universities (same for question #2).

**(2)** Have those topics been of interest to anthropologists in South Korea for many years or are they relatively new? Again, what are you using as data or evidence of them?

Topics like animal rights, digital finance, or online sociality are very new, while most other topics in the above have been around for the past ten to twenty years. Other, more enduring topics include family and kinship, community sociality and revitalization, ritual, cultural heritage and tourism, war and state violence, and other consequences of modernization. These topics generally cut across different regional interests, although ethno-historical studies are mostly done about Korea or South Korea. Speaking of regional interests, Northeast Asia (China and Japan), Southeast Asia, and South Korea itself are three main areas among Korean anthropologists, while other regions like Latin America or Middle East are also researched, though less frequently. For the size we are, the regional diversity in Korean anthropology is remarkable.

(3) Has the war with North Korea, and the long-time division of the Korean peninsula, had any impact on anthropological research and teaching in South Korea? Please detail this as much as possible.

Quite a few Korean anthropologists have studied how the Korean War and the national division have affected people's lives, for example, through oral histories of war refugees or survivors of incidents of state violence over ideological allegiance. Lately, some anthropologists are also working with North Korean defectors coming to South Korea. As far as North Korea itself is concerned, however, it is so far out of reach, so it doesn't seem to have any real impact on our anthropological research and teaching in general, which paradoxically shows how profound the impact has been. North Korean studies is big in South Korea, mostly drawing from the disciplines of political science, international relations, economics, or sociology, as well as humanities disciplines. The impossibility of on-site fieldwork in North Korea has practically barred anthropologists from taking it as an anthropological other. To South Koreans, North Korea may be the ultimate example of "the familiar made strange." Yet it has not rendered itself to be approached as such. I note that a few anthropologists, including myself, are endeavoring to do anthropological research and teach about North Korea. There are a couple of anthropological monographs about North Korea as well.

Apart from the immediate problems in researching and teaching about North Korea anthropologically, the war and division more deeply influenced anthropology in South Korea. To try a subjunctive, if we had been a unified Korea, that is, if there had been no division when the Japanese colonial rule (1910-45) ended, it might have been particularly more favorable to anthropology. I speak with an actual historical episode in mind. Upon the liberation, a group of scholars who had been trained in ethnographic research during the colonial time founded the National Museum of Ethnology. Their vision was, I believe, to de-colonize Korean people's self-perception by putting Korea into a wider comparative horizon of peoples and cultures. Yet the Korean War soon broke out and the museum was short-lived. Decades later, Korean Folk Museum (presently, National Folk Museum of Korea) was opened, which on its website claims to have succeeded the National Museum of Ethnology. In my view, the change of "ethnology" to "folk" paradigmatically witnessed a change in public sentiments vis-à-vis the world at the time: from the hopefulness and willingness to engage in the immediate post-liberation years to the inward-looking inclination after the war and in the following several decades. It was probably that the concept of "folk" served better the public's longing for what they perceived were being lost in Korean society during the time of rapid modernization (see #4 for a related issue involving folklore studies). I also ponder that Korean society being homogenous ethnolinguistically, the "folk" became a sort of an internal cultural other.

For the discipline of anthropology to flourish, it needs a public who is interested in knowing about other societies, other cultures. Not only the colonial subjugation, but also the national division by the super powers, the subsequent Korean War started by North Korea, and the ongoing Cold War paradigm on the Korean peninsula, all have contributed to a certain defensive national consciousness among South Koreans, which works against fostering anthropological interests in the public. The tension and competition among the neighboring countries in Northeast Asia (China, Japan, North Korea, and South Korea) are another factor in the defensive nationalism among South Koreans. However, the time may be changing. Along with the maturing of democracy in political and social spheres, the global success of the Korean popular culture has undoubtedly given South Korean people a new sense of confidence to move forward to a more open engagement with the world at large. I am cautiously positive that anthropology will be able to garner more public support and take a firmer root in South Korean society.

(4) How many anthropologists do you believe there are in South Korea today, and what are the main issues they debate? It would be helpful to know the breakdown of anthropologists by region, gender, age, generation, or socioeconomic class/status/family background.

Anthropology in South Korea is predominantly sociocultural, as physical or biological anthropology is much less developed, so I speak about sociocultural anthropology here. I will briefly touch on physical anthropology later.

I estimate the number of practicing anthropologists to be around 200. The number of full members of the Korean Society for Cultural Anthropology (KSCA), the only professional society for anthropologists in South Korea, stands at 151, as of this writing. The number of anthropologists holding professional positions in universities or other institutions is a little less than 150. Those in institutional positions are not necessarily members of the KSCA, though mostly they are. With the help from other anthropologists, available public information, and my own knowledge, I was able to compile the general demographic information and academic backgrounds of 153 anthropologists, which I use as a base group in the following answers.

Meaningful social categories among Korean anthropologists are made along the lines of gender, age, and the granting institution of their doctoral degree (domestic or international). In terms of gender, females are 46% (70 out of 153) of the practicing anthropologists in my list. In terms of age, those in their 40s and 50s count the biggest numbers, each 35%, followed by those in their 60s (18%) and their 70s (7%). South Korean institutions have a compulsory retirement: university's retirement age is 65 and in other institutions it tends to be earlier. This affects the activeness of those in the 60s and beyond. When gender and age are combined, a generational change is shown. Out of the 153 anthropologists, those in their 60s through the 80s, males are 28 and females 13. In the 50s bracket, the gender ratio is more balanced with 30 males and 24 females. In the 40s, the ratio is reversed: 24 males and 30 females.

The home institution of the doctoral degree, whether it is an "abroad" (*haewoe*) or "domestic" (*gungnae*) one, has long made a conspicuous social category among anthropologists like in the Korean academia in general, whereby the degrees from the Western countries, particularly the US, are considered as better academic credentials and are granted more (or far more) prestige than degrees from South Korean institutions which have a prestige scale among themselves. Among those in my list, the US degree holders are 44%; the British, Australian, and French degree holders are 5%, 3%, and 3% respectively. The degree holders from the Western countries altogether make up 55%. The South Korean degree holders are 35%, while the Japanese degree holders are 4%. The rest of the home institutions of the doctoral degree include Canada, Germany, China, India, Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, Israel, and Mexico, each with rarely more than one case. When the degree-granting institution is combined with age, there emerges an interesting recent trend. To compare the numbers of US and South Korean degree holders only, US degree holders outnumber South Korean degree holders in the age brackets of the 70s (8 vs. 1), the 60s (13 vs. 8), and the 50s (25 vs. 16), but in the 40s bracket, South Korean degree holders outnumber US degree holders (16 vs. 26). This reflects that with the political and economic advances of the society, South Korean higher education institutions have increasingly recruited more graduate students; that in anthropology specifically, those in their 70s through 50s, many of whom had studied abroad, have made conscious efforts to train the next generations of anthropologists in South Korean graduate programs.

To speak of debate issues in Korean anthropology, I break them down into theoretical issues and identity issues of the discipline. First, for the theoretical side, although many Korean anthropologists are specialized in many different regions outside South Korea, it is mostly in the studies of Korea that theoretical debates have occurred. It is perhaps because Korea is the regional focus for a large enough number of anthropologists, as well as because anthropological research about Korea can more readily enter into conversations with other

Korean social sciences. Most notably, Korean anthropologists have debated about the sociality of a traditional village community (hierarchy vs. egalitarianism) and its transformation, and the characteristics of Korean kinship and social structure, and the degree of the predominance of the Confucian family ideology and its continuing (or diminishing) significance. These debates are closely tied to the anthropological interests in the cultural identity, continuities and changes of the people and society under the rapid modernization.

Secondly, there have been debates around the identity and scope of the discipline, that is, around “what kind of anthropology” Korean anthropology should be. Foremost among them is the issue whether anthropology should relate to folklore studies and how. The relationship between folklore studies and anthropology is complicated not only with the tension between description and analysis, or data and theory, but also with the postcolonial consciousness over knowledge production, with which anthropology may be the “imperialist suspect.” In recent years, however, the boundary between the two disciplines has become more blurred. Particularly those anthropologists working in the areas of cultural heritage and community revitalization have attempted intellectual conversations with folklore studies in their research and teaching, while many folklore scholars are not shy of using anthropological theories. Anthropology is better represented institutionally as departments or programs, but the field of folklore studies has a far larger number of practicing scholars with four different professional societies (and one national museum), drawing from a wide array of humanities (e.g., literature, religious studies, ethnomusicology) as well as from anthropology and folklore studies proper.

I add that the debates around these issues had their peak times in the 1980s and 1990s through the early 2000s. In the more recent years, however, Korean anthropological scholarship has been rather quiet, despite there are many theoretical issues that can potentially make rich and exciting debates. Let alone debates per se, there don't seem to be enough intellectual conversations among anthropologists. There may be a number of reasons for this, but I think the increasing integration of local scholarship into the global academic market is a substantial one. Since the mid-2000s, publishing in the citation-indexed, predominantly English-language, journals has been prioritized, i.e., has counted more, for employment or tenure. This institutionalized drive for “global excellence” in a way intensifies the dominance of the Western scholarship, particularly in theory-making, as you are compelled to make references to the theoretical literature familiar to English-speaking audiences, which is overcarried into Korean-language publications. This circumstance is hardly favorable to intellectual conversations among local scholars across the board. Another, related yet more deeply-running, factor may be a general perception among Korean anthropologists that “we do not have an intellectual heritage to carry on.” Perhaps I am being too critical here, but in our academic practice, we tend not to look to what our predecessors (or colleagues) had to offer. When there is not much of a shared ground or efforts to make one, debates are not likely to happen.

Lastly and briefly, to report on physical or biological anthropology, the Seoul National University Department of Anthropology is, presently, the only department that has a physical/biological anthropologist. The SNU Anthropology has produced several doctorates in physical or biological anthropology. In several regional national universities, anthropology is jointed with archaeology, but those joint programs do not have physical anthropologists. The Korean Society for Physical Anthropology was established in 1958 and in 1988 began to publish its journal, *Anatomy & Biological Anthropology* (formerly, *Korean Journal of Physical Anthropology*). Its members are drawn primarily from anatomy and related fields in medicine and dental science, but physical and biological anthropologists from the SNU Anthropology are active members of the association.

(5) What are the main anthropological journals and associations in South Korea, and what do you think are the publishing houses that are most willing to publish books by anthropologists?

The Korean Society of Cultural Anthropology is the professional society for sociocultural anthropologists. It was founded in 1958 and started its flagship journal, *Korean Cultural Anthropology* (한국문화인류학), in 1968. The two other journals, *Cross-Cultural Studies* (비교문화연구) and *Korean Anthropology Review* are published by the Seoul National University Department of Anthropology. *Korean Cultural Anthropology* (thrice-yearly) and *Cross-Cultural Studies* (twice-yearly) are similar in scope and orientation, probably the former representing the more cutting-edge, theoretically oriented scholarship of Korean anthropology. *Korean Anthropology Review: A journal of Korean anthropology in translation* (annual) is an English-language journal that carries translations of select articles previously published in the two Korean anthropology journals. I listed the names of the association and journal for physical anthropology in #4.

For the publishing houses most willing to publish anthropology books, I would name Seoul National University Press, Iljogak, Jipmundang, Minsokwon, and Nulmin, but recently many other publishers have published anthropology monographs that appeal to a larger public.

(6) Are there any themes or topics that are of interest to foreign anthropologists but not welcome as areas of specialization among anthropologists in South Korea? And vice versa, in other words, are there any themes or topics that are of interest to anthropologists in South Korea that you think are not welcome as areas of specialization among foreign anthropologists (at least foreign anthropologists who work in and on South Korea)?

Korean Christianity and corporate culture, two very different yet equally emblematic aspects of a capitalist Korea, have produced significant anthropological scholarship among foreign anthropologists specialized in South Korea, but not as much among Korean anthropologists. I understand that for a Korean anthropologist, it may be more difficult to gain a fieldwork entry to a conglomerate company, let alone publishing the result in Korean. The case of Korean Christianity is interesting. Apart from an entry problem, it may also be the relative lack of interests in Christianity on the part of Korean anthropological scholarship in general, when Korean shamanism has been considered a classical, endangered (“by Christianity”) anthropological subject. Korean popular culture also comes to mind. Internationally, there seem great demands for ethnographically produced knowledge on K-pop and other phenomena of K-culture, but Korean anthropologists have not been actively undertaking studies in this area, with a few exceptions.

Those themes that have stimulated greater interests among Korean anthropologists include kinship ideology and practice, transformations of the traditional status system, ethnoecological adaptation, and indigenous knowledge, with rural or fishing villages, including remote islands, as frequent fieldwork sites. Researching in these thematic areas often involves an ethnohistorical approach to a varying degree, which may require extensive research with old documents and in some cases an adequate degree of literacy in the Chinese characters. It is not only that Korean anthropologists are generally better prepared to do historical data-based research; but also that they have taken it seriously to witness and theorize the cultural transformations under modernization and urbanization of South Korean society.



**(7)** How is employment today for university graduates in anthropology? As in question 5 above, it would be helpful to have this information broken down by region, gender, age, generation, and socioeconomic class, status, or family background. For example, do you think it is harder for someone from a rural area to find employment with a degree in anthropology? Or do you think it is harder for women with a university degree in anthropology to find employment?

For undergrads, the job market is very tight, regardless of their major, so it is not particularly worse for those majoring in anthropology. Many undergraduates in my department are opting to go to a professional school upon graduation, typically in law or medicine. For those with a master's in anthropology, they have a niche market, like research firms, museums, or non-governmental organizations. For those with a doctorate, most degree holders have professional jobs in anthropology-related institutions, although university professorship is harder to get. Nationwide there are only 11 universities with anthropology departments or programs, including one graduate-level only program, with a total of 46 anthropology positions in my counting. Many anthropology doctors are hired in various departments such as Korean studies, sociology, area studies, or general liberal education. Still others work in research institutions or museums. I note that the strength of anthropological scholarship, particularly in the studies of East Asia and Southeast Asia, has created many job opportunities beyond anthropology in the Korean academia.

Region, socioeconomic class, or family background do not usually impact employment, but gender and age do. With the compulsory retirement and the culture of seniority, age is an important consideration when hiring; younger and junior scholars are preferred. In terms of gender, I do not deny that in anthropology too, the male is the preferred gender; however, female anthropologists presently occupy 16 out of the 46 positions (35%) held in anthropology departments, which are more coveted, compared to positions in other departments or non-university institutions.

**(8)** Would most anthropologists in South Korea say that they are liberal, progressive, traditional, conservative, apolitical, Marxist, globalist, radical, or nationalist? Perhaps none of those work there, though they are frequently chosen as self-descriptors by anthropologists in a number of other countries. If these terms don't work for anthropologists in South Korea, what term or terms would be better?

In the civil society and the political circle, and in the academia to a less degree, "progressives" (*jinbo*) and "conservatives" (*bosu*) are self-identifying or otherwise social descriptors, but most anthropologists would not identify themselves as either. My conjecture is that they are fairly liberal and progressive overall regarding social issues, while politically they are more likely to be center-right or center-left. They also tend to have a certain distance from nationalist agendas, although they would largely share a nationalist consciousness.

**(9)** How does one become an anthropologist in South Korea today? This is the main question here but I have a number of other pedagogical questions, too, as follow ups. For example, do all universities include anthropology departments or programs, or just some of them? Are there fields, like sociology, that claim that there is no difference between them and anthropology and, therefore, say that they train people to do anthropological research and teaching? Does training in anthropology in South Korea require long-term fieldwork, and is that fieldwork generally done in South Korea itself? Is knowledge of languages other than Korean required? Your English is terrific and you worked in and on the U.S. for many years, but are you/were you unusual in doing so?

To be a professional anthropologist, one has to have a doctoral degree in anthropology. As pointed out earlier, there are 11 anthropology departments or programs nationwide, ten of which have a doctoral program. Among the disciplines of humanities and social sciences, anthropology is one of the least represented in Korean academic institutions. Many prospective graduate students choose to go abroad, mainly to US, for a doctoral study, but Korean anthropology programs have become more competitive in recent years.

In South Korea, sociology is far more established and predominantly quantitative. There are more than 40 sociology departments or programs nationwide. I know of an anthropology textbook written by a group of sociologists at a major private university, which rarely employs anthropology degree holders even as instructors. In my knowledge, a couple of sociology departments have hired an anthropologist. Outside anthropology, the discipline is usually associated with ethnography or qualitative research, so when other social scientists look to anthropology, it is most often for the methodological aspects. In some fields, like education and sports studies, they train students in qualitative research and call their sub-field “educational anthropology” or the “anthropology of sports,” but there is not much communication between sociocultural anthropology and these other anthropologies.

Yes, a dissertation project in anthropology requires long-term fieldwork of a year or more. For the information of fieldwork sites, I looked at the area topic of the doctoral dissertation of the anthropologists in my list. South Korea has attracted the largest number of doctoral projects (41%). It is followed by Japan (14%), China (11%), and the regions of Southeast Asia (10%). The rest cover a wide variety of countries from Mexico to Tunisia, to India, to South Pacific, to Ireland, or to Russia. Among the minor area specialties, US has been the field site in a small yet considerable number of dissertation projects (5%), each of which was done for a graduate program in the US. Similarly, France has been researched by several Korean anthropologists while pursuing a degree in a French institution (2%). Latin America (5%) has also attracted relatively more dissertation projects, done mostly for US or British graduate programs.

In terms of language, proficiency in the language of one’s field site is a must. Plus, English has increasingly become the second language in the Korean academia; younger-generation scholars are particularly expected to be fluent not only in reading but also in speaking and writing in academic English.

Am I unusual in studying US anthropologically? As shown above, there are quite a few other Korean anthropologists who did their fieldwork in and wrote their dissertation on US. I may be unusual only in that I have continued working on US, after returning to South Korea, but I have to confess that my supposedly current US project has been sitting idle for many years now, while I am committed to North Korea research.

**(10)** What courses are required of students in anthropology, and does the assigned reading typically include non-Korean authors, and not just Western European or U.S. authors, but also Latin American, African, and Asian authors??

Most typically, History of Anthropology, Anthropological Theories, and Ethnographic Field Research and Methods are required courses. For reading assignments, in our department at Seoul National University, we tend to assign texts in Korean and by Korean anthropologists for undergraduates, but use English-language texts as well. For graduates, the majority of readings are in English. Many of the English-language texts are authored by US or British anthropologists, but they also include English publications by Korean anthropologists and US-based anthropologists of a non-US origin. We use Korean or English translations of French texts fairly regularly. In the case of authors from other than US or Western Europe, if their texts are translated into Korean or English, they are more likely to be used in courses. Overall, we have heavily relied on English-language texts for graduate-level training, whether they are by English-speaking authors or translations.

**(11)** Is there much talk among anthropologists in South Korea of World Anthropology or World Anthropologies? I know that a South Korean association belongs to the WCAA (the World Council of Anthropological Associations), but I do not know what most anthropologists in South Korea mean by that term (or those terms). Do you know, and could you at least hazard an educated guess?

I don't think there is much talk of "world" anthropologies among South Korean anthropologists. My guess is that the majority of Korean anthropologists are not much aware of the existence of the WCAA, although the Korean Society for Cultural Anthropology is indeed a member association. I note, however, that there have been considerable efforts to connect with anthropologists based in the other parts of Northeast Asia, to help build East Asian anthropologies. Currently the East Asian Anthropological Association (EAAA) holds an annual conference, rotating its venue among China, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

**(12)** Is there a "brain drain" in South Korea? In other words, is there fear in South Korea that students who go abroad for graduate school (like you did) will not come back to South Korea? You did, of course, but do most anthropologists? I guess I think that it would be useful to know both if anthropology students feel pressured to go abroad for their doctorates and if there is fear in South Korea that they will not come back.

The pressure is certainly there to go abroad to obtain a doctorate from an overseas institution, preferably US, but then there is a strong desire to come back to South Korea, generally speaking. Even if you are hired in a top-tier university in US, you still want to come back, at the risk of having to take a lower-tier position in Korea. The "best scenario" is to obtain a doctorate at a US higher education institution and secure a professorship position at a South Korean university. Yet as I spoke earlier, the pulling power of a domestic doctoral degree has been remarkably increasing in recent years. With younger generations of Korean anthropologists, the "best scenario" may be changing.

**(13)** Are there things I should have asked and didn't?

No. Thank you for all the questions. They really pushed me hard to reflect on the current state of affairs in Korean anthropology.

# Anthropology in India and Anthropological Journals in India

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**VRD:** Nilika, you are the current Editor of *Indian Anthropologist*. If you look at issues published in the last 10 years, what would you say are the leading issues or topics you and your colleagues work on? And is it different if you look at other anthropology journals from India and abroad including *Contributions to Indian Sociology*?

**NM:** In Indian Anthropology the leading issues that have appeared in *Indian Anthropologist* are in the fields of Indigenous issues, Development studies, Public Health, Environmental issues, Urban and gender studies. There are competing journals like *Sociological Bulletin*, *The Eastern Anthropologist*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, *Social Change* and some others where in addition to these economic and political subjects like poverty, labour, protest and movements, Dalit (caste issues) and minorities (Muslim), issues of governance and public policy find place. I largely work on Gender and disability issues. On the latter very few publications appear in the journals.

**VRD:** If you look at the earliest issues of *Indian Anthropologist*, do the issues your predecessors published at that time resonate very much with what you are doing today? In other words, what has changed, if anything, in the journal?

**NM:** A closer examination of the earlier volumes of *Indian Anthropologist* (IA), which ran in its 50<sup>th</sup> volume in 2020, reveals that a lot has changed. Right from the beginning IA endeavored to publish papers from 3 major sub-branches of anthropology i.e. social/cultural anthropology, physical/biological anthropology and pre-history/archaeology. In the early days, many articles were published on themes in social anthropology in 70s. In the 80s and early 90s, there were larger numbers of contributions from physical/biological anthropologists. From mid 90s onwards, social anthropologists and sociologists have published more articles in the journal. Contributions from pre-historic archaeologists have been very few and those are primarily symbolic in nature.

Since I got associated with *Indian Anthropologist* from early 2000, one saw an increasing emphasis on topics of inter-disciplinary interests and many thematic issues have been published like 'Women and HIV/AIDS,' 'Folk narratives,' 'Health policies,' 'Everyday state,' 'Public policy,' Urban Ecology, 'Methodological Issues in Disability Research,' 'Transformation in theories,' etc. One of the important changes is the increasing number of publications from younger scholars working in anthropology and allied fields while it was the reverse in the early years of the journal, when senior anthropologists published in its pages. *Indian Anthropologist* has a global as well as national reach today due to its being hosted by JSTOR in comparison to the past, when it was largely consumed locally within anthropology academia.

**VRD:** Are there other anthropological journals in India? Do they have different interests and preferences?

**NM:** There are many other anthropology journals. The oldest being *Man in India* (MI), established in 1921 by Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Roy at, Ranchi, Central India, *The Eastern Anthropologist* (EA), established in 1947 by D. N. Majumdar at Lucknow, North India, and the *Journal of Indian Anthropological Society* (JIAS) established in 1966 at Kolkata, Eastern India. They along with IA have been running without any break for several decades. Many other anthropology journals started in earlier decades; however, they could not sustain their continuity. Some new have also started.

**VRD:** Do they face challenges that are particular to them or that you all face?

**NM:** The major challenges before most of the journals have been both financial and human personnel. Except *Man in India*, which was started by one of the first professional anthropologist in India, Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Roy, other journals have been organs of anthropological associations that are voluntary in nature, being groups of professional anthropologists. In the absence of any state patronage or private funding, the journals have struggled to stay afloat on the basis of lifetime membership fees, subscriptions and meager sales. Some years ago, EA has been taken over by one private publisher and their financial condition has improved. In the recent past, publishing houses of the stature of Sage Publications wanted to take over IA, but their conditions were not acceptable to the Indian Anthropological Association. One of the major points of conflict of interest was the publishing house's refusal to provide hard copies to the life members. The second problem before many journals has been lack of commitment to voluntary editorial responsibility. In the case of the above-mentioned journals, the editorial teams have committed their valuable time and energy to keeping the journals afloat.

One of the major challenges faced by anthropology journals today is the scarcity of good research and language issues. Barring few instances, the declining standards of research and poor training in English language are some of the major challenges we face today. Another challenge is authors, reluctance and sometimes refusal to revise the paper after receiving critical peer reviews. Many authors, especially the senior colleagues, do not want to be subjected to criticism, and that is perhaps the reason why we receive fewer papers from senior scholars.

**VRD:** Do you all publish in English? And is the language of publication something that is taken for granted by anthropologists in India? Is this just an example of neocolonialism or the legacy of colonialism in India?

**NM:** The above-mentioned journals are in English and, yes, it is true that owing to the continued legacy of colonial practices in education, English has become the de-facto medium of communication in higher educational settings; anthropology is no exception to that. In north India, however, the Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society that brings out the EA also brings out a journal, *Manav* in 'Hindi', the lingua franca of India. Beside this at different points of time, some anthropology journals appeared in 'Bangla' in eastern India and south Indian languages but they have not been able to sustain their presence in academia. In some state universities a few journals have been published in vernacular languages but many have not been able to sustain themselves. Since anthropology is taught in very few departments (47), English is predominantly the medium of instruction. It is different in other fields. Subjects like political science, history, and sociology are being taught in vernacular mediums. As mentioned above, though anthropology is preeminently taught in English, very poor quality of writing is evidenced owing to poor training in English at the school level.

**VRD:** India has an enormous population in general, and many academics, but am I wrong in thinking that it still has a small population of anthropologists (of any sort)?

**SMP:** I think you are right, India has very few anthropologists in comparison to academicians from other subjects. There are many reasons for this, first being that anthropology is a relatively new subject, which started only in the early part of the 20th century as a professional discipline in a few universities in India. Its association with colonialism and its implications for the nature of shaping the subject have something to do with it not being visible in the public sphere. Though the contemporary Indian anthropology has pitched itself on many unconventional places, the association of anthropology in India with the study of tribes has been still continuing. There are many anthropologists who continue to work with the tribes and indigenous communities. Tribes have been one of the most excluded populations who never got their due in Indian polity, economy and society. Anthropology as a subject has low visibility also in terms of career prospects for students since it is also not taught at the school level. It is not a popular subject in universities, but it is preferred a lot by civil services aspirants. In recent decades, people with anthropological training have been finding placement in the development sector. The ethnographic methodology has been utilised by other subject specialists who fail to give due acknowledgement to anthropology. One important reason for anthropology's modest profile is also the fast emerging popularity of sociology, which is taught at school and college level in all parts of the country. Education policy matters have confined anthropology to areas dominated by tribal populations thinking that the anthropologist could mainly provide expertise on the population. This stereotyping and neglect have caused anthropology to pay a high price.

**VRD:** Are there enough positions in universities, colleges, NGOs, and government agencies for graduates of universities in anthropology? Do most anthropologists in India teach and do research?

**NM:** Since there are very few departments of anthropology in India, only a few graduates get to enter academia (departments and colleges). There are more anthropologists serving in the public universities and colleges in eastern India and now some private universities have also opened their doors to anthropologists. In addition to this, Anthropological Survey of India, an organization of the Government of India has been recruiting anthropology graduates at different levels. Many biological anthropology graduates have worked in medical and public health institutions including the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR),

another public sector institution. There are some social science research institutes aided by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) where anthropologists have found work. Further, in recent decades anthropologists have joined the development sector working in both local and international NGOs. Some also work in the corporate sector in advertising, Human Resources, research and marketing divisions.

**SMP:** Anthropologists have also been finding jobs in various fields outside academia. After independence, anthropologists were recruited on the international borders of north east India as members of the Indian Frontier Administrative Service (IFAS) which came up in 1954 as a part of the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's policy on North Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA) which he developed in collaboration with Verrier Elwin, a very important missionary turned anthropologist. The idea was to win over the hearts and minds of frontier people with sensitivity, care and friendliness using the presumably expert knowledge of anthropology. Officers were specifically selected and trained on the basis of how popular they were with the local tribes. The IFAS officers were given freedom to act as deemed necessary, somewhat similar to a kind of autonomy, which Sol Tax visualized for action anthropologists in 1958. However, this service was discontinued in 1968 due to stagnation and taking over of many of its services by the Indian Army especially by the Border Roads Organizations (BRO).

Currently anthropology has been a very popular optional course in the coveted civil services examinations conducted by the Union Public Service Commission and the top bracket students join the prestigious Indian Administrative Service (IAS).

Anthropologists also find placements in museums, office of Registrar General, Census Operation, and forensic laboratories. As NM mentioned earlier, anthropologists are finding jobs in the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FICCI), where anthropological skills are used in business and corporate houses, especially in the field of marketing, branding and big ticket purchasing.

**VRD:** There was a time not that long ago when the Indian government frowned on foreign anthropologists coming to India to do fieldwork. In fact, I know people who put down that they were sociologists in order to get research visas.

**NM:** As mentioned earlier, people working on politically sensitive areas might find it difficult to get a research visa. However, in my association with many anthropologists, I did not see any particular reason for them not getting a visa. I have been on Fulbright foundation committees where I did not find any reservation being expressed by the committee. Rather I found large number of US students exploring anthropological themes coming to India for field research.

**SMP:** Even I also feel so. Maybe some foreign anthropologists found it easy to get a visa as sociologists, but to the best of my knowledge such distinctions do not exist at the level of issuance of Indian visas. You may be referring to a specific case where the scholar's academic training or country of origin or the route of travel could be a concern for the visa office, but not as a general rule discriminating the anthropologists.

**VRD:** I have happily worked with young Indians who have come to the U.S. to do their doctoral work, and I have found them quite good, but I worry that there is some form of *brain drain* in India and that some of your best students get pressured to get their doctorates in the U.S., the U.K., Canada, and perhaps Australia. Can't good students today get excellent doctoral training in anthropology in India? Is it a matter of prestige, or habit, or something else altogether?

**NM:** Since the eighties there has been a popular trend where students from India have been going to the USA to take degrees in anthropology and many have also settled in faculty positions there. I clearly see an Indian-American diaspora pretty visible in American anthropology today. To me it appears as a phenomenon of status mobility, a new kind of elite formation in India. Those were largely children of elite, upper caste/class families of India who did not see any value in being educated in Indian public universities. They were chasing the 'American dream' in the pursuit of money, power and prestige. Professor Andre Beteille, the eminent sociologist from India, once explained to me in a personal conversation that the aspirational middle class of India is trying to maintain higher status and prestige by sending their children abroad for studies, and this is a new kind of inequality emergent from the 80s and the 90s. On the other hand, it is also true that there has been a systematic decline in the standard of education in the public universities of India barring the University of Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru university, University of Hyderabad and a few others where the training of anthropology is comparable to the best of the world. In recent years I have also noticed that people trained in anthropology from foreign universities are being recruited by the private universities.

**SMP:** Having a degree from abroad is definitely a status symbol and a matter of prestige. Many rich parents send their daughters to the UK for a one year Master' degree program spending a minimum of nearly 40,000 USD. Many a time it leads to an academic branding, and sometimes it enhances their marriage prospects. This is how the upper caste/class contribute to elite formation and maintenance. Bright students in physical and natural sciences aspiring for a degree from a Western university have gone abroad and become a kind of academic habit in post-independence India. Social Sciences have been following this trend of late.

This need for branding has caused implicit pressure on young minds to go abroad in pursuance of higher studies. They come up with excellent ethnographies, innovative and socially responsive topics that are theoretically rich and empirically grounded. Some of them return to India, but the *brain drain* starts when others compete for tenure track positions in US universities and settle down there. Some of the reasons for settling down there is the work culture, professional rigor and ethics, commitment to quality and excellence which are difficult to find in other places.

**VRD:** Is there a class, region, language, religion, or caste factor in India both when it comes to who becomes an anthropologist there, and who gets studied there? I think there is something like that in many countries, including the U.S.

**NM:** Though there are no systematic studies on this subject, a cursory glance reveals that for a long time, upper caste, middle class members of Indian society chose to study and practice anthropology. It is interesting to see larger number of anthropologists coming from most educated states of India (i.e. Kerala and Bengal), Bombay (western India, Maharashtra). Today Bengali anthropologists along with Odia colleagues (anthropologists from Odisha) seem to dominate the diaspora and the local set ups in north India. Large number of Punjabi and Hindi-speaking anthropologists also came from Delhi, Lucknow and Chandigarh (North India). It was largely a male-dominated discipline with very few women being trained there. But today a change is clearly visible; women constitute almost 80% of the student population and 50% of the faculty due to social change. Many individuals from the marginalised categories like Dalit (the so-called 'lower caste'), ST (scheduled tribe) and Muslims have also joined the discipline primarily due to India's reservation policy. There are a large number of anthropologists in India today who are doing interesting ethnographic research on their communities. The rise of this new breed of anthropologists has dissolved the distinction between us and them. Most of the early anthropologists worked on communities who were unequal in status with them but this has also been challenged.



**SMP:** I agree that factors like caste, class, region, language and religion influence two things, (i) who comes to anthropology and (ii) what is being studied. I will talk about the regional manifestation of the discipline in different parts of India with reference to its specialization. In north India, Panjab University of Chandigarh has emerged as the premier center for cutting edge research in physical/biological anthropology with specialization in paleoanthropology, paleoecology, forensic anthropology and human growth and development. This has influenced the department at Delhi, which has followed this path in biological anthropology but not so successfully as the Chandigarh department. Universities in northeast India including Guwahati are marked with a stronger presence of prehistoric archaeology (a specialization within anthropology). Shades of this are also evident in Calcutta and Utkal University on India's East Coast. In south India, Central University of Hyderabad has emerged as the premier center of social anthropology producing high quality research in the fields of medical anthropology, ecology, natural resource management, development studies and urban anthropology. Indian universities in central India focus on the study of indigenous communities and culture studies. However, there are overlappings across the regions but a broader picture points towards such a mapping of the subfields of anthropology or what is being studied across the regions.

**VRD:** Most anthropologists I know in various countries describe themselves as progressive, liberal, secular, socialist, or Marxist. Also, many anthropologists I know in various countries are critical of their state authorities and government officials. What is the scenario in India?

**NM:** Many anthropologists in India would like to describe themselves as liberals, socialist and secular. Though I also feel that many today might also support the right-wing policies of the government. In India, anthropologists in the past have worked closely with India's policy makers and bureaucrats. They have been critical of public policies and their implementation, irrespective of the nature of the political parties ruling the government, though it is also true that there are very few public intellectuals from anthropology who have taken a clear position *vis a vis* government policies

**SMP:** There is, however, another category of anthropologists who are currently trying to derive inspiration from Indian civilization and not necessarily from an exclusive Hindu majoritarian perspective. In other words, vedantic philosophies have started providing the point of departure for developing a new kind of Indian anthropology. They are being taken as important sources of logic and its perusal for knowing the world, both material and non-material, so that the ultimate truth is revealed.

In most of cases, anthropological work in India tries to escape from situating the phenomena within the ambit of the State. While physical/biological anthropologists have conveniently ignored the presence of the State, the social anthropologists in provincial universities have fashionably taken up the role of providing unsolicited recommendations to the State, as a colonial hangover. Anthropologists are largely dealing with the issues of development policy and practice, public health, women's empowerment, tourism, NGOs and disaster management.

**VRD:** Is there any intellectual or scholarly interchange among anthropologists in the subcontinent, or is that simply impossible given current (and longstanding) issues since the partition? For example, are there Pakistani anthropologists doing fieldwork in India, or Indian anthropologists doing fieldwork in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka or the Maldives?

**NM:** There have been very clear scholarly exchanges among the anthropologists in the sub-continent. Students have been coming to India to study anthropology from Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan and even Afghanistan. With Pakistan, however, things have been uneven. I remember at JNU, we used to receive Pakistani students some years back but no longer due to visa issues. Delhi also has a 'South Asian University' where there are sociologists and social anthropologists working together in the department of sociology. They have also brought out a good number of publications on their work together. I do not remember working with any scholar or student from the Maldives. It may be difficult to point out the reasons for this, though some students might be going to south India. India is a huge country with so much diversity that it is difficult to generalize. Many scholars have worked with those from south Asian countries especially feminists and those working on human rights.

**SMP:** The intellectual and scholarly interchange among anthropologists in the subcontinent may not be significant, but it is noticeable. The University of Delhi has been attracting students from Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka for their doctoral research. But they prefer to do fieldwork in their own countries. I know one Pakistani scholar, Sheba Saeed, who has done her doctoral research among beggars in Mumbai. It was in anthropology of law and she was a student at a university in the United Kingdom.

Currently I have a doctoral student who is an assistant professor of anthropology at a public university in Bangladesh. I also have done extensive fieldwork in Sri Lanka and Nepal in the fields of disaster management, sustainable ecology, economic literacy and downward accountability. However, a south Asian platform is much needed for providing the anthropologists of the subcontinent with the intellectual and scholarly exchange needed in promoting cross boundary work.

**VRD:** Are there non-Muslim anthropologists in India who work on Islam itself or Muslim communities in India? And how about Muslim anthropologists in India working on Hinduism or Hindu communities in India? I ask because I recall a former colleague from India telling me that he was very liberal and open-minded, except when it came to Islam.

**NM:** There have been a few non-Muslim anthropologists in India who have worked on Islam and also on Muslim communities (e.g. Deepak Mehta, Ragini Sahay and Anusua Chatterjee). Some have also worked on the aftermath of communal riots in the past three decades in Bombay, Gujarat and elsewhere, like Roma Chatterjee, Deepak Mehta and Rowena Robinson. Today there are large number of Muslim anthropologists working on Muslim communities, as they want to bring out an insider's perspective. There is a raging debate between the left and the right in academia on the Hindu-Muslim question since the 70s. I remember T. N. Madan's paper on religious ideologies in a plural society among Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir, a contribution which appeared in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* in the early 1970s and later on his comprehensive edited work on Muslim Communities in South Asia (2001). His *Explorations in Anthropology of Islam* (2006) is also a significant contribution.

**SMP:** There are many Muslim anthropologists in India who have been working on topics of anthropological relevance other than Islam or Muslim communities. I shall refer to two such prominent anthropologists here. Sekh Rahim Mondal, formerly Head of Anthropology Department and Director, Himalayan Study Centre at North Bengal University have worked extensively on Himalayan communities belonging to all religions on the international borders of Bhutan and Myanmar. His doctoral work at Calcutta University, in the early 1980s, was a comparative account of Hindu and Muslim villages in the industrial belt of west Bengal.

Another anthropologist, Nadeem Hasnain, formerly Head of the Anthropology Department and Executive Editor *The Eastern Anthropologist* at the University of Lucknow also worked on non-Muslim tribal communities in different parts of India. His recent work on 'the other side of Lucknow', a classic in urban anthropology and culture studies is an inclusive ethnographic account elucidating the changing dimensions of city life. Hasnain's work on the changing status of other backward communities of India and bonded labour is about non-Muslim communities.

In addition to these, there are non-Muslim anthropologists who have worked on Muslim communities. Ranjit Bhattacharya, formerly Director of the Anthropological Survey of India worked on Moslems of Birbhum district of rural Bengal for his doctoral thesis under the supervision of Surajit Sinha in the early 1980s from Calcutta University. It was a study on social stratification and sociocultural boundary maintenance. Surajit Sinha was a student of Nirmal Kumar Bose, anthropologist turned freedom fighter and a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi. Both of them preferred the term 'moslem'-- an anglicized version of the word 'muslim'.

Kumkum Srivastava, a historian turned anthropologist, worked on the Kalandars, an antinomian Sufi sect with special reference to two shrines located in Delhi and Panipat in Haryana in North India. It was a work in historical anthropology combining first-hand fieldwork with the study of historical documents to explore the mystical Islamic beliefs and practices. This was her doctoral dissertation, which she did under my research supervision at the University of Delhi in the early 2000.'s

**VRD:** Soumendra, you took on a big administrative role recently, and you spearheaded bringing the 2023 IUAES Congress to India. Did that job and that initiative lead to attacks on you by fellow Indian anthropologists, or were they supportive?

**SMP:** Yes, recently I completed my tenure (2017-2020) as Vice Chancellor, Utkal University, a NAAC A+ and Category -I university in Odisha on India's east coast. Beginning in 1999, for nearly two decades the university was witnessing a lot of violence due to the presence of outsiders on campus having a vested interest in local polity and economy. Violence was rampant and so much entrenched into the everyday life of the campus that it was almost normalised. People took violence of any magnitude as a part of everyday campus life. As an administrator, instead of using coercion to discipline the recalcitrant students, I chose the Gandhian method of non-violence, persuading and counseling the students not to indulge in violence. Even I had to sit on a silent introspective day long fast to bring students' aggression under control. It was fulfilling to see that in the 150<sup>th</sup> year of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi, we could install his life size statue in front of the central library at a newly created amphitheater, *Ahimsa Sthal*, the citadel of non-violence as a perpetual reminder to the younger minds that violence leads to a blind lane.

The coming of the 19<sup>th</sup> IUAES-WAU World Anthropology Congress 2023 on the theme *Marginalities, Uncertainties and World Anthropologies: Enlivening the Past and Envisioning the Future* from 14 to 20 October 2023 is a historic event. This is coming to India after 45 years, the last one being in 1978 when L. P. Vidyarthi, the then President of the Indian Anthropological Association (IAA) was the main organizer. In 2018, IAA along with other collaborators won the bid and the much-awaited world congress came to India. However, after the Executive Committee of IUAES' unanimous decision to withdraw its collaboration from one of the partners, the problem began. Since then, I have been at the receiving end. Unsubstantiated criticism, baseless allegations and narrow parochial considerations and disciplinary fundamentalism have been the main source of such tendencies. However, my anthropological lessons on tolerance, non-violence and let it go approach have been very instrumental in sailing through the crisis. Most of the Indian anthropologists with a cosmopolitan outlook and an interdisciplinary orientation supported our stand and those with vested interests have distanced themselves from us. I have always believed that 'World Anthropology Congress' has to be inclusive of divergent

views and opinions and, as organizers of this mega event, we have kept our house open to all kinds of intellectual currents especially the indigenous voices. Many senior anthropologists through their well-researched work have supported our stand on this. The composition of our National Organizing Committee clearly reflects this.

**VRD:** Soumendra: the coming of the World Congress to India is a big event. Will it lead to any academic churning in this subcontinent? Will it be different from the earlier ones?

**SMP:** The 2023 Congress is a momentous occasion in the history of World Anthropology because for the first time it is being organized by IUAES under the umbrella structure of the World Anthropology Union (WAU), an important milestone in synergizing the many voices of one discipline on a global platform. This time the forthcoming World Congress has created an unprecedented response from different parts of the globe shaping a responsible and responsive World Anthropology.

Therefore, instead of taking it in a routinized way of organizing a conference, innovative academic events have been planned to create pathways for an anthropology of the future in terms of grooming the future leaders, connecting with civil society institutions, media houses and policy makers-- providing them a global platform for cross cultural exchange of ideas, the creation of transnational networks and the fostering of sustainable international linkages in different regions of the world, including the global south. Efforts are being made to reach out to the south Asian colleagues in this context.

In the IUAES-WAU Internship Program, especially designed for this World Congress, the young anthropologists will be groomed under the academic guidance of international mentors beginning in January 2022. Several Pre-Congress activities have been planned out in terms of Workshops, Webinars and Online conferences spreading over these two years to create an atmosphere of preparedness not only to optimize the Congress outputs but also to make its effects sustainable.

At present four prestigious institutions representing rich academic traditions and the intellectual heritage of Indian anthropology have come together to organize it. They are (i) the Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society of India (EFCS) founded in 1945, (ii) the Indian Anthropological Association (IAA) formed in 1964, (iii) the Department of Anthropology at the University of Hyderabad established in 1988, and (iv) the Discipline of Anthropology operational since 2010 at IGNOU. Each one of these captures disciplinary practices after nearly every two decades spread over last 75 glorious years of Indian Independence.

The University of Delhi shall host the main Congress at Delhi followed with a post congress followed with a Post Congress at Hyderabad and other places. The month of October is the time of festivities, social celebrations and cultural extravaganza in India. The festivals of Dussehra and Diwali have different regional variations with polysemic understandings of Indian traditions going back in time. More details are available on the official website [iuaes2023delhi.org](http://iuaes2023delhi.org).

# A Brief History of the First Global Survey of Anthropological Practice and Some Lessons Learned

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## Abstract

This brief article is intended to complement “The WCAA Global Survey of Anthropological Practice (2014-2018): Reported Findings” in this issue of *ViBrAnt*. The article details the internal processes within the World Council of Anthropological Associations through which the Global Survey of Anthropological Practice (GSAP) was initiated and developed. It also discusses the issues and challenges the research team faced, as well as how it endeavored to address them, in carrying out a global survey of anthropologists. The principal aim of the GSAP was to create a knowledge base about the professional practice of anthropologists globally that could be used by the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA) and its member associations to help promote the value and relevance of the discipline. With its fifty-odd member associations from all continents, the WCAA was uniquely positioned to gather these data, and the GSAP process effectively remade this network of associations into a large-scale research consortium. The development and intent of the survey, the particular actors involved and actions taken in its development, are thus critical to its fruition, as well as its shortcomings. The historical process itself contains valuable insights for any future endeavors to survey practitioners of anthropology on a global scale.

**Keywords:** Global, research, collaboration, world anthropologies, anthropological practice.

# Breve História da Primeira Pesquisa Global de Práticas Antropológicas e Algumas Lições Aprendidas

## Resumo

Este breve texto pretende complementar o artigo “The WCAA Global Survey of Anthropological Practice (2014-2018): Reported Findings”, incluso nesta edição da *ViBrAnt*. O texto detalha os processos internos do Conselho Mundial de Associações Antropológicas por meio dos quais a *Pesquisa Global de Práticas Antropológicas* (GSAP) foi iniciada e desenvolvida. Também discute questões e desafios enfrentados pela equipe de pesquisa, bem como os esforços para abordá-los, ao realizar uma pesquisa global sobre antropólogos. O principal objetivo do GSAP era criar uma base de conhecimento sobre a prática profissional de antropólogos em todo o mundo que pudesse ser usada pelo Conselho Mundial de Associações Antropológicas (WCAA) e suas associações membros para ajudar a promover o valor e a relevância da disciplina. Com suas mais de cinquenta associações-membro de todos os continentes, a WCAA estava posicionada de forma única para coletar esses dados, e o GSAP efetivamente transformou essa rede de associações em um consórcio de pesquisa em grande escala. O desenvolvimento e a intenção da pesquisa, os atores particulares envolvidos e as ações tomadas em seu desenvolvimento são, portanto, fundamentais para sua fruição, bem como suas deficiências. O próprio processo histórico contém insights valiosos para quaisquer esforços futuros para pesquisar as práticas antropológicas em escala global.

**Palavras-chave:** Global, pesquisa, colaboração, antropologias mundiais, prática antropológica.

# A Brief History of the First Global Survey of Anthropological Practice and Some Lessons Learned

*Vesna Vučinić Nešković; Chandana Mathur; Pam McGrath; Greg Acciaioli; Adele Millard; Emily Metzner*

## **Introduction**

The overarching objective of the Global Survey of Anthropological Practice (GSAP) was to create a knowledge base about the professional practice of anthropologists globally that could be used by the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA) and its member associations to help promote the value and relevance of the discipline. A major aim of this global survey of anthropologists' practice was to complement the focus in previous publications by anthropologists allied with the World Anthropologies network on the intellectual content and knowledge production in various national and regional traditions throughout the globe (e.g. Ribeiro and Escobar, 2006) with data on anthropologists' activities, movements and avenues of impact. With its fifty-odd member associations from all continents, the WCAA was uniquely positioned to gather this data, and the GSAP process effectively remade this network of associations into a large-scale research consortium.

## **Brief History of the GSAP**

The GSAP was approved as the WCAA's principal research project at the WCAA Biennial Meeting in Taipei (October 2014). Greg Acciaioli made the initial proposal for a global survey of anthropological practice and his proposal was supported by the newly elected WCAA Organizing Committee, chaired by Vesna Vučinić Nešković. A Task Force comprised of Greg Acciaioli (project coordinator), Lorne Holyoak (WCAA secretary), Chandana Mathur (WCAA deputy chair), and Vesna Vučinić Nešković (WCAA chair) worked on conceptualizing a project that would include institutional as well as individual aspects of the profession. All aspects of the project were discussed at regular monthly WCAA Organizing Committee meetings and via intensive e-mail communication.

The GSAP Project was implemented by the WCAA Organizing Committee over a four-year period, in two phases. The first phase took place between October 2014 and May 2016, the period between the WCAA biennial meetings in Taipei and Dubrovnik. During the first phase the GSAP task force compiled surveys and other data sets that had already been undertaken by member associations. Greg Acciaioli recruited two other Australian colleagues, Pamela McGrath and Adele Millard, to be involved in the survey design and implementation. At the May 2015 CASCA meeting in Québec City, the GSAP Task Force held a roundtable on "The Global Practice of Anthropology," organized by Lorne Holyoak. GSAP design and implementation was further discussed at the WCAA Delegates Meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, in July 2015. Early in 2016, the survey designers carried out a pilot questionnaire using Survey Monkey with the Australian Anthropological Society, and its preliminary results were analyzed and reported later that year (McGrath and Acciaioli, 2016). In May 2016 at the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) Inter-Congress in Dubrovnik, the Task Force organized a two-day GSAP Panel Stream. During the event, the WCAA delegates presented 27 papers on anthropological practice in different national contexts, as well as debated the intellectual, methodological, and technical issues related to implementation of the survey around the world. These papers were presented

across five sessions, which were: 1) Profiling through Survey and Interviews: What Anthropology Graduates Do and How They Identify, 2) Relating Anthropological Practice to the State: Perils, Possibilities, and Policies, 3) Confronting the Challenges of Neoliberalism and Globalization, 4) Organizing the Diversity of Anthropological Practice through Associations, and 5) Teaching Anthropology outside the Traditional Anthropology Program. The concluding 6th session presented and discussed the preliminary results of the pilot survey conducted by the Australian Anthropological Society, with a focus on what lessons could be gleaned from that pilot for the final design of the GSAP.

The second phase took place between June 2016 and July 2018, the period between the meeting in Dubrovnik and the WCAA meeting in Florianopolis. In the second phase, the 2016-18 WCAA Organizing Committee made it a priority to seek further input of WCAA member associations into the survey design process. At a well-attended interim WCAA meeting held in Minneapolis in November 2016, then WCAA Chair Chandana Mathur led a line-by-line discussion of the draft survey instrument, and the useful and detailed feedback gathered there was passed on to the GSAP team. Olga Jubany, the Chair of Institut Català d'Antropologia, a WCAA member association, offered to arrange for the translation of the survey instrument into Spanish. Throughout this phase, at interim meetings and via regular communications, there were continuous efforts to involve WCAA member associations in the GSAP process since sustained participation of associations at all stages of the project was understood to be the key to higher final response rates. A grant proposal submitted by a sub-committee of the WCAA Organizing Committee to the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research was successful, and the GSAP was awarded funding in August 2017.<sup>1</sup>

The GSAP was conducted online using Survey Monkey<sup>2</sup> between October 2017 and February 2018 and was offered only in English and Spanish. The survey was promoted through the WCAA website and professional anthropology networks such as AASNet, an Australian listserv with a public subscription base. Information about the survey and a link to it were provided to representatives of WCAA member associations for distribution to their members. Anyone who self-identified as an anthropologist, whether or not they were a member of one or more member associations of the WCAA, was invited to participate.

A final GSAP symposium was held in July 2018 as part of the WCAA biennial meeting immediately preceding the IUAES World Congress in Florianopolis Brazil, during which presentations of GSAP findings for subsamples of various nations or regions were made. After opening comments by incoming WCAA chair Carmen Sílvia de Moraes Rial, Chandana Mathur (outgoing WCAA chair), and GSAP coordinator Greg Acciaioli, the symposium began with the keynote address by Pamela McGrath of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies and the Australian National University entitled "Is Global Anthropology Many Gods, or a God with Many Faces? Findings from the Global Survey of Anthropological Practice." This keynote was later expanded and submitted to the Wenner-Gren as the "Report on the Preliminary Findings of the 2018 Global Survey of Anthropological Practice: How We Move through the World, How the World Moves through Us," a report now available online (McGrath, Acciaioli and Millard, n.d.). The papers following the keynote were organized into five sessions – 1) Thematic Foci of Institutional Practice, 2) Visibility/Invisibility of Anthropology beyond the Academy, 3) From Colonial Heritage to Decolonization and Reconciliation in Anthropological Practice, 4) Changing Employment and Engagements: Graduate Trajectories, and 5) Changing Employment and Engagements: Neoliberal Impacts

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1 We gratefully acknowledge this funding from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. Without that funding and other encouragement from this foundation, GSAP could not have come to fruition.

2 Survey Monkey is a great data collection and analysis tool, but it proved very difficult and time consuming to clean data in Survey Monkey because of the number of responses. It was necessary to extract data out of Survey Monkey in order to clean and validate it, but once extracted it could not be reloaded in order to make use of Survey Monkey's data analysis tools. It was necessary at this point to recruit a volunteer statistician to assist with designing and implementing data analysis frameworks. This additional expertise was provided by Kate Mason (statistician) and Mark McInerney (geospatial data management specialist), and we thank them profusely for their invaluable contribution.



– along with a final discussion. Of the 18 papers presented during these sessions, six were almost wholly concentrated on the GSAP results for the subsample from their nation or region, while 12 were primarily drawing on other sources, in part due to the low response numbers for those regions, which we discuss below.

## Issues and challenges of the GSAP Design

### Participation

The GSAP received 3836 valid responses from around the world, 15 percent of which used the Spanish survey instrument. One of the aims of the GSAP project was to collect data that the member associations of the WCAA would be able to use to address their members' needs and issues. Most (86%, n=3618)<sup>3</sup> respondents were members of at least one WCAA member association. Almost every WCAA member association is represented in the responses to some extent; however, some associations are better represented than others, with participation rates likely influenced by the strategies each association used to promote the survey to their members, as well as language accessibility. Participation was limited by the fact that the survey instrument was only available in English and Spanish.<sup>4</sup> As a result, there are major gaps in the global representativeness of the findings.<sup>5</sup>

The member associations with the highest response rates<sup>6</sup> were Anthropology Southern Africa (ASnA) (with 76.5% of its members participating in the GSAP), Anthropological Association of the Philippines / Ugnayang Pang-Aghamtao, Inc. (UGAT) (with a participation rate of 61.2%), the International Association for Southeast European Anthropology (InASEA) (with a 50.7% participation rate), the Canadian Anthropology Society/Société canadienne d'anthropologie (CASCA) (with a 45.3% participation rate), the Colegio de Graduados en Antropología de la República Argentina (CGA) (with a 41.4% participation rate), and the Serbian Ethnological and Anthropological Society (SEAS) (with a 41% participation rate). Part of this had to do with members of the WCAA Organizing Committee actively recruiting participants in their home associations. Many other representatives of WCAA associations also endeavored to recruit respondents, but not all members succeeded,<sup>7</sup> and UGAT's high participation rate cannot be explained simply as a result of Organizing Committee member efforts.<sup>8</sup> There are some additional factors that limit the global representativeness of the data, which we discuss below.

3 Whenever possible, we list the number of valid responses to any given question ("n"). Not every respondent answered every question. Percentages, when possible, are figured based on the number of responses to a given question.

4 Providing an opportunity for all respondents to complete the GSAP in their first or preferred language was impossible, primarily because of the time and complexity of creating a single database into which responses to a multilingual survey instrument could be collated and analyzed. The survey team invested considerable time and energy into creating a Spanish version of the survey instrument, which in the end 568 (almost 15%) respondents used. This required translation of the survey instrument from English into Spanish, and then manual coding of the translation into Survey Monkey, a task that was both technically challenging and labor intensive. The resulting bias towards English and, to a lesser degree, Spanish, excluded many potential respondents.

5 For example, the dataset would seem to suggest that very few anthropologists live in north or northeast Asia; however, due to a variety of constraints, the survey was not widely distributed among members of north or northeast Asian anthropological associations and their response rates were very low, which would be the more accurate interpretation. In the case of the Peoples Republic of China, for example, despite the notable efforts of the Chinese Anthropological Society's representative to foster participation in the GSAP, the lack of a version in Mandarin led to a very low response rate.

6 The memberships of anthropological associations around the world vary significantly in size, so these participation rates do not necessarily reflect the greatest absolute number of respondents to the survey.

7 Despite vigorous attempts to promote the survey among members of the Australian Anthropological Society, the response rate was lower than anticipated, in part because some AAS members reported a certain amount of survey fatigue after having participated in the similar pilot survey two years earlier.

8 High levels of proficiency in English in the Philippines due to its status as a former American colony certainly contributed to the accessibility of the survey to UGAT members.

Besides difficulties with participation and language accessibility, the survey design team encountered some important challenges in crafting a survey instrument with global reach. Broadly speaking, two of the most challenging problems were international differences in terminology and navigating a shifting and contested geopolitical landscape. As a result, the survey instrument was long and complex. The 23-question survey included multiple-choice and write-in questions and allowed for a large number of possible responses and resulted in an unwieldy dataset.<sup>9</sup>

## Terminology – International Differences

During the drafting of the survey instrument, it became apparent that there were significant variations in the structures and terminology of anthropological education and practice around the world. For example, we realized that there were differences in the structure of (post-)graduate research programs around the world, and in the focus and nomenclature of sub-disciplines. For example, archaeology is generally considered a sub-discipline of anthropology in the USA, but in many other countries it is a discipline in its own right, sometimes more closely allied to history and classics than to anthropology. The terminology used in the survey instrument tended to have an Australian bias due to the all-Australian team involved in design and analysis, despite efforts to mitigate this bias by soliciting comments on the draft instrument from the WCAA Advisory committee and the WCAA delegates in the various phases of consultation described above.

Variations in terminology and ideology around gender and race also posed significant challenges in the global survey. The terms used in the GSAP for gender – male, female, and other – do not begin to represent the diverse range of gender identities and expressions. Definitions and manifestations of racial hierarchies and racial identities vary so widely around the world, not to mention the vexed character of the term race as an etic analytic concept as opposed to an emic identity term, that it was decided to exclude questions of race altogether. However, doing so has limited the GSAP's ability to provide insight into employment patterns and inequity along such dimensions, as well as other professional trajectories within the discipline.

## Geopolitical Landscape – Shifting and Contested

The survey team received advice from the WCAA early in the process that a coarsely grained regional approach (e.g. Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia (Huxley, 1996), etc.) to place-based questions would be inappropriate, in part due to colonial, Cold War and contemporary geopolitical biases in delimitations of such regions. A decision was made to include only formally recognized nation-states in questions relating to geography (noting that the definition of these is itself disputed). Disputed territories and Indigenous nations within settler states were not included as individual units. One consequence of this was that a number of respondents were born or educated in countries that no longer exist, such as Yugoslavia. Furthermore, respondents who identified as being born in, or living in, places such as Catalunya, the West Bank, Palestine, Kosovo, Puerto Rico, and the Blackfoot confederacy were understandably upset about the exclusion of their home nations from the survey's standard list of responses. The WCAA apologizes to these individuals; yet, these were very difficult issues to resolve in the context of a global survey where the inclusion of too many possibilities might obfuscate patterns emerging from cross-tabulation. Doubtless, the decisions taken could have benefited from even further consultation with WCAA member associations before administering the survey.

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<sup>9</sup> Raw data were extracted from Survey Monkey into a csv file for cleaning and analysis. Because of the format of the survey instrument, the export file was extremely large (many hundreds of columns wide) and unwieldy. With assistance from our volunteer statistician, the dataset was imported into statistics software for reformatting. The dataset was then cleaned, and invalid or problematic responses were removed. Analysis of the dataset undertaken for the purpose of the final report was done in Excel, primarily using Excel pivot tables.

## Conclusion

All of the above factors should be taken into consideration when seeking to use the GSAP dataset to draw conclusions about the nature of global anthropological practice as a whole. Despite all these challenges, however, the survey has produced a large and potentially very useful dataset about the professional lives of anthropologists around the world, and the GSAP provides a solid foundation for future surveys of this kind. Notably, the GSAP Project showed that a global attempt to collect data about anthropological practice is indeed possible. It is as of yet the discipline's most spatially extensive glimpse of the everyday life of non-hegemonic anthropologies. By applying more complex quantitative analysis, the acquired data set may yield additional findings about geographical distinctions and global trends in the present-day practice of anthropologists from around the world. Moreover, assembling the articles in this special issue will hopefully stimulate subsequent surveys that can take our knowledge about the anthropological profession further in order to investigate emergent trends in anthropological practice and the discipline's potential to participate in the solving of acute world problems even further.

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# Incarceration of indigenous people in Brazil and resolution no. 287 of the National Council of Justice of Brazil

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## Abstract

This article aims at analyzing Resolution No. 287 of the National Council of Justice of Brazil (CNJ), which establishes special procedures for the treatment of indigenous people who stand as accused, defendants, who are sentenced or are deprived of liberty and shows the necessary process to ensure their rights within the Brazilian Judiciary Branch. It encourages a reflection about why said Resolution's impact on social representations within the Brazilian Judiciary Branch is nearly none. The Resolution No. 287 is a surprising step by CNJ to effectively recognize the cultural and ethnic plurality of the original peoples of Brazil, although it maintains contradictions inherent to the challenge of overcoming the assimilationist paradigm. However, beyond any new registration protocols, any reduction in incarceration rates or any training of magistrates and adaptation of their services, any change will ultimately come from the outside, as Brazilian elites abdicate privileges coming from their whiteness.

**Keywords:** Indigenous Peoples; criminalization of Indigenous people; Indigenous Incarceration; Resolution No. 287 by National Council of Justice of Brazil.

# Encarceramento de indígenas no Brasil e a resolução n. 287, do Conselho Nacional de Justiça

## Resumo

Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar a Resolução nº 287 do Conselho Nacional de Justiça do Brasil (CNJ), que estabelece procedimentos especiais para o tratamento de indígenas acusados, réus, condenados ou privados de liberdade e mostra o necessário processo de garantia de seus direitos no Poder Judiciário brasileiro. Incentiva a reflexão sobre por que o impacto da referida Resolução nas representações sociais do Poder Judiciário brasileiro é quase nulo. A Resolução nº 287 é um passo surpreendente do CNJ para efetivamente reconhecer a pluralidade cultural e étnica dos povos originários do Brasil, embora mantenha contradições inerentes ao desafio de superar o paradigma assimilacionista. Contudo, para além de novos protocolos de cadastramento, de redução do encarceramento ou de capacitação da magistratura e dos seus serviços, a mudança virá de fora para dentro na medida em que as elites brasileiras abdicarem dos privilégios da branquitude.

**Palavras-chave:** Povos Originários; criminalização de indígenas; encarceramento de indígenas; Resolução nº 287 do Conselho Nacional de Justiça do Brasil.

# Encarcelación de indígenas en Brasil y resolución n° 287 del Consejo Nacional de Justicia

## Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar la Resolución No. 287 del Consejo Nacional de Justicia de Brasil (CNJ), que establece procedimientos especiales para el tratamiento de indígenas acusados, imputados, condenados o privados de libertad y muestra el proceso necesario para garantizar sus derechos en el Poder Judicial brasileño. Estimula la reflexión sobre por qué el impacto de la mencionada Resolución sobre las representaciones sociales del Poder Judicial brasileño es casi nulo. La Resolución No. 287 es un paso sorprendente del CNJ para reconocer efectivamente la pluralidad cultural y étnica de los pueblos indígenas de Brasil, aunque mantiene contradicciones inherentes al desafío de superar el paradigma asimilacionista. Sin embargo, además de los nuevos protocolos de registro, la reducción del encarcelamiento o la capacitación de la magistratura y sus servicios, el cambio vendrá de afuera hacia adentro, ya que las élites brasileñas abdicarán de los privilegios de la blancura.

**Palabras clave:** Pueblos originarios; criminalización de los pueblos indígenas; encarcelamiento de indígenas; Resolución No. 287 del Consejo Nacional de Justicia de Brasil.

# Incarceration of indigenous people in Brazil and resolution no. 287 of the National Council of Justice of Brazil

*Ela Wiecko Volkmer de Castilho*  
*Tédney Moreira da Silva*

## Introduction

Little is known of the criminalization and sentence execution of Indigenous peoples in Brazil. The Federal Prosecution Office School (*Escola do Ministério Público da União - ESMPU*) commissioned a groundbreaking survey on indigenous incarceration between 2008 and 2009, which was made by the Brazilian Anthropology Association (*Associação Brasileira de Antropologia - ABA*). Unfortunately, the survey could not be continued: it should have been assigned to the National Indigenous Foundation (*Fundação Nacional do Índio - Funai*), which in turn should have continued to collect official data, but they never did. The Federal and State Prosecution Offices, the Federal and State Public Defenders' Offices and the Indigenous peoples or indigenist organizations have partial data on their particular jurisdiction, but such data has not been added to any system. The National Penitentiary Department (*Departamento Penitenciário Nacional - DEPEN*) is the most valuable data source from a quantitative perspective, since it gathers all the data from penitentiaries in all of the states and the Federal District. However, such data is inaccurate and does not include cases of deprivation of liberty sentences. Most recently, the National Council of Justice of Brazil (*Conselho Nacional de Justiça - CNJ*) created the National 2.0 Prison Monitoring Database (*Banco Nacional de Monitoramento de Prisões 2.0 - BNMP 2.0*), a nationwide dynamically integrated database that is updated in real time by Federal and State Courts and Appellate Courts to manage the proceedings of defendants who are arrested and of people who have been sentenced to reclusion, even if they have no prior criminal record in the system (CNJ, 2020c). The National Council of Prosecution Office (*Conselho Nacional do Ministério Público - CNMP*) also created its database about the Federal and State Prosecution Offices and the Federal District Prosecution Office jurisdictions in order to inspect the imprisonment and incarceration system. Finally, the indigenous peoples decided to organize themselves around the creation of an Observatory of the Criminal Justice System and Indigenous Peoples, through the Articulation of the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (*Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil - APIB*), whose work began within the second half of 2021 with the promise of carrying out a current work of surveying information.

We currently have access to a lot more information than we did 20 years ago, but researchers face difficulties when trying to access the data related to Indigenous people within the justice and public security records, and the absence or inaccuracy of such data is striking.

From that perspective, the enactment of Resolution No. 287 of 2019 by the CNJ, a government organ responsible for controlling the administrative and financial actions of the Judiciary Branch and for overseeing that judges comply with their duties, is uplifting news. The resolution presents the necessary procedures to properly treat indigenous people who stand as accused, defendants, or who have been convicted or received a deprivation of liberty sentence in Brazil by incorporating in its internal rules the constitutional and legal rules as well as the international human rights.

However, the desired repercussion is yet to be achieved, because the assimilationist ideology concerning Indigenous peoples - from before this shift in paradigm brought by the Brazilian Federal Constitution for ethnic diversity - is still very much alive within decisions rendered by the Superior Court of Justice (*Superior Tribunal de Justiça* – STJ) and even the Federal Supreme Court (*Supremo Tribunal Federal* – STF), whose President also presides over the CNJ.

The punishment of native individuals through incarceration shows the challenges of achieving a true equal interethnic relations in Brazilian society, one which resists the knowledge of its multiethnic roots and latches onto hierarchical structures from the colonial period that extended until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The silence in legal texts about this matter, the criminal procedure and sentence execution concerning native individuals that ignores their ethnic particularities under the short-sighted argument of assimilation based on the fact that such individuals speak the national language or live in urban areas, such silence is part of an ethnocide logic whose purpose is to erase any ethnic diversity.

In order to break the silence, we encourage you to reflect about the challenges of implementing Resolution No. 287 of 2019 in the Brazilian criminal justice system. The following is a list of the subjects that drive this research: 1) Why constitutional and international treaties texts have not been enough to change social representation and practices within the Brazilian Judiciary Branch in relation to native individuals that are charged of crimes defined under the State law?; 2) What is the capacity of a Resolution issued by an administrative control body to make the interpretation of judges and courts abandon the assimilationist paradigm and incorporate that of ethnic diversity established in the 1988 Constitution?; As hypotheses, we work, on the one hand, with the theory of coloniality of power that configures the structural racism of Brazilian society that denies the poor, black population and native peoples the condition of subjects entitled to rights. On the other hand, with Herrera Flores' critical theory of human rights, according to which it is possible to use the norms and the justice system to include subjects and themes in order to destabilize the current order, creating contexts favorable to economic and social changes that will establish a less unequal order.

We start by presenting Resolution No. 287, its precedents and its observed effects. Next, we display data made available by penitentiary administration agencies about the Indigenous imprisoned population that is serving both unappealable and provisional sentences. We indicate the challenges set forth by the SARS-CoV-2 (new coronavirus) pandemic, whose devastating potential amongst Indigenous peoples has been largely ignored by the Brazilian Government, thus aggravating even more their imprisonment situation. This indefinite data collection method unveils the State's omission in properly implementing a criminal execution policy for Indigenous peoples, where indirect discrimination takes place. In the third topic, we analyze the possibility of reversing this situation through the CNJ's judicial policy. Our closing thoughts point towards the paths that can lead to an internalization of the diversity paradigm by the Brazilian Judiciary Branch and, consequently, the entire legal and public security system.

## **1 The National Justice Council Resolution No. 287: precedents and effects**

The data survey carried out by ABA and Federal Public Prosecution (*Ministério Público Federal* – MPF), from 2000 onwards, displays the disproportionate number of incarcerations of indigenous individuals in some states, a situation that begs for a solution. The proposals went through different deliberation organs and displayed different thematic approaches of the issue (ranging from the Executive Branch with the possibility of issuing a collective pardon of sentence to legislative changes through the alteration of key procedural and criminal executive laws).



Somehow, the presence of indigenous people in the prison system started being noticed as it has been noticed the need to “fix” the excess of criminalization through pardons and commuted sentences. We need to go further: a permanent and immediate policy to identify and assure the cultural rights of incarcerated indigenous people, such as the maintenance of their bonds to their respective communities, being able to express in their mother tongue, healing and meals methods according to their native customs, etc. (Castilho, 2019: 144) [free translation]

The most recent, and, so far, most far-reaching attempt to deal with the stigma of criminalization and high number of imprisonments of indigenous people was consolidated in the form of Resolution No. 287 of June 25, 2019 by the National Council of Justice (CNJ, 2019). The document establishes special procedures for the treatment of Indigenous peoples standing as accused, defendants, who have been convicted or deprived of liberty, and indicates processes to guarantee this population’s rights within the criminal sphere of the Brazilian Judiciary Branch.

The Resolution’s recitals point to the CNJ’s respect for the international human rights guidelines for Indigenous peoples and the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, and it could not be differently. It expressly mentions the 2016 Report on the Mission in Brazil by the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous peoples’ rights, which recommended that the Legislative, Executive and Judiciary Branches urgently consider working along with the Indigenous peoples to eliminate the barriers that stop them from enforcing their right to justice.

The manual enclosed to the Resolution brought a presentation written by Justice Dias Toffoli, President of the CNJ. Such presentation reports that the CNJ:

[...] has organized a series of meetings with representatives from various organs and entities of the justice system, the Executive and Judiciary Branches, and from the civil society that intended to identify procedures to ensure that the criminal liability and sentence execution of indigenous peoples were compatible with the Brazilian constitution and international treaties signed by Brazil. (CNJ, 2019: 7) [free translation]

In considering that the role of the Judiciary Branch in the criminal context is not just to punish, but to preserve human rights, the CNJ determined that, in dealing with Indigenous peoples, whether they are Brazilian or not, should they be identified as such in any step of the criminal process, they must be approached with the application of special procedures that maintain their right to self-determination, and the use of Portuguese language or their native language, regardless of their current place of residence.

This measure also ensures other subjective rights of indigenous people, such as: the delivery of procedural records that should be forwarded the nearest Funai office in up to forty-eight (48) hours after their arrest; their right to add this information to the data system of the Judiciary Branch, especially the record of custody hearing (which verify the legality of the act that orders an arrest); their right of having interpreters, who should preferably be members of the same indigenous community as the defendant’s while such interpreter should be in attendance in every step of the process when needed (CNJ, 2019).

The public organ was also concerned with determining that, whenever possible, either by praxis or by request of the parties to the proceeding, any judge may, when receiving a report or complaint against an indigenous individual, order an anthropological examination that will provide for elements necessary to define the criminal liability aiming at restricting discriminatory and arbitrary decisions based on ethnocentric judgment of the customs of ethnic groups. The anthropological report should determine the ethnicity, native language, personal, cultural, social, and economic circumstances, customs and circumstances of the defendant and how their native community construes the typical conduct imputed on the individual. Furthermore, the report should also inform whether there is any criminal alternative, meaning the agreements and resolutions undertaken by said individual’s own native people (CNJ, 2019).

Lastly, the Resolution encourages judges to attempt to apply proper conflict resolution measures of each Indigenous People, and should the sentence still require the deprivation of liberty, they should seek partnerships with Funai and other institutions to adopt and implement a special semi-free sentencing regime to respect the convicted person's ethnicity and attempt to reduce the deleterious impacts of a sentence that deprives liberty. The organ also incentivizes house-arrest for the indigenous people, considering their home as the territory or geographic boundaries of their community pursuant to a previous consultation.

We cannot overlook a contradiction in the wording of the Resolution because it invokes Convention No. 169, which reads that Indigenous peoples should be consulted in the issuing of norms that involve their interests. The organ itself, however, failed to summon indigenous organizations to express their opinion. This attitude reveals the understanding by the state organs that the representation of the Indigenous peoples is supplied through Funai, an indigenist organ formed under the assimilationist paradigm that considers Indigenous people as incapable of exercising their own rights and legal interests.

In any case, two years after the issuing of Resolution No. 287 of 2019, its guidelines are apparently not being followed by the Judiciary Branch. The number of provisional arrests has gradually increased in disagreement with the guidelines that call for their substitution with alternative measures, as well as the number of definitive arrests, ignoring the special semi-free prison regime recommendation. The incarceration of indigenous people without regard for their rights and legal guarantees reinforces the same penal functionality of suffocating ethnic differences and, consequently, shows a contempt for their social vulnerability status.

As an example, the decision by the STJ Justice João Otávio Noronha on the Habeas Corpus Petition (RHC) No. 113.309/BA on October 26, 2020 causes astonishment; one of its main foundations in an excerpt of the appellate decision by the Regional Federal Court of the 1<sup>st</sup> Region:

As to the application of the special semi-free prison regime provided by the sole paragraph of Article 56 of Law No. 6,001 of 1973, the request is not granted, considering that such mitigating factor does not apply to an indigenous individual who, although he preserves his customs, is socially integrated and exercises his civil rights in full. Now, the petitioner took part in several land negotiations having frequently participated in Funai meetings and, therefore, no one can say that he lacks social integration. Still, the petitioner has real possibility of reengaging in crime or evading any culpability, which prevents applying any alternatives to prison, even a semi-free sentence regime available to Indigenous peoples (STJ, 2020).

If the resolution and the manual were followed, this decision would have been different, because the text reads that the criteria for recognizing a defendant as indigenous is self-declaration and that the “acculturated” or “integrated” typification have been banned from the Constitution of 1988. (CNJ, 2019: 16) [free translation] The manual text clarifies:

The fact that indigenous peoples have access to fundamental rights, such as public education, work, healthcare and transportation – rights granted equally to all under the Constitution – has no impact on their indigenous identity, and as such, it cannot be used as an argument to avoid granting them rights and legal guarantees specifically aimed at protecting Indigenous peoples undergoing criminal prosecution. (CNJ, 2019: 13) [free translation]

The aforesaid is similar to the STF 1<sup>st</sup> Panel decision, taken by majority vote, on the Habeas Corpus Petition (HC) No. 183.598 of December 1, 2020, which denies a house arrest on humanitarian grounds to an elderly diabetic, hypertense and chronically ill indigenous man of the Guarani-Kaiowá community. He was, instead, sentenced to 18 years in prison on a fully closed prison initial regime (STF, 2020c). One of the points considered by the STF Justice-Rapporteur, according to statements by STF Justices Dias Toffoli and Roberto Barroso,

is that, according to the case records, the indigenous man is acculturated, which prevents the individual from being recognized in his indigenous identity and therefore having his sentenced commuted into house arrest (STF, 2020c).

It is necessary, however, to recognize that Resolution No. 287 has had positive effects. In this sense, it is important to mention Technical Note No. 53/2019<sup>1</sup>, still in process at the Ministry of Justice and Public Security (*Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública* – MJSP), through which the Department of Care for Women and Specific Groups (*Divisão de Atenção às Mulheres e Grupos Específicos* – DIAMGE) of DEPEN has the “goal of recommending state penitentiary management organs to adopt necessary and effective measures for Indigenous people incarcerated at penal establishments, in compliance with the international and national guidelines” (MJSP, 2019: 1) [free translation].

The Technical Note is the result of collaborative works among the National Criminal Services Ombudsman (*Ouvidoria Nacional de Serviços Penais* – ONSP) and Funai on the issues of incarcerated indigenous people about the individualization of their sentences, which expressly mentions the need to follow Resolution No. 287. The note lists a series of recommendations as an action protocol to be followed by penitentiary administration agents that covers the following: (I) Entry; (II) Registration; (III) Allocation spaces; (IV) Language; (V) Access to healthcare; (VI) Dietary habits; (VII) Religion; (VIII) Documentation; (IX) Registry of indigenous visitors; (X) Haircut; (XI) Educational activities; (XII) Work activities; (XIII) Gender specificities; (XIV) Capability of prison workers. If the Technical Note is approved by DEPEN’s general management, it is expected to be notified to, among other organs, the National Council of Criminal and Penitentiary Policy (*Conselho Nacional de Política Criminal e Segurança Pública* – CPNCP), the CNMP, the CNJ, the National School of General Public Defenders (*Colégio Nacional de Defensores Públicos-Gerais* – CNDPG), the National Mechanism to Prevent and Fight Torture (*Mecanismo Nacional de Prevenção e Combate à Tortura* – MNPCT). It is worth mentioning that the CPNCP and MNPCT are allowed to inspect and investigate penal establishments and file reports with relevant authorities in case of any violation of the sentence execution norms. The remaining organs establish standardized protocols to investigate or visit the prison system on behalf of sentence execution organs, as judges, members of the Prosecution Office or the Public Defender’s Office.

In that context, the management of the CNJ by STF President-Justice Luiz Fux, between 2020-2022, set a transversal initiative called “Electronic Systems of the DMF<sup>2</sup> and the Population in Vulnerable Situation.” Its goal is to improve registration fields in digital systems, granting more visibility to these groups and producing data that allows the creation of legal policies against structural inequality. One of the vulnerable groups that attracts special attention is the Indigenous peoples. The initiative goes further in the actual implementation of Resolution No. 287, because it demands the diagnosis of digital systems maintained by DMF/CNJ to evaluate criteria of race, ethnicity, accessibility, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and immigration situation; the correction of digital systems to help the user visualize the requirements and functionalities mapped out; the writing and publication of a manual for filling the registry properly; the dissemination of knowledge and educating users, and; coordinated action between Justice Courts and Regional Federal Courts to publicize the material and application of its content.

<sup>1</sup> The Technical Note was proposed by DIAMGE with the General Coordination for Citizenship and Penal Alternatives (*Coordenação-Geral de Alternativa Penais* – CGCAP), both of them part of the Penitentiary Policies Department (*Diretoria de Políticas Penitenciárias* – DIRPP), the National Penitentiary Department (*Departamento Penitenciário Nacional* – DEPEN), was signed on December 6, 2019, by Susana Inês de Almeida e Silva, General Coordinator of Citizenship and Penal Alternatives and forwarded to DIRPP (MJSP, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Department of Monitoring and Supervision of the Prison System and the Execution System of Social-Educational Measures (*Departamento de Monitoramento e Fiscalização do Sistema Carcerário e do Sistema de Execução de Medidas Socioeducativas* – DMF), created by Law No. 12,106 of 2009.

The standardization to which every unit of the Judiciary Branch is subject to could, in the next two years, lead to a successful collection of data on the number of indigenous people currently going through criminal proceedings and those who have been convicted, are serving sentence, as well as on criminal incidences, gender, age, and other markers. The theme of indigenous identity will be subject to increasing controversy, and it is our hope that it will be on a level that conforms to the principles of the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN, 2007), of the ILO 169 Convention (ILO, 1989), and of the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (OAS, 2016).

Considering the assimilationist and punitive ideologies that serve as the basis for the majority of the Judiciary Branch's arguments, as we will show in a topic below, it is relevant to attempt to understand how and why Resolution No. 287 was written, and analyze the effective possibilities of whether it can promote an ideological change in the Judiciary Branch that even the Brazilian Federal Constitution was not able to achieve, especially considering that the CNJ is not an organ that controls jurisdictional activities. However, it can be thought of as interventions in the organization of non-core activities and debate forums, and it can, for instance, leverage attitude changes. In that vein, we emphasize the creation of the Task Force named "The Judiciary Branch's Human Rights Watchers," by Ordinance No. 190 of July 17, 2020, which has as one of its members Maria Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, who had an important role in the discussion for the recognition of the original rights of Indigenous peoples (CNJ, 2020b). This Task Force can propose to the CNJ Full-Bench Panel measures they deem adequate to improve protection of human rights within the sphere of the Judiciary Branch. The presence of Professor Carneiro da Cunha will certainly contribute to the visibility of violations of indigenous rights by the justice system and help propose measures to stop them.

We have also identified the repercussion at the level of civil societies, such as the Brazilian Institute of Criminal Sciences (*Instituto Brasileiro de Ciências Criminais* - IBCCRIM), which created the Task Force named "Indigenous Peoples and the Criminal System" and promoted, along with other entities, the publication of the "Educational Comics for incarcerated indigenous people and their communities" (Hilgert et al., 2020). This group, which counts on the help of indigenous lawyers, has been promoting debates on how to focus on the justice system to modify the interpretations that disregard ethnic specificity.

Finally, we point out to the recent formation by APIB of the Observatory of the Criminal Justice System and Indigenous Peoples, which will undeniably contribute to a direct representation by the aboriginal peoples of their interests in the subject.

## **2 Indigenous incarceration in Brazil: the inconsistency of statistic data and omission by the State**

Incarceration is not just the result of the penal process that, logically and temporally, precedes it; before anything, it is the goal towards which the process unfolds. Sentence execution, as a peculiar field in criminology, is seen as the final step of concretization of criminal justice, in which those convicted will serve, for an amount of time defined by the Judiciary Branch, the imposed sentence as a form of punishment for the illicit act attributed thereto, and, simultaneously of resocialization. Construing it as a goal of criminalization leads us to study the reasons of selectivity in regard to those convicted and the particular conducts effectively punished.

Indigenous peoples have been targeted for incarceration mostly often for ideological or political biases that lead to prejudice and discrimination rather than on actual evidence of any unlawful conduct. This is a common trait in every country that was subjected to the violence of European colonization. In that sense, in comparing criminalization processes for Indigenous peoples in three different countries (Canada, Australia and New Zealand), Samantha Jeffries and Philip Stenning (2014: 480) observe:

Legislative and judicial approaches to the sentencing of Aboriginal offenders appear to be driven more by political and ideological considerations and aspirations, rather than by clear evidence. Unfortunately, none of the sentencing approaches adopted in any of the three countries can actually be shown to have led to any significant reductions in the statistical over-incarceration of Aboriginal people, which has increased rather than diminished since these various innovations were introduced.

Once the convict is identified as indigenous people, in accordance to article 56, sole paragraph, of Law No. 6,001 of 1973 (Indian Statute): “the reclusion and detention sentences will, if possible, be served in a special semi-free regime, located in the nearest working place of federal government bodies tasked with assisting Indigenous peoples to the person in question” (Brazil, 1973). There are no specific procedures in the special law, apart from the definition of mitigating any penalty enforceable on the indigenous people and the provision of their own prison regime, specific procedures regarding the criminalization of indigenous people in the course of the criminal proceedings. Funai workplaces no longer has the physical structure and human resources for such and, therefore, Indigenous peoples are sent to common penitentiaries in a closed or semi-open prison regime, the latter of which should not be mistaken for the semi-free regimes that have never been regulated. In legal terms, it violates the subjective rights of those indigenous people convicted of a crime, because, due to the State’s omission, they are serving a harsher sentence than required by law.

The exact number of Indigenous people prosecuted through the criminal justice system is unknown. Prison data, on a national level, is collected and sorted by the National Penitentiary Information System (*Levantamento Nacional de Informações Penitenciárias – Infopen*)<sup>3</sup>, a part of DEPEN. The reasons for such uncertainties towards the data by Infopen are threefold: Firstly, in each federative unit, different organizations and public agents are tasked with the collection and processing of data, and there is no standardization in responsibility or method of collecting it; secondly, it is unclear how the matter of race or ethnicity of the inmates is answered in each survey, that is, if the person self-declares as such or if a third party establishes who is part of a certain group, according to subjective criteria; thirdly, there is no information on what type of criminal behavior each indigenous people inmate has been trialed for – both under provisional and definitive arrests – or if they are awaiting trial or serving their sentences in special prison units. For these reasons, Christian Teófilo da Silva (2009: 213) is quoted saying

[...] Infopen’s quantitative data should interest us less as a trustworthy record of the totality of Indigenous inmates currently incarcerated, but more as eye-opening data on the use of ethnic and legal classifications within the system of processing and management of penitentiary data in Brazil. [free translation]

According to Infopen’s last update (MJSP, 2020b), Brazil’s prison population – temporary detention excluded – reached the level of 748,009 people<sup>4</sup>, relative to the period from July to December 2019, with 657,844 of them being identified by ethnic and racial criteria. From these, 0.21% are Indigenous, which equals 1,390 people (MJSP, 2020a)<sup>5</sup>. The following table presents the absolute number of Indigenous peoples in incarceration in the period from June 2016 to December 2019.

3 Infopen is a database that registers general and preliminary indicators about the prison populations in Brazil and is intended to inform the adequate public bodies the measures that should be necessary to outline specific public policies.

4 The total number, including in carcerary units and temporary holdings, amounted to 755,274 people.

5 On the other hand, the Prison Monitoring Board of the CNJ, updated every day with data relayed from state courts, registered on July 13, 2020, that the number of people incarcerated was 875,659, from these, 289,701 are provisional prisoners (44%)

**Table 1:** Indigenous peoples incarcerated in Brasil

Semester	Male prisoners	Female prisoners	Total number of Indigenous folk incarcerated
June.2016	552	38	590
December.2016	613	41	654
June.2017	1,106	81	1,187
December.2017	1,022	68	1,090
June.2018	745	45	790
December.2018	1,148	53	1,201
June.2019	1,218	78	1,296
December.2019	1,325	65	1,390

Source: Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2020.

The Technical Note No. 77/2020 by DEPEN, in dissociating the data pertaining to the 1,390 prisoners in December 2019, points that the state with the largest number of indigenous people incarcerations is Mato Grosso do Sul with 349 in total belonging to the Guarani-Kaiowá, Terena and Kadiwéu ethnicities. The state of Roraima comes second place with 110 from the Macuxi, Wapixana, Ingarikó, Tikuna, Yanomami, Taurepang and Guiana ethnicities<sup>6</sup>. The state of Rio Grande do Sul comes third with 64 people from Guarani, Terena and Kaingang ethnicities (MJSP, 2020). The Technical Note registered that, out of the 1,390, less than half (672) indicated their ethnicity (MJSP, 2020a).

There is a noticeable, progressive increase in the number of indigenous arrests – except for a brief decrease in the second half of 2017 – until the first half of 2018 when it began to rise again.

Both DEPEN and the CNJ have sought to improve data collection methods, including those pertaining to race/color and ethnicity. It is a relevant task, for the lack of reliable data on indigenous incarceration in Brazil causes the issue to go unnoticed, which, in turn, further contributes to the vulnerability of this social segment and making the adoption of proper public policies even more difficult.

The following graphic shows the peaks at each half-year of incarceration of indigenous men and women throughout Brazil, according to data from the surveys made by DEPEN from December 2005 to December 2019. It should be noted, however, that the DEPEN did not provide the reports on the half-year periods from June to December 2013 and from January to June 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Most likely pertains to one of the ethnicities whose territory is on or near the border (Macuxi, Taurepang, Yanomami), with Guyanese citizenship.

Total number of incarcerated indigenous people in Brazil



Source: MJSP, 2020

There has been an increase in the last two years (from 2017 to 2019), which may in fact express an increase or only the recognition of previously unidentified indigenous people, without knowing whether self-recognition has been respected or whether there has been indicated an ethnic identity by civil servants.

Daniele de Souza Osório, when revisiting the 2010 Census data (2020: 39), in regional terms, pointed out the following percentage distribution of indigenous prisoners: Midwest (37.62%), North (21.70%), Northeast (18.31%), South (15.93%) and Southeast (6.44%). She also indicates that Mato Grosso do Sul is the state with the highest number of indigenous people incarcerated: in absolute numbers, there are 73,295 self-declared indigenous people, especially the Atikum, Guarani Kaiowá, Guarani Nhandeva, Terena, Kadiwéu, Guató, Ofaié and Kinikinau (Osório, 2020:39)

As previously stated, both DEPEN and CNJ have sought to improve data collection methods, including race/color and ethnicity. A relevant task, because the lack of reliable data on indigenous incarceration in Brazil makes the issue go unnoticed, which, in turn, contributes even more to the vulnerability of this demographic group, making it more difficult to adopt adequate public policies.

In 2020, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of reliable data was very damaging to those indigenous individuals in incarceration due to the fact they were being kept in establishments known for being unsanitary presents an increased risk of exposure to the entire prison population, especially those of indigenous ethnicities. Although SARS-CoV-2 (new coronavirus) is a novel virus to which there is no previous immune response to non-indigenous people, scientific studies point to an increased vulnerability in an epidemiological standpoint, on account of their historical social, economic, healthcare and food restrictions (Valverde, 2020).

For that reason, Indigenous peoples were expressly included by the CNJ amongst the risk groups for the purposes of Recommendation No. 62 of March 17, 2020, which regards preventive and combative measures against the COVID-19 pandemic in the prison and social-educational systems (CNJ, 2020a).

The number of indigenous people benefiting from the Recommendation with the substitution of preventive detention for alternative measures or progression from a sentence to a semi-open or open prison regime or even under house arrest has not been made available by CNJ or DEPEN.

Questioning the omissions by the Brazilian Federal Government in the fight against SARS-CoV-2 amongst Indigenous peoples, the APIB filed with the STF the Fundamental Precept of Non-Compliance Complaint No. 709/DF (*Arguição de Descumprimento de Preceito Fundamental –ADPF No. 709/DF*) along with several political parties with the purpose of questioning commissive and omissions by the Brazilian Public Administration

concerning the fight against COVID-19. Amongst the various subjects approached by ADPF No. 709/DF is the concern with indigenous people who are currently incarcerated, and STF was requested to order the Federal Government to adopt urgent sanitary measures for the prevention and treatment of COVID-19 cases amongst Indigenous peoples to the entire country. STF Justice Luís Roberto Barroso recognized that APIB has legal standing to sue and determined, on a preliminary basis, a plan to fight COVID-19 amongst Indigenous populations should be implemented with the participation of the communities (STF, 2020b).

In the meantime, ADPF No. 684 filed by the political party PSOL on May 11, 2020 was not reviewed by then STF Justice Celso de Mello, and the lawsuit still awaits an analysis by his successor, STF Justice Nunes Marques. The lawsuit purpose is to have the Court acknowledge the breach of fundamental precepts in penitentiary management, especially with regard to healthcare, life and general safety of the prison population, its workers, and society at large, in light of the State's failure to contain the proliferation of the COVID-19 pandemic in the prison system (STF, 2020a). The lawsuit requests, on a provisional basis, the Secretaries of Penitentiary Administration (or other secretaries with similar purposes) within state level, and DEPEN within the federal level, and the Groups for Monitoring and Administration of the Prison System (*Grupos de Monitoramento e Fiscalização do Sistema Carcerário – GMF*) of state courts, be ordered to publish accurate information on the healthcare and installation situation of indigenous prisoners, according to article 12 of Recommendation No. 62/20 by the CNJ (CNJ, 2020a).

Finally, it is undeniable that the reliance on punishment through normal regime incarceration overwhelmingly impacts the reinsertion of Indigenous peoples into society, according to their customs and cultures. Examining the effects of incarceration on Indigenous peoples who were criminalized in Canada, Davinder Singh et al. (2019: 488) remark that:

Incarceration negatively affects social determinants of health, such as employment and career prospects, relationship stability and housing status. Lack of access to these social determinants also increases risk of involvement in the criminal justice system, creating a cycle of poor health and vulnerability for criminal justice involvement. These issues are compounded for Indigenous Peoples, given their historic and current experiences of racism and social inequality. [free translation]

Such deleterious effects mark the experience of punishments that disregard ethnic diversity and the respect to the multitude of ways to solve and settle conflicts in society, which ends up electing the punitive power of the State as the only means to resolve such issues, given its concealed function of gathering and maximizing political power.

### **3 The Coloniality of power and the critical theory of human rights as interpretative keys to the challenges and achievements of Resolution No. 287 of 2009**

In the previous topics, we brought to debate the CNJ's Resolution No. 287 that recognizes that it does not integrate the updated Penal Code, the Procedural Penal Code or even the Indian Statute to incorporate paradigm changes on the issue of respect to Indigenous Rights introduced by the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988, leaving several gaps to criminal and legal proceedings for indigenous people who stand as accused, defendant and has been convicted for a crime. It identified procedures to ensure the actions of criminal liability or enforcement of sentence on indigenous people are compatible with the Brazilian constitutional text, as well as international treaties signed by Brazil (CNJ, 2019: 7).

The question that arises is: why have the Brazilian Constitution and international treaties not been sufficient to change the social representations and practices of the Brazilian Judiciary Branch in relation to indigenous people accused of crimes defined under the State law? From this perspective the following question arises:



what is the capacity of a Resolution issued by an administrative control body to make the interpretation of judges and courts abandon the assimilationist paradigm and incorporate that of ethnic diversity established in the 1988 Constitution?

In this topic we seek to answer these questions from the theory of Coloniality of power, by Aníbal Quijano (2000), which allows us to understand the construction and the permanence of social relations of European domination over the peoples originating in the Americas, and the critical theory of human rights by Joaquín Herrera Flores (2008), which makes it possible to understand its role as a counter-discourse, even if given the limitations of the edition of the Resolution.

Quijano identifies coloniality as an element that is specific to the constitution of the worldwide pattern of capitalist power. It is based on an ethnic/racial classification of the peoples of the world, like an axis outlining this pattern of power, which operates within several scopes and (material and subjective) dimensions of daily social existence, originating and spreading globally starting from Latin America (Quijano, 2000: 342). Colonialism and modernity are intertwined, having Eurocentric hegemony and modern rationality serving as a base, the latter being the only rationale compatible with the cognitive needs of capitalism (Quijano, 2000: 343). Eurocentrism does not constitute the ideals of just Europeans or those who benefit from power in global capitalism, but also of those who were taught under its hegemony, which normalized the experiences of those who live in this power structure, one that was held up by the myth of European superiority, with Europe and its citizens being the most advanced in a linear, continuous, and unidirectional path for humanity (Quijano, 2000: 343).

A central characteristic of coloniality and Eurocentric modernity is the concept that humanity is classified in such terms as: inferior *versus* superior, irrational *versus* rational, primitive *versus* civilized, traditional *versus* modern (Quijano, 2000: 344). The author states that the racialization of relations is an important point for understanding coloniality. Such concepts allow us to better understand how the annihilation of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas was set, and the social and judicial theories that were – and still are – used to justify the belittlement of their way of being, how they do things, how they live. Among such concepts is Augusto Comte's positivist philosophy that is still present in the common sense of Brazilian jurists.

Comtean philosophy stated that humanity progressed through three evolutionary stages: the theological stage that characterizes societies with both thinking and social structure mythological; the metaphysical stage that defined the revolutionary Illuminist impulse in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century; finally, the positive state that describes societies dictated by a scientific thinking and the assumption of a “straight line” developmental order.

Positivist philosophy advocated the application of the biological theory to explain social inequality within a global and multicultural context – thus it began to be referred to as social Darwinism – even though Darwin never applied his theory in biological field to the social and political fields. According to Auguste Comte, humanity marches towards continual progress, which is only possible due to the adoption of scientific rhetoric to explain the differences between nations. This view, in turn, made it possible to talk about backward (or primitive) societies, or developing and civilized (or positive) societies, the latter being represented by Western European societies. According to John Corr (2014: 99):

Comte's design for society, a form of humanitarian authoritarianism, foresaw that government would be directed by the naturally powerful, those who produced wealth in the capitalist economies. Their governance values would be based on the scientific method, which would produce conclusions in all areas of knowledge so obvious that all of society would accept them. The scientific method would discover society's laws of operation, thereby giving society's governors the ability to make decisions conforming to what would be best for society.

Two-thirds of the Comtean motto (*Amour, Ordre et Progrès*), are present in the Brazilian flag indicating that the formation of the Republic, in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, not only imported Comtean ideals, but it also molded State institutions and defined how political power is used in the country.

In the field of criminology, positivist lessons began to be taught in the Law Schools of Recife and São Paulo, and in Bahia's Medical School, by Adelino Filho, Aurelino Leal, Clóvis Bevilacqua, Pedro Lessa and Roberto Lyra; all important thinkers in the national legal field. They upheld Comtean ideals as the most adequate ones to the formation of the republican regime, established in the country by a civil and military coup in 1889, whose first President was a Marshal and fellow positivist, Deodoro da Fonseca.

The intellectual elites, with the goal of modernizing themselves with the latest philosophical theories of the time, and at the same time, instrumentalizing the exercise of political power in a society with well-established hierarchies, viewed Positivism as a self-evident truth. In the Comtean thought, the concept of a criminal was based on racial, gender and class inequalities that structured national formation, which became an alleged scientific stage that explained the nature of criminals. According to Don Weatherburn and Mark Findlay (1985: 194):

There is no doubt that the constraints positivism imposed upon theory dramatically affected the character of what could be classed as legitimate criminological (or social) explanation. Theoretical attention turned almost exclusively to the task of identifying the correlates (e.g. broken homes, personality traits, etc) of deviant or criminal behavior. There was no sense in asking, save for purely heuristic purposes, what the deviant or the criminal had to say about his or her own behavior. Such verbalization was considered (at best) a kind of epiphenomenon lying between the real cause and effect of environmental conditions and observable response.

However, criminological knowledge was not derived directly from Comtean writings, but from the works of Italian writers inspired by them, who also became influent in the national legal academy. Among them are Cesare Lombroso, Raffaele Garofalo and Enrico Ferri, as the main builders of a criminal epistemological framework that linked crime and its occurrence to the nature of its perpetrators with the intent of affirming biological determinism in the criminal act.

Positivist criminology rooted in the ideals of social defense "(...) attested to delinquent personalities through the discernment of what it called 'anthropological signals' of crime, which made treating the 'evil' contained in potentially criminal people through penal intervention". (Santelli and Brito, 2014: 70) [free translation] In that sense, those who committed a crime would by nature be described as having a defective and incorrigible biological and psychological constitution, thus being the State's responsibility to either incarcerate them definitively or neutralize them.

Although beyond such measures, Indigenous peoples were also looked at through these extremes; they would either not being capable of committing any crime (for total lack of capability, due to their 'savage' state, according to the hypothesis of the *bon sauvage*), or they would concentrate all the criminological factors on themselves (considering what Lombrosian theory calls congenital atavism).

Thus, Indigenous peoples were considered the bearers of the evils of crime, part of societies that are primitive and barbaric, which preceded European civilization; the latter of which was seen as the tried-and-true example of civility (Leão, 1913: 135-136). Other professors and jurists also contributed to the consolidation of the criminal stereotype attributed to indigenous people, with particular mention of Nina Rodrigues, who is the most dedicated to examining the causes of criminality according to positivist criminality perspective. In his essay, entitled "Human races and criminal liability in Brazil," published in 1894, black and indigenous populations represented atavistic species, ones that perpetuated mental and physical characteristics of primitive peoples, and as such, were so themselves. Even though his theories relied on a biological determinism to explain criminality among Indigenous peoples and black communities, Nina Rodrigues (1984 [1894]: 85)

considered it of great importance to adopt a punitive correctional stance in which there were different degrees of punishment to the imprisoned person, varying in accordance to their proximity to whites. He emphasized that Indigenous peoples were especially incapable of being held criminally liable as others, because, he stated, that they would always lack the necessary psychological development to understand what they did. His arguments on indigenous liability reinforced the bias of their incompleteness; in broad terms, Indigenous peoples started being considered atavistic or of delayed mental formation.

The transposition of these etiological findings into legal dogmas started with a proposal by Nelson Hungria on the necessity of formulating a new Penal Code in the 1930's. In his work "Comentários ao Código Penal", Nelson Hungria (1958: 330) defended the hypothesis that Indigenous people should be treated as though they were people with mental disorders, being considered as such for practical legal purposes "[...] *Homo sylvester*, entirely devoid of the same ethic acquisitions as the civilized *Homo medius*, which penal law states is legally responsible." [free translation]

Nelson Hungria thought unnecessary to explicitly mention Indigenous peoples in the law, since they would logically be inferred to belong to the same category as other non imputable individuals – or those who cannot be held legally liable because they cannot fully comprehend or do not know how to determine their own actions according to their understanding.

The non imputability criteria would then take precedence in legal doctrine, when analyzing the culpability of indigenous defendants, with no further elaboration on the legal used for recognizing them as such or not. Although not explicitly stated in legal texts, the link between the inimputable status and Indigenous peoples was reproduced by teachers of penal law, thus, influencing the decision making in trials where the defendant declared their Indigenous ethnicity.

Surveying caselaw rendered until December 2014 (Silva, 2015), 319 court decisions within appellate sphere were found throughout Brazilian territory<sup>7</sup>, which regarded the rights of indigenous defendants, thus requiring full-bench bodies to speak on the importance of ethnic identity when determining criminal liability. In 25% of cases (80 cases), the accused's defense requested the production of anthropological expert reports to infer the level of influence of ethnicity in the criminal act, thus appealing trial court decisions that had precluded the Indigenous ethnicity argument based on superficial and discriminatory criteria (such as the fact the defendant speaks Portuguese, works a regular job, or even watches television). In 22.6% of decisions (72 cases)<sup>8</sup>, the defense petitioned for a specific prison regime for indigenous inmates (semi-free regime found in Law No. 6.001, from 1973 [Statute of the Indian]), but, in every decision, the request was denied on the grounds that the defendants were no longer indigenous (Silva 2015: 161).

In a research conducted with similar methods (Cordeiro et al., 2020), encompassing criminal cases between the years of 2004 – year of the publication of the ILO 169 Convention in Brazil – and 2020, 18 appellate decisions were found that applied the semi-free sentence regime among the 153 analyzed appellate decisions. In the case of appellate decisions that refused the application of semi-free regime, the arguments used mostly focused on saying the indigenous individual was already integrated in society or that article 56 did not forbid the sentencing the individual to a closed prison regime because the article contains the expression "if possible."

7 Due to the federalist model adopted by the Brazilian Constitution, the Judiciary Branch is organized on the levels of states, the Federal District, and the Union. 215 court decisions were examined from States' and the Federal District's Courts of Justice, 38 from the five Regional Federal Courts, and 66 court decisions from upper courts, Superior Justice Court and the Supreme Federal Court.

8 The other cases ruled on a variety of issues; the indefiniteness towards the trial of cases that involve Indigenous individuals, whether they are of state or Federal jurisdiction (22,88% of decisions, or 73 cases); the application of sentence reduction or pardons, given the defendant's Indigenous ethnic identity (16,6% of decisions, or 53 cases); the need for the intervention by Funai - an indigenous tutelary body – in the procedural hearings (6,9% of decisions, or 22 cases); the application of criteria of non-imputability in regards to responsibility of Indigenous peoples who are accused of a crime (4,4% of decisions or 14 cases), and the right of defendants to attend trial whilst free (1,6% of decisions or 5 cases) (Silva, 2015)

As for the appellate decisions in which the semi-free sentencing regime was applied, most of them did not specify how that would be done, and imposed that Funai dealt with all the necessary actions to enforce the decision. The grounds for applying these sentences, in accordance with article 56 of Law No. 6.001/73, were that the regime is applicable not only because the individual was indigenous but always, and above all, because it was a compliance with the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph of article 33 of the Penal Code, and as a consequence of the attenuation granted by the new writing of the 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph of article 2 of Law No. 8.072/90, enforced through Law No. 11.464/07.

Thus, the process of criminalization of indigenous people is done without proper regard to ethnic diversity (and the impacts brought by such differences make in adequately defining legal liability); it is a process of State punishment, which, truth be told, violates the equality principle by promoting indirect discrimination. According to Andy Yu (2019: 3), if doctrinal texts and international treaties fail to conceptualize and differentiate between direct and indirect discrimination, it is up to international courts to identify the subtle differences between them, based on both identifying factors of discriminatory patterns, and the intention of the discriminating agent in each case. Thus: “(...) direct discrimination involves a standard that facially discriminates based on a prohibited ground. Conversely, indirect discrimination involves a standard that is facially neutral and nonetheless differentially and adversely impacts a group identifiable by a prohibited ground.”

Even if there is no explicit discriminatory motivation, the apparent neutrality the Brazilian Judiciary Branch shows in criminalizing Indigenous peoples by following the same patterns used for non-indigenous defendants, results in discrimination, especially when the criminalizing process is done through an ethnocentric perspective by a judge who interprets an indigenous individual as someone who has been assimilated into the national cultural hegemony, or who should be assimilated. This practice constitutes a biopolitical strategy of denying ethnic diversity through the exercise of a “civilizing punishment” (Silva, 2015), in other words, a criminalizing discourse that communicates the so-called success of the project of integrating or assimilating Indigenous peoples into the national unity.

Thus, the incarceration of Indigenous people unveils, the hidden political ends of the exercise of the State’s punitive powers, which was not fully detached from the hierarchical and colonizing project disseminated here in the Americas; one that, in these terms, states that ethnic diversity is an evil or danger to be eliminated.

This racist mindset is a basis of Brazilian society. Overcoming it demands a deep social change, one that goes beyond changing laws, norms, and public policies (Almeida, 2018); that is due to the factor that keeps this mindset present in the structure of Brazilian elites. Goés (2018: 87) explains that:

[...] due to the particularities of the formation of Brazilian society, it formed a bourgeoisie that was entwined with foreign capital, incapable of developing productive forces and conducting the processes to develop an autonomous Brazilian form of capitalism. For that reason, it needs to be anti-democracy, and oppose any demonstrations by lower classes. [free translation]

Changing that configuration is an ongoing challenge. State institutions normally function in the perspective of its dominant social segment, they are “essentially conservative, always attempting to reproduce the same individuals and behaviors.” The conservative aspect:

[...] restricts results of efforts to democratize its structures through policies that promote equality. It is not rare for the organization to reject diversity of behaviors and thoughts. It resists ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, among other diversities, in places of power (Bento, 2018: 120) [free translation]

Members of the Judiciary Branch are also part of the Brazilian elite, and of an essentially conservative institution, although half the magistrates are up to 46 years old. Considering the age groups by segment of the Judiciary Branch, the youngest are in Federal Justice, with only 9% of the magistrate being over 56 years old. A little over half of the magistrates were born in São Paulo. Minas Gerais takes the second spot with 9%; Rio Grande do Sul, Rio De Janeiro and Paraná are next, with 8%. Most magistrates (59%) operate in the state they were born. As to ethnic and racial identities, most declare themselves white (80,3%), 18,1% black (16,5% Pardo and 1,6% black), and 1,6% of Asian descent. Only 11 magistrates consider themselves Indigenous. Between those who entered until 1990, 84% declare themselves white. Of those who entered between 1991-2000, that number is 82%, reduced to 81% between 2001-2010, and that number is at 76% between those who started their career from 2011 onwards. Ethnic and racial diversity is slightly higher among the Labor Justice magistrates when compared to state-level and Federal Justices; it is also higher among men than it is among women. The states of Piauí, Sergipe, Bahia, Maranhão and Acre have a number of at least 40% of magistrates that declare themselves as pardo or black. In Roraima, 3% of magistrates declare themselves to be Indigenous (CNJ, 2018).

The sociodemographic profile of magistrates clearly shows the scale of the transformation that is needed, since it is, in its majority, male and white, and although half of them belong to the generation of the 80's and were educated legally in a context after the Brazilian Federal Constitution, that fact alone was not enough to incorporate the paradigm of ethnic diversity.

In Adorno's view (apud Pastana 2012: 188), among judges, "with few exceptions, the most predominant interests are conservative when it comes to controlling the social order, the repressive containment of crime, and in questions of public safety." Even when they tolerate addressing human rights, they frequently doubt alternative solutions and the trust in democratizing policies. "Quite the contrary, they emphasize retributive policies that apply the most punitive rigor, if possible, contained in penitentiaries and restrictive of liberty" [free translation].

The prevalence of decisions that deny the right of Indigenous folk to a semi-free sentencing regime - or any condition that is perceived as less severe - is an example. It shows the resistance the Judiciary Branch shows to recognizing differences as a right in the concretization of substantial equality, that is, resistance to interpret in accordance with the Constitution and international treaties, indicating that, although it has presented itself as an important step towards the deconstruction of the assimilationist paradigm, Resolution No. 287 of 2019 runs the risk of constituting the exception within a long-established set of rules.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognize at the same time its important symbolism as a movement in favor of a decolonial critique of the criminal legal system. Although considering the limitations of the measure, the Resolution presents itself as an important counter-speech, given the fact that it was produced within the National Council of Justice, constitutional body in charge of control, the improvement and administrative and procedural transparency of the organs of the Judiciary Branch.

In this sense, regarding the possibility of promoting and defending human rights from internal and international legal instruments, as a way to consolidate the achievements of social movements' struggles, the considerations of Joaquín Herrera Flores (2008) constitute the theoretical basis for reflecting on the capacity of Resolution No. 287 to make the interpretation of judges and courts abandon the assimilationist paradigm and incorporate the constitutional and supraconstitutional of ethnic diversity.

Pursuant to Herrera Flores (2008: 134), it is possible to "[...] build normative proposals and realize social practices that can be used to transform such hegemonic systems and propose the search for real and concrete native alters if we perceive that they lead to injustices and exploitation of the human being". [free translation] As a result, the resolution is within a set of measures that formalize within the State's logic that contribute to represent the resistance to hegemonic narrative that excludes any and all form of diversity. As Ela Castilho (2021: 184) sums up, Joaquín Herrera Flores understands that

[...] the legal system is shaped by the material and social context in which it is inscribed. Under these conditions, the interpreter, as a jurist, should be aware that his actions shape this context, a fact that can allow the claims of social struggles to be legally recognized and translated into the form of rights. [free translation]

The Resolution constitutes an important step towards accepting the social demands for recognition of ethnic diversity, although, paradoxically, the main criticism to be made of the Resolution lies in the fact that it was drawn up without the prior hearing of the indigenous, which reaffirms, in practice, a tendency to the extent that they can be represented by bodies responsible for the exercise of the tutelary Indian policy. The paradox, however, is emblematic of these clashes of contradictory political narratives, demonstrating that the obstacles to the realization of the human rights of the original peoples are many, but in the process of gradual deconstruction.

## Closing thoughts

Indigenist integrationist policies act in maintaining interethnic barriers, building the consolidated views on Indigenous ethnicity, reinforcing a transitory nature to Indigenous peoples, to cover their stories of fighting, resistance and political struggles for autonomy. Be it to forever link them to the long-gone past of the colonial civilizational march (of white European persuasion), be it to frame Indigenous peoples as a perfect symbol of humanity, uncorrupted by society, coloniality paints (and still does) the outlines of indigenous people, whilst ignoring their voices, their bodies, and their acts of resistance to colonialism.

The construction of such image serves the purpose of denying, silencing, and erasing Indigenous history and putting it in a status of inferiority imposed to non-whites. In the field of criminology, as seen above, this view found space in physical anthropology developed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, which attributed an atavistic nature to indigenous individuals preventing them from being considered civilized; one that was disseminated in Brazil by importing ideas from positivist theories and social evolutionism. On the other hand, in the field of Indigenous policies, the same image was construed by means of integrationism or cultural assimilationism, and it worked (as still works) as a mechanism to deny ethnic diversity, downplaying the importance of indigenous people as true subjects entitled to rights.

As non-subjects, Indigenous peoples have their subjective rights denied and pending on legal definitions described by non-indigenous parties. By denying Indigenous subjectivity, integrationism operates ethnocide.

The CNJ took an important step with the publication of Resolution No. 287, which definitively points to judges what to do and how to fulfill the Constitutional text and international treaties on human rights. However, given its resolute and administrative nature, the scope of the measure is limited to its role of challenging the institutional racism present in the Judiciary Branch. Recognizing the importance of the debate it promotes, Resolution No. 287 is not capable of by itself changing the course of the long-term phenomenon of assimilationism that marks Brazilian Indian politics, even because, even when well-intentioned, used it for the construction of its proposal, considered the direct non-avoidance of the indigenous in free, prior and informed consultation. The haste in the adoption of the resolution may be justified in the use of an administrative composition of the staff for the purpose of renewing the State's obtuse procedures, proving, however, that haste is not a sure way to change so consolidated integrationist bias.

In any case, it cannot be denied that the enactment of the Resolution No. 287 has an undeniable provocative and critical effect of the legal and administrative instruments available to the lawyer who deals with the criminalization of indigenous people: it constitutes an important counter-speech in favor of a narrative more focused on the recognition of ethnic diversity and respect for indigenous people as subjects entitled to rights. Moreover, by establishing an obligation to insert data into electronic systems operated by the CNJ

– and the correct filling out of it by the responsible parties – will give more visibility to the particularities of Indigenous peoples and generate data that will allow the creation of more effective legal policies to fight structural inequality.

It cannot be overstated that undoing five centuries of colonialism and Eurocentric power structures will take some time. However, the process can be expedited as Brazilian elites knowingly abdicate their privileges or if they are sufficiently pushed by the lower classes to do so.

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# The Indian Protective Service Accused: The Logic of Defamation in the Dispute for the Control of Indigenous Territories in the State of Amazonas, 1931

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## Abstract

The present article analyzes the Inquiry into the Indian Inspectorate in Amazonas and Acre, established in 1931 by order of the Federal Intervenor of the Amazonas. Taking as our approach an analysis of regional contexts, we link the inquiry to land conflicts that occurred in the previous decade, which gravitated around the imposition of a commercial monopoly on a resource historically configured as a “remedy for poverty” – Brazil nut trees. We demonstrate how narratives regarding these conflicts were triggered in the inquiry according to a logic that aimed to criminalize indigenous peoples and Indian Protective Service representatives as a way of accumulating legitimacy for the extralegal exercise of power. Finally, we illuminate the symbolic character of these disputes, which sought to restrict the legal meanings of “Indian” in order to question the legitimacy of the Indian Service in its administration of the so-called “semi-civilized peoples” and to restrict indigenous peoples’ access to State resources.

**Keywords:** Territorial conflicts; Indian Protection Service; History of Amazonas; Mura; Munduruku; Symbolic Power.

# O Serviço de Proteção aos Índios no banco dos réus: a lógica da detração na disputa pelo controle de territórios e indígenas no Estado do Amazonas, 1931

## Resumo

O presente artigo analisa o *Inquérito na Inspeção dos Índios no Amazonas e Acre*, instaurado em 1931 por ordem do Interventor Federal no Amazonas. Em uma aproximação a contextos locais e regionais, articula o inquérito aos conflitos fundiários ocorridos na década anterior, em torno da imposição do monopólio comercial sobre um recurso que se configurava, historicamente, como o “remédio da pobreza” – os castanhais. O artigo demonstra como as narrativas acerca desses conflitos são acionadas, no inquérito, segundo a lógica circular da detração, visando a criminalização de indígenas e representantes do SPI, como forma de acumular legitimidade para o exercício extralegal do poder. Por fim, ilumina o caráter propriamente simbólico das disputas, que buscavam restringir os sentidos legais da categoria “índio”, retirando a legitimidade da Inspeção na atuação entre os chamados “semicivilizados”, e alijando os indígenas de canais de acesso ao Estado.

**Palavras-Chave:** Conflitos territoriais; Serviço de Proteção aos Índios; História do Amazonas; Mura; Munduruku; Poder Simbólico.

# El Servicio de Protección al Indio en el banquillo de los acusados: la lógica de la difamación en la disputa por el control de los territorios y los pueblos indígenas en el Estado de Amazonas, 1931

## Resumen

Este artículo analiza la Investigación de la Inspección de Indios en Amazonas y Acre, iniciada en 1931 por orden del Interventor Federal en Amazonas. En una aproximación a los contextos locales y regionales, articula la investigación a los conflictos territoriales ocurridos en la década anterior, en torno a la imposición del monopolio comercial sobre un recurso que históricamente se configuró como el “remedio de la pobreza”: las castañas. El artículo demuestra cómo, en la Investigación, se desencadenan las narrativas sobre estos conflictos según la lógica circular de la difamación, apuntando a la criminalización de los representantes indígenas y del SPI, como una forma de acumular legitimidad para el ejercicio extralegal del poder. Ilumina el carácter propiamente simbólico de las disputas, que buscaban restringir los significados jurídicos de la categoría “indígena”, quitando la legitimidad del SPI en la administración de los llamados “semi-civilizados”, y removiendo a los indígenas de los canales de acceso al Estado.

**Palabras clave:** Conflictos territoriales; Servicio de Protección Indígena; Historia de Amazonas; Mura; Munduruku; Poder simbólico.

# The Indian Protective Service Accused: The Logic of Defamation in the Dispute for the Control of Indigenous Territories in the State of Amazonas, 1931

Ana Flávia Moreira Santos

## Introduction

The Inspectorate, according to its procedures, has created “a State within the State”, in which it is the absolute authority, dividing up [at] its discretion the municipalities into lots, which it delivers to the administration of its agents. With this protocol, as we have said, it has created an asphyxiating atmosphere inside [its territories] for those who, in defense of their rights and interests, try to peacefully resist it. Old landholders with property titles find themselves stripped of what they have maintained as their patrimony for many years. (BRASIL 1931 Vol. I: 42/43)

If we swap out some terms –such as “lots” for “indigenous lands” – the above paragraph would not seem strange to any Brazilian reader in the 21st century. Someone with a good memory would think that they might have been from a news story published at the beginning of the present decade in a major magazine, or perhaps from an affirmation made during the most recent Parliamentary Inquiry Commission into FUNAI and INCRA<sup>1</sup>. This, however, is a passage taken from documents that long predate Brazilian Constitution of 1988, which instituted new parameters for the recognition of indigenous territories. The paragraph comes from the final report of the *Inquiry into the Inspectorate of Indians Protection Service in Amazonas and Acre*, produced by a commission established in January 1931 by the Federal Intervenor in the State of Amazonas, Álvaro Maia.

What motivated the establishment of this raping of Indigenous lands during a historical period in which the demarcation of Indigenous lands was not yet an objective of the indigenous policy? Why these accusations against an agency whose performance, (considering the dimensions of the territories and indigenous populations in Amazonas and Acre), could at best be described as “incipient”?

The inquiry into the SPI’s Inspectorate was not, in and of itself, an exceptional fact at the dawn of the New Republic in Brazil. The establishment of investigations to examine the actions of directors and employees of state and federal administrative bodies was part of the new regime’s general practice, which sought to purge the evils incarnated in agencies and individuals likely to be associated with the defeated Old Republic. The denunciations in public spaces and the press were part of an ideological language that sought to impose the “new”. This language often expressed disputes between political groups for prestige and space in the situation that was then consolidating itself in early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Brazil (SANTOS 2009).

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<sup>1</sup> This is the article entitled “A farra da antropologia oportunista”, published by *Revista Veja* in June of 2010, which accuses anthropologists of “inventing” indigenous groups and *quilombolas* and of promoting “a true demarcation industry” (COUTINHO, PAULIN, MEDEIROS 2010). Five years later, a Congressional Investigation Committee (Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito – a CPI da FUNAI e do INCRA) would be established to investigate the routines and administrative practices adopted by the Fundação Nacional do Índio (FUNAI) and by the Instituto de Regularização e Reforma Agrária in respectively demarcating indigenous and *quilombola* lands. Proposed and sustained by members of the so-called Agrobusiness Parliamentary Front (FPA), the CPI ran between 2015 and 2017 and recommended the indictment of 67 people, including community leaders, anthropologists, and civil servants (AGÊNCIA BRASILEIRA DE NOTÍCIAS E FOTÓGRAFIAS, 2017). See COSTA 2019.

We also know, on the other hand, that the administrative reforms that followed the so-called Revolution of 1930 resulted in a severe crisis for Brazil's Indian Protection Service, which lost administrative autonomy and saw the dismantling of its network of local action units, the indigenous posts (SOUZA LIMA 1995).<sup>2</sup> The inquiry should not be read, however, as a mere reflection of this general picture, sometimes understood as a direct consequence of General Rondon's refusal to participate in the revolutionary movement that took control of the Brazilian State. As noted by Souza Lima (1995), the relations between Rondon's collaborators and the sectors that were being established in the government were extraordinarily complex. In the case of Amazonas, advisors close to the Inspectorate maintained alliances with political forces that were aligned with the Revolution, even assuming positions in the Intervening Body during the period in which the inquiry commission was operating.<sup>3</sup>

In the present article, we try to demonstrate how specific historical local and regional contexts can illuminate inquiry into broader events, explaining interests and movements through which sectors of regional oligarchies imposed, through political negotiation, the dismantling of the Indian Inspectorate and the subsequent rape of Indigenous lands. I discuss the inquiry through which they did this as a device for the production of *interested truths* (BOURDIEU 1989) – hierarchical, authorized truths that are capable of enhancing, on the ground, the arbitrary and violent exercise of physical force. From this perspective, the criminal expressions under which territorial conflicts are registered (ZHOURI, LASCHEFSKI 2010) can be seen as a dimension of a deeper struggle -- a symbolic, classificatory struggle, in which the most serious threats are created by the mere *possibility* that indigenous peoples might access administrative channels authorized to define the physical and symbolic realities (BOURDIEU 1989) which give legal access to rights. By analyzing the inquiry and the struggles that surrounded it in this way, we argue for a better understanding of the lasting effects of the rearrangement of political forces, such as the reorganization of apparatuses and devices for training and controlling the workforce that resulted in the collapse of the Indian Protection Service in the 1930s.

## The Inquiry

Despite the existence of a single final report regarding the inquiry, the records of it are a very heterogeneous<sup>4</sup> set of papers resulting from a series of independent and parallel investigations. Part of the survey was administrative in nature, focusing on financial resource flows and the management of public assets (allocation of funds; indigenous assets; use and conservation of river vessels; administration of the São Marcos National Farm). Another part was the receipt of complaints presented by people who thought they had been harmed by the Inspectorate or who had witnessed arbitrary acts committed by its representatives.

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2 As Souza Lima shows (1995), from 1930 on the SPI became part of the Ministry of Labor, Industry and Commerce (MTIC) but it had no administrative autonomy as part of the Department of Settlement. After 1934, it was shifted to the War Ministry. According to Souza Lima, between 1930 and 19, the total number of the Inspectorate's units fell from 67 to less than 20 across the nation. In the jurisdiction of the Amazonas and Acre Inspectorate, the fall of the number of Service units seems to have been less dramatic, but analyses demonstrate the total failure of the SPI's ability to intervene in the region during the 1930s and the beginning of the '40s (MELO 2007).

3 Although fragmentary, the data shows a political group containing a significant presence of sectors of the Army, which, to some extent, contemplated in the reformulation of the state's bureaucracy, sought to oppose the old oligarchies and which gained space in this process. It is possible to identify by name two people close to the Indian Protection Service with clear links to the *tententista* movement and the 1930 Revolution: Lieutenant Colonel Aluísio Ferreira, who was part of the group of lieutenants that took power in Amazonas in 1924 and was invited by Rondon to take over as deputy chief of the Santo Antônio do Rio Madeira Telegraph Post at the end of the 1920s; and law student Francisco Pereira da Silva, an important collaborator of the Inspectorate in 1927 and 1928, summoned to participate in the State Government Board in October 1930, and, after its dissolution, appointed Secretary General of the State Government, a position he held until 1932 (SANTOS, 2009).

4 The document set consists of seven volumes, which contain the commission's final report and the records of the inquiries themselves (vol. I); official letters and opinions produced by the Commission, or documents received by it (offices, reports, letters, invoices) (vol. II); defense allegations, including documentary annexes (vol. III); a set of photographs presented with the defense allegations (vol. IV); records of the inquiry carried out in São Gabriel da Cachoeira (vol. V). Available for public consultation, they are all part of the Fundo "Tribunal Especial", Série "Procuradoria", of the Brazilian National Archives Collection, where they can be located as Notation #640, Volumes 1 to 5, Deposit 311.

The reports were in sent writing to (or given in person in) the Rio Negro Palace room reserved for the Commission of Inquiry's work. Once registered, the accusations resulted into smaller sub-inquiries, with the summoning of witnesses and requests for information from various agents such as merchants and local authorities (judges, notary publics, police delegates and sub-delegates).

Another procedure adopted by the Inquiry was the formulation of questions about the actions of the Inspectorate among the populations it administered. A questionnaire containing six questions was sent to mayors and judges through official letters in which the Federal Intervenor requested the opening of "rigorous local inquiries" in order to verify the following:

- (a) Do Tribes, Hordes, or Villages of true forest-dwellers in fact exist, as defined by the terms of the Civil Code;
- (b) Where are they located;
- (c) Are there groups regularly constituted and installed by the Indian Inspectorate;
- (d) What is their situation;
- (e) Do those in charge of the Indigenous Posts limit their activities to those laid out under their mandate, or do they take advantage of nut harvests to buy and sell nuts;
- (f) Do those in charge of the Indigenous Posts stay in the areas under their responsibility or do they widen their activities over other lands (BRASIL 1931: Vol. I, fl. 212).

The questions are indicative of some of the survey's main interests. These concerned access to certain territories, which placed the land issue at the heart of the inquiry. In the vast territorial expanse of the Amazon, landholdings have historically constituted islands characterized by the occurrence of commercially valuable resources and by the presence of labor that can be fixed in place to work these. The rubber plantation<sup>5</sup> is the most classic form of this model (PACHECO DE OLIVEIRA 1979). In 1931, these resources were mainly nut groves and circuits, especially those along navigable rivers, already benefiting from the presence of so-called *semi-civilized indigenous peoples*. The Inquiry was questioning the principles upon which the Inspectorate argued for its the prerogatives in managing lands containing Brazil nut trees and in the administration of indigenous people and the commercialization of Brazil nuts. "Catechizing Brazil nut grove workers in order to discover Indians" is the phrase employed that best sums up the core of the denunciations reported to the Commission of Inquiry against the Inspectorate (BRASIL 1931 Vol. I: 73v).

### **The decline of the rubber economy and "nut fever"**

Readers must bear in mind that in 1910, the Amazon produced more than 50% of the rubber consumed in the world (reaching 61% in 1892). However, by the 1920s, the English and Dutch colonies in Asia were producing 90% of the world's rubber (SOARES 1927). The marginalization of the Amazon vis-à-vis the international rubber trade was abrupt and definitive; its effects were drastic. A dizzying reduction in state revenues (largely based on export taxes) took place. Rubber traders underwent abrupt decapitalization and insolvency, and this effected the entire rubber extraction and commercialization system. There was a complete depreciation of assets involved in the credit network, including the rubber plantations and circuits themselves. Long-distance river transport systems broke down. Imports collapsed, especially those of companies dedicated to supplying of luxury items or trade goods to rubber traders (SANTOS, R. 1980; WEINSTEIN 1993). Amid the economic depression, massive population rearrangements took place. Rubber tappers abandoned their circuits and retreated to capital cities,

<sup>5</sup> Translator's Note: many resources in the Amazon (notoriously rubber) do not occur in concentrated form but are spread out throughout a given region. The harvesting paths that link these resources are referred to as "circuits". In the present text, we use both "groves" "plantations" and "circuits" interchangeably to refer to collections of nut-bearing plants harvested by local workers.



regional centers and villages, to other parts of the Amazon, or to other states entirely. Scarcity, famine, and epidemics created precarious living conditions for those who gathered in the region's cities, a framework that would be further aggravated by the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 (REIS 1944).

Although abrupt, the collapse of the Amazonian rubber economy did not entirely extinguish rubber extraction and trading activities in the region, nor did it immediately remove them from the center of political and economic life in Amazonas (WEINSTEIN 1993). It created important changes in the spheres directly related to production and to the initial stages of commercialization, however. Over the course of the decade, these changes were reflected in new conditions for those who remained engaged in the extraction of goods from the jungle. The inability of traders and rubber tappers to continue to supply rubber plantations with all the necessary items for their operation caused a significant sea-change in the mechanisms of controlling labor and extracting surpluses. Activities aimed at the self-sustainability of rubber tappers that had previously been prohibited and harshly repressed, — subsistence farming, hunting, fishing — became a basic condition for extractive production in the region (REIS 1953; WEINSTEIN 1993). In Amazonas during the Alcântara Bacelar administration (1917 – 1920), the SPI Inspectorate had been directly involved in government efforts to produce food, control population flows, create infrastructure, and order territories, among other forms of subsidiary activities to extractive enterprise.<sup>6</sup>

Diversification of production and exportation was another fundamental strategy for the survival of extractive enterprise in the Amazon. Products such as nuts, *balata*, *pirarucu*, *guaraná*, and wood took on greater relative importance in the regional economy, contributing to diluting the risks of the extractive enterprise. The Brazil nut, in particular, prevented the hinterland from becoming completely abandoned according to Reis (1944). Some characteristics of this product must be highlighted, particularly its historical relationship with the so-called “rubber economy”.

The rubber tree is a plant of the floodplains and river margins. Rubber extraction is carried out in the summer (BRASIL 1929). Brazil nuts, characteristic of the higher interfluvial uplands, are harvested during the winter rainy season. This facilitates access and production transport. The complementarity of these two products in terms of their seasonality meant that Brazil nut production remained high even during the rubber boom, and was even more easily associated with rubber production after the bust. But while the rubber circuits ended up being the regional model of land ownership, the huge difference between the value of the two products meant that nut circuits remained areas of public domain and free extraction. They were thus historically known as the “remedy for poverty”.<sup>7</sup> In the state of Pará, as indicated by Emmi (1987), this situation gave nut workers a certain autonomy in relation to commercial capital: they even benefited from competition between agents of private capital.

The value correlation between rubber and Brazil nuts changed during the 1920s. With the end of World War I (1914-1918) and the normalization of trade with Europe, there was an increase in demand for Brazil nuts on the international market. The highest prices were registered between 1920 and 1925 (BRASIL 1929). In 1922, rubber was at its lowest price since 1910. In 1923 and 1924, rubber prices would have a brief and artificial recovery, in response to the U.K.'s pricing policies in the face of overproduction in British rubber colonies (SOARES 1927).

6 Alcântara Bacelar adopted a discourse of searching for “new props” for the Amazonian economy, placing at the center of the government's programs the rationalizing and modernizing of “archaic” Amazonian agriculture through the dissemination of education. The civilizing character of this project is evident. The Inspectorate of the Service for the Protection of Indians came to occupy the place of a preferred partner in it. I have tried to demonstrate elsewhere how, in addition to an ideological identity between developmental goals and the fraternal protection of Native populations, an alignment of interests was created between regional oligarchies and sectors of the Federal Government, resulting in a joint effort to implement a plan for economic recovery based on the recruitment of indigenous labor for different purposes (SANTOS 2009; 2014).

7 In the case of Amazonas, this process seems to have undergone oscillations, even though its meaning is the same from the 1920s onwards. At the beginning of the 20th century, Governor Silvério Nery deplored the maintenance of Brazil nut groves as public lands for free extraction, as established in Law no. 231 of 10/09/1898. He requested that the Amazon Congress modify this law, claiming that it was impossible for the State to monitor compliance (AMAZONAS 1920: 57).

The impact of this process was soon felt on the lands occupied by indigenous peoples. Invasions of indigenous territories, threats towards or the effective domination of indigenous peoples, forcing them to slave labor, occurred, throughout the period of the decline in rubber's fortunes. This was true even during the Alcântara Bacelar Government, which was characterized by a certain alignment of interests between regional oligarchies and sectors of the Federal Government (SANTOS 2009). In the late 1910s, however, documents such as the Indian Inspectorate's annual reports not only show tensions and fissures in this alignment, but also a resurgence of conflicts. These began to draw a new geography in the Amazon, which was based on Brazil nut circuits that were known for their abundant production (BRASIL 1929), especially in the Jauaperi, Lower Amazon, and Lower and Middle Madeira River regions, territories populated by the Waimiri-Atroari, Mura, Munduruku, Mura Pirahã peoples, among others.

At the same time, a series of regulatory changes began to take place. In 1920, Alcântara Bacelar modified the state's agrarian legislation, instituting the provisional lease of vacant lands that contained Brazil nut trees. In the same year, he revoked law 941/1917, which he himself had instituted together with the SPI, regulating the allocation of land to indigenous peoples in the State of Amazonas.<sup>8</sup> The new law suppressed the principle of recognition of the right of indigenous people to land. It placed any land concessions to indigenous families or tribes under the control and convenience of the state government. In 1921, the new governor, César do Rego Monteiro (1921-1924), not only suggested relaxing prohibitions on the sale of nuts, but also proposed a change in how nut groves were defined: "if one considers as nut groves [or circuits] to be any land containing small groups of not trees, (...) then almost all of the land is within this prohibitive definition". In Governor's opinion, defining the nuts as "a food resource for the poor [cannot] be a reason for the State to [impede] nut harvesting" (AMAZONAS 1921: 135/136).

In the wake of conflicts between factions in the state oligarchies, Rego Monteiro pushed one of the characteristics of the *coronelist*<sup>9</sup> system to the limit: the interweaving of the state's governing apparatus with private interest networks. In mid-1924, the state government was deposed by *tenentista*<sup>10</sup> forces who took Manaus and held power for about a month (SANTOS, E. 2001). From the end of 1924 until the beginning of 1926, the state of Amazonas would thus suffer under direct federal intervention as a result.

The 1920s, which had begun under the cloud of serious economic crisis, also saw a worsening in the regional labor shortage, especially in the 1923/1924 when the reactivation of the rubber plantations combined with the increased price of Brazil nuts to boost extractive enterprises in a very specific way (SANTOS 2009). On the one hand, Brazil nut groves were legally constituted as common areas for free extraction or as lands regulated by the community. On the other, the rubber plantations had been forced to loosen the mechanisms of their control over their laborers, expanding tappers' autonomy. According to Weinstein (1993: 274), "the very basis of the employer's economic and political power: his ability to extract a marketable surplus from the local population" was thus under threat. The resurgence of violence and attempts to subject indigenous peoples was therefore part of a broader process of reordering forces and strategies to immobilize the regional workforce and reconstruct a monopoly on the extraction of resources: most notably Brazil nuts.

8 Law 941/1917 authorized the state governor to "grant, as immemorial possessions held by primary occupation, all lands [then] owned by wild or semi-civilized Indians, for their residence and use" (caput). As demonstrated elsewhere (SANTOS 2009; 2014), the practical-symbolic resolution of this law led to the recognition of the territorial rights of semi-civilized indigenous peoples over limited areas of land destined for agricultural activities. It also referred to a unilateral act of the state – the reservation of land – and the possibility of allocating larger areas (more favorable to extractive practices) to so-called wild Indians. This created a norm grammatically linked to the civilizing project under which the interests of the SPI and the state executive were aligned. Law No. 1144/1920, which revoked Law No. 941, established in its Second Article 2 that the Governor of the State "would grant to indigenous families or tribes the area of land that in his discretion [he judged] convenient for the domicile and use of these families or tribes" (our emphasis).

9 Translator's note: rule by paramilitarized local elites through clientelist networks.

10 Translator's note: a progressive movement of the 1920s championed by the lower ranks of the Army's officer corps.

## Methodological questions and scales of analysis

When making his defense, Bento Lemos -- head of the SPI Inspectorate in Amazonas and Acre<sup>11</sup> -- emphasized that several of the protagonists of the Inquiry Commission (merchants, alleged landowners, alleged squatters, mayors, and police officers) were at the time (or had been in the past recent) in direct confrontation with indigenous peoples and representatives of the SPI (BRASIL 1931 Vol. IV). In fact, all those who had voluntarily filed complaints against the SPI in 1931 were in this category, as were several witnesses and some members of the Commission itself, particularly engineers with experience in demarcating land in indigenous territories (SANTOS 2009).<sup>12</sup>

This approach, based on my analysis of the diverse documents produced by the Inquiry Commission,<sup>13</sup> indicates that the Inquiry should be read as a product of political interests, whose signs were manifest not only in the lists of investigators and witnesses, but also in the procedures the Commission adopted and in the construction of its court case. Particularly notable in this regards the absence in the Inquiry's transcripts of any testimony favorable to the Inspectorate and in the exclusion of the results of an extemporaneous investigation by the Commission, carried out in São Gabriel, which -- unlike all the others -- had concluded that there were indeed "true forest-dwellers" in the region (BRASIL 1931 Vol. IV). Nevertheless, the methodological and analytical option I adopt here is to suspend any distinction between "false" and "true" testimony. Complaints, statements, and defenses are appraised equally as construction of "interested truths," produced for/by judicial dispute (BOURDIEU 1989). The interplay of the various versions of these "truths" exposed in the Commission's paperwork ends up showing the multiplicity of meanings and effects implied in the representations, relations, and social actions set before the Commission.

This allows us to discern at least three distinct situations in the scenarios under investigation. The first is a set of events referring to the strong resistance of indigenous peoples to attempts to privatize Brazil nuts. This resulted in outbreaks of violent conflicts in different regions of inner Amazonas, particularly in 1923 and 1924. The second refers to processes that we might call the *restoration of order*. These involve 'pacification' measures in the interior of the state, undertaken between the years of 1925 and 1927. Finally, between 1928 and 1931, we see an intensification of disputes for control of territory and indigenous labor. These sets of events are not only linked together as small social dramas, but are also discursively connected in the Inquiry Commission's documents. I call this the logic of defamation<sup>14</sup> (SANTOS 2009).

Following the regional focus of my broader research and in view of the excellent results produced by microanalysis and shifting scales (REVEL 1998), events and narratives will be presented below through singular scenes, taken from testimonies given in the context of the Commission's questionnaires regarding the municipality of Borba and the lands occupied by Mura and Munduruku on the Lower Madeira River.

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11 Bento Martins Pereira de Lemos, from Maranhão, headed the first Regional Inspectorate of the SPI between 1916 and 1932, becoming an important agent in the institutionalization of the Service in the state of Amazonas and the territory of Acre. Under his administration, initiatives were taken to recognize indigenous lands and to legally defend these. Exploitation of indigenous labor by employers and private enterprises was also a concern of Bento Lemos' administration, as well as the census and regulation of indigenous tutelage. Bento Lemos produced significant documents such as letters, dense annual reports, and visual records. See, in this respect: FREIRE, 2007; MELO, 2007; SANTOS, 2009, Chapter 2

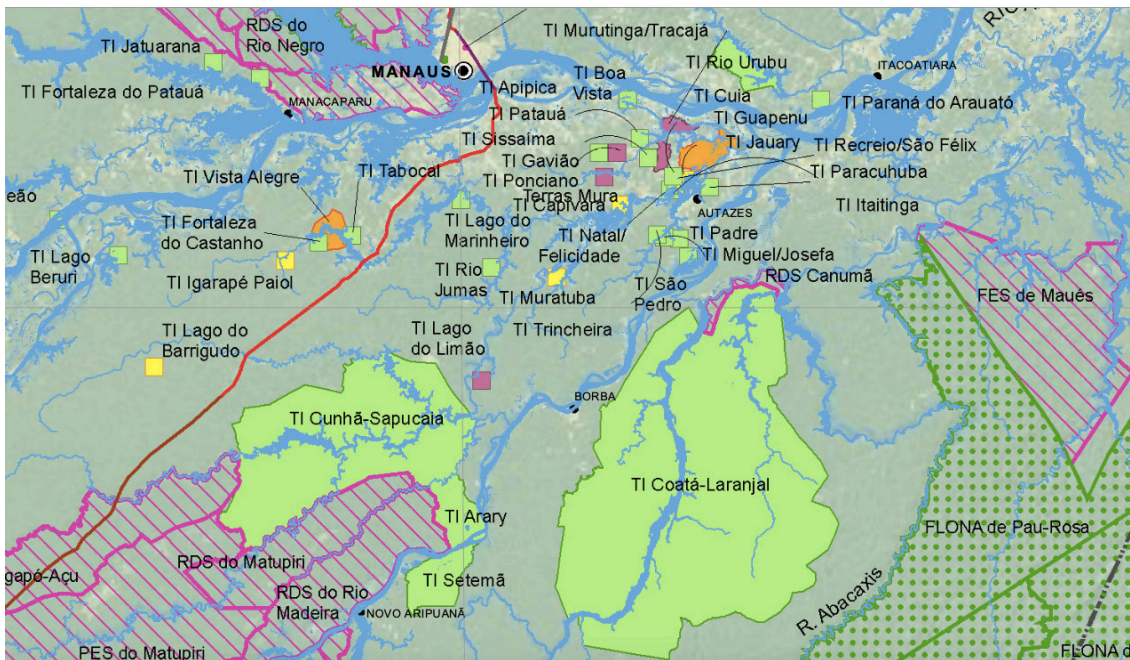
12 The Commission was chaired by engineer and surveyor Manoel Dias Barroso, responsible in 1923 and 1925 for the demarcation of plots in Munduruku lands on the Mari-Mari River and Igarapé Laranjal. Another of its members, Demétrio Hermes de Araújo, was an agronomist from a traditional family established in the Baixo Madeira/Amazonas. He had been denounced for irregularly demarcating two lots in Mura territory (Igapó-Açu) in 1928 (BRASIL 1931 Vol III).

13 In the research for the thesis that gave rise to this article, reports and official letters from the Indian Protection Service, messages from the governors to the Legislative Assembly of Amazonas, newspapers and publications of the time, from different collections in Rio de Janeiro and Manaus were analyzed. In this article, the examination of the records of the investigation itself has been privileged, although this analysis is also based on this broader set of documents (SANTOS 2009).

14 Translator's note: the *lógica da detratção* in the original. Literally, the logic of "mistreating" or of mistreating through intentional attacks on the reputation of the target.

This region's economy was deeply linked to the exploitation of rubber and Brazil nuts at the time (BRAZIL 1913) and we can thus presume that this regional focus maintained connections with the broader political spheres involved in the Inquiry Commission's attack on the Inspectorate. The local inquiry itself took the form of a great "legality ritual", performed by a local commission presided over by the judge who prepared the charges. This "ritual" traveled through the main indigenous and Brazil nut territories of the municipality in question, questioning witnesses and future defendants.<sup>15</sup> The map presented below locates some of the areas visited at that time. These are indicated by the presence of the Cunhã-Sapucaia and Arari Indigenous Lands (TIs) to the left of the Madeira River and the Setemã and Coatá-Laranjal TIs to its right.<sup>16</sup>

Map of indigenous lands and conservation units in the Legal Amazon, March 2019, Instituto Socioambiental. Highlighted: Cunhã-Sapucaia, Arari, Setemã, Miguel/Josefa, and Coatá-Laranjal Indigenous Lands.



<sup>15</sup> The inquiry carried out in Borba stands out from the others. In addition to concentrating many of the complaints against Inspectorate officials and indigenous police officers, present in significant numbers in the municipality, the local authorities paid particular attention to the Inquiry, for which they mobilized a notable investigative apparatus. Answering the questions elaborated by the Commission of Inquiry in Manaus gave rise to the creation of a small committee, coordinated by the judge preparing the report and integrated into the highest levels of the municipal executive branch. A boat provided by City Hall took members of this commission up several rivers throughout municipality so that they could question, in loco, residents of places close to the villages, Indians, and SPI employees. An ad hoc report was written by the mayor himself -- Sérgio Pessoa Filho -- who had inspected incidents in nut groves in areas occupied by indigenous peoples shortly after his appointment as military mayor, even before Act no. 193 (SANTOS, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> The map depicts the Lower Madeira River and its tributaries around the Autazes lakes, a complex of channels near the confluence of the Madeira River with the Amazon, a floodplain area that constitutes the Mura's territory, where several regularized Indigenous Lands are situated. Going up the Madeira River from the municipality of Autazes towards Borba, one encounters some of the localities/regions mentioned in the article: the Cunhã nut circuit, occupied by Mura (Cunhã-Sapucaia TI); the Miguel/Josefa TI, where the Josefa Indigenous Post was established in 1928; the Setemã, Aranaquara, Arari and Jacaré villages, areas of Mura occupation on the banks of the Madeira (Arari TI on the left bank, and Setemã TI on the right bank); and the Canumã-Abacaxis interfluvium region to the right of the Madeira, where the Paca, Laguinho, Cipó and Laranjal villages are situated with reference to the Coatá-Laranjal TI, occupied by the Munduruku and Sateré-Mawé (INSTITUTO SOCIOAMBIENTAL 2019).

## Scenes from the conflict

Odorico Ferreira Chaves – a farmer from Pará, 62 years old, married, living since 1902 in Boa União/Rio Preto do Igapó-Açu, Autaz region – was questioned as a witness by the Borba commission regarding the first territory they investigated: the Cunhã nut grove, located on the Preto do Igapó-Açu River, where the Inspectorate maintained a village of Mura Indians. That year's harvest had been administered by civil police officer on leave, José Sant'Anna de Souza. In his testimony, Chaves agreed with the assertion that there were no *real forest-dwellers* in the region, nor any *village regulated by the Inspectorate*. He also denied that the person “responsible for the Inspectorate's lands” had extended his activities beyond the Cunhã site. Called to justify his position as a Indian police officer<sup>17</sup> before the Commission, he explained that the Mura were the native caboclos<sup>18</sup> of the region who, although “already mixed”, lived a “more needy life than others” (BRASIL 1931 Vol. I: 236v).

Chaves' posture of active work with the SPI and with the indigenous peoples of the region is quite apparent in the documentation relating to the previous years. In 1928, he was asked to respond, as an Indian police officer, to a series of protests by the residents of Igapó-Açu who claimed that the Indians held numerous possessions and nut groves in the region. In the same year, Chaves went to Manaus accompanied by some Mura Indians to personally deliver to Governor Efigênio Sales a report regarding the occupations of the indigenous people and the “poverty” of Igapó-Açu. Also in 1928, he demanded a series of measures aimed at reinforcing the local presence of the Inspectorate from the SPI. These included the inauguration of a school - which Chaves was willing to work in as a “teacher of elementary reading and writing” and a suggestion that General Rondon visit the region (SANTOS 2009).

In 1923, along with twenty-seven other residents of Autaz-Açu, Odorico Chaves addressed a petition to then-Governor César do Rego Monteiro, denouncing attempts to usurp lands occupied by the Mura indigenous people along the Igapó-Açu, Tupana and Autaz-Mirim rivers (SANTOS 2009). Some witnesses in the 1931 inquiry complained that they had been expelled from their occupations in these places that year by “neighbors (...) [who] called themselves Indians” (BRASIL 1931 Vol. I: 222). Two years later, in 1925, Chaves would be accused by the police deputy of the 10th District of Borba – his next-door neighbor, “compadre and friend” – of leading an “uprising” of Mura Indians in Igapó-Açu “with the purpose of disturbing public order and preventing measurement and demarcation services on lands required by several people” (BRASIL 1925). The Inspectorate was obliged to carry out an operation in the region to investigate the complaint.

It is important to note that, also in 1925, Odorico Chaves gave shelter, on his own land, to Mura from the Setemã, Aranaquara, Arari and Jacaré villages, located in areas along the Madeira River which were being claimed by the owner of the Vista Alegre rubber plantation, Colonel Augusto Costa. Indigenous people were fleeing the persecution organized by the colonel and his son-in-law, sub-delegate Luís José Soares. Since at least 1922, both of these men had been restricting the Mura's free access to nut groves and to lakes and other resources. The climax of this conflict came in 1924, after a confrontation that resulted in the death of a worker and the surveyor subcontracted to demarcate the lands next to the villages. That year, Natives encircled the Vista Alegre trading post for approximately one month. Through José Guimarães – the manager sent by the Inspectorate to manage that year's nut harvest - they had effected the arrest two men linked to Colonel Augusto Costa. These were sent to a Manaus, then under *tenentista* control. Months later, the villages were the target of violent punitive incursion, carried out by police officers and Augusto Costa's men. Women were raped in these attacks and other Natives were beaten, imprisoned, taken to Manaus, and later convicted of murder (SANTOS 2009).

<sup>17</sup> The *delegado dos índios*, or Indian Police Officer, was an unpaid SPI position, established in regions where formal SPI posts had not or could not be situated. It kept the Service abreast of occurrences in the region.

<sup>18</sup> Translator's note: people of mixed Indigenous and European ancestry.

In 1925, Augusto Costa accused Odorico Chaves of “making the *caboclos* into hired thugs” and of having organized with indigenous leaders and José Guimarães himself the actions that had resulted in the deaths and imprisonment of Costa’s men in 1924. Costa asked the Inspectorate to investigate the conduct of the Indian police officer (SANTOS 2009). In 1931, Luís José Soares brought this to the Commission. Demonstrating that there were no Native in Vista Alegre – only “*caboclos*, but civilized”, he sent a series of documents to the Judge in Borba, including a letter dated June 1930, in which Colonel Costa requested Inspector Bento Lemos’ “resignation from the position of Indian police officer” (BRASIL 1931 Vol. II: 266). The official letter was in fact a response to a previous request from the Inspectorate, which asked the Colonel to inform them about the date of the installation of the Indian police station in those lands, indicating “the known Indian *malocas*, *verandas*, rivers, streams, lakes, civilized encampments, centers of extractive industry (rubber, *balata*, *caucho*, nuts), natural fields, etc.” (BRASIL 1931 Vol. II: 265). It is interesting to note that a Protectorate school had been operating in Vista Alegre at least since 1927, whose teacher was Corina da Costa Soares, daughter of Colonel Augusto Costa, married to Luís José Soares.

The Abacaxis District – the region of Munduruku occupation where the Laranjal, Paca, Laguinho and Cipó villages were located, on the right bank of the Madeira - was the third place to be visited by the local inquiry commission in Borba. Some of the municipalities main nut groves were in this region, and it was thus not by chance that it had been chosen in 1929 for the establishment of an Indigenous Post.<sup>19</sup>

In 1931, the person in charge of this Post, Raimundo Venâncio da Costa Leite, nephew of Bento Lemos, testified before the local commission of inquiry, along with three Munduruku, Militino de Souza e Silva (an Native police officer since at least 1925) and Manoel João dos Santos (Captain of the Laranjal, Laguinho, Paca and Cipó Indians). The main subject of this investigation were the practices surrounding the supply of and commercial exchanges at the post. The monopoly on the sale of Brazil nuts and other products, established with the installation of the post, was firmly defended by Raimundo da Costa Leite as a measure aimed at protecting the indigenous people and one of his main duties as post supervisor. Nevertheless, the indigenous people themselves showed some discontent with this position, pointing out the breach of commitments made by the post and the disadvantages of having to work with pre-fixed prices without being able to “sell their nuts to whoever gave the best price” (BRASIL 1931 Vol. I: 252). There was consensus regarding the scope of the supervisor’s activities, which everyone described as limited to the duly demarcated area. The witnesses also agreed that there were no “true forest-dwellers” in the region.

Along with Inspector Bento Lemos, the person in charge of the Laranjal Indigenous Post was one of the SPI employees most severely attacked during the investigation, being the target of several accusations sent directly to Manaus. In response to these allegations, the Defense carefully recovered, in its documentary appendix, the long history of conflicts and land disputes involving the Munduruku and generations of the same oligarchic family group – the Pessoa Sobrinhos – which had been occurring since at least the middle of the 1910s (BRASIL 1931 Vol. IV). In the early 1920s, the intensification of these disputes was revealed in several Native initiatives: 1922 was the year in which Militino de Souza e Silva “founded” the Laranjal village, building a wattle and daub chapel in it and requesting that the Inspectorate demarcate the area in his name.

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<sup>19</sup> The Laranjal Indigenous Post was located at the confluence of the Paca River with the Mari-Mari, a tributary of the Abacaxis River, in the midst of other Munduruku villages spread throughout its interfluvial region with the Paraná do Urariá and the Canumã Rivers. It was certainly one of the main nut producing areas in Borba, as Mayor Sérgio Pessoa noted in his report. The area under the influence of the Post contained three other nut groves with a total production of between 1000 and 1500 hectoliters, in addition to the Laranjal itself, with a production between 600 and 800 hectoliters

There were also attempts to by merchants, civil servants, and rubber tappers to advance into the territory, such as those that materialized in 1923 in the form of requests for land demarcation. These were sometimes followed by violent incursions and arbitrary arrests (SANTOS 2009). In 1924, conflicts exploded in the region around the Canumã River (also under Munduruku occupation), with a series of trading posts being besieged and ransacked by the indigenous and non-indigenous people living along the river. The episode was described in 1931 as “the famous revolt on the Canumã River and its tributaries, in which several people died, and all commercial establishments were looted” (BRASIL 1931 Vol. I: 247v/248).

In 1928, there were new attempts to privatize nut groves in the Laranjal region, as shown in five different land applications from the Pessoa Sobrinho family. At least one of these was recorded as resulting in a direct confrontation between indigenous people and the family’s workers. The episode was followed by a police incursion that besieged the home of a Native in the Paca village. In the documentation, it is sometimes described as “robbery of the trading poet”, sometimes as a seizure of property for payment due to the indigenous people. In that same year the Inspectorate refounded the Laranjal School. In 1929, it installed the indigenous post and demarcated two “lots”: Laranjal and Chiadá, the latter located on the Canumã River. In the mid-1930s, Raimundo Costa Leite, in charge of the Laranjal Indigenous Post, would undergo a police investigation, being blamed for the cruel (and false) murder of a Munduruku man.<sup>20</sup> In the same year, he was also the target of an aggressive public repudiation campaign, expressed in a manifesto signed by no less than 102 district residents (SANTOS 2009).

### **Restoring order: narratives of defamation, legality, and violence**

The events that formed the basis of the 1931 narratives thus date back to the early years of the 1920s, a period strongly marked by the rubber collapse, the increasing value of Brazil nuts, and the transformations of extractive enterprise in the Amazon. Far from being incidental attacks on extractors and their resources, these changes involved the privatization of Brazil nuts and destabilized the entire local productive system, directly threatening the occupations and autonomy of extractors – indigenous and non-indigenous – and small traders. The conflicts reveal the strong resistance to strategies that finalized the (re)composition of commercial monopoly over land and resources that had remained tangential to the rubber economy and which had continued, up to then, to be accessed by “the poor”. It is necessary see the records of “turbulent gangs plundering and destroying the property they found along their way” in the light of this process (AMAZONAS 1923: 17/18) and likewise, inversely, the initiatives to defend access to resources and territories whose paths said “properties” insisted on obstructing.

The uprising in Canumã and the siege of Vista Alegre in the critical years of 1923/1924 suggest that the conflicts went beyond reactions to localized disputes, taking the form of a broader resistance. The strength of this movement seems to have resulted from the organization of multiple local networks with significant and fundamental participation of indigenous people, but also including other subaltern sectors of the population (SANTOS 2009). In this process, the role of the SPI Inspectorate stands out, especially through its Indian police stations. The Inspectorate was building alliances that served to produce information and affirm the agency’s presence in territories where the strategic distribution of resources had not yet permitted the installation of local administrative units (SOUZA LIMA 1995).

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<sup>20</sup> Under the terms of the defense documents produced by the Inspectorate, a Munduruku person had been taken to the village of Cipó, the residence of his family, where he had died of severe fever accompanied by delirium. He would have been ritually cremated by other indigenous people (BRASIL 1931 Vol. III: 733 / 733v). The false accusation of murder against Costa Leite was based on statements obtained from seven Munduruku who were arbitrarily arrested and held in prison for seven days.

The stories of Odorico Chaves and Militino Souza e Silva suggest that it was through the Inspectorate's connection to these subaltern sectors, which were under severe pressure, that the agency first implemented its activities in these regional contexts, marked by strong disputes. For the Mura, the Munduruku and the non-indigenous groups linked to them, the Inspectorate represented access to more-or-less institutionalized channels of federal administration and, through this, state administration. In the resistance to the privatization of the nut groves, this was an important consideration. It infused demands, denunciations, and actions with legitimacy and created concrete entries into the legal field. These, in turn, could result in effective measures carried out by state agents. In certain contexts, such agents started to function as alternative networks of commerce, protection, and power, providing access to the State in a parallel or opposite way to the networks articulated around oligarchic *coroneis*.

A dimension that must be further investigated is that of the relationships and mutual effects between the confrontations described above and the political developments in Manaus. The *tenentista* rebellion in the state capital was mainly associated with external factors and agents, with its local face based on dissatisfactions emanating from an urban context (SANTOS, E. 2001). From a general perspective, the simultaneity of these revolts does not seem fortuitous, suggesting awareness and political action on the part of the Natives and their networks, as well much deeper ruptures in the emergence of the *tenentista* movement than those caused by the arbitrariness of the Rego Monteiro Government. After the defeat of the rebels and the arrest of the movement's principle leaders, the need for federal intervention became the consensus among state political actors. The restoration of order was turned into a social necessity, shaping the more immediate context of the conflicts that unfolded at the beginning of the decade.

Aimed at cooling down the disputes and tensions that had erupted over the previous years, the actions of the Inspectorate accompanied the restoration order. In 1925, Bento Lemos informed the Federal Intervenor of the situation of the indigenous lands threatened by the advance of extractive enterprise. He observed that, due to the dispossessions perpetrated during in the previous year, the Inspectorate had been forced to send numerous missions to the interior with the aim of "restoring normality in the villages and calming the spirits of the Indians who remained revolted by attempts to occupy their lands" (BRASIL 1925a: 02). Letters and reports with different objectives and degrees of formality (VIANNA 1995) describe the diligence of the Inspectorate in Igapó-Açu, clearly showing the existence of a performative dimension in these acts of restoring order (SANTOS 2009). The Federal Intervenor then seemed to ensure that the SPI would retain a certain amount of political capital.

In terms of its programs, the Efigênio Sales Government (1926-1929) had many similarities to that of Alcântara Bacelar, investing in the "civilizing" and "ordering" effectiveness of public education and agricultural rationalization.<sup>21</sup> There is, however, a clearing away of the Inspectorate's real political power: the body would no longer be the preferred partner of the state government in implementing "civilizing" projects. The Catholic Church, as well as landowners and civil entities, emerge as important agents in (for example) the creation of schools, a policy with well-known territorializing goals.<sup>22</sup> As far as the Inspectorate was concerned, the initiatives taken to "maintain order" lost their performative dimension, becoming increasingly substantive commitments to local bosses and oligarchs. This can be seen in the appointment of Augusto Costa as an Indian police officer and in the founding of a school in the Vista Alegre plantation.

21 Professor Sales pushed basic education, reconstructing the network of public primary school in inner Amazonas, which had been losing units since 1912, when it had 270 schools. In 1923, only 123 of these were left, to which Federal intervention added another. In 1929, the last year of the Salles government, there were 278 schools (AMAZONAS 1929: 217).

22 The policy of creating and maintaining new schools in the interior of Amazonas was particularly dear to the Governor, who claimed that in this region "the child population is very widespread and not very sedentary outside the cities and towns". Salles attributed low average attendance at schools to the "almost nomadic life of the extractor", which inevitably led to the interruption of the children's school activities. He projected a future in which school attendance would surpass 80%, when "the country population of Amazonas was tied to the soil by agriculture or by breeding, as in part is already being done" (AMAZONAS 1928: 60;67).



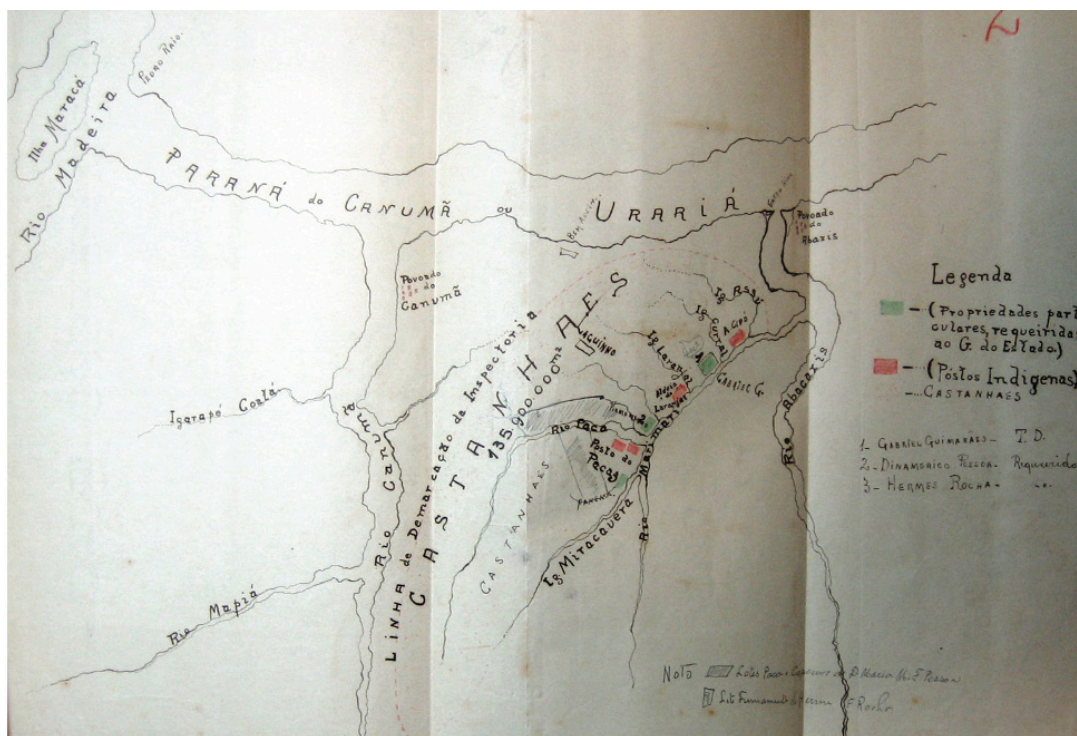
This scenario illuminates some of the testimonies and denunciations that made up the 1931 Inquiry. In these narratives, conflicts appear displaced from their contexts. They are described not as a call for help in the midst of a crisis, but as part of later processes of *defaming* political opponents: the indigenous and non-indigenous actors connected to the Inspectorate. There is an accusatory principle at work in this logic, aimed not only at criminalizing, but also at delegitimizing, belittling, diminishing – defaming, in short -- the value of certain people’s words and the scope of their actions. The Inquiry sought to eliminate these actors from the circuits authorized to produce truth regarding the facts, reducing said actors’ capacity to promote actions that validated and defended their interests. The accusations made against Odorico Chaves in 1925 by a neighbor – that he organized an “uprising” in Igapó-Açu – is exemplary in this sense. The Inquiry can thus be seen as an “idealized plan” that was intended, as the procedure concluded, “to alienate the authority of the officer of the Inspectorate and displace the Indians from that region, so that the complainant [could] take charge of Igapó-Açu village (nut groves) and facilitate the occupation of Cunha” (BRASIL 1925: 5/6, our emphasis).

If we observe that the complainant was a police sub-delegate, we see that both *defamations* and *praise* constitute a dialectic, aimed at building legitimacy for the *extralegal* exercise of power (SANTOS, 2009). Public functions and positions carried significant degrees of prestige for their occupants, in addition to the possibility of accessing the resources essential for the exercise of domination – information, police power, the operation of justice, economic benefits (CARVALHO 2005).

At this point, it is necessary to emphasize that “order” and “violence” were not antagonistic realities: as two sides of the same coin, the construction of legal pretensions was deployed for the arbitrary use of force. As Emmi (1987) points out, in an extractive mercantile economy the determining factor is not land ownership but rather commercial capital, as this establishes control over land and transport, guaranteeing labor (production) and commercialization. Such control does not require strict ownership of land. As Pacheco de Oliveira (1988) shows when describing the “situation of rubber plantations” among the Ticuna in the early 20th century, the imposition of a commercial monopoly was associated with claims of ownership over lands strategically located to allow control over large territories inhabited by the indigenous people, who were then transformed into vassals.

In the land conflicts of the Baixo Madeira, the construction of this alleged legality is perceived as being endorsed by the *officially transmitted* legitimating word. A sketch attached to the records of the investigation shows the occupations that took place in the Rio Mari-Mari region (BRASIL 1931 Vol. II). The Munduruku villages of Paca, Laguinho, Cipó and Laranjal appear interspersed with “*private properties, claimed by the State Government*”, almost all also claimed by members of the Pessoa Sobrinho family (our emphasis). This family sought, in its own words, “to regularize their situation in the Rio Mari-Mari” (our emphasis). The geographical arrangement of the claims shows the very clear intention to isolate the nut trees and subject the indigenous peoples:

Map indicating nut groves and the Mundurucu villages of Pacas, Laranjal and Cipó (marked in red). Lots requisitioned or regularized by third parties are marked in green. Source: BRASIL 1931 Vol. II



Although expressed as mere reports, such statements (written in an apparently descriptive and referential language) quickly acquired the air of acts of institution, of naming, as stated by Bourdieu (1989) in referring to the performative character of the public, authorized, official word. The judge’s verdict is the form *par excellence*. In fact, as soon as they had access to a stage for formalizing their “rights”, the Pessoa Sobrinho family set up trading posts at both ends of the area they intended to rule. These were the headquarters from which they launched, in subsequent harvests, the battles for the territory’s sovereign conquest.

The process of imposing dominion, meeting requests, granting concessions, titles, and fees, and collecting territorial taxes made it possible to remove the arbitrary violence committed against the indigenous peoples from view. The process becomes an alibi for violent actions, extending the opportunities and limits of these actions. It is no wonder, then, that the Efigênio Sales Government would promote a comprehensive reform of the state’s land legislation as part of its efforts to reorganize the Amazonian interior. The Government argued that the legal dimension of property should be a stimulus, not an obstacle to economic activity (SANTOS 2009). The working hypothesis we have developed elsewhere points to a flexibilization of the rigid norms instituted during the federal intervention of 1925, reinforcing the legal bases and bureaucratic procedures favorable to strategies of territorial usurpation and imposition of domain (SANTOS 2009). Continuing Emmi’s (1987) reasoning, we can perhaps say that, in a mercantile extractive economy, it is better to have a “reserve of legality” that can be applied to contextually valued territories and resources, rather than to have a guaranteed, legal reserve of land in the strict sense.

The second half of the 1920s would be characterized by the resumption of the downward trajectory in the price of rubber and by the instability in Brazil nut prices, which. Even so, the nuts consolidated as the premiere product among the region’s exports. By 1928 and 1929, the final years of the Sales Government, an already depressed economy is at the end of its rope. This is when concern with disorder in the interior of the state reappears in official messages (SANTOS 2009). In fact, during this period, there was a resurgence of conflicts in the indigenous territories of the Baixo Madeira. This resurgence was associated with the same strategy of

subjecting the labor of *semi-civilized Indians*, then being renewed by their “stability in penury”. However, it also reflected the practical effects of a new federal norm: Decree 5484/1928, which regulated indigenous tutelage (SOUZA LIMA, 1995).

### **New conflicts and classificatory disputes**

To understand this third scenario produced by the 1931 narratives, it is necessary to understand that, in Amazonian land disputes, the construction of legality did not dispense with some kind of factual engagement with the territory “on the ground” so to speak. In addition to violence, this engagement was also based on more-or-less fortuitous alliances with local authorities and residents. These, in turn, produced small private forces capable of controlling territory and/or asserting land ownership and -- more importantly -- use of the residents of the land as workers.

These so-called *pre-posts* were thus the real forces of territorial occupation, including for the Inspectorate. In this sense, compromise solutions along the lines of indigenous schools and police stations involved a geopolitics of territorial occupation. This could be a tactic of advancing indigenous interests, even when carried out in association with known indigenous oppressors such as Colonel Augusto Costa. By regulating Native tutelage and infusing the actions of the Inspectorate with legitimacy Decree #5484/1928 contributed to tactically repositioning the SPI’s interests and dispositions, strengthening direct interventions in land management and in the administration of Indians. Between 1928 and 1929, the Inspectorate demarcated five lots in the Baixo Madeira: Onça, in Lagos da Josefa, Miguel and Sampaio; Cunchã, in Igapó-Açu; Laranjal and São José do Cipó, on the Rio Mari-Mari; and Chiadá, on the Canumã River. In addition, the SPI founded Indigenous Posts and schools (Laranjal and Lago da Josefa) and placed administrators in Brazil nut groves (Igapó-Açu and Canumã). It even incisively imposed a commercial monopoly on the indigenous people. Conflicts were therefore renewed, and the geopolitical and symbolic dimensions of the disputes became ever more intertwined.

Returning to the proposition about the praise/defaming dialectic as an accumulation of legitimacy for the extralegal exercise of power, it is not surprising that the most way to convert the authorized word into power for action was rooted in the instrumentalization of police forces. Small private armies (which, when not effectively employed in open confrontations or punitive expeditions, served to intimidate) often relied on the participation of the agents of the State’s public forces. Such practices had a general meaning that went beyond the co-option of armed forces to increase military power. Police agents imputed their authority and public functions to the private production and commerce networks with which they engaged. Persecutions determined by private interests were transformed into State actions and the violence exerted against the Indians became a classificatory act.<sup>23</sup> It is no wonder, then, that some of the administrators authorized by the Inspectorate to manage indigenous nut groves were also police agents.

The Inquiry’s practices extended the scope of the instrumental use of the police in violent actions against indigenous peoples. It expanded the target to include the representatives of a governing body (the Inspectorate). It created legitimacy for the physical force arbitrarily employed in territorial disputes. Complaints were filed in 1925 against the Mura and Odorico Chaves in Igapó-Açu and Madeira. In 1927, by order of the Chief of Police, an inquiry was launched in the village of Canumã against a trader who had allied with the Munduruku in 1924. It was during this investigation that the State established that no “real forest dwellers” existed in the region (BRASIL 1931: Vol. II page 509). In 1928, the Tuxaua and Mura Captain from the Onça lands in the Josefa region,

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<sup>23</sup> José Murilo de Carvalho (2005) calls attention to the economic dimension of this political control of police power and administration of justice through the distribution of public offices: the judge and the police officer, he observes, were important for the control of the workforce and, therefore, for economic competition, with the ability to oppress and protect one’s own workers as crucial as that of being able to persecute the workers of others.

close to Madeira, were forced to sign an “agreement to live properly”.<sup>24</sup> But nothing better reflects this double constitution of physical and symbolic violence than the 1929 inquiry initiated into the false murder of an indigenous man and attributed to Raimundo da Costa Leite. The discourses created by this inquiry were constituted by and through the crudest physical violence (the imprisonment, coercion, and forced labor of seven indigenous people who were thus transformed into witnesses) via the magical authority of the written word (the reading, in prison, of newspaper stories about the alleged murder) and the threat of extralegal power as adjuncts to the constituted public authorities (BRASIL 1931 Vol. III).

To make a long story short, after the clashes of 1923 and 1924, repressive activity was closely linked to the defamation of indigenous people, indigenous police officers, and those in charge of indigenous posts. Up to the beginning of 1931, initiatives were taken to gather formal complaints against Indians and Inspectorate employees. This movement began at the end of 1930, possibly as a result of post-revolution political arrangements. In 1931, these denunciations were mentioned, suggested, dismissed, re-enacted, and ultimately re-appropriated as evidence for the production of certain truths. There is a sense of timing in this logic of defamation<sup>25</sup> *The Inquiry into the Indian Inspectorate* did not, in fact, represent a new attack against the Indian Protection Service in Amazonas, but rather the acquisition, by the Service’s detractors, of a new level of legitimacy.

### **Neither true forest-dwellers, nor good citizens**

The *Inquiry into the Indian Inspectorate* was nourished by a climate of revenge by technical action versus political action, the latter being associated with the fallen Republic. It counted upon the support and knowledge of specialists, the engineers/surveyors. It was guided by a set of objective questions (the questionnaire), which, at least in the municipality of Borba, were answered only after analyzing abundant amounts of information gathered and analyzed transparently *in loco* through direct observation or via witnesses who knew the local reality.

Nevertheless, a political production emerged from the analysis, tortuous in terms of recording the facts, but clear in terms of defending the economic interests of certain groups and social sectors. It was necessary for us to suspend questions about what was true and the false in these records so that we could detail their content. We now must return, however, to the question of the production of truth, for this is what qualifies the Inquiry as political theater and an act of power. What were the truths produced by the Inquiry? What were the representations and categories made explicit in it?

As already noted, one of the main mechanisms instituted by the Commission of Inquiry in Manaus consisted in the preparation and distribution (to authorities in the interior) of a set of questions regarding the presence of indigenous groups in the Amazon, and the nature and scope of the activities of Inspectorate’s representatives among them. The first and central question -- whether there were “Tribes, Hordes or Settlements of true forest-dwellers, as such recognized under the terms of current legislation and the Civil Code” and where these were located -- clarifies the content and scope of “Indian” as a category and the place of the authorities to pronounce upon the veracity of this category. In its final report, the Inquiry Commission maintained that the Inspectorate, to the detriment of the “true forest-dweller” population of several rivers in the State of Amazonas, took pains to register Indians in Manaus, Itacoatiara, Borba and Manicoré, municipalities where “true forest-dwellers” did not exist according to the Commission’s records (SANTOS 2009).

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<sup>24</sup> The “agreement to live properly” was a kind of public commitment taken on by those who potentially threatened public tranquility (drunkards, bums, prostitutes, etc.) and, until 1832, also by those legally suspected of intending to practice a crime (COELHO 2004). In the case analyzed here, the Mura were forced by the Police Chief of Borba to sign a public commitment that obliged them not to return to their lands.

<sup>25</sup> Dinamérico Pessoa, for example, (re)presented the complaint to the Police Headquarters against the “assault” on his post by the Munduruku of the Mari-Mari River, attesting to the direct and personal participation of Bento Lemos in the execution of the “crime”.

In fact, in the statements taken in Borba, not a single one affirmed the existence of “true forest-dwellers” in the places under investigation. The data reflects the effective formulation of the question. This sought to distance the meanings recognizable in the daily lives of the witnesses from the set of possible legally guaranteed categories (Indians, forest-dwellers). The expression “true forest-dwellers” exposes the premeditated and rational use of terms in these legal disputes. Interpretations of reality that are much more complex and rich in associative terms and which explained everyday knowledge (such as a certain condition of poverty, belonging to the place, descent) only appeared in these documents as quaint “asides”, since they were already inadmissible given the legalistic formulation of the question.<sup>26</sup> The asymmetry of power and competence inherent in the rite of questioning of witnesses must also be added to the limits set by the question.

A series of characteristics that are still present today in common sense as diluting the indigenous condition – miscegenation, mastery of the Portuguese language and other cultural skills – were used by the witnesses to distance the Mura and Munduruku from “forest-dwellers” and categorize them as “caboclos” or “civilized”. Two sets of images attract attention here. First, there is socio-spatial organization: the indigenous families of those regions are already “organized” and “regularly constituted”, so that each one had its own possessions. They did not live “in Native villages”<sup>27</sup>, nor “at the expense of the Inspectorate”, but by the fruits of their own labor, in “their places near trading posts and plantations”. Second, there is the exercise of civil and political rights. Voting, participation in the Judiciary, the National Guard, or the Army, knowing how to read and write: all these things qualified the “indigenous descendants” of Borba as “civilized” and thus “not really Indians”. As one witness put it:

...among those who call themselves Indians in Canumã and in Sampaio one finds voters and jury members and today only the oldest natives speak their tongue, but the youngest and all of them speak modern Portuguese, and protest in favor of their rights as any citizen and have organized families... (BRASIL 1931 Vol. I: 244).

It is interesting to note that the deconstruction of the Mura’s indigenous condition – woven from supposedly technical and objective criteria – was accompanied by a silent work construction, which was strongly valued. Their mischaracterization of the Mura as Indians was not accompanied by an objective or ordinary characterization of them (as Amazonians, for example). Defamation gained support from small shifts in meaning. Frequently, the marks of civilization itself were used to deconstruct Indigenous people as such. Alongside the mischaracterization of the inexistence of villages, defined in “technical” terms as “three structures set far apart” (for example), we also find evaluative descriptions that describe existing Native occupations as unworthy of “true” Indians. The “so-called” village of Cunhã, emphasized in the report prepared by the judge in Borba, “didn’t [actually] exist”, since in addition to the shack that served as the residence of the Inspectorate’s manager, the settlements other structures were “huts that are well spread apart” (BRASIL 1931, VI, page 183). One whistleblower described Laranjal as “pompously called a village of Indians and which serves as a reason to drain away the Nation’s money”:

...[I]t’s a thin strip of land *useless* for any kind of cultivation where the native MILITINO so-and-so resides, with two huts in which he lives with his family and where he has built a *crude* thatched chapel which he says will be the center of a nut grove that he demanded be regularized in May 1928... (BRASIL 1931, V. I, fls. 276V/277, our emphasis).

<sup>26</sup> This effect immediately stands out in the reading of the testimonies, repeatedly introduced by a formula already established by the initial statements: “he said that there are no savages in this entire region (...), because the descendants of the Indians who live there...”; “he said that despite knowing all the rivers in this region, he never saw wild Indians anywhere, and he only knows a few descendants of Mura Indians...” (BRASIL 1931 Vol. I: 219/220).

<sup>27</sup> The existence of indigenous villages was the object of the second question, formulated according to the same restrictive logic as the first: a generic association between “villages” and “dependence” being insufficient, the decision was to establish, in the question itself, that they would only be considered as indigenous those “groupings” which had been “regularly constituted” by the Inspectorate.

A second operation can be found in the moral, appreciative valuation of those who were presented – or presented themselves – as harmed by the territorial actions and pretensions of indigenous people and the Inspectorate. The main authors of the narratives contained in the records – both authorities and complainants – described themselves as “upright men” while describing Indians and other poor groups as “criminals” or “hapless victims”. The moral superiority of the authorities and witnesses was of fundamental value to the Inquiry as a device for the production of truth. The constant reference to noble and “regular” economic activities, the recourse to the performance of public functions, and the proper compliance with legal formalities (regularization requests, payment of fees and taxes) highlighted the immorality, uselessness, and irregularity of the defendants: the Indians and Inspectorate.<sup>28</sup> Here we see the link between social hierarchy, morality, and legality being powerfully reaffirmed.

The criminalization of the Indians became a necessary component of this construction: an inevitable consequence and a kind of symbolic corollary. It was evident in the use of expressions that operated in a “natural” way to equate the terms *Indian* and *criminal*. They also equated Native territorial defense initiatives with crimes, transforming indigenous people into “looters”, “supposed Indians”, “robbers”, “individuals who on that occasion called themselves Indians”, “who only call themselves Indians when they want to take the place of others or when they commit some crime”, or “civilized caboclos and smart-asses” (BRASIL 1931 Vol. I:181; 222; 233/233v; 244v; Vol. II: 519). This field of illegality/immorality/illegitimacy quickly began to incorporate the Inspectorate: Indian police and supervisors were the “pseudo protectors of Indians” and the “true clandestine traders” (BRASIL 1931 Vol. I: 247v/248; Vol. II, fl .514). The portrait that the “peaceful, calm and orderly people” of Abacaxis made of Raimundo Costa Leite described him as a “disgusting creature”, given to the practice of “theft, crimes, and bad habits”, which should be banned “for the sake of the morality, decency, and tranquility” of the region (BRASIL 1931 Vol. I: 185v to 186v).

It is clear here that, with regards to the Mura, Munduruku, and the Inspectorate, the defining categories of criminality are meant to be read as carrying essential truths, and that, therefore, these groups were justifiably the targets of police intervention and control.

### **Final considerations: the power of classification**

The analysis presented above leads us to conclude that disputes over the power to categorize, classify, and – consequently -- define and control the administration of the Brazilian Indians, their lands, and resources constituted a key dimension of the territorial conflicts that erupted in the 1920s and ‘30s in the Baixo Madeira.

The new level of this dispute, the Inquiry itself, provides us with a measure of the impact caused by the enactment of Decree 5484 in 1928. In addition to assigning the SPI as the legal guardian of the indigenous peoples, the decree determined that the Inspectorate should proceed to conduct a census of the Indians, a task begun in Amazonas in 1929 and which was particularly advanced at the end of the following year in the municipalities of Manaus, Itacoatiara, and Borba. For Inspector Bento Lemos, this was simply the result of geography, the work being naturally faster in the areas closer to Manaus. For the Commission of Inquiry, it was (as said above) a clear indication that the agency ignored its responsibilities in civilizing the “true forest-dwellers” in favor of registering “false Indians” and installing them in nut circuits, thus gaining control of important resources and labor pools.

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<sup>28</sup> This prevailed in the larger survey while it remained at the state level. The deconstruction of the integrity and exemption of witnesses, promoted by the defense of Bento Lemos, was incorporated into the investigation after the final report. Lemos claimed curtailment of his right to defense (BRASIL 1931 Vol. IV).

But, above all, the Inquiry's supporters feared that the Inspectorate had come to control a *powerful instrument for defining reality*: legal and administrative control over the civil registration of Indians. A true State action that would allow the SPI to "recruit the already civilized as Indians", cataloging them, registering them, assigning them a tribe, and "pushing them into native huts through the summary process of the census" (BRASIL Vol. I :304).

In February 1930, Inspector Bento Lemos had sent to Bezerra Cavalcante, Director of the SPI, a *Memorandum on how to carry out the Indian census in Amazonas, Acre and the North of Mato-Grosso, as instructed by Mr. General Rondon*. This was to be passed on to the General Director of Statistics of the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce. Lemos argued that the Directorate of Statistics would not be able to carry out the census with its own personnel. He argued that, due to its "special nature", the census of Indians be transferred to the SPI, mentioning initiatives already underway in the Rio Negro and Lower Amazonas and presenting an ethnic-geographic zoning of the area under the jurisdiction of the Inspectorate, scaling the material and personal resources necessary for the census in each zone (BRASIL 1930; 1930a). In practice, the plan (which was not adopted) proposed that the indigenous census be coordinated by SPI Regional Inspectors, assisted by census takers and specific agents. In any case, the bold initiative provides an idea of the horizon of possibilities established by Decree 5484/1928.

The potential new reach of the SPI had not escaped the notice of Amazonian authorities and politicians, at least in the Baixo Madeira where a new level of indigenous resistance to processes of subjection and territorial expropriation had been taking place ever since the Brazil nuts had increased in value. Both reports presented on the Mura and Munduruku in Borba concluded with references to Decree no. 5484/1928. Judge Renato da Matta praised the progressive nature of the four legal categories established for the classification of Indians.<sup>29</sup> These revealed that legislators had understood "how complex are the relationships between the so-called true forest-dwellers and those who are already in contact with civilization and who, through approximation made by means of donations, are gradually being integrated into the bosom of civilization". The great and dangerous problem was in the "domain of practice", especially when the law left tasks to the SPI inspectors (BRASIL 1931 Vol. I: 278).

The mayor of Borba would also cite the decision of the Superior Court of Justice of Amazonas, which in 1929 published a judgment stating that the process of incorporation of Indians into civilized society was a *matter of fact, not law*. As such, the court dispensed with the attestation of the competent SPI Inspector, adjudging it sufficient, for the application of the common regime of law, that any evidence be produced of an "Aboriginal" belonging to an agricultural center or living in promiscuous contact with *civilized people*.<sup>30</sup>

However, the practical effect of legislation is neither given nor contained by its formal objective. In this sense, in the case of Amazonas, we must note the importance of Decree 5484 having been proclaimed in a context of social and institutional relations that provided for its immediate instrumentalization by the Inspectorate and by the indigenous peoples, notably those groups established in territories close to the state capital (the Mura and Munduruku particularly). What this meant is that if the new law provided at that time for the exercise of an indigenous citizenship (even if under tutelage), this was because it was nourished by a process of struggles, institutional actions, acquisition of rights, and strategies of resistance that had been developing at least since the promulgation Law no. 941 of 1917. This process included both the bureaucratic-administrative initiatives of the Bento Lemos administration at the head of the Inspectorate (SANTOS 2009), and the confrontations through which various indigenous peoples reacted to the processes of territorial expropriation and domination.

<sup>29</sup> Article 2 of the Decree classified Indians into categories defined according to a civilizing perspective: nomadic Indians, uprooted or village Indians, Indians belonging to indigenous settlements, Indians belonging to agricultural centers or who live promiscuously with civilized people.

<sup>30</sup> This understanding was signed in reference to a case that dealt with the granting of guardianship of a Wapishana minor to a private individual, in which the Inspectorate obtained a favorable decision because it was considered proven by the records that the indigenous woman was "really not adapted" (to the country's civilization). See Complaint no. 169 (38), in AMAZONAS (1929).

There were, therefore, already-established paths and experiences that informed (in the regional context) the instrumentalization of the decree. Paths to “statehood (*estadania*)”, to use the term coined by José Murilo de Carvalho (1996). Imperfect paths, considering the incipient network of the federal Indian Inspectorate, built out of the same personalistic connections so characteristic of clientelist networks in the Amazon region. But paths capable of producing strong effects on the regional scene by connecting indigenous actions in the territories to access to administrative instances and channels authorized to intervene in the definition of what is and is not *real* (BOURDIEU 1989). It is significant in this sense that the exercise of citizenship fueled some of the most powerful images disqualifying the indigenous condition of the Mura and Munduruku and that the dismantling of the SPI throughout the 1930s excluded indigenous peoples from important access to State channels and legality.

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## Annex

### People/Roles/Places

Name	Role	Lugar
Alcântara Bacelar	Governor of the State of Amazonas, 1917-1920.	Manaus
César do Rego Monteiro	Governor of the State of Amazonas, 1921-1924.	Manaus
Efigênio Sales	Governor of the State of Amazonas, 1926-1929.	Manaus
Álvaro Maia	Federal Intervenor in the State of Amazonas Nov. 1930 -- July 1931.	Manaus
Bento Martins Pereira de Lemos	Chief Inspector of the 1ª Inspetoria Regional do Serviço de Proteção aos Indígenas (State of Amazonas and Territory of Acre, 1916 --1932.	Manaus
José Guimarães	Manager sent by the Inspectorate to administrate the nut harvest in the Mura village of Madeira in 1924. Linked to police forces.	Mura villages along the Madeira River.
Odorico Ferreira Chaves	Landholder, police officer among the Igapó-Açu Indians between 1923 and 1931.	Cunhã nut circuit
Militino de Souza e Silva	Munduruku, police officer for the Laranjal Indians from at least 1925, still in this position in 1931.	Laranjal, Laguinho, Paca Cipó Villages (Canumã-Abacaxis interfluvial region).
José Sant'Anna de Souza	Responsible party, according to the Inspectorate, for the Cunhã nut circuits in 1931. A Civil Policeman on leave.	Cunhã nut circuit
Augusto Costa	Colonel, rubber baron, owner of the Vista Alegre rubber circuits, land speculator in Mura lands along the Rio Madeira.	Vista Alegre rubber circuit (Mura villages along the Madeira River).
Luís José Soares	Colonel Augusto Costa's son-in-law, married to Corina da Costa Duarte. Subprecinct Commander of Police in 1925 and Indian police officer in 1928.	Vista Alegre rubber circuit (Mura villages along the Madeira River).
Corina da Costa Soares	Daughter of Augusto Soares and wife of Luís José Soares. Professor at the Laranjal School from 1927 on.	Vista Alegre rubber circuit (Mura villages along the Madeira River).
Raimundo Venâncio da Costa Leite	Head of the Laranjal Indigenous Post in 1931. Nephew of Bento Martins Pereira Lemos	Laranjal Indigenous Post (Canumã-Abacaxis interfluvial region)
Manoel João dos Santos	Munduruku, Captain of the Indians in Laranjal, Laguinho, Paca and Cipó villages in 1931.	Laranjal, Laguinho, Paca Cipó Villages (Canumã-Abacaxis interfluvial region).
Pessoa Sobrinho	A family that was part of the rural oligarchy, with territorial holdings and political control in Borba during the first decades of the 20th Century. Would-be owners of the lands of the Munduruku villages.	Laranjal, Laguinho, Paca Cipó Villages (Canumã-Abacaxis interfluvial region).

# Relations between the Brazilian state and the incarceration of Indigenous peoples: a look at the situation in Mato Grosso do Sul in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

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## Abstract

This article reflects on relations between the criminal justice system and Indigenous peoples through a perspective that combines anthropology and criminology as complimentary theoretical lenses through which contemporary Indigenous incarcerations can be understood. It charts relations between the historical constitution of the Brazilian criminal justice system and the ideas of ‘necropolitics’ as a defining thread of policies that impact the conditions in which Indigenous peoples are incarcerated. The article considers some of the effects of the COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic on the prison system of the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, where it is possible to evaluate the effects of measures undertaken by the National Justice Council to alter the levels of provisional imprisonment, even if the overall average of imprisoned Indigenous peoples continues to rise. To this end, survey and data processing were carried out using a deductive methodology, coupled with a sketch of historical considerations.

**Keywords:** Criminal Justice System, Indigenous peoples, Covid 19 Pandemic, Incarceration.

# Relações entre o estado brasileiro e o encarceramento de indígenas: olhares para a situação no Mato Grosso do Sul no contexto da pandemia de COVID-19

## Resumo

O presente trabalho apresenta uma reflexão sobre o sistema de justiça criminal e os povos indígenas a partir de uma visão conjugada entre a antropologia e a criminologia como aportes teóricos para compreender o fenômeno do encarceramento indígena contemporaneamente. O propósito é traçar relações entre a formação histórica do sistema de justiça criminal brasileiro e as ideias de necropolítica como definidora de políticas que influenciarão a realidade dos indígenas que estão encarcerados. A abordagem apresenta algumas ideias em torno das consequências da pandemia de COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) nos dados do sistema penitenciário do Mato Grosso do Sul, onde foi possível identificar o impacto das medidas do CNJ na alteração do patamar das prisões provisórias, embora a média geral de indígenas presos continue em ascensão. Nesse sentido, foi feito levantamento e processamento de dados a partir de uma metodologia dedutiva com alguns contornos de reflexão histórica.

**Palavras-chave:** Sistema de justiça criminal, Povos indígenas, Pandemia de COVID-19, Encarceramento.

# Relations between the Brazilian state and the incarceration of Indigenous peoples: a look at the situation in Mato Grosso do Sul in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

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## Introductory remarks

This article investigates certain elements of the Brazilian criminal justice system in relation to Indigenous peoples by demonstrating how the historical constitution of the criminal justice system perpetuates colonial practices into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It reflects on how the process of the colonization of the Americas – which, at its core, is a denial of plurality – is axiomatic of the structure of the criminal justice system. The latter, revealing continuities and discontinuities with the process of colonization, largely continues to make use of the same devices in the exercise of punitive power.

This broad-stroked sketch of the context of the emergence of Latin American states aims to show how ideas that originated in Europe and were incorporated into the Brazilian bureaucratic structure. Thus, despite efforts to disengage from the metropolis, which ultimately resulted in the formal declaration of independence and in the birth of the Brazilian state, the fact remains that colonial relations did not disappear with the end of the colony.

This process has been seen through the lens of decolonial ideas (Quijano, 2005; Dussel, 1977) that aim to understand political action (and criminal selectivity) within the criminal justice system as it pertains to Indigenous peoples' through the concept of 'necropolitics'. The ideas developed in this study also seek to provide in-depth analyses of some of the contemporary consequences of Indigenous incarceration in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes it (Medeiros, 2020).

The first section of this article offers ideas concerning the establishment of the Brazilian state, with its Eurocentric and exclusionary origins, by focusing on the history of the two oldest law schools in the country (Recife-PE and São Paulo-SP) and the different ideas developed in each one. The academic trajectory for obtaining a bachelor's degree in law has been, and remains, directly tied to the occupation of spaces of power in the bureaucratic constitution of the state, and in the ability to guide public policies. These considerations are intended to present, in a synthetic manner, the bases of Latin American criminological thought, assisting in understanding criminal phenomena involving the Indigenous population.

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<sup>1</sup> This is, no doubt, an extremely complex relationship, with different tensions, breakthroughs and setbacks. It is important to take note of the 2019 publication of Resolution 287/2019 by the Conselho Nacional de Justiça (Brasil, 2019), which regulates procedures for dealing with Indigenous people who are being criminally investigated or persecuted. In contrast, Bill 490, which alters the laws for the demarcation of Indigenous lands, including the "temporal marker" (which considers Indigenous land only the ones in fact occupy by the year of 1988), and removes rights of exclusivity over Indigenous lands, among other proposals, is yet to be voted.

In the second part of the article, the concept of ‘necropolitics’, developed by Achille Mbembe, will be linked to the contemporary character of the relation between the Brazilian state and Indigenous peoples. I will present a brief analysis of data on incarcerated Indigenous people in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso do Sul (MS), which is the state with the largest numbers of Indigenous peoples in the custody of the prison system.

To this end, I surveyed and analysed the data available in the databanks of the Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública (MJSP; Ministry of Justice and Public Safety), through the Departamento Penitenciário Nacional (DEPEN/MJSP, National Prison Office) and the Agência Estadual de Administração do Sistema Penitenciário (AGEPEN, State Agency for the Administration of the Prison System) of the state of Mato Grosso do Sul. This analysis is contextualized by a bibliographical review which provides the theoretical basis for understanding the situation of Indigenous peoples in prison.

## **1. The bureaucratic construction of the Brazilian state and the criminal justice system: reflections on the emergence of Latin American criminological thought**

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century criminal justice system runs on the same machinery as the European-medieval model. We are hence not dealing with a returning past, but, indeed, with a past that has never actually passed: a punitive power with a vertical structure and a tendency to expand with lethal results (Zaffaroni, 2012: 36). This premiss is buttressed by the fact that we are a product of that very same punitive power that enabled European colonizers to invade the territories of the Americas, Africa, and Oceania in order to enslave and decimate autochthonous peoples (Quijano, 1992: 13), making headways into the world by way of colonialist and neo-colonialist massacres and depredations.

To this fact we must add a consideration of internal colonialism, national patterns that reproduce the structures of (internal) domination and exploitation of heterogenous social groups in plural societies (Quintero, 2018). Dominant classes or groups “exercise colonial-type control over the social groups that pre-existed the historical establishment of the nation-state” (Quintero, 2018), reproducing the legitimizing discourse of punitive power in collusion with the age-old tendency to carve out increasingly wider spaces and to free itself of all of the shackles that limit its scope (Zaffaroni, 2012: 36-37).

The structure of state-sanctioned punitive power was the instrument of social verticalization that enabled Europe to colonize different territories, homogenizing a religious rhetoric that benefited the functioning of the apparatus of justice<sup>2</sup>, and hence of social control, through the systematic negation of the Other (Fanon, 1965: 133). The rise of the modern state out of ideas for new ways to organize “bureaucracy”<sup>3</sup> during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century was founded on a range of different theories, including contractualism, rationalism, positivism, among others. It had a direct impact and the political, social, and economic reorganization of the Americas, materialized in the “liberal revolutions” which conducted various processes of political “autonomy” (Anitua, 2008: 148).

One cannot lose sight of the central fact of these historical processes: the ethnocentric view of society – the negation of difference – was “scientifically” justified by recourse to “evolutionary” processes. Its consequence for the justice system at that historical juncture included the emergence of a humanizing guarantee of right to trial, based on the work of Beccaria and resulting from a blend of English empiricism and French rationalism (Anitua, 2008: 160).

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that the origins of the inquisitive justice system blur historically into the Middle Ages, and its characteristics remain present in the forensic practices of Latin America

<sup>3</sup> For Quijano, the process of the colonization of the Americas reveals certain ideas that contest the creation of the nation-state, including how the power structure that is reproduced by those which did not truly participate in the democratic distribution of this power (Quijano, 2005: 130).

The old regime's punitive logic, founded on vengeance, was ultimately "humanized" by a model that sought to set penalties of a preventative-utilitarianist character limited by the rule of law. In a general way, and with a few adaptations, this is the formula that persists today, since each national system implements a punitive method that corresponds to its relations of production (Rusche & Kirchheimer, 2004: 17-23). In other words, the objectified justice of punitive processes is not dissociated from the relations of production. It is precisely here that the filter of decolonial thought intercedes, assisting us in understanding punishment beyond the limits of its ideal bureaucratic structure in the modern state.

It is necessary to investigate oppression along ethnic, racial, and gender lines (Ballestrin, 2013: 90) which is characteristic of the criminal justice system in Latin America. This is a key to "comprehending and acting on the world, marked by the permanence of global coloniality at different levels of personal and collective life" (Ballestrin, 2013: 90), a position which is known as the 'decolonial option'. I thus investigate the criminal justice system and its relation to Indigenous people as part of an effort to overcome the epistemic, theoretical and political origins of Eurocentric thought.

In what pertains to limitations on punitive power, the purported tranquillity that the "humanizing guarantee of right to trial" afforded the criminal justice system was eroded with the emergence of Latin American states. The early structure of the Brazilian state is a telling example, since the central political figure of its "independence" (1822) was the heir to the metropolitan throne. Furthermore, the quest to attain legitimacy as an independent state required not only the elaboration of new laws, but also a new "conscience" bereft of cultural ties to the metropolis (Schwarcz, 1993: 185-186).

Hence the creation of two law schools in the provinces of Pernambuco and São Paulo in 1828. The format of their degree courses, based on study toward bachelor's degrees, conferred symbolic prestige on its students which bolstered political careers (Schwarcz, 1993: 185-186). It is noteworthy that the São Paulo law school was influenced by the liberal political model, while the one in Recife focused on racial issues through analytical models derived from social Darwinism and evolutionism (Schwarcz, 1993: 209).

In consonance, Recife developed criminological studies, influenced by the ideas of Lombroso, Garófalo, Ferri, and Benedikt (all European authors), which established the figure of the "natural born criminal" and investigated the influence of physical/ethnic characteristics in criminal practice in contradistinction to the notion of 'free will' (Schwarcz, 1993: 216). In contrast, São Paulo, which was much closer to the national capital at the time, began to delineate a tradition of "civilizational progress" and a model of freedom which was not only conservative, but also elitist and anti-popular (Schwarcz, 1993: 233-238).

There used to be a tendency to see the Recife school as a producer of scientific knowledge, while the São Paulo school was a centre for political practices that were converted into laws and concrete measures (Schwarcz, 1993: 240). It is worth highlighting the laws for controlling immigration, which were burdened with stereotyped and ethnocentric views, justified by eugenic criteria, particularly with regards to Asians and Africans (Schwarcz, 1993: 241). This is at the root of the decision to use this pretence science in the realm of punishment, as a means for an emerging bourgeoisie to deal with social problems through mechanisms of control (Olmo, 2004: 157).

These considerations on law schools and the training of bureaucrats are relevant to the present discussion insofar as the theories developed by these schools and the curricula of their degree courses were based on the European model, specifically the Portugal/Coimbra model (Schwarcz, 1993: 189). This fact reveals what decolonial thought frames as the "coloniality of power", so that the "relations of coloniality in the economic and political spheres did not end with the destruction of colonialism" (Ballestrin, 2013: 99).

Stressing, from the outset, that decolonial thought incorporates a particular complex of ideas and epistemological consequences, particularly when it is used in scientific approaches, in this article I will mainly use the idea of the 'coloniality of power', as referred to above. This idea manifests itself in three dimensions



(power, knowledge, and being) that are important elements in connecting the other ideas which I will develop in the article, as well as in linking the criminal justice system to Indigenous peoples in Brazil.

The punitive model is thus forged in the dichotomous context of the colonizer and the colonized, and it is slotted into the bureaucratic structure of the emerging Brazilian state through formal knowledge produced in law schools. To this day we find a significant breakdown in the relations between the formalism of law degrees, forensic practices, and criminal phenomena. In the words of Lima, “the process in search of a SINGLE [sic] truth places greater value [...] in the logic of arguments from authority than on the authority of the arguments” (Lima & Baptista, 2014: 12).

It should be added that European thought, particularly positivist, liberal and rationalist thought, was largely accepted outside of the contexts in which a critical conscience of the scientific method was developed, resulting in a “scientific scholasticism” (Olmo, 2004: 160). The importation of ideas was largely accepted with no discussion and without a structured system of critical thought, thus creating a deformed and artificial Latin American variant which was often disconnected from regional realities, but which “was suited to local needs and, indeed, had to be deformed so as to be rational within the Latin American context” (Olmo, 2004: 161).

In this context, the groundwork has been laid for the adoption of a criminological model highly dependent on European ideas and incorporated by a dominant elite in peripheral countries, in such a way that: (a) it functions, on an international level, as a superstructure that legitimizes the relationship between the local dominant class and dominant international centres; (b) it can internally represent the legitimacy of the dominant position, by functioning as an instrument of domination and a means for distinction from subordinate classes and groups (Olmo, 2004: 162). Latin American criminology consolidates itself with these imports from positivist philosophy and liberal ideology as routes toward order and progress, but, mostly, as means to carve a path toward “the process of implementing capitalism as a dominant mode of production” in the region while conferring legitimacy on the ascendant position of oligarchic groups implicated in relations of domination/subjection of the social makeup (Olmo, 2004: 162-164).

Criminal policies consist of a “programme which establishes the conduct that should be considered criminal and the public policies for repressing and preventing criminality and controlling its consequences” (Dieter, 2013: 18), expanding into a “project of governance”. This project is, to a large degree, intrinsically linked to the maintenance of the ethnocentric model via the formal instances for the control of violence (the police, Attorney General, the Judiciary, etc.) and the triage of those who enter the criminal system as “criminals”.

Thus, accepting the limitations and simplifications required by the scope of this article, certain premises according to which the Brazilian criminal justice system is structured can be sketched: a verticalized punitivist model at the service of government projects for the control over selective violence toward populations that have, historically, been kept apart from the socially hegemonic arena. Indeed, reflections on criminality are not – nor could they be – a unified and hermetic discourse, but multiplicities that assist us in examining the criminal phenomenon in contemporary reality.

Sharing his own reflections on verticalized and colonialist destructive punitive power, Zaffaroni claims that we have heard much from people in the academy, legislatures, the police, etc., but that the only pertinent voice in criminality is the “word of the dead” (Zaffaroni, 2012 20). Starting from this observation, I will reflect on what our dead have to say. The question I pursue in the next section is: how can this model of monocratic and Eurocentric justice account for the pluralism and specificities of traditional peoples, and in specific Indigenous peoples?

## 2. Necropolitics and relations with incarcerated Indigenous peoples in Brazil

The theoretical framework outlined in the previous section provided some of the elements of the context in which the criminal justice system was elaborated, and the ethnocentric way it creates incriminating norms and criminal selectivity. Although we must demarcate the many theoretical positions on the functions and consequences of penalties, it is a moot point that the experience of incarceration is a process of acculturation (Dieter, 2013: 98) resulting from the exercise of punitive power.

Both violence and power are hence strategies for the neutralization of alterity (Han, 2017: 140), which is why, according to Ailton Krenak, Indigenous peoples have resisted for over 500 years by expanding their subjectivity, refusing the idea that they are all equal (Krenak, 2019: 31). Indeed, the notion of ‘equality’ has been used historically as a differentiating criterion of the Other through which it is possible to select “friends or enemies” of the state within the criminal justice system.

Within this context we can understand the observation that, since the formation of the Brazilian state, the lack of alterity is directed toward socially, culturally, and economically marginalized people (Aguilera Urquiza; Prado, 2016: 13-16). The workings of the criminal justice system are, above all, ethnocentric and, therefore, negate the Other toward whom punitive power (and, in its wake, violence) is directed.

These reflections are interconnected. Punitive power refers to and produces the state of exception, and with it the very emergence of the idea of the ‘enemy’<sup>4</sup>, thus seeking legitimacy for its acts within this “link of enmity” (Mbembe, 2018: 17). The notion of biopower operating as “the capacity to dictate who is able to live and who must die” derives from this reflection, through the separation of the human species into groups or “races” (Mbembe, 2018: 17), wherein instances which control power will act.

The right to kill and the mechanisms of biopower are hence at the origin of the modern state and are constitutive elements of this power in modernity (Mbembe, 2018: 19). In the Latin American context, where the plantation model and use of enslaved peoples drove the start of commercial exploitation, we can ponder the loss of a “home”, of rights over the body, and of political status. The result is domination through alienation from birth to social death, a true “living death” (Mbembe, 2018: 27).

Accepting the difficulty in applying necropolitics to the Brazilian reality, Mbembe coins the concept of ‘necropower’, associated with territorial fragmentation in the form of “scorched earth policies”<sup>5</sup> (Mbembe, 2018: 46-47). Having been historically denied their territoriality, Indigenous people were systematically included in the “great enclosure of peace” (Souza Lima, 1995) by being actually enclosed in “reservations” (Amado, 2019: 79), bringing full circle the cycle of biopower exercised over them. Their rights to cultural diversity, language, religion, knowledge, and, above all, to their traditional territories and self-determination, were all denied.

In the same line of reasoning, the “dead” tell us that the relationship between the Brazilian state and Indigenous peoples has promoted the systematic destruction of ways of life and thought, configuring what is generally called ‘ethnocide’<sup>6</sup> (Clastres, 2004: 56). Government acts institutionalized by the Serviço de Proteção

4 As a matter of fact, the concept of the ‘enemy’ adapts and finds plenty of room for expansion in the verticalized punitive model of Latin America. Yet it is worth observing the complexity of this theme in light of its adaptation to a rhetoric that purportedly takes aim at the “owners of power”, and which garners followers during the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Their target are themes such as “combating” corruption (a bellicose concept, which necessarily assumes enemies that must be engaged), organized crime, drug trafficking, etc. Under the cover of this rhetoric we find the foundation for spaces of discretion in which the state acts against the usual suspects: social movements, Indigenous peoples, maroons, etc. On this issue, Zaffaroni observes that the “authoritarian disaster answers to no ideology, because it is not conducted by any idea, but rather by its polar opposite: it is devoid of thought” (Zaffaroni, 2014: 79).

5 The international press has for some time drawn attention to the “Indigenous issue” and to conflicts in Mato Grosso do Sul (Brazil indigenous group Guarani-Kaiowa ‘attacked’). Available in: <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-34166666>> accessed: 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021). More recently, the incident in which farmers used a “Caveirão” (literally “Big Skull”, a motorized and bullet-proof tractor) to intimidate Indigenous peoples, was widely reported in the national press (Salani, Fabíola. 2020. Fantástico mostra “caveirão” construído para “atropelar” indígenas no MS. Revista Fórum. Available in: <<https://revis-ta-forum.com.br/noticias/fantastico-mostra-caveirao-construido-para-atropelar-indigenas-no-ms/>> accessed: 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

6 A highly relevant recent development was the formal indictment of the Brazilian government by the Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil (Articulation of the Indigenous People of Brazil, APIB) on charges of genocide, as stipulated by the Roma Statue, at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at the Hague (Pela primeira vez na história, povos indígenas vão diretamente ao tribunal de Haia, com seus advogados indígenas, para lutar pelos seus direitos. Available in: <<https://apiboficial.org/2021/08/09/inedito-apib-denuncia-bolsonaro-em-haia-por-genocidio-indigena/>> accessed: 12<sup>th</sup> ago 2021).

aos Índios (Indian Protection Service, SPI) and, later, by the Fundação Nacional do Índio (National Indian Foundation, FUNAI), left their mark, encouraged by a wide scope for action during the military dictatorship in Brazil (1964-1985), in which it is estimated that some 8,350 Indigenous people were killed “as a direct result of government agents or their omission” (Brasil, 2014).

This violence, sponsored in the name of a “civilizational process”, made emphatic use of the prison system to deal with Indigenous people that had been removed from their lands. We can discern a punitive chronology of the autochthonous people of Brazil, spanning the period from the creation of the Indigenous Post of Icatu in the interior of São Paulo state, at the start of the SPI<sup>7</sup>, to the Krenak Reformatory and the Fazenda Guarani (Guarani Farm), along with other spaces built to the same end, spread throughout the national territory, whose functioning was always assured by the Brazilian state.

As if this were not enough, we must not lose sight of acts that make evident the state’s lack of commitment to the health of Indigenous people, including those that should fall to FUNAI (Valente, 2017: 205-212), which has become even more blatant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is thus once again necessary to return to the words of the dead to make sense of the criminal justice system. At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the COVID-19 pandemic has surely left its mark on relations between the state and society. In August 2021, Brazil had 565,748<sup>8</sup> confirmed deaths from the disease, at least 1,128 of which were Indigenous peoples. Various different peoples were affected and there are 58,142 confirmed cases of infections according to data gathered by the Comitê Nacional pela Vida e Memória Indígena (National Indigenous Life and Memory Committee), established by the Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil (Articulation of the Indigenous People of Brazil, APIB)<sup>9</sup>.

In this context, a matter of great concern<sup>10</sup>, particularly in Mato Grosso do Sul, is the presence of Indigenous persons in the prison system, as they were at high risk of contagion due to the precarious sanitary conditions of these facilities. According to data from the Departamento Penitenciário Nacional (National Penal Department, BRASIL/MJSP/DEPEN), there were 1,167 imprisoned Indigenous people in Brazil in June of 2020 (Brasil, 2020). Mato Grosso do Sul had 380 Indigenous inmates (in closed, semi-open, and open regimes), according to data that stretches to October of 2020 (Mato Grosso do Sul, 2020). This is the largest Indigenous inmate population of any Brazilian state.

Faced with this scenario, the Conselho Nacional de Justiça (National Justice Council, CNJ) reacted to the pandemic by producing the CNJ Recommendation n° 62, (Brasil, 2020) formalized in March of 2020<sup>11</sup>, which proposed to review verdicts of temporary imprisonment or custody in both common and juvenile criminal justice in order to reduce “epidemiological risk”. This was yet another effort at putting into practice what was already normatively anticipated and which should have been the general rule in the criminal justice system: incarceration as the last measure to be imposed. The Penal Code, which is intended to restrict the state’s actions in the criminal sphere, establishes freedom as the rule and imprisonment as the exception, particularly when there are appeals available before final sentencing.

7 As I have stressed elsewhere: “The Icatu Indigenous Land was the protagonist in a punitive meshwork that lasted for over 30 years during the Republic. Here, through the analysis of available documents, we identified 64 possible transferrals under the label of ‘doing time’, among which we pinpointed 50 names and some pictures in the few documents available, which prevented them from being erased from history” (Penteado Junior & Aguilera Urquiza, 2019: 529).

8 BRASIL. Ministério da Saúde (MS). 2021. Coronavirus Panel. Available in: <<https://covid.saude.gov.br/>> accessed: 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021.

9 Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil (APIB). 2020. *Emergência Indígena*. Available in: <[https://emergenciaindigena.apiboficial.org/dados\\_covid19/](https://emergenciaindigena.apiboficial.org/dados_covid19/)> accessed: 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021.

10 The document produced at the end of the Acampamento Terra Livre 2020 (Free Land Camp 2020), resulting from the Grande Assembleia Nacional (Great National Assembly), pointed to a range of measures for dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic (Available in: <<https://cimi.org.br/2020/04/povos-indigenas-documento-final-atl-2020/>> accessed: 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

11 Later changed by CNJ Recommendation n° 68/2020 and CNJ Recommendation n° 78/2020.

However, regardless of what the norm restricts, the agents who operate the machinery of the state are the truly fundamental pieces of the justice system. Under the guise of an illusory and unreal ‘impartiality’, the historical agents acting within Brazilian society power the judicial machine, often perpetuating the same structures that crush Indigenous bodies.

Stephen Grant Baines revealed an “ethnic de-characterization of Indigenous peoples by the brokers of the state”, generating their “legal invisibility” as right-bearing subjects (Baines, 2015: 3). As we have elsewhere stressed, “making penitentiary procedure brown and uniform, states have failed to reveal the insufficiency of penitentiary institutions in applying the principal of individualization in sentencing” (Penteado Junior & Aguilera Urquiza, 2020: 92)<sup>12</sup>.

Complementarily, the distance between official discourse (resocialization) and actual penal practices that affect communities as a whole is considerable. In the case at hand, the actions of the state – as a punitive power – has an unequal effect on Indigenous communities resulting from the shock and cultural violence that such actions provoke (Osório, 2020).

In the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, which has one of the largest Indigenous populations in the country, the agents who occupy positions of power in the bureaucratic structure of the state (the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches) almost never represent the interests of Indigenous peoples. What we noted above regarding necropolitics applies here, as legal decisions are made by agents with no relation of alterity to the Indigenous population, with no recognition of their unique ways of relating to the world. Frequently, the positions in which power is exercised are occupied by agents that are directly or indirectly involved in land disputes over Indigenous territories.

The 1988 Federal Constitution confers a unique juridical status on Indigenous peoples (Article 231). Judgements on matters related to “disputes over Indigenous rights” falls in the jurisdiction of Federal Courts (Art. 109, XI, CF/88). However, interpretations of this rule were considerably changed by the Court of Appeals through the discussions that led to Summary nº 140<sup>13</sup>, which divides the collective stewardship of Indigenous rights (jurisdiction of the Federal Courts) to the individual stewardship of Indigenous persons (State Courts), an arrangement that favours the perpetuation of the interests of traditional elites (Oliveira & Tenório, 2020). The impact of this shift on legal practices is immense, considering that, typically, State Justice is closely aligned to local interests (considering the agents involved in operating it), much more so than the Federal Courts.

This fact plays an important role when we compare the average of incarcerated Indigenous peoples in the period from 2018-2021<sup>14</sup> that resulted from cases tried in Federal and State Courts. Graph 01 results from the compilation of data on incarcerated Indigenous people plotted against the jurisdiction in which cases were tried (Federal or State), taking into account both those who are under provisional arrest (temporary incarceration or custody) and those who are doing time (*res judicata*).

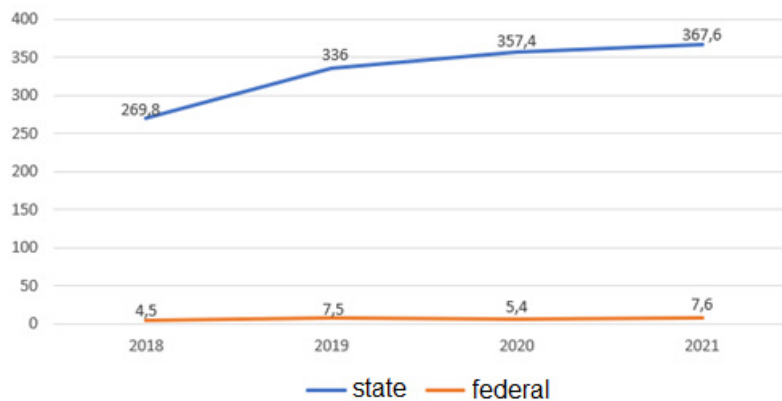
Since 2011, the AGEPEN/MS makes available data on Indigenous people arrested in Mato Grosso do Sul, providing an important source for scientific research on the theme. However, it does not reveal the methodology used in producing the data, thereby creating barriers against more in-depth analyses on the situation of incarcerated Indigenous persons. In relation to the distribution of cases between Federal and State Courts:

12 A number of researchers have observed that, in Brazil, many Indigenous people come to be counted as ‘brown’ (*pardo*) once they enter the prison system. (Baines, 2015)

13 Summary nº 140 of the Court of Appeals: “It is the jurisdiction of State Courts to try and judge crimes in which Indigenous persons feature as culprits or victims”. (Available in: [https://www.stj.jus.br/docs\\_internet/revista/eletronica/stj-revista-sumulas-2010\\_10\\_capSumula140.pdf](https://www.stj.jus.br/docs_internet/revista/eletronica/stj-revista-sumulas-2010_10_capSumula140.pdf) accessed 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

14 The 2018–2021-time frame was chosen because data on Indigenous people incarcerated according to the jurisdiction that emitted their arrest warrants was only made available by the AGEPEN/MS in 2018.

**Graph 01:** distribution of cases between Federal Courts and State Courts (2018-2021)<sup>15</sup>

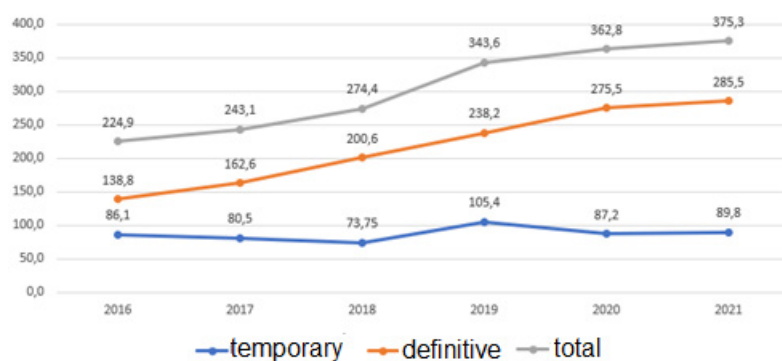


Taking the above considerations into account, we examined the number of Indigenous people incarcerated in Mato Grosso do Sul between 2016 and 2021 in relation to nature of their status in the prison system: temporary or definitive custody (Mato Grosso do Sul, 2020). Our aim is to identify possible variations in these numbers in light of the recommendations of the National Justice Council (CNJ) concerning imprisonment in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, considering the period between March 2020 and June 2021.

Allowing that the measures for reviewing sentences according to the guidelines of the CNJ in the context of the pandemic specifically targeted Indigenous people (to a degree), this may indicate changes in the general trend of imprisonments. The available data was thus plotted in terms of the nature of imprisonment.

For this data to be measured against the general analysis, we calculated the averages corresponding to the total number of prisoners in monthly intervals for each year. The averages also take into account the lack of data for certain months. In general, however, we can discern the following behaviour:

**Graph 02:** average of Indigenous peoples incarcerated according to the nature of their imprisonment (temporary or definitive custody) from 2016-2018<sup>16</sup>



<sup>15</sup> All data is publicly available at the AGEPEM/MS website. There are no observations concerning the methodology used for data collection; certain ambiguities may arise from discrepancies between self-identification and alter-identification of incarcerated peoples. However, the numbers are official, which makes them highly relevant for scientific research as a reflection of public policies (Available in: <<http://www.agepen.ms.gov.br/informacoes-penitenciarias/>> accessed: 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

<sup>16</sup> Data analysed by the authors based on the AGEPEM/MS database (Available in: <<http://www.agepen.ms.gov.br/informacoes-penitenciarias/>> accessed 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

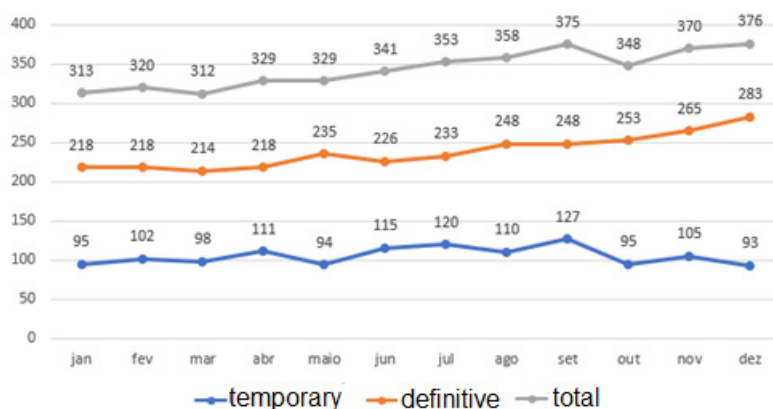
Although the average of definitive incarcerations has been growing, it is thus possible to identify a significant dip in the average for 2020, a fact that has, until now, been consistent with the data consolidated up to June 2021.

Concerning the specific measures adopted by prison facilities in Mato Grosso do Sul as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, we know that part of the Indigenous population incarcerated in the city of Campo Grande was vaccinated, although we lack official numbers<sup>17</sup>.

The matter is complex and involves diverse factors that influence a range of research hypotheses. Furthermore, as even the National Immunization Plan (Plano Nacional de Imunização (PNI)) accepts, along with a higher risk of death from the disease, there is likewise greater impact of the pandemic on vulnerable populations (Brasil, 2021: 17).

For the purpose of comparison, taking into account the context of the pandemic, this is the graph for temporary and definitive custody for 2019:

**Graph 03:** data on temporary and definitive incarceration of Indigenous people in 2019<sup>18</sup>



It is clear that the blue line shows greater fluctuations, perhaps because provisional decisions can be more easily revised. The graph shows that the number of incarcerated Indigenous people rose steadily, carried mostly by the number of those in definitive custody. The dip in total numbers between September 2019 and November 2019 may be linked to the decrease in temporary detainments, which, in turn, may be related to different preventative actions of the CNJ<sup>19</sup> concerned with cautionary measures. Confirming this, however, would require a different study.

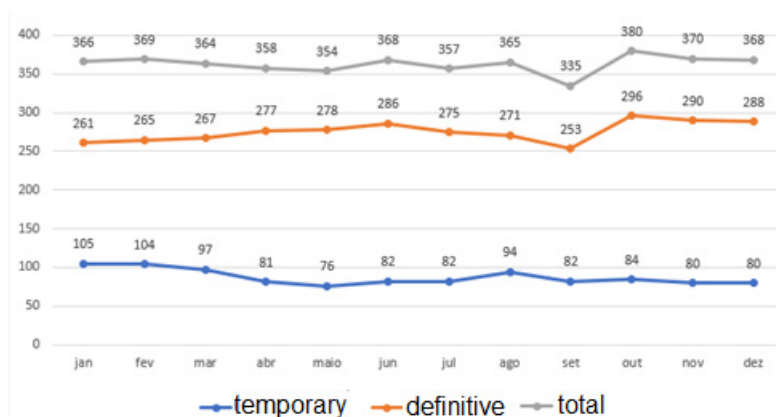
Concretely, the COVID-19 pandemic, which officially began in Brazil in March of 2020, resulted in measures concerned with the incarceration of Indigenous people. As mentioned above, the CNJ established guidelines for legal procedure, aiming to avoid incarceration by considering the fragile biosecurity conditions in prison facilities. The variations in 2020 are plotted in Graph 04:

<sup>17</sup> Available in: <<https://www.agepen.ms.gov.br/vacina-contracovid-19-comeca-a-ser-aplicada-em-reeducandos-da-capital/>> accessed 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021.

<sup>18</sup> Data analysed by the authors based on the AGEPEN/MS database (Available in: <<http://www.agepen.ms.gov.br/informacoes-penitenciarias/>> accessed 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

<sup>19</sup> A structure that is still being implemented in what concerns, for example, hearings on the nature of custody and their regulation, which only came to be integrated into Brazilian juridical order in 2019, although its foundation harks back to the American Convention on Human Rights of 1969. This makes evident the need to tackle normative provisions with concrete public policies for the operationalization of rights.

**Graph 04:** data on temporary and definitive incarceration of Indigenous people in 2020<sup>20</sup>



Graph 04 shows a stabilization of the total number of incarcerated Indigenous persons (2019-2020) when the variable factor (the COVID-19 pandemic) is taken into account. What we would like to highlight is the downward tendency that begins in March 2020, achieving a relative stability at the level of between 50 and 100 people, a fact that may result from the measures, mentioned above, of the CNJ in regards to provisional custody. In contrast, Graph 03 (referring to 2019) has a variation of between 100 and 150 Indigenous persons in temporary incarceration. The same level of variation of between 50 and 100 people is being repeated in 2021, although we do not want to make final claims regarding this period in the absence of consolidated data.

Complementarily, the AGEPEN/MS database does not present data on the ethnic configuration of incarcerated Indigenous persons, which point to certain provisional conclusions on the invisibility of these communities as bearers of specific characteristics.

However, in reply to a legal request from Observatório Sistema de Justiça Criminal e Povos Indígenas<sup>21</sup> (Observatory of the Criminal Justice System and Indigenous People), the Departamento Penitenciário Nacional (National Penitentiary Department, DEPEN) presented notice n° 45/2021<sup>22</sup>. This notice attests that, of the total number of incarcerated Indigenous persons in Mato Grosso do Sul, 349 people informed their ethnic identity. It is thus possible to identify that, at present, the prison system has custody of people of the following ethnicities: “Guarani Kaiowá, Kaiowá, Guarani, Terena, Guarani Caiowá, Kadiuwéu and Kadiwéu”(sic)<sup>23</sup>.

No standard approach is available for identifying ethnic affiliations. In the official notice mentioned above, there is no data concerning the methodology used to identify ethnic affiliation, although we can assume that it is based on self-declared statements by detainees.

There is no simple or easy solution; perhaps there is no solution at all. However, it should be remembered that incarceration implies a variety of collateral damages that transcend the individual who is in the custody of the prison system, directly affecting his or her family and community (Ferrecchio, 2017: 22)<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Data analysed by the authors based on the AGEPEN/MS database (Available in: <<http://www.agepen.ms.gov.br/informacoes-penitenciarias/>> accessed 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021).

<sup>21</sup> Available in: <https://apiboficial.org/observatorio-de-justica-criminal/> accessed: 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Notice n° 45/2021/DIAMGE/CGCAP/DIRP/DEPEN (process n° 08016.006910/2021-71).

<sup>23</sup> We have chosen to maintain the orthography of de DEPEN document. The lack of standardization in writing the names of ethnicities in official documents may reflect a defect of technical training in identifying these subjects and their respective ethnic identities (Notice n° 45/2021/DIAMGE/CGCAP/DIRP/DEPEN; process n° 08016.006910/2021-71).

<sup>24</sup> It should be noted that, according to the Attorney General Marco Antonio Delfino de Almeida, the “Kaiowá and Guarani are over-represented in the prison system, with an average of 520 detainees out of 100,000 citizens, double the national average, three times the world average, close to the American average” (Penteado Junior & Aguilera Urquiza, 2020: 96).

When Indigenous peoples are considered, and the reproduction of the logic of ethnocentric coloniality is taken into account, there is a tendency to perpetuate domination of Indigenous bodies. As if this were not enough, after incarceration Indigenous persons are not provided with interpreters, anthropological expertise, assistance from FUNAI, juridical support, or the means for reproducing their cultural practices (Penteado Junior & Aguilera Urquiza, 2020: 93–113).

Beyond existing norms, society must establish ties of alterity to understand the issue in relation to the criminal justice system and Indigenous peoples. We must move beyond the aseptic frigidity of bureaucratic structure, turning our attention to understanding and recognizing the specific and unique forms of social organization of the different Indigenous nations. Listening to what “the dead” tell us, we can at least try to better understand them, and to elaborate public policies that will effectively protect incarcerated Indigenous persons.

## Final Thoughts

The bureaucratic structure developed in Brazil during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century is based on the ethnocentric thought that flourished in European centres of knowledge and was consolidated in the colonies. Political emancipation did not profoundly change colonial thought, which practically reproduces the same logic into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Punitive power is exercised vertically, geared toward the social control of those who have been marginalized.

We cannot engage the prison system without the filter of colonial thought, without what is called the ‘coloniality of power’. We find, here, a complete disregard for the Other coupled with the establishment of spaces of conflict between those who make up the elite and those who suffer the wages of power.

The Indigenous issue is no exception. In 2020, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the actions and omissions of the Brazilian state in relation to Indigenous people became more evident. It is necessary to break with the view that only normative provisions will solve social problems by accepting that the actors involved in the process of criminalization, from police officers to members of the judiciary, must tackle the system from its true basis and thereby to create ties of alterity.

Incarceration can be seen to increase constantly by incorporating marginalized populations (Harvey, 2014) or outsiders (Becker, 2008), or as a substitution for the welfare state (Wacquant, 2003, 2004) against noxious individuals, designated enemies of society (Zaffaroni, 2014). In Mato Grosso do Sul, the home of Brazilian agribusiness, the consolidated data show that, despite administrative measures intended to review decisions to keep Indigenous peoples incarcerated, during 2020 the total number of Indigenous peoples in the prison system remained steady.

For years the state has topped the Brazilian ranking for the incarceration of Indigenous peoples, in blatant disrespect for constitutional clauses, such as Article 231 of the Federal Constitution of 1988, which recognizes rights to Indigenous social organization, customs, languages, beliefs, and traditions (Brasil, 1988), and international treaties such the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN 2008: articles 5 and 34) and or the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO 1989: arts. 8<sup>o</sup>, 9<sup>o</sup> e 10). To these should be added Resolution no 287/2019 (Brasil, 2019) of the CNJ and Resolution no the National Council for Criminal and Penitentiary Policy (Conselho Nacional de Política Criminal e Penitenciária (CNPCP), which establish specific measures for incarcerated Indigenous people or those undergoing trial.

Finally, the past is more present than ever. Indigenous people are incarcerated in increasing number and, now, during a pandemic, the cycle of extermination persists, reminiscent of the high rates of lethality of the Spanish flu epidemics in the last century.



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# Indigenous Peoples and the Judiciary in Brazil: an appeal for a Legal Anthropology approach

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## **Abstract**

The lack of understanding between the Judiciary and Indigenous Peoples in Brazil stems in large part from the state's refusal to recognize the sovereignty of the latter, while asserts its own sovereignty over them. There is little interest from judges and legal operators in knowing and recognizing the specific rights brought by indigenous alterity, recognized by the Federal Constitution of 1988. Academic interest in Indigenous Peoples in Law schools is still low and, in most cases when it occurs, is without the methodological tools of empirical research and the ethical concerns of anthropological fieldwork. I intend to analyze the difference between the typical approach of anthropologists and jurists on this subject, while defending the relevance and contribution of Legal Anthropology to all sides involved: Indigenous Peoples, Judiciary and Academia.

**Keywords:** Indigenous Peoples; Judiciary; Legal Anthropology; Alterity.

# Povos Indígenas e o Poder Judiciário no Brasil: um chamado ao olhar da antropologia jurídica

## Resumo

A falta de entendimento entre o Poder Judiciário e os Povos Indígenas no Brasil decorre em boa parte da recusa do estado em reconhecer a soberania destes últimos, enquanto afirma a sua própria soberania sobre eles. Há pouco interesse por parte dos julgadores e operadores do direito em conhecer e reconhecer os direitos específicos advindos da alteridade indígena, reconhecida pela Constituição Federal de 1988. O interesse acadêmico sobre os Povos Indígenas nas faculdades de Direito ainda é baixo e, na maioria das vezes em que ocorre, carece das ferramentas metodológicas da pesquisa empírica e das preocupações éticas do trabalho de campo antropológico. Pretendo analisar a diferença de abordagem típica dos antropólogos e dos juristas neste assunto, ao mesmo tempo em que defendo a relevância e contribuição que a pesquisa em Antropologia do Direito pode trazer para todos os lados envolvidos: Povos Indígenas, Judiciário e Academia.

**Palavras-chave:** Povos Indígenas; Poder Judiciário; Antropologia do Direito; Alteridade.

# Indigenous Peoples and the judiciary in Brazil: an appeal for a Legal Anthropology approach

*João Francisco Kleba Lisboa*

In this essay, I intend to discuss the possibilities of Legal Anthropology research in observing the relations of Brazil's Judiciary over the Indigenous Peoples. A relationship that was – and to a large extent continues to be – defined by colonial domination and ethnocide (Clastres, 2004 [1974]). I assume that in such relations the rules and cultural values of hegemonic society intervene on Native Peoples, who after all maintain their own social dynamics and juridicities. I also propose that legal forms and discourses, that constitute judicial acts and decisions, express a cultural and historically conditioned view from legal operators (judges, barristers, lawyers, etc.) about the Native Peoples and their customs. Through those points of view, as in a photographic negative, we could observe the Indigenous forms of social life which, when confronted with state law, are denied, censored or punished by the latter.

The need for an interdisciplinary approach that joins theoretical and methodological efforts from Law and Anthropology, to deal with the problematic relationship between Indigenous Peoples (or other ethnic minorities) and the Brazilian state, has already been noted for some time. I highlight the pioneering meetings organized by prof. Sílvio Coelho do Santos, at the Federal University of Santa Catarina, in 1980 and 1983, bringing together anthropologists and lawyers to criticize the current indigenist politics and legislation and propose alternatives. Those interdisciplinary meetings resulted in two collections of articles (Santos, 1982; Santos et al., 1985). Prior to the current Federal Constitution of 1988, such dialogues helped to formulate the innovative understanding about Indigenous Peoples embodied in the new Constitution (Santos, 1989). The present article intends to renew and refresh those debates, by mixing theoretical references, examples of Brazilian judicial decisions and ethnographic data.

In practice, Indigenous rights are quite distant from what the main documents and rules say about it. I empirically observed that during my Master's field research, among the Kaingang People, over ten years ago<sup>1</sup>, and continued to register it through this time. Despite the “multiple faces of the state” for the Indigenous Peoples (Lisboa, 2010b), Brazilian laws, the judiciary and other control institutions impose themselves above Indigenous communities and their social dynamics.

This imposition theoretically stems from state's sovereignty and its territorial jurisdiction, that legitimize (or at least provide legal form to) decisions from non-Indigenous society over Indigenous Peoples, while denying their own sovereignty (Mcneil, 2016). However, court decisions carry with it not only juridical principles and modern impersonal rules, but also contain inaccurate, quick ‘sociological’ analysis and racial stereotypes that aim to explain the functioning of Indigenous communities, or their ‘culture’. As already noted on the litigations of the Tupinambá de Olivença (Bezerra, 2017), those non-judicial contents of judicial decisions reproduce, but also reinforce, a certain mediatic common-sense view about Indigenous Peoples, now covered by the legal authority.

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<sup>1</sup> Resulting in my Master's thesis, entitled [approximate translation] “The Law among the Kaingang in the West of Santa Catarina: a view from the legal anthropology” (Lisboa, 2010a).

## Law and Indigenous Peoples in practice: beyond the doctrinal debate

I start from Carlos Frederico Marés statement, that the historical condition of success to Latin American states was the forced (and fictitious) integration of conquered Indigenous Peoples. Because of that, the national legal systems of those states maintain a “veiled conflict” with the ways of life and existence of the Indigenous Peoples (Marés, 2014, p. 360). In other words, it’s what Gersem Baniwa defined as “a democracy of the majority over or against minorities” (Baniwa, 2009, p. 99), exemplified both in the absence of Indigenous representatives in the three constituted branches – Executive, Legislative<sup>2</sup> and Judiciary – and in the non-recognition of the Indigenous legal systems.

Surprisingly, and despite providing rich ethnographic and analytical notes, judicial decisions over Indigenous Peoples are still a very unexplored subject, although not unprecedented. Among the research done by jurists on this subject, I highlight the doctoral thesis of Erika Macedo Moreira (2014) “Onhemoirõ: o Judiciário frente aos direitos indígenas”, and the book from the newly appointed judge in the state of Pará, Ib Sales Tapajós (2019) “Direitos indígenas e o Poder Judiciário: o caso da Terra Indígena Maró”.

Among Brazilian anthropologists, many have actively observed the rising of Indigenous rights for decades, and have also begun to analyze the role of the Judiciary in enforcing those laws – or, more recently, the political threats to these legal guarantees (see Carneiro da Cunha et al., 2017). Manuela Carneiro da Cunha stands out in this milieu, since at least her precursor book (1987) “Os direitos dos índios: ensaios e documentos”, which covers a vast period, from colonial and imperial legislation to the 1973 Indian Statute and the 1987 National Constituent Assembly – reviewing also the International Law, Comparative Law and numerous legal documents, including a valuable section named “Indigenous Peoples Documents”. Carneiro da Cunha is probably the main Brazilian anthropology expert on Indigenous rights, and remains very active writing and speaking against the reactionary theory of “time landmark” (marco temporal)<sup>3</sup>, including in her recent book, organized in partnership with Samuel Barbosa (2018), “Direitos dos povos indígenas em disputa”.

The 1988 Brazilian Constitution is very clear when recognizes, to the “Indians”, “their original rights to the lands they traditionally occupy” (BRASIL, 2013, p. 122), in a new legal paradigm that no longer seeks to combat and integrate indigenous otherness (as the previous ones did). Notions such as traditional occupation and territoriality, however, should not be romanticized or naturalized. The creation and recognition of Indigenous lands by the state must be seen from a historical perspective, focusing on the respective processes of territorialization, “pacification” and tutelage of Indigenous Peoples by colonial powers and knowledges, as well as the set of state administrative policies and procedures, called ‘indigenism’, over such populations. This is one of the main research lines led by an important group of Brazilian anthropologists for over three decades, such as João Pacheco de Oliveira (1988, 1998, 2012, 2016) and Antonio Carlos de Souza Lima (1995, 2012 2015).

<sup>2</sup> With very rare exceptions, the most important Joênia Wapichana, elected in 2018 for the position of Federal Deputy, representing the state of Roraima through the “REDE Sustentabilidade” Party – the same of Marina Silva.

<sup>3</sup> The controversial thesis of “marco temporal” emerged during the 2009 Supreme Court judgment on the demarcation of the Indigenous Land (IL) Raposa Serra do Sol, in the far north of Brazil, after a very biased reading of the Constitution (which is quite explicit about Indigenous lands in its article 231 and paragraphs) by the judges Carlos Ayres Britto and Carlos Alberto Menezes Direito. Over the time, the thesis was adopted by the Brazilian government and judges, weakening the Indigenous territorial rights, in response to the pressure made by anti-Indigenous agrarian elites. Between August and September 2021, when the Court was about to judge the scope of the “marco temporal”, approximately 6,000 people, including men, women, children and elders, from 150 different Indigenous nations, camped on the Esplanade of Ministries in Brasília. While this huge mobilization took place outside with lots of music, dances, prayers and creative performances, the young Indigenous lawyers Eloy Terena, Cristiane Baré, Ivo Macuxi and Samara Pataxó made the legal defense of their ancestral lands before the 11 Supreme Court judges. On social networks, widespread support for Indigenous rights gathered in the hashtag #MarcoTemporalNao, raising NGOs, indigenists, anthropologists and other allies of the Indigenous Peoples.

Ana Lúcia Lobato de Azevedo (1998), a member of this group, dedicated her research specifically to the role of the Judiciary in defining Indigenous lands. In a proposal quite similar to what I advocate here, she was interested “not in performing an exegesis of legal texts [...], but in trying to understand how the rights contained in the codes are actualized through what happens in the *forum* space and what emanates from there” (p. 153, *own translation*). Through the notion of ‘arena’, Azevedo analyzes the Judiciary anthropologically, “as part of a broader political field with which it articulates, both influencing and being influenced by the social processes that occur within it, and not as an equitable and equidistant sphere, capable of standing above all other powers and decision-making spheres” (p. 154, *own translation*). Azevedo was based on a concrete case study in the state of Paraíba in the late 1970s, about the judicial litigation over the traditional lands of the Potiguara people and against the Indigenous assistance agency (FUNAI), for what she monitored the events inside and outside the process and the performance of FUNAI’s lawyers over the following years.

Also interested in the judicial relationship between the state and Indigenous Peoples, the anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2006), in a well-known interview, questions the power of jurists and the Judiciary in defining who is an Indian and who is not. Viveiros de Castro provokes such pretension by inverting the terms of the common-sense: “In Brazil, everyone is an Indian, except for those who aren’t”. Also, on the same case analyzed by Ib Sales Tapajós, the Maró Indigenous Land, Viveiros de Castro, after being requested by the Public Prosecutor’s Office of Pará, wrote a 28-page “Opinion on the sentence of the federal judge” (*Parecer sobre a sentença do Juiz federal*) who decided about that case.

Such examples allow a bonding of Law and Anthropology research areas and, simultaneously, address both the functioning institutions of Brazilian state law and the dynamic reality of Indigenous Peoples, who live in this territory. Such approximation could combine a broad and accurate monitoring of judicial practices over the Indigenous Peoples with the issues, approaches and distances provided by the anthropological view and the ethnographic practice. The construction and exploration of this (macro) research theme would bring countless advantages to what is meant by anthropology of law – and somehow to Indigenous ethnology too – in Brazil.

The most part of the Brazilian academic production on this subject, however, tends to be focused on a review of the *corpus* of written norms (whether laws in force or repealed, national or international) that rule the Indigenous population, adding to it some legal doctrine discussion<sup>4</sup>. When court decisions are the subject of academic analysis, they are often about the titling of Indigenous Lands – a next step of administrative processes that are federal government’s responsibility.

The issue of Indigenous Lands (ILs) is part of an agenda that is discussed at the highest levels of the Republic offices or the by the international law organizations. These themes, like environmental issues and the protection of the rainforest, are endowed with visibility and public appeal, moving the national and international imaginary about Indigenous Peoples, despite the growing bureaucratization of this field (Ramos, 1992). See, for example, the case of the of Raposa Serra do Sol IL demarcation, in Roraima, which yielded intense debates and discussions in the main national newspapers, between the first and second decade of this century (Miras et al., 2009); or the previous case of the Yanomami IL demarcation, with wide international repercussions (Kopenawa, Albert, 2013). Unnecessary to say that such cases receive most of the attention from researchers and academic works focused on the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the state law.

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<sup>4</sup> As demonstrates the book organized by Carlos Frederico Marés de Souza Filho and Raul Cezar Bergold (2013), in which, among fourteen articles, only two seek to focus on the application of Indigenous rights by the Judiciary.



Such demarcation processes, on the other hand, imply a political and bureaucratic recognition that doesn't occur without state's resistance or complete refuse in observing those rights, not only in Brazil (Erueti, 2006; Leuzinger, Lyngard, 2016). Judiciary, therefore, would be the natural way to charge countries to respect the Constitution, the Treaties or the "Land Title" agreements. Unfortunately, even if the Indigenous otherness and territoriality are constitutionally recognized, self-governance and Indigenous justice systems have little or no institutional support in Brazil. This lack is reflected in a low number of academic researches or government actions on this subject, placing us well behind other countries (see, for example, Miller, 2001; ALRC, 1986).

I suggest here that we must look to the effective production and application of judicial decisions on Indigenous individuals and social life. That is, to the precise moments when the state imposes itself, through its jurisdictional role, exercised by the Judiciary, refusing or (less often) recognizing and validating Indigenous forms of conflict resolution and their regulatory systems. In those moments, state's sovereignty makes itself visible, not by the person who sits in the highest position in the political hierarchy, but by legal operators spread in its most diverse instances. Sovereignty, in any country in the American Continent, carry a colonial and everyday face to the Indigenous Peoples.

### **State sovereignty and Indigenous rights: a territorial dispute**

One of the main authors on the definition of the political-juridical concept of sovereignty in the 20th century, the German jurist Carl Schmitt (2006 [1950]) interprets the conquest of the "New World" as the episode that marks the beginning of the modern European Law of Nations, the predecessor of International Law. Following ancient European jurists, like Francisco de Vitoria and Isidore of Seville, Schmitt recognizes the conquest's land-appropriation as the foundational act of any law, on which a new order is established, internally or externally, and from which the whole colonial history unfolds: "the great primeval acts of law remained terrestrial orientations: appropriating land, founding cities, and establishing colonies (...). Land-appropriation takes first place" (p.44)<sup>5</sup>. It so happens that the image of a "state of nature", projected by European philosophers on the Indians, presupposed the idea of a free space to be disputed (among themselves, the Europeans) and occupied. According to Schmitt, "essential and decisive for the following centuries, however, was the fact that the emerging new world did not appear as a new enemy, but as *free space*, as an area open to European occupation and expansion" (p. 87).

The false idea of the New World as a 'free space' is directly related to the international law principle highlighted by Robert J. Miller and Micheline D'angelis (2011) as 'the Doctrine of Discovery', a resource still used by many states in territorial disputes with other countries and, for centuries, to impose sovereignty over Indigenous Peoples:

Portugal and Brazil also used the elements of the Doctrine in their colonial dealings with the Indigenous peoples that inhabited the areas that today comprise Brazil. Furthermore, the modern-day government of Brazil continues to enforce aspects of this legal principle against Indigenous peoples (p. 2).

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<sup>5</sup> So continues Schmitt: "In every case, land-appropriation, both internally and externally, is the primary legal title that underlies all subsequent law. Territorial law and territorial succession, militia and the national guard presuppose land appropriation. Land-appropriation also precedes the distinction between private and public law; in general, it creates the conditions for this distinction. To this extent, from a legal perspective, one might say that land-appropriation has a categorical character. Kant expounds on this notion with great clarity in his *Philosophy of Law*. He speaks of *territorial sovereignty* or, more preferably, of *supreme proprietorship of the soil*, which he considers to be the 'main condition for the possibility of ownership and all further law, public as well as private'" (op cit, p. 46).

The Brazilian Indigenous policy, in turn, was based until recently on what Mércio Gomes (2005, p. 435) calls ‘the paradigm of acculturation’, that is, the idea or desire the Indigenous Peoples will disappear. It would be an inexorable process and a “natural event”, resulting from their contact with the “civilization” and their consequent integration into the national society. Such prediction, as we know today, was seriously shaken, if not disproved, by the resistant survival and the surprising growth of many Indigenous Peoples in the last decades. Realizing such changes, anthropologists and other researchers turned to the phenomenon of continuous increase in the total Indigenous population and the risen of political organizations from the last quarter of the 20th century. As shows, for example, the PhD thesis of Poliene Soares dos Santos Bicalho (2010). Also, the historical evolution of Indigenous rights in Brazil, to the present day, has been the subject of some studies, standing out the collection of articles, with the participation of Indigenous lawyers, “Povos indígenas e a lei dos ‘brancos’: o direito à diferença” (Araújo et al., 2006).

The recent recognition, by the national states, of the fundamental connection of Indigenous Peoples with their traditional territory, confirms the existence of other Indigenous rights based on their otherness, that is, on the cultural and ethnic distinctiveness of Indigenous Peoples. The Federal Constitution of 1988, on its article 231, refers to the Indigenous rights and ensures that “Indians shall have their social organization, customs, languages, creeds and traditions recognized, as well as their original rights to the lands they traditionally occupy, it being incumbent upon the Union to demarcate them, protect and ensure respect for all of their property”, according to the official translation (BRASIL, 2013, p. 122). The Constitution, therefore, recognizes a mutual and two-way relation between Indigenous Peoples and the land: just as the traditional occupation is what constitutionally guarantee the identification and demarcation of a territory as an Indigenous Land, so too are those lands what, according to the Indigenous themselves, guarantee the existence and perpetuation of their culture and traditional ways of life.

The territoriality of Indigenous Peoples can so be seen as a legal relationship that they maintain with the land, recognized by the Federal Constitution of 1988. In the words of prof. Sílvio Coelho dos Santos:

In this way, the constituents established on the Constitution the intention to design, for the legal sphere, norms that recognize the existence of Indigenous Peoples and define the preconditions for their reproduction and continuity. In recognizing the ‘original rights’ of Indigenous Peoples over traditionally occupied lands, the FC incorporated the thesis of the existence of legal relations between the Indians and those lands prior to the formation of the Brazilian state (Santos, 2005, p 77, *own translation*).

Far from being a passive pole of the relationship with the state (neither with academic research), some Indigenous Peoples seek to articulate their reaction to discriminatory acts and to judicial decisions that disrespect their ethnic and territorial specificity. They do so through a combined use of state’s categories and their own legal notions and concepts, whether individually or collectively. An example of the latter is the collective pronouncement of the Guarani-Kaiowá, in Mato Grosso do Sul, in 2012. Written in response to the eviction order given by a federal judge, the letter generated great commotion for suggesting that the state should decree the collective death of the Guarani-Kaiowá. As shown in their letter:

We ask the Government and the Federal Court not to issue the eviction/ expulsion order, but we do ask to decree our collective death and to bury us all here.

We ask, once and for all, to decree our total decimation / extinction, in addition to sending several tractors to dig a big hole to play and bury our bodies. This is our request to federal judges (*own translation*)<sup>6</sup>.

6 See: [https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2012/10/121024\\_indigenas\\_carta\\_coletiva\\_jc](https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2012/10/121024_indigenas_carta_coletiva_jc) (last accessed on 15/01/2021).

Another example of collective resistance to a judicial decision came from the Indians of Baixo Tapajós, in 2014, who wrote a letter questioning the judicial decision that declared the inexistence of the Maró Indigenous Land. Through a simple trick – however able to undo the entire land demarcation – the judge did not recognize the Indigenous identity of its residents (and without Indigenous people there is no Indigenous land). In the decision, which would be annulled only in 2016, by the 1st Region’s Federal Regional Court, the judge stated that the Maró IL Indians were the result of an “artificial process of ‘invention of Indians’, by influence of exogenous ideological activist, focused on the environmental conservation of the Amazon” (Tapajós, 2015, p. 84, *translated by me*). The letter of the Indians, released in conjunction with the occupation of the Federal Justice building in Santarém, stated in response that:

Because of this discriminatory judicial sentence, we, the aforementioned Indigenous Peoples, REAFFIRM our Indigenous identities, we have not accepted throughout history and we will never accept the violence of the colonizing White, the refusal of our beliefs, our culture and our values. We know that laws in general do not favor us, but there is no law that can exterminate us. We are clear that the policy implemented by governments is anti-Indigenous and anti-environmental (*own translation*)<sup>7</sup>.

The frictions between Indigenous Peoples and the Judiciary, however, are not limited – in spite of its enormous importance – to the demarcations of Indigenous Lands and the struggles over Indigenous collective rights, the first of which is territorial. These causes have become the motto and the main claim of the Indigenous movement in recent decades. Even recognizing that, it can be said that the interactions of Indigenous People with the different state’s legal spheres go far beyond the land struggles.

It should be noted that, recently, some very relevant contributions on this subject are emerging. Equally notable is the fact that they have started not from universities and their academic research, but from the bodies linked to or related to the Judiciary, such as the Public Prosecutor’s Office, at federal level (*Ministério Público Federal*)<sup>8</sup>, and the National Council of Justice (CNJ)<sup>9</sup>. Also, in the academy some works have been carried out with the same purposes, bringing to light concrete cases, although its methodology is generally, after theoretical, doctrinal and legal analyzes, based on research in jurisprudence through the computerized search systems of the courts themselves (Wagner, Borges, 2019).

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<sup>7</sup> See full content of the letter at: <http://www.correiocidadania.com.br/33-artigos/noticias-em-destaque/10329-13-12-2014-carta-circular-dos-povos-indigenas-do-baixo-tapajos> (last accessed on 15/01/2021).

<sup>8</sup> As, for example, the Manual of jurisprudence on Indigenous rights, with 921 pages, carried out by the 6th MPF Coordination and Review Chamber and made available in PDF on the internet (BRASIL, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> As is the case with the Resolution 287, from July, 25, 2019, specifically for the treatment of accused, convicted or deprived Indigenous People, approved by the CNJ after Funai’s provocation to the Council: “By the Resolution, the Judiciary is guided with a view to ensuring rights to Indigenous People in the course of legal processes, observing what dictates the Convention N. 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, so that their specificities are properly considered by the organs of the criminal system. Among the new procedures are the duty to forward the case file to Funai within 48 hours; ensuring the presence of an interpreter at all stages of the process, when necessary; the carrying out of an anthropological investigation that must consider, among other aspects, the personal, cultural and social circumstances of the accused person, as well as the uses, customs and traditions of the community to which he is linked” (Source: <http://www.funai.gov.br/index.php/comunicacao/noticias/5507-resolucao-aprovada-pelo-cnj-garante-direitos-de-indigenas-no-sistema-prisional>, last accessed on 15/01/2021, *own translation*).

## Encounters and mismatches

Here is the paradox: Brazilians who do not belong to the Brazilian people – not because they are less Brazilian than other, but on the contrary, because they are more, since, as many Indigenous leaders claim for White interlocutors, “it was you who came from outside”. For an Indigenous person, state considers her or him a regular individual citizen, despite the differential treatment, not to say discriminatory, that is guaranteed to her or him by law. But he or she is also part of an Indigenous community, a people and a land, and is inserted in a web of social relations and meaning (that is, in a culture) (Geertz 2000 [1973]) that is quite distinct from that in which most Brazilians live.

The encounter of the legal dimension of state with other non-state manifestations of juridicity is always problematic, and frequently produces a semantic and institutional friction, if not an ontological and political discontinuity. When Indigenous People face the Judiciary, it is not only about a small difference, solved by the solitary question to inquire the race or ethnicity of those involved in a census questionnaire. What is at stake here is precisely the imposition of a type of law – not only the law and the legal principles behind it, but the judicial rite itself and the labyrinth of acts, forms and procedural standards in which one enters – on another, and therefore of one society over another.

As the Judiciary gives the last word when it comes to interpreting and applying state law and society values (Rosen, 2006), its relationship with Indigenous Peoples is thus inserted in the field of interethnic relations studies. At the same time, it concerns to the study of the Judiciary as a decision-making body, but also as a dynamic branch of lived relationships, of proper language, customs and habits, that is, also a “web of meanings” woven by its own members. Far beyond an abstract analysis of legal norms, this topic concerns the effective exercise of state sovereignty, through its judicial apparatus, with its own written and unwritten codes, over those Indigenous individuals criminally prosecuted, but also on the non-state forms of Indigenous social life.

Although Constitutional Law and International Law recognize, to some extent, the collective rights and the relative autonomy of Indigenous Peoples, in other areas of Law (especially the Criminal Law) the reality is very different. Spread across the country, there is an infinity of minor cases, with none or little public visibility, involving Indigenous People. Such specific cases may be or not linked to collective rights struggle, but they frequently are a sample of broader social problems faced by Indigenous Peoples. They are also subject to isolated applications of the law, on Indigenous individuals or groups, often without any specialized legal assistance – samples, in turn, of how the Judiciary operates.

Luiz Fernando Villares (2010), for example, points to the mismatch between a Criminal Law based on a liberal model, which in theory (but we know that “in practice the theory is quite another”) applies to all individuals indiscriminately, according to the conduct of each one, and its role of surveillance and control applied by the state over Indigenous Peoples, that occurs “only when their behaviors confront the power of Brazilian society” (p. 21, *own translation*). Most criminal cases involving Indigenous people as defendants originate from local inter-ethnic conflicts – as well as in many other cases where one or more Indigenous people appear as victims of crimes such as homicide<sup>10</sup>.

Villares demonstrates, based on his professional experience at the agency’s Attorney Office, that although the evident relevance of interethnic conflicts around the criminal cases that reach Funai’s prosecutors, “investigations are taken in a different direction, seeking not to elucidate the fact, but on the contrary, simply to identify the guilty” (p. 22, *own translation*). Legal processes, thus, end up losing the view of the conflict as a whole and its historical context, preferring to adopt “a limited view of criminality” (Idem). Villares, who got closely involved with the subject, affirms that there is a profound disinterest on the part of the Justice systems in recognizing the specificities of the Indigenous people when confronted with their agents:

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<sup>10</sup> Such cases have been growing in recent years, see CIMI annual reports entitled “Violence against indigenous peoples in Brazil”, despite the difficulty in obtaining total data.

The moment of application of Criminal Law imposes on the Indigenous people repressive legislation and a judicial system (judges, prosecutors, delegates, police) that ignores their customs and judges them with indifference, like any other citizen. In almost all cases, it occurs with deep prejudice, without taking into account the peculiarities about knowing the meaning of the law, the cultural conditions and the understanding of the illicit character of the conduct (Villares, 2010, p. 21, *own translation*).

A similar critical analysis is made by Tédney Moreira da Silva (2016), for whom Criminal Law played a crucial role within the set of integrationist theories and practices that marked Brazilian indigenous policy until the end of the 20th century – and continue to do so today, after the 1988 Federal Constitution. Moreira da Silva thus suggests a notion of ‘civilizing penalty’, according to which the criminalization of Indigenous People continues to be used by the state to impose on them a civilization model that is intended to be unique and necessary. Civilizing, in these cases, has the meaning of erasing its cultural distinctive features and ethnic belonging. For Silva, such an ethnocidal view would be based on the outdated 1973 Statute of the Indian, and on the discourse of ‘unimputability’ (juridical category dedicated to those with incomplete or retarded mental development), through which

generic and quick judicial decisions on the guilt of Indigenous People, that recognize them as criminally liable from the superficial analysis of their interethnic contact, are political instruments for neutralizing or suppressing ethnic diversity, as they signal the success of integrationist politics and the consequent disappearance of subjects who would be marked by failures in the socialization process (Silva, 2016, p. 61, *own translation*).

Prof. Stephen Baines, who has been studying Indigenous People held in penitentiary institutions in Boa Vista, the capital of Roraima, since 2008, noticed numerous problems between legal operators and the imprisoned Indians, especially what he called ‘ethnic mischaracterization’ during the defendant’s institutional journey. As an explicit example of how integrationist doctrine, that was supposed to be overcome after 1988, continues to operate in the decisions of the judicial authorities, one of the statements collected by Stephen Baines brings the following speak: “The prosecutor said that I was not an Indian, no. Because of my signature (I knew how to write)” (Baines, 2009, p. 181, *own translation*). This way, Baines notes that there is a process of

ethnic mischaracterization of Indigenous People by law operators (policemen, police chief officers, prosecutors, judges, state secretaries of public safety, state secretaries of justice and citizenship, etc.). This problem results in an inaccuracy of official statistics regarding the contingent of imprisoned Indians and their “legal invisibility” as subjects with different rights (...).

The categories used in the National Censuses and adopted by the penitentiary system contribute to the invisibility of Indigenous prisoners subsumed in the “*pardo*” [“brown”] category, as well as regional categories such as “*caboco*”, “*caboclo*”, “*civilized Indian*”, “*mestiço*”, “*acculturated Indian*”, among others, in opposition to the “pure Indian”. These terms are used to disqualify the differential treatment that the Federal Constitution guarantees to Indigenous People. In addition, there is no administrative guidance to systematize prisoners according to their ethnic identity (Idem, p. 184).

As we can see, this research subject also deals with the judicial institutions functioning and their agents, when confronted with the Indigenous people who enter “the system wires”. This implies turning the empirical purposes and questions of the research also to the Judiciary and its members. The statistical overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in the prisons, facing the criminal justice system or as victims of violent crimes is a social problem in some English-speaking countries, such as Australia (Weatherburn, 2014),

New Zealand (Jackson, 1987; Perret, 1999) and Canada (Malakieh, 2019), raising serious reasons for the reform of national justice systems and their adequacy to Aboriginal/Maori systems (although the Indigenous marginalization is a much broader issue than merely criminological or judicial).

Critical analyzes of the Judiciary in Brazil are not uncommon<sup>11</sup>, and may even come from its own members. Eliana Calmon, for example, who became minister of the Superior Court of Justice (STJ) and national corregidor of justice at the National Council of Justice (CNJ) before retiring in 2013, published an essay in 1994 from her own experience as a magistrate, in which she stated that:

unfortunately, we reached the end of the 20th century with a Judiciary in an abysmal situation towards society: a bureaucratic power, oblivious to real needs, because it was uncommitted, due to deformation, with the repercussions of the responses produced. Judges protect themselves in a false impartiality and without an own perspective; a body without a soul in search of an identity it lacks, as Carnellutti warned: “The greatest danger to the Judiciary lies within the Judiciary”.

The danger lies in the ataraxia of ideas, in the transformation of judges into luxury bureaucrats, who gravitate towards a narrow and backward apparatus, mystification of an independence that they do not have, except insofar as they are at the service of an efficient judicial provision (Calmon, 1994, p. 142, *own translation*).

Such criticisms, however, should not be read as personal attacks on the figure of the magistrates, neither should these be the solely responsible for the “encirclement” of Justice or for its excessive bureaucratization. Rather, they are perceptions of structural problems that often affect these judges (and other legal operators), once they enter a judicial (could we say cultural?) system whose normative structure has already been consolidated and can hardly be modified without a large amount of individual and collective effort. Magistrate Eugenio Raúl Zaffaroni (1995), for example, writes about a ‘sociological profile of the judge’ (p. 210), pointing out this structural character of judicial technobureaucracy, that projects itself to the subjective level, often as a survival strategy in recent-born democracies, such as ours:

Bureaucratization is, precisely, a defensive reaction that allows to survive in internal and external dependence, generated through the threat of sanctions, blocking ascents and promotions, arbitrary removals, internal defamatory campaigns, police pressure and administrative agencies etc.

These are the institutional conditions to which people are submitted, but which tend to generate escape mechanisms, which configure what we call “subjective bureaucratization” or bureaucratic deterioration at the operators’ personal level (p. 158, *own translation*).

A look at the judicial environment and the personal profile of this workers, in turn, cannot be disconnected from a concern with the ‘way of production of Justice’, especially about the Criminal Justice system and its flow, with a potentially wide research field, involving identification and location of processes, data collection and critical reflection (Rifiotis et al., 2010). This would imply an opening of legal theories to the day-to-day dynamics of forums, courts and tribunals, along the lines of what has been called “empirical research in law”, as in the book published by the Institute for Applied Economic Research (Ipea), originated from a seminary on the subject (Cunha, Silva, 2013). In the presentation of the book, Marcelo Neri, at the time the President of Ipea, defended the ‘smart solutions’ of this reality-grounded way of research:

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, the repercussions caused by the paper “The cost of Justice in Brazil: an exploratory comparative analysis”, published by Luciano Da Ros (2015), which provided headlines in the press as “The most expensive Judiciary in the world” (*Estadão*: <http://opinio.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral.o-juditario-mais-car-o-do-mundo.10000060068>) or “The most expensive justice in the world” (*O Globo*: <https://oglobo.globo.com/opinio/a-justica-mais-cara-do-mundo-19689169>).

On the one hand, they provoke the theory of Law to stick their feet in the reality of the application of the laws, in the functioning of the courts, of the judicial processes, of the trials, of the adverse-parties, of the conflict. The connection with society, social sensitivity and reality are, more than premises of method, conditions for understanding the law in the complex and distinct scenario of contemporary society and the state. On the other hand, demand for research in Law, long contaminated by the logic of the opinion, that frees itself from any commitment to the pre-established response, that recovers the zeal with the method, the fidelity to the investigation procedures, the centrality in an investigation guided by a problem, some hypotheses and a profusion of analyzes in which the truth is a consequence, not the cause of the research work (Idem, p. 9, *own translation*).

The Law research field is traditionally a mixture of universal conjectures, hermeneutic debates and theoretical-analytical abstractions. But Law is gradually been challenged to deal with social and subjective phenomena that escape the classic definitions that date back to the beginning of the modern age, with which Law faculties were established in Brazil. In face of the new problems (a word I use in the sense of both “social problem” and “research problem”) of contemporary society – the globalized, interconnected world and intercultural, interethnic conflicts – we can’t find sufficient answers among the traditional conceptual equipment of the academic-legal environment, such as the “social contract”, “popular sovereignty” and the “property rights”. Nor in the most recent, progressist categories such as “human dignity” and “diffuse rights” we are able to solve those problems. That’s why anthropology would have much to contribute, either through an ethnographic approach “up close and from the inside”, as defined by José Guilherme Magnani (2002), or because of its challenging attitude face to given truths, unquestioned habits and apparently stiffened systems.

First of all, there would be an urgent need to reconnect the Law that has been taught in public and private faculties across the country<sup>12</sup> to that which constitutes the daily practice of graduated professionals, whether they are civil servants or not. According to a recent study that raises the panorama of research in Law in Brazil, this is one of the main reasons for what the authors consider the low quality of legal research in the country:

It is necessary to clarify that the low scientific quality of the works is understood as the research reproducing the abyss between the law of the manuals and codes from that practiced by lawyers and courts. There is a described break between an idealized law and an empirically verified one. Such a situation is little explored in research in Law in the country, revealing the fragility of these works (Barros, Barros, 2018, p. 32, *own translation*).

To overcome this gap portrayed by the researchers above, we need to take a few steps in the direction of interdisciplinarity (both theoretical and mainly methodological) and the non-isolation of the Law in relation to other disciplines in the social sciences (applied or not). I then proceed to advocate the viability and the relevance of Anthropology in working together and within the field of legal studies. Historically bonded to research with Indigenous populations, anthropology in Brazil, as an academic body represented by the Brazilian Association of Anthropology (ABA), founded in 1955, has been for decades acting emphatically in the defense of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, with a deep involvement in the latter constituent process and in several land demarcation campaigns. To do this, anthropologists had to get to know closely the functioning of the country’s legal mechanisms over the Indigenous issue, which ended up producing numerous specialists in this area<sup>13</sup>.

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12 I wrote about the contemporary challenges of teaching Law and the role of legal anthropology in a previous article, see Lisboa, 2014.

13 The role of anthropologists is crucial and institutionally attributed in the judicial processes over Indigenous Lands. An agreement continuously signed between the ABA and the Federal Attorney Office (PGR) since 1990 provides for the appointment of anthropologists to work in the preparation of expert anthropological reports, which allow technical support for the work of the PGR on issues involving the rights and interests of Indigenous populations, maroons (remnants of quilombo communities), ethnic groups, minorities and others. These institutional attributions of anthropological reports are frequently subject of collections of articles and publications such as Silva et al., 1994; Leite, 2005; and Pacheco de Oliveira et al., 2015.

## The Legal Anthropology Approach

The lack of mutual interest between Law and Anthropology can be very damaging to Indigenous Peoples. On the one hand, there is a complete lack of preparing among the legal operators to deal with the specificities of the Indigenous Peoples, since the Law courses pay little attention to or despise the topic. On the other hand, however, there is very little interest from the academy in promote research or specific material to support those professionals, although many of them work in local, poorly equipped courts, far from urban centers and academic discussions. This seems to deepen the lack of understanding when it comes to applying general legal principles in cases involving Indigenous Peoples.

The Judiciary, nonetheless, can be seen as another ‘political field’ (Bourdieu, 1991), and at the same time as an ‘interethnic arena’ (Ramos, 2012), where interethnic relations take place, now through a legal discourse that will hardly open loopholes for the Indigenous justice systems. An inside, ethnographic view of the Judiciary will allow to glimpse, with the due proximity and from a privileged locus, this unequal and imperative relationship, as well as the possible forms of resistance interposed to it.

By suggesting that Legal Anthropology can offer a significant contribution to the study of this troubled relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the state, specifically the Judiciary, I would like to point up both the theoretical and conceptual apparatus accumulated by this discipline and the anthropological method and its ethnographic research practice – although the latter is quite discredited today. This appeal is also based on the statement of Luís Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira that there is a ‘critical vocation of anthropology’, descendant from its radical dialectic between “domains of knowledge and experience”, that is, “between science and philosophy, between empiricism and metaphysics, or between the data and the meaning” (Oliveira, 1993, p. 67, *own translation*).

This approach would make it possible to overcome what Oliveira himself defines as the “distance that legal education in Brazil maintains in relation to the empirical world or the ethnographic perspective, which is at the heart of Anthropology” (Oliveira, 2010, p. 452, *own translation*). Such a gap may seem paradoxical in a course aimed at the training of lawyers and jurists, who at first would be interested in elucidating the facts as a guiding substance in the judicial processes in which they will work.

Working for decades to bring the courses of Law and Anthropology (at least in graduate school) closer together, Oliveira updates and brings the “interpretive turn” into the Brazilian legal context, comparing it to other Countries legal systems, and actualizing the Geertz’s classic book, “Local Knowledge” (1983). Drawing attention to the contextual dimension of specific cases and to the equity of decisions (and opposing it to the application of norms as absolute values), Oliveira (1992) makes a constructive critique of Geertz’s ethnographic example of the Balinese case of Regreg, proposing that Legal Anthropology should seek to identify what he calls the ‘structural tendencies to reification’, beyond the cultural translation goals proposed by Geertz.

For Oliveira, however, the gap mentioned above arises from the context of the practice and teaching of Law in Brazil, in which predominates the ‘contradictorial rhetoric’ [*retórica do contraditório*]<sup>14</sup>, more destined to persuasion than to elucidate facts, something that “suggests that the facts have very little value in the outcome of judgments” (Idem, p. 453). Hence, the observation that an approximation of legal knowledge with empirical research would be more than necessary to overcome the distance between Law and society itself.

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<sup>14</sup> The ‘contradictorial rhetoric’, or ‘contradictorial logic’, is something that is not to be confused with the adversary procedure, or adversarial system, a method of exposing evidences in court, through which the opposing sides can bring out pertinent information and present and cross-examine witnesses (definition of the Encyclopedia Britannica). In Brazil, the Constitution (art. 5, LV) ensure the right of the parties to manifest themselves at all stages of the process, judicial or administrative. Roberto Kant de Lima, however, defines the contradictorial logic as a specific Brazilian Judiciary way, originated in medieval scholasticism. It’s the way Brazilian legal (and juridical-academic) tradition faces the challenge of building truth, through an infinite opposition of theses, only solved by the intervention of a third part, detached from the dispute (the judge). It also produces the ‘manualization’ of knowledge, in which proliferate “manuals, treaties and dictionaries, which are perennial sources of controversial doctrinal opinions, to be instrumentalized according to the specific needs of the actors in the field at a given moment” (Kant de Lima, 2012, p. 36-7, *own translation*).



For Roberto Kant de Lima, empirical research – mainly anthropological research, built through the interlocution with other (co)producers of knowledge – can bring a great contribution:

Promoting empirical research in the field of judicial practices, for example, can spell out some carefully hidden paradoxes, such as those usual in the criminal justice system, when the practice of the actors in the system obeys a distinct theory from that the books explicitly propose and taught in the legal courses (Kant de Lima, 2012, p. 37, *own translation*).

Conducting empirical research in the judicial environment, however, is not a matter of trying to discover ‘the truth of the facts’ through unquestionable data. Instead, it is a matter of listening and making the so-called ‘native theories’ – observed during the researcher’s interaction with other subjects in the fieldwork – dialogue with the legal theories already recognized by the judicial tradition. As empirical proximity and theoretical profundity are mixed in anthropological practice, it becomes difficult and unproductive to try to separate these two domains. As Mariza Peirano has demonstrated, this dichotomy between theory and empirical work is already overcome since, although many decades have passed, the better monographs of classical anthropologists continue to be read. Their work continues to provoke our interest mainly because they bring theoretical and ethnographic formulations that derive from their observations on the field, which in turn dialogue with theories formulated by older authors from their own observations. In Peirano’s words, there is no doubt about this double character of ethnography:

Ethnography is not a method; all ethnography is also theory. I always warn students to be suspicious of the claim that a work has used (or will use) the “ethnographic method”, because this claim is only valid for the uninitiated. If it’s good ethnography, it will also be a theoretical contribution (Peirano, 2014, p. 383, *own translation*).

Simultaneously, Anthropology differs from the model of questionnaires and inquiries practiced by judges and other legal professionals, or what Roberto Kant de Lima (1989) pointed out as the ‘inquisitorial tradition’ of our penal system, which resonates even in legal science and theoretical debates. Such differences are due not only to the way of formulating and directing the questions, but also in the answers that the two areas of applied knowledge seek. For as Eduardo Viveiros de Castro says about the question “who is an Indian in Brazil?”, this is not an anthropological question, but a legal one: “this is where the anthropologist is distinguished from the jurist: in the type of question they have ‘the right’ to do and, therefore, to answer” (Viveiros de Castro, 2006, p. 44, *own translation*). In other terms, as Ana Lúcia Pastore Schritzmeyer points out, there is a dialogical disposition of Anthropology that, instead of being guided by the signs of failure or success to reach a decision, resides

in the fact that anthropologists should not settle for seeing informants as mere affirmative echoes for their inquiries – a common and generally successful practice among inquisitors and defendants – but create situations in which dissonant and contradictory voices remain poorly ‘fitted’ into models and theories (Schritzmeyer, 2012, p. 228, *own translation*).

What stands out here as the great differential between anthropological practice and judicial inquiry is, in certain way, included in what Clifford Geertz (2000 [1973]) proposed as the main anthropological task: instead of intending to formulate the laws of functioning of a system, trying to understand the “webs of meaning” woven by the people who are involved in it, seeking to interpret them within the context with which they relate. This does not intend to carry out an anthropology disconnected from any function or social responsibility, nor an anthropology that falls into the absolute relativism of immeasurable or solipsist cultural facts.

With regard to the relationship between the state and ‘its others’ – to use a notion of historical alterities (Segato, 2007) – Brazilian anthropological research (which must recognize that is itself also part of the state, usually bonded to some public university or government agency) must proceed through an ethics that can give the field of interethnic relations a horizontality between all the subjects involved, including the researcher.

As an outline of a research plan, I highlight the following initial steps in order to delimit this field: **a)** addressing the historical role of the Brazilian Judiciary in the process of forced integration of Indigenous Peoples into national society, including the acts motivated by the principle of acculturation. Those acts presupposed the inherent inferiority of Indigenous People and their progressive disappearance. As well as ascertaining the continuity of such ethnocentric practices in the context of the 1988 Federal Constitution; **b)** to analyze the presence of Indigenous People in legal proceedings, especially in the criminal area (including those who are serving the sentence), and how officers and civil servants treat them, seeking to identify the recognition or the unrecognition of their ethnic identity; **c)** to observe how legal discourses about Indigenous Peoples are constructed by the legal operators, how these discourses relate to the current Indigenous legislation and how they support decisions and procedural acts related to Indigenous People, and finally; **d)** seek the manifestations of Indigenous justice and self-government that reach the Judiciary and have their validity refused or recognized by it, as well as confront such examples of Indigenous law with the equivalent state law.

## Conclusion

True anthropology occurs when one is willing to “open oneself to the viewpoints of the interlocutor, instead of despotically imposing his cultural certainties” (Rouanet, 1990, p. 119). This is not just about a data collection procedure, so that it occurs “in a respectful way”, but it concerns the equivalent treatment that the speeches, texts and analyzes, “native” or not, receive in the very process of understanding the world, or in a legal dispute resolution. This undertaking does not seem comfortable at all: taking equally seriously the point of view of a magistrate and that of an Indigenous defendant can, it seems, cause serious upheavals in the valuation hierarchy of power and positions typical of our society and of our Judiciary.

Finally, this preliminary bibliographic survey points to a delimited research problem, little explored and that promises relevant knowledge about the Brazilian Judiciary and contemporary Indigenous Peoples. This ‘double subject’, so to speak, instead of making a research diffuse or badly tied, makes its two poles delimit each other, searching for the intersectional points and mutual perceptions, even if permeated by ‘misunderstanding’ (Viveiros de Castro, 2015) or the ‘lack of interethnic understanding’ (Ramos, 2014). Above all, it makes research in Legal Anthropology not limited to intellectual debates around themes that – although urgent and noble – prove to be abstract and distant from the daily lives of both Indigenous Peoples (and other groups that traditionally awaken the interest of anthropologists) and legal professionals.

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# Courses on Indigenous rights: an anthropological contribution to the training of magistrates in Brazil

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## **Abstract**

In this article I discuss how Brazilian magistrates have begun to approach the realities of Indigenous peoples through experiences in the elaboration and implementation of training courses for judges on the theme of Indigenous rights. These courses are an important step toward a necessary curricular adjustment, with a corresponding impact on how magistrates understand the theme and in collective efforts to develop a plural and multicultural justice. In this context, anthropology assists magistrates in expanding their knowledge of Indigenous societies in Brazil, particularly in what pertains to different peoples' conceptions of justice, thereby making intelligible the complex realities that typically unfold in inter-ethnic situations.

**Key words:** Indigenous rights; inter-ethnic justice; cultural pluralism; magistrates; Brazil.



# Cursos de Direitos indígenas: uma contribuição da antropologia na formação de magistrados no Brasil

## **Resumo**

Discuto aqui um processo de aproximação de magistrados brasileiros à realidade dos povos indígenas, a partir das experiências de elaboração e implementação de cursos de formação para juízes sobre a temática dos direitos indígenas. Tais cursos representam um passo importante em direção a uma adequação curricular necessária, com consequente impacto na compreensão dos magistrados a respeito desse tema e no desenvolvimento de uma justiça plural e multicultural. Nesse contexto, a antropologia contribui para que os magistrados se aprofundem no conhecimento das sociedades indígenas no Brasil e, especialmente, nas concepções de justiça de diversos povos, de modo a tornar mais inteligíveis realidades complexas que frequentemente ocorrem em situações interétnicas.

**Palavras-chave:** Direitos indígenas; justiça interétnica; pluralism cultural; magistrados; Brasil.

# Courses on Indigenous rights: an anthropological contribution to the training of magistrates in Brazil

*Gustavo Hamilton Menezes*

## **Introduction**

My aim is to analyse how members of the Brazilian justice system, in particular magistrates, are approaching the realities of Indigenous peoples through my experience in elaborating and implementing training courses for judges on the theme of Indigenous rights.

Indigenous Lands make up a considerable part of the national territory, emerging as common sites for legal disputes, particularly in what concerns territorial rights. However, it was only in 2016 that the Escola de Magistratura Federal da Primeira Região (ESMAF, Federal Judiciary School of the First Circuit), a teaching institution that is a part of the organizational structure of the Tribunal Regional Federal da Primeira Região (TRF1, Federal Regional Court of the First Circuit), began to offer courses on Indigenous themes for magistrates. The Escola Nacional de Formação e Aperfeiçoamento de Magistrados (ENFAM, National School of Magistrate Training and Professional Improvement) offered its first course on the theme in 2017.

By 2021, five courses had been offered to judges via partnerships with magistrate training and professional improvement schools. These courses are not, as of yet, a regular part of curricula, but are offered as optional or elective courses. Nonetheless, as we will see, they amount to an important step in curricular change, with an attending impact on how magistrates perceive the matter of Indigenous rights and the development of a plural and multicultural justice system.

The first course was offered to candidates who passed the 16<sup>th</sup> magistrate contest, which inducted 93 judges. The new judges were divided into two groups, the first of which took the course in 2016. A second course had always been intended, but it was decided that it would only be offered if the first course was well evaluated. Since it was highly praised, the second group took the course at the start of the following year.

After the first evaluation, it was decided that magistrate courses should also include classes alongside Indigenous peoples, in their communities, to promote dialogue and shared experiences between all parties. In December 2016, a first group of judges travelled to the Waimiri-Atroari Indigenous Land in the states of Amazonas and Roraima. The first course to feature classes in Indigenous Lands was held by the ENFAM in partnership with the Escola Judicial do Amazonas (Amazonas Judicial School). The group, made up of 11 judges, two appellate judges, and nine instructors, remained in the Indigenous Land for one day.

In early 2017, the course was offered in the state of Amapá, with classes held in the Waiãpi Indigenous Land, where ten instructors and 24 magistrates stayed for three days. This course was held through a partnership between ESMAF (Magistrate School, linked to the Federal Regional Courts for the First Circuit) and the Amapá Judicial School.

In November 2017, ENFAM offered a course in Boa Vista, in partnership with the Judicial School of Roraima State. During this course, activities with Indigenous people were held in the Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous Land, with 11 instructors and 24 judges staying for three days in the area.

In 2019, the course was held through a partnership between the Acre Judicial School and ENFAM. The course held classes in the city of Cruzeiro do Sul and in the Ashaninka Indigenous Land, where ten instructors and 24 magistrates stayed for three days.

In total, some 180 judges participated as students in at least one of the five courses offered by the magistrate schools. The number of students is still small, around 1% of the 18,000 magistrates in Brazil. It is nonetheless noteworthy that these initiatives were extremely well-received, so that there is a possibility that these courses might shift from optional to regular aspects of the magistracy curriculum. This fact will, no doubt, positively affect the views of a larger number of magistrates regarding Indigenous rights, shining the spotlight on a theme that has so far had low visibility and interest in the judicial field.

### **Creating the course: the curriculum as a disputed field**

The creation of the course emerged from the initiative of people linked to judicial institutions, foremost among them Andrea Brasil Martins, federal justice employee, and the federal judges Célia Bernardes and Davi Wilson. Brasil reflected on the process of creating the course in her MPhil dissertation (Martins, 2017):

As advisor to a federal appellate judge, analysing complex cases of the most diverse sorts, I came to realize how much agents of the Justice System have to gain from a multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary training that enables them to understand legal phenomena through a wider perspective. This is the case with the Indigenous issue, considering the distinct character of their rights. Mere knowledge of law is insufficient as a base for legal decisions with serious and direct impact on the ways of life of traditional people.

For example, we can refer to requests for the disappropriation of lands that have traditionally been occupied by Indigenous peoples; demarcation of territories; review of demarcated “reserves” carried out before the Federal Constitution of 1988; regularization of landing strips with Indigenous Lands; discussions involving the extraction of energy sources and minerals; among other, including, more recently, the issue of the temporal marker.

Institutional change in the judiciary demands a sensitive eye from the agents of justice, and the recognition of the singularity of originary peoples, with a focus on the reality of human societies and with the aid of cognate disciplines such as Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, “since, whatever the legal conflict, these aspects will always be present and it is important for legal professionals to know how to recognize them” (Dallari 1996: 28).

I thus came to reflect on our legal training – imposed upon us through a universalist curriculum, presented through far-reaching, generic and abstract concepts, directed toward learning norms, codes, and laws without the requisite cross-referencing between the judicial order and social problems (Santos 2007). This has direct repercussions on legal decisions, which curb the judge’s eyes away from the legal texts. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007: 72) calls this model of learning “judicial deformation”, since it is based on a normative techno-bureaucratic culture that “knows law well and how it relates to case-files, but does not know how the case-files relate to reality” (:14)

The team understood the inevitable resistances to curricular change, particularly in what affects the “privatism” paradigm. But it was precisely this challenge that the team set out to meet by proposing a curricular approach that would sensitize judges to the distinct character of the rights of Indigenous peoples, drawing attention to the diversity of these legal subjects and to the need to establish channels for communication between formal law, with its tradition of privatism, and Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of life, in the hope of building shared spaces for dialogue. They realized that the curriculum was a disputed field of power that often-disregarded non-hegemonic identities:

If for Foucault (1997, in Cortiano Junior 2002: 216) discourse “is a space not only of words, but of struggle, and its production – through struggle – acts to impose a determinate truth or will to knowledge”. Since the curriculum is a disputed field, “where the subtlety of discourse and the microphysics of power lead to symbolic violence and the denial of non-hegemonic identities” (Silva 2007: 23), we advocate a curriculum for legal schools the discourse of which also reflects the cultural and epistemological traditions of subordinated groups, rather than only those of dominant groups” (Silva, 2005) (Martins, 2017: 39).

It should be noted that the proposed changes to the curriculum did not emerge randomly. They are mostly anchored in the Federal Constitution of 1988, which, in line with the protection of cultural diversity, of multiculturalism, and inter-culturality, seeks to overcome the historically attested policies and legal practices of integration in Brazil and in most Latin American countries. Thus the judicial recognition of new subjects and new rights, positively inscribed in a particular socio-political context, enabled some authors to conceive of the emergence of “a paradigm of cultural diversity”, or even of an era of diversity (Melo, Burckhart, 2020: 2).

This shift in the constitutional paradigm represented a great leap forward for Indigenous movements. The rights that they had long claimed were embraced by the justice system, and could thus be ensured by legal decisions<sup>1</sup>. In this landscape, the team that proposed and elaborated the courses on Indigenous rights for magistrates considered that it would be fundamental for judges to have knowledge of the historical achievements of Indigenous peoples and to assume the mantle of their own “politicity”, which, according to Dallari (1996), is not tantamount to a partisan politics. According to this author, judges exercise political activity in two senses: as members of the apparatus of power of the State, which is a political society; and by applying legal norms that are necessarily political (Dallari 1996 in Martins, 2017: 30-31). Thus:

Through the Constitution, the people confer on the judge the formal legitimacy of his or her decisions, which can often have extremely severe effects on the freedoms, family, wealth, place in society, and a range of fundamental interests of one person or many people. This legitimacy must be permanently ratified by the people, which can only take place when, through permanent conviction, judges fulfil their constitutional role, efficiently protecting rights and making just decisions. This legitimacy is exceptionally important because of the political and social effects that judicial decisions can have (Martins, 2017: 31).

In this context, federal judge Bernardes recognized that judges’ lack of knowledge on Indigenous rights underscores a process of de-Indigenization linked to the interests of the dominant elites, which marked the colonial period and part of the republican period.

It seems to me that magistrates’ ignorance of Indigenous affairs fulfils the inexplicit, but latent, function of serving a centuries-old project of usurping the rights of Indigenous peoples, of maintaining reality as it is and always has been, wherein Indigenous peoples do not enjoy the rights beautifully inscribed in our normative diplomas, rights which are promised but never delivered. (ibid: 82)

Thus, ever since the first course took place, there has been a push for an ESMAF curriculum that is guided by the perspective of critical interculturality, conceived as a political and social project aimed at changing the pedagogical processes for training federal judges by drawing their attention to these right-bearing subjects.

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<sup>1</sup> Examples include the legal decisions that require Funai to instate working groups to study the identification and delimitation of Indigenous Lands, and to ensure the conclusion of their work. Failure to comply results in fines.

## Some resistance: the influence of stereotypes

Being innovative and differential courses, they are not a regular part of the training of judges, and are still being consolidated in schools. Their innovation derives from the fact that a part of them takes place in Indigenous Lands, enabling the coexistence between judges and members of Indigenous communities, even if only for a short time. Furthermore, the teaching staff always includes Indigenous instructors.

Despite these characteristics, which most tend to view in a positive light, not all students unanimously approve of them. Indeed, some students resist or disapprove of certain activities and some of the teaching content. There was some resistance and even tension during the first version of the course which contained visits to Indigenous communities, which included classes in Manaus and an exchange with the Waimiri-Atroari in their Indigenous Lands. The course was held by the school of the Justice Court of Amazonas (ESMAN), in partnership with ENFAM, and was the first to take judges to Indigenous communities. Some judges feared for their safety. Even though the Waimiri-Atroari agreed to host the magistrates, making it clear that they would be happy to welcome them and would host a special reception, there were talks between judges and representatives of the military police of the state of Amazonas concerning whether they should be accompanied by an armed police escort, and even by undercover officers. To argue for the need for police protection, representatives of the military police referred to an episode in 1968 when Indigenous peoples attacked the expedition of Father Calleri, resulting in numerous deaths. This reference emerged many times during the meeting, as part of the argument that it is “better to prevent incidents than to remedy them”.

According to Baines (1993: 5), this episode has frequently been used by sectors of Brazilian society to paint the Waimiri-Atroari in negative light, with stereotypes such as “treacherous”, “wild”, “bad”, “perverse”, “savages”, etc. Since the team that was organizing the course did not agree to the armed escort, as the Waimiri-Atroari had prepared a welcoming reception, some judges decided not to take part in the trip to the Indigenous Land. Nonetheless, most of the enrolled students took part in the visit, which was peaceful and friendly.

In the Indigenous Land, Waimiri-Atroari leaders told the judges their own understandings of the long history of violent invasions of their territory, which were at first related to interests in forest products. They narrated how, at the end of the 1960s, the Federal Government began to intensively occupy their lands through large regional projects. Between 1972-1977 this territory was crossed by the BR-174 highway. The Waimiri-Atroari resisted its construction, and their resistance was met with extreme violence by the Brazilian Army, resulting in an estimated 2,650 deaths (CNV 2014: 248) and almost leading to the extinction of the Kinja (the Waimiri-Atroari auto-denomination). In 1982, the Waimiri-Atroari population had reached the nadir of 332 people (Baines, 1988: 109). When the judges visited the Waimiri-Atroari in 2016, they were celebrating their demographic recovery and the birth of a baby which pushed their population to the 2000-people mark. In his speech, one Waimiri-Atroari chief claimed that this was the first time a delegation of the State went to their lands in peace.

After the visit, and the conversation with the Waimiri-Atroari in their villages, many judges approved of the activity, claiming that it had been a highly educational activity, and even, in a way, transforming:

The visit was very important for my professional growth, not only for all of the information that was transmitted, but above all for enabling a reflection on Indigenous issues and for revealing how we need a more sensitive eye to realities that are very different from that with in which we are inserted. Experiences such as this provide a valuable coexistence in the professional career of magistrates, since we are able to get to know a reality through our senses, propitiating an understanding that goes well beyond formal debates, which are, often times, indifferent to social issues that involve the Indigenous interests. In other words, studying this theme requires that we relieve ourselves of our prejudices in order to have a better understanding of that which is different from us through a methodology that is not girdled to the formalism of ideas written down on paper (judge who attended the course) (Brasil, 2017: 61).

With positive evaluations of the classes and activities in Indigenous Lands from judges, succeeding courses adopted the same model and were partially held in Indigenous Lands, in close cohort with its inhabitants.

### **Anthropologists in the team**

Since the first course, Bernardes and Wilson were in favour of the inclusion of anthropologists in the team<sup>2</sup>. I was invited to take part in the courses because of my experience with legal issues, having for many years worked in preparing anthropological reports for situations in which Indigenous people were defendants in legal proceedings. I also participated in teaching federal attorneys and public defenders on Indigenous issues.

Since before joining the team and taking part in elaborating and putting into practice the courses, I was already interested in how law professionals, and particularly judges, conceive of Indigenous individuals and communities. Likewise, I had made efforts to understand the principle of free motivated conviction (Mendes, 2012), as well as how magistrates represented the use of this principle. In the production of anthropological reports, I sought to understand the mechanisms for conflict resolution of each of the peoples being studied, according to each form of social organization. In this context, I insisted with law professionals that, even though we are socialized so as to naturalize “our” idea of justice as the only one available, both immutable and natural, anthropology teaches us that the idea of justice is a social construct, varying cross-culturally. As Mendes (2012) has stressed:

It is indispensable that both the idea of justice and that of law are relativized, taken to be local knowledge, socially constructed and varying in time and space, so that we can reflect on them.

The essentially conventional and precarious character of the idea of justice makes the recognition that a solution is a just solution for the group a constitutive element of the very idea of justice. In other words, a just solution for a conflict is one that is recognized as such by the social group that adopts it (2012: 45).

It is fundamental that law professionals develop this sort of perception, particularly in cases which involve Indigenous citizens. Following the unfolding of legal proceedings where Indigenous persons are defendants, I was taken by how many magistrates refused expert anthropological opinions. While, on the one hand, there are magistrates that made efforts to take into account anthropological reports and studies, on the other there were many who considered them unnecessary and judged according to their own convictions and (lack of) knowledge. In these situations, anthropology, its rigour and precepts, are substituted by the pseudo-anthropology of legal and administrative knowledge, or by a “spontaneous anthropology” (Souza Lima & Barroso-Hoffmann, 2002), re-elaborated and explained according to criteria formulated by judges, lawyers and administrators.

Such situations are not exclusive to the Brazilian justice system. The anthropologist Julie Cruikshank (1992) refers to the case known “*Delgamuukw v British Columbia*” in Canada where three anthropologists were called in as expert witnesses. One of the purposes of their testimonies was to provide the court with basic information on how oral traditions reveal Indigenous dominion over lands on the northwest of British Columbia. Chief Justice Allan McEachern categorically rejected anthropological evidence and, according to Cruikshank, “invented anthropology itself”, proposing a structure of assertive evidence for the case:

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<sup>2</sup> I have thus far taken part in five courses on Indigenous rights. Other anthropologists have also joined the team, taking part in a few courses. I take the opportunity to stress the valuable contributions of Gerssem Luciano, José Pimenta, and Leda Martins.

Justice McEachern ultimately concludes that the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'em had social organization of some kind but finds no proof that they had "institutions and governed themselves" or that they had occupied territories for a period of time long enough to establish Aboriginal rights (McEachern: 49, 226). In order to buttress the argument which he claims to offer in support of social organization, he turns not to social sciences but to a 1919 legal decision made by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in England with respect to a case heard in the courts in Rhodesia. That decision concluded that "some tribes are so low in the scale of social organization that their usages and conceptions of rights and duties are not to be reconciled with the institutions or the legal ideas of civilized Society" (McEachern: 226). "I have no doubt", Judge McEachern states, referring to the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'em, that "life in the territory was extremely difficult, and many of the badges of civilization, as we of European culture understand that term, were indeed absent..." (McEachern: 31). Citing no evidence, he speculates that "warfare between neighbouring or distant tribes was constant, and the people were hardly amenable to obedience to anything but the most rudimentary form of custom" (McEachern: 73). Given the judge's dismissal of anthropological evidence, it is alarming to see him turn to decisions justifying apartheid or to his imagination for examples from which to frame his judgment. (Cruikshank, 1992: 30)

In the Brazilian courts it is likewise not uncommon for pseudo-anthropology of an integrationist persuasion to be applied by judges, producing negative effects on the Indigenous population. A part of available jurisprudence has dispensed anthropological expertise and the application of differential rights to Indigenous citizens when the judge decides that the person being tried is "integrated" or "acculturated"<sup>3</sup>. According to this view, understanding the national idiom, having attended school for some time, coexistence with national society, and voter registration are taken to be indexes of the extinction of cultural specificity. This posture is criticized by anthropologists and by law professionals, such as the federal prosecutor Villares:

"To consider, by means of easily apprehended external aspects, that the Indian is entirely capable of understanding the illicit character of certain facts, or reaching decisions based on this understanding, is part of the arrogance of law, and of the judge, who believes him or herself to have the requisite knowledge to judge without the aid of specialists. To take formal aspects such as the degree of schooling, an understanding of the official language, voter registration, etc., is to privilege formal truth over the real world. The Indian may reveal him or herself to be extremely capable in all acts, and still, internally, lack a perfect understanding of the illicit character of his or her conduct, or, even if the illicit character is understood, may be incapable of acting differently because of cultural demands" (Villares, 2007: 447).

An examination of legal processes has revealed that interpretations that Indigenous people are *integrated* or *acculturated* are extremely harmful for defendants, since it rejects anthropological studies and prevents the argumentative construction of a defence based on sociocultural factors. Even formally accepting that these defendants are Indigenous persons, many judges have made this identification irrelevant for processual purposes, since by considering these persons to the *integrated* they ignore protective legislation. Consequently, a whole range of Indigenous defendants have been excluded from the protection of specific legislation, coming to be tried in a generic manner. Furthermore, the superficiality of the elements used to attribute the *integrated* label to Indigenous defendants is noteworthy, a fact that has a direct impact on the unravelling of the process and the fate of the defendants. Let us turn to some concrete examples<sup>4</sup>:

3 For a more detailed discussion of these categories, see (Menezes & Miller, 2015) and (Menezes, 2016).

4 These extracts were taken from <http://jusbrasil.com.br>, consulted on the 15/05/2015, except for the final extract - referring to the Waiāpi case - which was received in 2021 from a magistrate who was collaborating with this research.

The fact that the patient signed power of attorney excludes any possibility that the aborigine is not acculturated, since, if this were the case, he would not even be able to sign over power of attorney (Vote of a judge denying the right to Habeas Corpus, Campo Grande-MS, 2005).

The attenuating circumstance of Article 56, Law n. 6.001/73 is inapplicable, consistent with the fact that while the accused is Indigenous, he is acculturated and integrated with urban culture, including speaking the Portuguese language, possessing characteristics that distance him from his original race (Vote of a judge denying appeal, Rio Branco-AC, 2009).

It is public knowledge that the Indians of the Mangueirinha Reservation are all acculturated, integrated into the community, consuming in the city's commerce, planting their gardens in the manner of the whites and selling their produce according to local custom. Thus, the accused being adapted to civilization and completely aware of his acts, he is fully imputable (Vote of judges in an Appeal in the Strict Sense, Mangueirinha-PR, 2013).

In what pertains to the plea that seeks the incidence of attenuating circumstances based on the fact that the appellant is Indigenous, I dispose that it does not proceed. I reach this decision because Article 56 of Law 6.001/73, on which the current plea is based, is here to be applied for an aboriginal person undergoing an acculturation phase, and that, were this not the case, the Article does not allow for the judge, on sentencing, to observe the aborigine's degree of integration. Hence, the sentencing magistrate did well to reject attenuation of the sentence, since he will have noted that the appellant was well-integrated to urban culture, including speaking Portuguese perfectly, attending Church, stressing that the attenuating circumstances under consideration are inapplicable (Vote of a judge denying appeal, Rio Branco-AC, 2009).

In regards to the absence of an anthropological report, whether or not this is needed is assessed during the process, for when the Indigenous person is already "integrated" [with knowledge of the symbolic and material mechanisms of non-Indigenous society] there is no need to apply these rules of Law 6.001/73 [the "Indian" Statute], as is the understanding of the Court of Justice of the State of Amapá: "1) Breach of procedure will not be declared if it does not entail prejudice to the interested party that claims it. Interpretation of Article 563 of the CPP. 2) In this concrete case, there is no breach of procedure in not applying the Indian Statute, given the defendants condition as an Indian perfectly integrated to society, capable of responding for his actions according to common law, therefore not demonstrating any prejudice to the defence, while in court, duly assisted by an attorney, having the defendant pleaded guilty (...)" (Appeal. Process N° --- Comptroller Judge ---, Single Chamber, sentencing on the 19<sup>th</sup> of November 2014). In the concrete case, there are indications that the defendant is "integrated" into non-Indigenous society, since he was staying at a hotel in the city of Pedra Branca and had a cell phone with a chip. These facts allow, for now, that the penal suit proceed, with no prejudice of the need for an anthropological report if and when doubts emerge concerning the "integration" of the defendant to non-Indigenous society. In what concerns the defendant not being judged in an "ethnic forum" (Art 57 of Law 6.001/73), the importance of this fact in the present case depends on the defendant's degree of "integration", which, for the time being, removes the need for a juridical-anthropological analysis of the punishment of the agent by his people. Dispatch by the judge, Pedra Branca do Amapari-AP, 2020).

We thus see practices aimed at producing ethnical invisibility within state structures, as has been noted by other authors (Miller, 2003; Silva 2009). These authors argue that it is easier for state bureaucracy to administer policies of a universalizing nature. Differential rights are hence only maintained in theory, while being repressed in practice. What is surprising is the ease with which law professionals pass over knowledge of aspects of Indigenous culture, identity, and worldview, all of which can be extremely relevant



to understanding conduct, or settling doubts concerning relevant matters. Note that widespread misinformation concerning Indigenous history, alongside the dissemination of negative stereotypes of Indigenous peoples, helps to create an atmosphere of disapproval among large swathes of Brazilian society in what relates to any sort of differential policies that benefit Indigenous peoples. Through an analysis of concrete cases, I consider that this atmosphere of disapproval also affects may law professionals, including magistrates.

In this sense, the Indigenous rights courses mentioned here are initiatives that can contribute toward re-dimensioning this reality, since the analysis of these categories have been carried out systematically, becoming a part of the curricula of these courses. Statements by judges who have taken part in some of these courses underscore this view:

The class on Indigenous rights was extremely important, considering that most of us come from places where we do not regularly have contact with these communities. Learning how these communities culturally function, understanding the need for dialogue between the Judiciary, FUNAI, and the representatives of these communities is essential for us to act in the most adequate way possible and to interfere as little as possible in the culture of these communities. The class was extremely important and we are already making plans to visit one of these Indigenous communities to come to know their reality better (Judge from the Southeast Region of Brazil) (Martins, 2017: 80).

Today's class was extremely important, really very relevant. We will be working in the hinterlands of the country, in states with a large number of Indigenous communities, with delicate themes which we are not prepared to deal with. We are not anthropologists, we are not sociologists, so we today have different judicial approaches, which matter when we work as federal judges. I think that when we reach the courts of judicial sessions we will at least have a view, a panorama of the reality of Indigenous peoples, which is indispensable for Federal Justice, which specifically deals with these Brazilian citizens and is constitutionally bound to do so. Truly, the class was of the utmost importance, I will carry it with me, for life, and will even research books on the theme, to decide in the best way possible when I am at the bench as a Federal Judge (Judge from the Northeast Region of Brazil) (Ibid: 81).

Today's class is very important for the training of a Federal Judge, considering that the actions of a Federal Judge require a knowledge that goes beyond a knowledge of law. Ethnic minorities in Brazil, such as, for example, Indigenous peoples – the study of Indigenous culture is not taught in colleges nor in schools in Brazil, seeing as knowledge of Indigenous cultures is not part of the school curricula nor is it demanded in the curricula of law degrees. The problem is that we interfere in the life of communities because we are juridically bound to do so in all of the national territory, and these people, being in the national territory, they end up somehow being submitted to our purview in some form. Knowing the culture, knowing the diversity of Indigenous communities, is essential because Indians do not have a single culture, there are many different types of Indigenous communities, and understanding what they think, how they live, is fundamental for reaching decisions that respect the individuality and difference of these peoples (Judge from the Southeast region of Brazil) (Ibid: 81).

## **Concluding remarks**

Anthropology and law have different views of life in society. Anthropology produces knowledge based on empirical research and is concerned with learning (and learning with) the point of view of the actor or the subjects of research. Law is a normative discipline that analyses “facts” taken to court, and is concerned with the duty of being the reference for predefined rights. However, anthropology and law are similar in being interpretative sciences; the former interprets social relations, the latter norms that regulate many of these relations, generally formally established by the State.

According to Castilho (2012: 21), admitting anthropological knowledge in the creation, practice and application of law can revolutionize Brazilian society's representation of the latter, since it allows us to move from the model of *rule by Law* (what is not in the law is not proper, is worthless, cannot be imposed) to one of *rule of Law* (law is constituted within society).

Latour (2019) proposes that the ethnographer should not be ashamed of her methodical ignorance, but rather proceed in describing law "as it is done". I take on a similar perspective here, that the anthropologists' contribution to the study of law stems from how she can focalize it, frame it not as a set of normative principles that prescribes certain conduct and establishes penalties for infractions, but as an integral part of social processes. This requires seeking out the values and ideological projects that are expressed in and consolidated through laws; determining which effective social interests specific laws answer to, and what are their true implications for the social groups involved; it also requires indicating how, and to what degree, this abstract set of prescriptions is actualized in social practice, passing through a selective sieve of mechanisms and instances of decision-making and implementation.

In this way, one of the outstanding factors of the courses I have dealt with in this article is the possibility of presenting the results of studies of laws and rights to the magistrates themselves, confronting them with the fragility of certain decisions involving Indigenous peoples and showing them other, more comprehensive contexts and perspectives. In the context of these courses, anthropological analysis has the potential to review certain conceptions and impact social processes. It thus gives continuity to a characteristic of Brazilian anthropology, linked to the ethical commitment for nation building (Oliveira, 1993: 13), that has, for some time, been reflected in the participation of anthropologists in the formulation of state policies aiming for a more just and solidary nation.

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# “We’re Totally Worthless” – An Anthropological Approach to Incarcerated Indigenous Persons in the City of São Gabriel da Cachoeira, Amazonas

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## **Abstract**

Prison conditions in Brazil have attracted the attention of social movements, the press, and researchers. The prison population grew 707% between 1990 and 2016, with no sign of slowing. This article does not seek to investigate the causes of this dramatic increase — a statistic that is nonetheless worth highlighting — but rather to describe the relation between the judiciary and a specific segment of society, indigenous peoples, evincing yet another point of tension in inter-ethnic relations. As such, this article analyzes the available Brazilian legislation and the practices of the criminal justice system as an official means of prosecution, conviction, and sentencing in the City of São Gabriel da Cachoeira, in the northeast of the state of Amazonas, Brazil, and the impacts of state-imposed punishment on indigenous peoples.

**Keywords:** Incarceration; Criminal justice; Indigenous peoples; Democratic state; Pluralism.

# “Nós não valem nada” – Uma abordagem antropológica dos indígenas em situação de prisão na cidade de São Gabriel da Cachoeira/Amazonas

## **Resumo**

A situação prisional no Brasil tem chamado a atenção de movimentos sociais, da imprensa e de pesquisadores. O crescimento da população carcerária chegou a 707% entre os anos de 1990 e 2016, sem demonstrar sinais de contenção. Este artigo não busca investigar as causas desse aumento vertiginoso - que é digno de realce enquanto dado quantitativo - mas descrever a relação do Estado-juiz com um segmento social determinado, qual seja, os povos indígenas, evidenciando mais um ponto de tensão nas relações interétnicas. Com isso, analiso a legislação brasileira disponível e as práticas do sistema de justiça criminal enquanto meio oficial de processar, julgar e executar penas na cidade de São Gabriel da Cachoeira, no noroeste do estado do Amazonas, Brasil e os impactos da punição estatal sobre os povos indígenas.

**Palavras-chave:** Encarceramento; Justiça criminal; Povos indígenas; Estado democrático; Pluralismo.

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*Felipe Pereira Jucá*

## **Introduction**

Recent legislative attempts to reduce incarceration in Brazil have not yielded desired outcomes. In 2006, Law 11.343/2006 — known as the “drug law” — entered into force, distinguishing the crime of drug trafficking from drug possession for personal use, thus absolving drug users from arrest. In 2011, Law 12.403/2011 established various preventative measures in attempt to surveil and control accused individuals without necessarily using preventative detention. Notwithstanding the significant changes that these laws brought about, the effect was an exponential rise in the number of incarcerated individuals. In this social context marked by a resurgence of punitive policies, the problem of incarceration — which is excessive, and in most cases, unnecessary — has affected indigenous persons, leading to the emergence of a new lexicon with significant symbolic weight: *accused, suspect, defendant, convicted*.

In 2018, in a historic decision, the Federal Supreme Court declared an “unconstitutional state of affairs” with regard to Brazil’s prison system. Minimum standards of hygiene, adequate food, medical care, physical health, and legal aid are not respected. It becomes impossible to observe human dignity in the carceral environment. Yet more, dominant legal practices are alien or unfamiliar to indigenous persons, who typically know little or nothing of the functioning of the criminal justice system practiced by non-indigenous people. This article seeks to describe acts of criminal justice applied to indigenous persons such to put into evidence practices of the state exercised through the judiciary in view of legal pluralism, spurring debate between the theoretical camps of criminal law and anthropology and sharing some of concerns of legal experts and anthropologists.

Rise in prison population between 1990 and 2016



Source: Ministry of Justice and Infopen (for data after 2005)

Police station holding cell in São Gabriel da Cachoeira



Photo: Felipe Jucá, 2018

To do so, methodologically, I make use of my position as a criminal defense lawyer for a number of indigenous persons, allowing access to cases before the judiciary, as well as documents that comprise legal proceedings and court decisions. Additional sources include information collected by police and statistics from the National Penitentiary Department (DEPEN). As a researcher, I also employ in-situ observational methods beyond journalistic approaches, including narratives and impressions of justice of incarcerated indigenous persons in view of the reciprocal relationship that I have forged with social agents participating in this study over the course of several years wearing two hats — as a lawyer (both public and private) and as a researcher — always seeking to remain attentive to their legal aid needs in both capacities.

## “The precinct creates more anger”

Since 2011, I have worked as a criminal defense lawyer on behalf of indigenous persons belonging to different peoples and ethnic groups in the state of Amazonas. This position has permitted me access to the prison system, court cases, legal proceedings, and the narratives of indigenous persons affected by these government authorities. In 2020, I was sought out by two leaders of indigenous communities in the Upper Rio Negro, where dissatisfaction with the justice system was notorious in view of the incarceration of members of their communities with whom they have close ties and who, in many cases, are family members. In 2020 I was also sought out by two indigenous women who had been convicted at trial but were not in custody. They needed to appeal the verdict, or else risk detention. In accordance with ethical considerations and for reasons related to my legal practice and research, the real names of the people involved have been omitted to protect the privacy to which they are entitled. Here, I will present a descriptive narrative of one of these events, illustrative of a pattern of maltreatment and practices of violations of the rights of indigenous persons observed in other cases over the years.

In March 2020, a resident of the Yanomami indigenous reserve — who I will refer to as Fábio — was incarcerated. The aforementioned community leader reached out to me in São Gabriel da Cachoeira, accompanied by an employee of the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), who I have known for some time and interviewed for my master’s research. When I learned of his detention, Fábio had already been in custody for over one month with an arrest warrant in his name, as displayed on the website of the Government of the State of Amazonas,<sup>1</sup> which published news of his arrest and the serious allegations against him.

According to the investigative proceedings, to which I had access, the Civil Police sent a letter to FUNAI requesting that the entity responsible for indigenous affairs serve the criminal summons in order to interrogate the indigenous man in question. FUNAI responded negatively on February 5, 2020 in a letter that included the following extract:

*“The Regional Coordination of the Rio Negro (CR – RNG) respectfully informs you that in accordance with report n. 113/2013/PFE-FUNAIJPGF, FUNAI is not required to serve summons or ensure the appearance of indigenous persons in court, per guidance note n. 2/2020/CGPDS/DPDS-FUNAI (SEI n. 1928725), Case: 08780.000037/2020-61. As such, the Regional Coordination of the Rio Negro is unable to summon the indigenous man [Fábio], who according to our information resides in the [REDACTED] community in the Yanomami indigenous reserve, to the precinct.”*

With the indigenous affairs bureau’s negative response, the Civil Police issued a request for pre-trial detention of the man under investigation without questioning him, which was granted by a local judge. After receiving information that Fábio was in the city, the warrant was carried out and he was detained.

I immediately asked the FUNAI employee to follow, with me and Tuxaua (the community leader) in the agency’s car, in order to deal with other matters. Upon our arrival at the police station, we requested permission to speak with Fábio and were granted access in a few minutes. Handcuffed, he was taken to a room near the holding cell so that we could speak, but not without the presence of a military police officer stationed at the cell’s only door, allowing him to hear part of our conversation. Amongst themselves, Fábio and Tuxaua spoke in the Yanomami language, only using Portuguese when including me in the conversation. I became aware of the situation and heard Fábio’s version of the story, agreeing to help him appeal the pre-trial detention order and leaving him more or less aware of how these accusation proceedings work. I considered that his detention was technically illegal since the deadline to conclude the investigation with a suspect in detention had expired and a formal charge had not yet been filed with the Public Prosecutor’s office, thus constituting an unlawful deprivation of liberty. Fábio said that a lawyer was already on his case. I contacted them, making

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.amazonas.am.gov.br/2020/02/policia-civil-prende-homem-por-abusar-sexualmente-da-propria-filha-em-sao-gabriel-da-cachoeira/>



myself available to assist with the defense and leaving legal measures to be handled by the lawyer assigned to the case. Approximately one week later, the judge scheduled a hearing with Fábio (accompanied by the lawyer who his brother had contacted before me). Fábio was released five days later and returned to his community.

The day after we saw Fábio at the precinct, I was able to speak privately with the community leader Tuxaua. When I asked him what he thought about detention, his impressions of his non-indigenous practice, he replied: “I’ve thought about doing this, detaining people, back in the community... but it’s not good...” Regarding the situation of indigenous persons arrested in criminal cases, he said, “no, the precinct isn’t good... it creates more conflict, more anger between one another.”

In August 2020, living in Manaus, I spoke with Fábio via an online messaging app. He has remained in his community and said that he plans to travel to Manaus soon. I asked him if he knew the status of his court case, to which he responded that the judge had “closed the case.” However, in addition to this allegation, there was another relating to threats and domestic violence against his ex-wife, which gave rise to another court case.

In our conversation, Fábio spoke about his experience in jail: “Being Yanomami, I experienced feeling small, belittled... my life was at risk, I was almost abused, I was very humiliated...” He also said that he was suing the state and a television network that exposed him on the news.

Fábio’s narrative corroborates that of many other indigenous persons whose stories I’ve heard over the years and who participated in my master’s research. These narratives point to practices ranging from aggression in police searches to torture in police precincts, on top of the tensions between inmates who share extremely close quarters.

While he is not currently in custody, Fábio is still being indicted, as though the state were pursuing a less grave accusation as an alternative to that on which he was acquitted. As Fábio recounted, he was absolved in the case in which he was accused of sexually abusing his own daughter, for which he was arrested. The decision stated that the very government entity that denounced the alleged crime, the Public Prosecutor’s Office of the State of Amazonas, requested to drop the case for lack of evidence, ultimately resolving the imbroglio, but not without causing trauma and harm for the defendant.

As previously mentioned, these stories of these cases involving indigenous persons who were arrested or tried in 2020 bear similarities to countless other situations of state violence, whether physical or symbolic, in which indigenous persons are subject to arbitrary and racist treatment until proven innocent. In 2014, a Tukano indigenous man was arrested by military police officers in São Gabriel da Cachoeira, accused of international drug trafficking, and brought into custody for pre-trial detention. A couple, friends of the detainee, called me as no one had heard the news yet. Upon arriving at the precinct, I was granted access to the detainee and noticed the various illegalities of his detention. With no real evidence, the police tried to legitimate the indigenous man’s detention by claiming that drugs found on a boat belonged to him. We took that opportunity to successfully release him from unlawful detention. However, with the continuation of the investigation, the case was transferred to federal court in the capital city, Manaus, where the pre-trial detention order was issued. The detention order was again served and the man was transferred to a jail in Manaus. After six months in custody, he was absolved in view of the unlawful detention initially identified. It’s worth highlighting his deposition, in which he said:

*On Wednesday, DSEI [the Special Indigenous Sanitary District unit] took a motorboat, saw some drugs, and handed them over to them [military police officers] and went directly for him. They came without a warrant, without anything, saying ‘let’s go, you’re under arrest.’ That boat that they found is white, while his is red. They took him right away, put him in front of the table to take a photo with the drugs, with nothing, already saying that those drugs were his. When he tried to speak with the federal police officer, the major put him in the cell and told him to shut up.*

On another occasion, I defended an indigenous client of the Warekena people who was arrested in his community under federal warrant. The following is a partial transcription of one of the interviews carried out during field work:

*I was arrested for being accused of... pedophilia, right!? Pedophilia meaning that, I committed I crime that I didn't know, that I wouldn't have thought I would be arrested the way that I was, I was arrested by the federal police along with the army here in São Gabriel. And... they went to find me in the village, we were at a community meeting with various leaders from other communities to build a house. I knew that they were looking for people, there was a [police] operation here in São Gabriel, but I never imagined that I was part of it and that day the police arrived looking [for me]. I was working in the interior of the Amiú community, in the Upper Rio Negro, which is a different people than my people, people of the Baré ethnic group and so... When they arrived there, I didn't think, in no way did it cross my mind to run, I wasn't thinking about anything. The police arrived there yelling, saying that I had to go to São Gabriel, to resolve something in São Gabriel... and they took me. When I arrived in São Gabriel, the officer asked if I had a firearm, or any type of weapon in my house, and then he said that if I did have one to tell him the truth. Up until then, I thought that I was being arrested for some kind of weapon, something that crossed my mind, and I was being arrested for something else than what I was actually arrested for. When I got home, they started to search through my things, turning my cabinets, closets, and my clothes upside down, and they didn't find anything. When we got back to the precinct, to... the federal police station, we arrived and then the officer went to inform, he went to say that I was, that there was a girl accusing me of being a child trafficker, of selling sex, that I paid for this and I needed to clear it up in Manaus, then, the boy... The officer said that I would go to Manaus on Sunday and I would be back by Tuesday at the latest, and then I got scared when I asked if I could stay at my house. Until then, I didn't know if I was going to be arrested, if I was under arrest. He said "no," that I couldn't wait at my house, that I had to be there at the station, and then they left me at the station here in the city. I was held there for one day and one night.*

*Felipe: Did they contact your parents, your family?*

*Yes, they did. Actually, when they searched the house, my parents were already afraid, right — this was something that had never happened before so they already started to follow [the situation]. The police entered, they invaded [the house] there without... I didn't know what was happening or even what they were looking for. When I was at the precinct, I started thinking about what was happening, and it started to sink in, that I didn't really know what I was being accused of, why I was under arrest, because no one had told me. When I arrived in Manaus, Officer Pessoa — I remember his name clearly — Officer Pessoa... He started to ask questions, right? He asked if I bought, if I paid to have sex with girls. I said no way, I had never done that. So, he started to yell, the officer saying that... He used the following phrase: "You think I'm a fool? What do you think you're doing here — you think you're here on vacation?" I started to get scared because before that, the officers weren't yelling. The officer started yelling at me, like he was yelling at a child. When they yell at us indigenous people it's an absurd thing because we don't grow up hearing shouting, we don't grow up yelling. Of course, we have our misunderstandings, but everything is usually resolved in conversation, so when people yell at us — especially when a white person yells at us — we become... uncomfortable. So, he started to talk, he started to read the testimony saying that I had been involved with a girl named Diana and someone named Michele. So, I said to him, "Sir, I don't know any Michele," and he started yelling again, pushing me to confess. He said the following, which I will never forget, he said just like this: "If you want to return to São Gabriel, you have to tell me everything, admit everything," he said. "That way you can return to São Gabriel on Tuesday," he repeated again. So, thinking that this was true, I said, "No, sir, I was involved with Michele as well." Then he stopped the interrogation. Except for then they left me in a cell at the federal police station in Manaus for another day and another night. The next morning, they said that I was going to be transferred... up until then, I thought I was going to be transferred, like to São Gabriel... to go back. Then they told me that... The following morning, they told me that I had to serve a 30-day sentence and took me to a jail, the Raimundo Vidal jail.*

In this case, the indigenous man also did not have the opportunity to speak in his own language at any stage of the legal process, confessing to me the difficulty and insecurity he experienced expressing himself in Portuguese before the judge, risking both misunderstanding and being misunderstood. Despite being Warekena on his father's side, he considers Nhengatú to be his native language — which is predominantly spoken by the Baré, to which his mother belongs.

In the hearing room, the Warekena man remained at my side, shy and silent, at a four-person desk. Two tables of the same size were placed in a T-shape, where the judge and prosecutor sat side-by-side facing everyone else. To their side sat the court reporter who types up the statements of those who have the power to intervene — that is, everyone in the room, except for the defendants and witnesses. A public defender who had previously worked in the city and left due to intimidation after receiving threats was present exclusively to accompany the case's proceedings, which carried on for practically the whole week.

Despite identifying as an indigenous member of the Warekena people, recounting that he was gathered in the community preparing for a cultural event specific to his people at the time of arrest, and that while his relationship with the alleged victim, while brief, was perfectly acceptable among other indigenous persons, no specific right was guaranteed under these circumstances.

From his narrative, it's possible to perceive a great asymmetry in the relationship between indigenous persons and the criminal justice system. This impression was shared by an incarcerated interlocutor, expressing himself in the Tukano language: “*We are considered indigenous by them [authorities]. In our Tukano language, we would say ‘pohsá.’ This is what happens to us here. (...) We’re totally worthless.*” *Pohsá* is a strongly derogative term used by Tukano indigenous people to refer to someone,<sup>2</sup> typically members of the Hupdah people, who have less contact with Brazilian society and are considered hierarchically inferior in inter-ethnic relations with indigenous peoples of the Eastern Tukano linguistic family who have had contact and relations with non-indigenous people for a longer period of time.

## Social Context of the Study

To better understand the ethnographic context in which the study was carried out, it's worth highlighting the mobility of indigenous persons from São Gabriel da Cachoeira and describe local social dynamics. The 23 indigenous peoples with a presence in the municipality frequently travel between their communities and the municipal seat by canoe or by small inboard or outboard motorboats, generally docking them at the port nearest to the city center or on the beach. These trips take place for various reasons, primarily in pursuit of access to public services (schools, hospitals, social security) and commerce. According to the most recent census carried out by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in 2010, the population of São Gabriel da Cachoeira was 37,986 — 76.6% of whom (29,017) are indigenous. From census figures and information contained in the text that follows, there are at least 11,918 indigenous persons residing in the municipality's urban area, corresponding to 57.8% of the population. Based on conversations with residents of the city, it is worth mentioning that only people who arrived from other places not linked to indigenous territories are excluded from the indigenous population count. The municipality is located in the northwestern Amazon region at the Colombian and Venezuelan border. The Xié, Içana, and Uaupés rivers, affluents of the Rio Negro, mark this mythical and ancestral territory occupied for over 3,000 years.

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<sup>2</sup> Loosely translated by indigenous coworkers who speak Tukano from an interview carried out in 2017.

With the expansion of the Brazilian state to its borderlands, the government increasingly present in places that are currently predominantly inhabited by traditional communities. The repressive state apparatus — the system of public security — is present in the form of a police precinct with five civil police officers and sixteen military police officers, in addition to a federal police station with agents who frequently rotate with others stationed in Manaus. In Brazil, the military police force is responsible for preventative policing, patrolling the streets. Civil and federal police forces, referred to as judicial police, are responsible for carrying out official procedures when crimes are committed, as well as investigations, such to gather evidence to be examined by the judiciary. Without consultation or participation, this system is arbitrarily applied to indigenous peoples residing in this region for whom contact with official institutions has not been solicited but imposed. While there are indeed indigenous persons who report crimes to the police, as well as indigenous police officers, this does not mean that indigenous peoples totally accept the procedures and forms of punishment of the non-indigenous justice system — nor does this negate the coercive character of *de jure* imperial domination that directly affects indigenous peoples.

It is worth emphasizing the frequent complaints that I observed from police officers who often requested to recant their reports, regretting having called the police and initiating accusation proceedings (despite legislative changes that impede police authorities from doing so). The legal explanation for this is that the punitive action that was previously private had become public — in other words, an investigation initiated at the victim's will in connection to their interests alone was transformed into the interest of society and of the state in an effort to curb gender violence. It happens that, in most cases, the victim does not intend for their report to result in a prolonged detention — imprisonment as a punishment — but rather seeks to put an end to the abuse or the direct cause thereof. This fact is frequently attributed to the lack of means to support their families in their partner's absence. However, it would be prudent to carry out an anthropological analysis considering the point of view of indigenous persons, as well as the implications of incarceration, in view of the divergence with non-indigenous understandings of serving justice, which privileges the practice of imprisonment as *punishment*.

I recall that at the beginning of my observations, in 2011, it was important to note that when indigenous persons spoke of prison in their own languages, they would borrow the term from the Portuguese language, as there is no equivalent word for the imposition of such a form of punishment. Yet more, visiting localities that did not seem to lack policing or criminal laws, in which the nearest stationed officer was only to be found hours or even days away down the river, it would be naïve to say that social control over an area the size of São Gabriel da Cachoeira, extending 109,185 square kilometers, is guaranteed by the state's preventative and repressive police forces.

The incarceration of indigenous persons is carried out in a way that violate Brazilian legislation as sentences are served in holding cells in police stations. In other words, a physical environment intended for spending mere hours or days is utilized as a space for serving entire prison sentences, which can be six or more years. Exceptions to this practice are rare and typically occur when sentences are sufficiently long to warrant transfer to the capital city, Manaus, where there are prisons. The São Gabriel da Cachoeira police station has one jail block with eight cells. Three cells border the back of the building and are larger than the other five. The larger cells are approximately 10 square meters, while the smaller are no more than six square meters. Thick walls divide the block into these tiny compartments, equipped with iron bars as doors. The cells block is fenced off by a gate in the center, where a large lock is placed. The keys remain the responsibility of the Civil Police after disagreements regarding the treatment of inmates.

This may indicate that social practices instilled by non-indigenous society are naturalized — the police or prison, for example — and are even present in indigenous communities of the Upper Rio Negro, with the exception of those occupied in part by the Brazilian Army, justified by the government as necessary for national security. Alternatively, this underscores the prevalence of other forms of social control dissociated from centralized authorities. Such questions were the object of analysis of 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars.

With regard to cultural dimensions, Robert Shirley synthesizes: “It seems undeniable that nearly all societies have some form of legal culture, that is, a view of what constitutes appropriate conduct and an idea of justice” (Shirley, 1987, p. 43). Moore (2005), in turn, in an illuminating text refers to the intellectual advancements that span this field, noting the contributions of Geertz, Habermas, Bourdieu, and Weber, among others. The author succinctly introduces law from an anthropological perspective: law as culture, law as domination, law as problem-solver.

For Davis, one of the propositions on law on which anthropologists are in agreement is that “in every society, there exists a body of cultural categories, of rules or codes that define rights and legal obligations among men” (Davis, 1973, p. 10).

Now, from the outset, law school teachings are universalizing. From the student’s first semester to their professional qualification, they are taught and inculcated with the idea that the bases of “Law” are, in the following order: laws, jurisprudence, doctrines, and customs. However, the absence of a theorized, standardized, written legal science does not imply the dearth of norms of coexistence worthy of consideration or legitimate means of social control. No society can be judged by virtue of what it seems to lack, as Pierre Clastres proposes in *Society Against the State*:

In reality, the same old evolutionism remains intact beneath the modern formulations. (...) It has already been remarked that archaic societies are almost always classed negatively, under the heading of lack: societies without a State, societies without writing, societies without history. (Clastres, 2017 [1987], p. 190)

The absence of written law cannot lead us to retreat to evolutionism, lest we reproduce old biases about indigenous peoples.

Agents in the legal realm do not perceive indigenous persons as subjects of many rights in view light of the autonomy of culture and social organization conferred by Brazil’s federal constitution. A so-called rupture with the current legal order imposed by the state would demand an approach based on dialogue with recognized ethnic groups — some of whose lands are demarcated, while many others continue to struggle for demarcation. In this sense, the study notes that the judiciary does not attach importance to cultural considerations in ruling on criminal cases with indigenous defendants. Legal pluralism, called for in recognition of social heterogeneity and tensions arising from inter-ethnic relations, is ignored.

As it appears, Brazilian courts follow the logic of productivism in issuing decisions — that is, judges who rule on a large number of cases are considered “good judges” without any substantive evaluation of their decisions such as verification of the constitutionality of applicable norms or respect for human rights. This is reflected in guidelines by the National Council of Justice, in which court representatives approved the “2020 National Goals for the Brazilian Judiciary.”<sup>3</sup> Of the twelve goals that were outlined and approved, the first states the following: decide on a higher number of pending cases than the number of new cases brought before the court. This can be taken to mean that issuing a large number of decisions supplants the need to analyze cases seriously and thoroughly, curtailing the instrumentality of law as a means of social transformation and putting into evidence the empirical fragility of this notion. As a consequence, incarceration is not considered a problem per se; rather, the problem is the volume of cases before the court.

3 <https://www.cnj.jus.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Metas-Nacionais-aprovadas-no-XIII-ENPJ.pdf>

The determination of sentences with due hermeneutic rigor in light of democratic values does not seem to figure among the courts' priorities. It's certainly a valid critique to call the justice system sluggish — and the accumulation of backlogs of cases should be addressed — but this must be done in a way that does not breed injustice or the dismissal of the social consequences of rulings. Punitive interventions cannot constitute the grounds for perpetrating additional violations.

Recently, motivated by the coronavirus pandemic, indigenous peoples across Brazil have mobilized in their territories, forming a sort of community policing system to control the entrance of outsiders as a preventative measure to curb potential infection. This form of policing should not be confused with activity by armed militias or paramilitary forces, but rather should be considered an exercise of autonomy over decisions that directly affect their communities. This gives rise to a question about the actual scope of autonomy conferred to indigenous peoples. Now, if indigenous peoples are not permitted to practice forms of social organization according to their own principles as they see fit — and if there is a lack of recognition of diverse epistemologies involving practices of education, healthcare, social assistance, and justice — they are limited to the enjoyment of *partial autonomy*, which bears a resemblance to the state policy of tutelage of indigenous peoples. It seems unreasonable to shroud these vestiges, perhaps of little importance to authorities, from public debate or to naturalize them as dominant practices imposed by the state from the top-down.

In this sense, I suggest that there may exist an aporia between the structure of the contemporary democratic state of law and the exercise of full autonomy by indigenous peoples, as the ethical totality codified in criminal law through prohibitions does not appear to be amicably accepted, as legal manuals might lead one to believe.

## Official Data on Incarcerated Indigenous Persons

On December 17, 2019, a technical note was published by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security.<sup>4</sup> According to the document, it was a “technical note through which the Department of Women’s and Minority Welfare (DIAMGE) — part of the General Coordination of Citizenship and Penal Alternatives (CGCAP) under the Board of Penitentiary Policy (DIRPP) of the National Penitentiary Department (DEPEN) — issued to recommend to state prison administration entities the adoption of necessary and effective measures with regard to the custody of indigenous persons deprived of liberty in penal institutions in accordance with international and national regulations.” Notably, DEPEN does not mention the legitimacy (or lack thereof) of the imprisonment of indigenous persons, but only alludes to the “rights of incarcerated indigenous persons.”

National statistics on incarcerated persons are produced by the National Penitentiary Department (DEPEN), which is subordinated to the Ministry of Justice and Public Security. The most recent data on the number of incarcerated indigenous persons can be found in a technical note published on May 26, 2020,<sup>5</sup> which signals continuity with the previously cited note. It's worth emphasizing that this was the first time that data was gathered on the number of incarcerated individuals who self-identified as belonging to indigenous peoples, disaggregated by ethnic group. The note stated: “1. According to data from the National Penitentiary Information Survey (Infopen) from December 2019, there are 1,390 indigenous persons in the Brazilian prison system. Of this number, a) 1,325 are men and b) 65 are women. 2. However, to quantify the number of ethnic groups with incarcerated members, the Department of Women’s and Minority Welfare (DIAMGE) produced a study demonstrating the presence of 672 indigenous persons who indicated their respective peoples.”

4 Technical Note n. 53/2019/DIAMGE/CGCAP/DIRPP/DEPEN/MJ

5 Technical Note n. 77/2020/DIAMGE/CGCAP/DIRPP/DEPEN/MJ



Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública  
Departamento Penitenciário Nacional  
Divisão de Atenção às Mulheres e Grupos Específicos

**NOTA TÉCNICA Nº 77/2020/DIAMGE/CGCAP/DIRPP/DEPEN/MJ**

Processo: 08016.018784/2018-01

Interessado: DIAMGE

Trata-se de apresentação de dados de indígenas que se encontram no sistema prisional brasileiro, com intuito de mapear as etnias que possuem membros em situação de prisão.

**DO MAPEAMENTO NACIONAL DE POPULAÇÃO INDÍGENA**

1. Informamos que, segundo dados do Levantamento Nacional de Informações Penitenciárias (Infopen) de dezembro de 2019, há no sistema prisional brasileiro 1.390 indígenas presos, sendo:

a) 1.325 homens; e

b) 65 mulheres.

2. Entretanto, com objetivo principal de quantificar as etnias que possuem membros em situação de prisão, a Divisão de Atenção às Mulheres e Grupos Específicos produziu pesquisa que demonstra a existência de 672 indígenas presos autodeclarados que indicaram seus respectivos povos.

3. Como resultado do levantamento, apresenta-se um mapeamento da população específica, conforme tabela a seguir:

Previously, statistics did not even take into account self-identification, as seen here: “The Infopen survey uses the five categories proposed by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) to classify race: White (*Branca*), Black (*Preta*), Brown (*Parda*), Yellow (*Amarela*), or Indigenous (*Indígena*). The category Black (*Negra*) is constructed by combining the categories Black (*Preta*) and Brown (*Parda*). It is important to emphasize that data collected by the IBGE on the population’s race or ethnicity are based on self-identification, whereas data collected by Infopen on these variables are recorded by survey administrators, without tracking self-declaration of these characteristics” (Infopen 2016, p. 32).

The identification of inmates’ ethnicities on the list provided by police precincts for the purpose of data collection follows suit, as inmates are not given the opportunity to self-identify either at the police station or in court, leaving this task to administrators at the station itself. This means that individuals deprived of liberty are also deprived of the right to self-identify, casting doubt on the reliability of official data. As such, official data from DEPEN should be treated with caution. Ground-truthed with empirical data, these figures seem questionable, implying that the numbers of indigenous persons incarcerated in Brazilian prisons are likely underreported. For example, in the state of Amazonas, there were eleven incarcerated indigenous persons according to official data. However, in this study, the number of incarcerated indigenous persons observed in the city of São Gabriel da Cachoeira alone exceeds the official count in the entire state. Several media outlets published articles on this issue in 2017.<sup>6</sup>

Carceral policies have been formulated without consideration for the diversity of peoples present in Brazil. The theoretical advances of anthropology have only been mildly influential in debates in the juridical field, in part due to the relative youth of the discipline of legal anthropology in Brazilian law schools. Brazilian penal norms do not contemplate discussions around identity, alterity, ethnicity, indigenous peoples’ autonomy, and culture.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.folha.uol.com.br/cotidiano/2017/07/1901538-homens-mulheres-e-adolescentes-dividem-delegacia-presidio-no-am.shtml>; <https://diplomatique.org.br/indigenas-tem-suas-identidades-invisibilizadas-nas-prisoas-do-brasil/>, accessed on September 20, 2020.

It should be clarified that criminal defense is generally conducted by supporting the accused person's version of events and proving the illegality of judicial acts. A majority of the indigenous population does not have private lawyers or public defenders. Brazilian legislation states that if a defendant does not have a lawyer or public defender, the judge will appoint one to carry out their defense in order to continue the proceedings and to ensure the right to defense. As it happens, in such cases, the defense is typically a mere bureaucratic formality without due attention to the person's rights.

Court-appointed defense lawyers also typically have their own private clients whose cases will be seen by the same judge, incentivizing them to refrain from being too aggressive in defending non-paying clients such to avoid engendering animosity from the judge on the given charge, thus abstaining from making a case or invoking rights that could help the defendant avoid jail time. These facts can help us delineate the social relations that mediate the justice system. This is not the place for such a discussion, however.

Would it be possible, then, to foment a movement to decolonize the judiciary? What steps are necessary to ensure respect for the autonomy of indigenous peoples, including with regard to the resolution of conflicts of a criminal nature? I suggest that debates on any aspect of policy, including crime policies, currently demands greater public participation and consequently, the involvement of all (or the largest possible number of) segments of society — including traditional peoples and communities.

## **Legal Tools Applicable to Indigenous Persons in View of Cases Observed**

With regard to the legal tools applicable to the situations presented here, it's worth highlighting the existence of Resolution 287/2019 of the National Council of Justice,<sup>7</sup> effective since mid-2019, with a manual<sup>8</sup> containing guidelines for judges with respect to the treatment of indigenous persons under criminal law. In its "General Principles for the Conduct of Courts and Judges in Criminal Cases Involving Indigenous Accused Persons, Defendants, or Convicted Persons," the manual lists the following: a) Diversity of indigenous peoples; b) The right to consult with indigenous peoples; c) Respect for indigenous peoples' language, customs, beliefs, and traditions, as well as indigenous forms of social organization, political, legal, economic, social, and cultural systems; d) Importance of territorial rights; e) Indigenous people's right to access to justice; f) Extreme exceptionality of indigenous incarceration.

Law 6.0001/73, also known as the Indian Statute, was created during the dictatorship regime prior to Brazil's democratization with the promulgation of the Constitution of 1988. For this reason, it should be interpreted through the lens of new constitutional values. Premised on the notion of the tutelage of indigenous peoples, this law states that indigenous persons deprived of liberty should be held at the site of the nearest indigenous affairs bureau, which I have never seen happen in practice.

The Brazilian criminal code, on the other hand, makes no mention of the criminal responsibility of indigenous persons or any distinct treatment that should be accorded to them. In "Commentary on the Criminal Code," Nelson Hungria noted that there were no references to indigenous persons "to avoid, with an explicit allusion to them, giving the false impression abroad that we are a nation infested with barbarians" (Hungria, 1958, p. 336). Thus, the treatment of indigenous persons under the criminal code is only concerned with the notion of competency, placing them in a position analogous to persons with diminished mental capacity.

<sup>7</sup> [https://atos.cnj.jus.br/files/resolucao\\_287\\_25062019\\_08072019182402.pdf](https://atos.cnj.jus.br/files/resolucao_287_25062019_08072019182402.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cnj.jus.br/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Manual-Resolu%C3%A7%C3%A3o-287-2019-CNJ.pdf>



In an international context, Article 10 of the International Labor Organization Convention 169 (the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples' Convention), ratified by Brazil, states that: "1. In imposing penalties laid down by general law on members of these peoples account shall be taken of their economic, social and cultural characteristics. 2. Preference shall be given to methods of punishment other than confinement in prison."

When judicial decisions address cultural elements, they do so in a way that delegitimizes indigenous identity. Forgoing anthropological expert witness reports, a set of criteria is applied in which contact with national society serves as the basis of identity. In other words, the judge infers, at their own discretion, whether the indigenous person should be considered indigenous in view of the degree to which they are integrated with non-indigenous society.

The indigenous persons whose stories are told here were not provided the opportunity to testify in their own languages<sup>9</sup> at the police station or in court. Nor were anthropological expert witness reports requested<sup>10</sup> for the consideration of the prosecutor, the defense, and the judge. The ethnic identification of accused indigenous persons is simply avoided or disregarded by authorities or, when registered, bears no impact on their treatment. It is also necessary to highlight that prison sentencing is naturalized among lawyers and public defenders involved in cases involving indigenous defendants. Arguments relativizing the criminal justice system are not taken into account, and special norms available in Brazil are not invoked.

The decision that absolved Fábio is three pages in length with no mention of cultural aspects, nor any discussion of the legitimacy of the proceedings against him in connection to pluralism, the autonomy of indigenous peoples, or ILO Convention 169.

In another case in 2014, a federal judge from the state of Amazonas rejected the application of legislation relevant to indigenous peoples, even having provided documentation of the defendant's indigenous birth certificate (RANI). In a purely rhetorical and legalistic fashion, the judge negated the defendant's identity with ethnocentric and racist arguments, as though a person who attends school or possesses government-issued ID was no longer indigenous and could not claim their rights as such.

Similarly, in 2020, the public prosecutor opposed the application of National Council of Justice Resolution 287/2019 and the so-called Indian Statute (Law 6.001/1973) in the appeal of a decision to sentence an indigenous woman to nine years and four months in solitary confinement. In his decision, he expressed: "In the case in question, it is clear that this is a situation of acculturation, one in which the benefits of the aforementioned statute do not apply with regard to the use and enforcement of criminal sanctions."

The juridical field, as such, reveals a feedback loop informed by its own concepts without consideration for different social realities and situations surrounding the concept of punishment. The scope of norms is restricted in denying the need for anthropological expert witness testimony, rather opting to invoke legal instruments such as case law and legal doctrines.

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9 "Article 5. Legal authorities will seek to guarantee the presence of an interpreter, preferably a member of the defendant's own indigenous community, at every stage of the process in which the indigenous person participates: I - If the language spoken is not Portuguese; II - If there is any doubt about the person's fluency and understanding of the spoken language, including with regard to the meaning of procedural acts and the indigenous person's verbal communication; III - At the request of the defense attorney or FUNAI; IV - At the request of the person in question."

10 "Article 6. Upon receiving a complaint or accusation against an indigenous person, legal authorities may determine, whenever possible, acting in their own authority or at the request of the interested parties, to solicit an anthropological expert witness report to ascertain the competency of the accused person, which should contain, at minimum: I - The classification, ethnicity, and language spoken by the accused person; II - The personal, cultural, social, and economic circumstances of the accused person; III - The uses, customs, and traditions of the indigenous community to which they are connected; IV - The indigenous community's understanding with regard to the act for which the person is being charged, as well as internal adjudication mechanisms and forms of punishment adopted by its members; and V - Other information deemed relevant to the facts of the case. Sole paragraph. The expert witness report should be carried out by an anthropologist, social scientist, or other professional assigned by the judge with specific knowledge on the topic."

Bourdieu highlights the formalism of legal science as a “specific mode of theoretical thinking, entirely freed of any social determination” (Bourdieu 1987, p. 814). For him, Hans Kelsen’s attempt to formulate a “pure theory of law” sought “to construct a body of doctrine and rules totally independent of social constraints and pressures, one which finds its foundation entirely within itself” (Bourdieu 1987, p. 814). Yet more, “divergences between ‘authorized interpreters’ are necessarily limited, and the coexistence of a multitude of juridical norms in competition with each other is by definition excluded from the juridical order” (Bourdieu 1987, p. 818). Regarding the situation of imprisonment and the indigenous men’s responsibility for gender violence, perhaps — before legitimizing the practices of trial and imprisonment — the inefficiencies of criminal proceedings and the primacy of sentencing as a solution should be better understood, which would, in turn, require consideration of all categories and definitions of offenses that are regarded as criminal. With regard to special rights concerning culture, Benhabib reminds us that “contemporary feminist discourse on these issues is strongly polarized... The claims of moral and political autonomy contradict the pluralist preservation of multicultural traditions that seem to make no room for such autonomy” (Benhabib, 2002, p. 101).

In this sense, it is worth mentioning the author’s approach, which proposes a discourse theory as an entry point in order to consider some actions related to minority groups legitimate. Her interpretation is backed by two principles: universal moral respect and egalitarian reciprocity. “Universal respect requires that we recognize the right of all beings capable of speech and action to be participants in the moral conversation; the principle of egalitarian reciprocity, interpreted within the confines of discourse ethics, stipulates that within discourses each should have the same right to various speech acts, to initiate new topics, and to ask for justification of the presuppositions of the conversation, and the like” (Benhabib, 2002, p. 107).

Sound scientific arguments can be ineffective in the juridical field and ultimately, it is up to the presiding judge to decide whether they find the anthropological expert witness report convincing or not. In other words, the force and weight of the expert report will ultimately depend on the judge responsible for analyzing it, which is indicative of the judiciary’s impermeability with regard to other branches of scientific knowledge. Anti-crime policy measures are sustained by discourses that reinforce penal punitivism through popular commotion, pressure from the media, and populist discourses. The legitimacy of incarceration goes against scientific evidence showing that this form of criminal justice is of little or no benefit to society, in addition to its frequent aberrations from the law — from confrontations on the street to sentencing — as intellectuals like Louk Hulman, Nils Christie and Angela Davis have discussed.

## Conclusion

Outdated categories that are inadequate for democratic policies of inclusion continue to be used by agents in the juridical field under a colonial logic that does not consider the epistemology, knowledge, and experience of indigenous peoples in the production of legislation and in debates on justice. As the facts indicate, penal alternatives are not sufficient to address the problem of crime policies. We need more than penal alternatives — we need *alternatives to punishment*. Such alternatives are offered by indigenous peoples who have socially reproduced and resisted throughout history without the violent practice of incarceration and the symbolic violence enacted by such forms of punishment.

To fail to problematize the criminal treatment of indigenous persons is to tacitly condone the violence and harms inflicted on them by the state — ignoring the power asymmetries that exist between government authorities and indigenous peoples, as well as the violations that are practiced. The legal gap between self-determination and the submission of various peoples with their own forms of social organization to the dominant legal system emerges as a new challenge for contemporary democracy, which demands greater participation of all subjects.

The judiciary has usurped indigenous forms of conflict resolution and imposed a juridical order based on colonial categories. Penal theory has become an object of discussion in pursuit of alternatives to existing practices that privilege imprisonment. The construction of crime necessarily involves the imposition of universal rules of conduct that, when violated, may result in the use of force and restriction of liberty of the offender on the part of the state — whether or not the person who violates the norm is aware or agrees with the principle. The pursuit of ethical universality, therefore, points to an intense and uninterrupted process of colonization via criminal law.

This is not to say that political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists and other academics should don judges' robes and preside over cases involving their areas of research. Thesis defenses, in which academics participate as examiners, are their objects of judgement. However, it would be reasonable to expect dialogue with the juridical field and with social agents involved in punishment to be fluid and considered relevant in a deliberative democracy.

The Brazilian government should be responsible not for reproducing forms of domination, but for creating the necessary conditions for the maintenance, realization, and sociocultural reproduction of indigenous peoples through respect for difference and the observance of their practices, knowledge, narratives, institutions, and rituals such to actualize their right to autonomy and eschew tokenism. Insofar as there exist (limited) public policy initiatives, directed toward health or education, for example, judicial powers remain universalizing with a monopoly on the language of the law and on access to forums in which rights are discussed, perpetuating colonial and racist forms of surveillance and control over various indigenous peoples not only in São Gabriel da Cachoeira but across Brazil. The banalization of criminal prosecution and incarceration in Brazil cannot be extended to indigenous peoples as a mode of social control, simply excluding them from debate on criminal policies. As such, a new form of jurisdiction is necessary — one that not only imposes itself but that is also open to democratic participation.

In 2019, the present study served as a theoretical reference in the elaboration of National Justice Council Resolution 287/2019 — on criminal procedures applied to indigenous defendants, accused persons, or incarcerated persons — and its respective manual.<sup>11</sup> This was part of an initiative by indigenous movements together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the “Justiça Presente” Program, an initiative of the National Justice Council (CNJ), aiming to humanize sentencing and make other improvements to the prison system. One current outcome of the aforementioned mechanism is Recommendation 62/2020, which concerns the situation of the pandemic in the prison system. Article 12 considers the specific nature of the situation for indigenous peoples (Article 12. Recommend that judges, in exercise of their duties, provide information to the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), the Special Secretariat for Indigenous Health (SESAI), the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office, and the community in question with respect to the adoption of measures that directly affect indigenous persons deprived of liberty, particularly with regard to COVID-19 diagnoses and the granting of provisional release or the fulfillment of sentences in an open regime, taking note of the differentiated juridical-penal treatment to do justice and procedures described in CNJ Resolution n. 287/2019). Also in 2019, the National Penitentiary Department (DEPEN) elaborated a technical note<sup>12</sup> “through which the Department of Women's and Minority Welfare (DIAMGE) — part of the General Coordination of Citizenship and Penal Alternatives (CGCAP) under the Board of Penitentiary Policy (DIRPP) of the National Penitentiary Department (DEPEN) — issued to recommend to state prison administration entities the adoption of necessary and effective measures with regard to the custody of indigenous persons deprived of liberty in penal institutions in accordance with international and national regulations.”

11 Available at: <https://www.cnj.jus.br/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Manual-Resolu%C3%A7%C3%A3o-287-2019-CNJ.pdf>

12 Technical Note n. 53/2019/DIAMGE/CGCAP/DIRPP/DEPEN/MJ, available at: [http://depen.gov.br/DEPEN/copy3\\_of\\_indigenas.pdf](http://depen.gov.br/DEPEN/copy3_of_indigenas.pdf)

Earlier, in May 2020, the same entity released a technical note<sup>13</sup> on the “publication of data on indigenous persons in the Brazilian prison system with the objective of mapping the ethnic groups with incarcerated members.” The document states that there are 1,390 incarcerated indigenous persons in Brazil, 672 of whom “self-identified their respective peoples.”

It’s important to recall that National Justice Council Resolution 287/2019 introduces the requirement to solicit an anthropological expert witness report with the support of the Brazilian Anthropological Association (ABA) to this end,<sup>14</sup> underscoring the importance of anthropological social science.

These are measures taken by federal authorities that are worthy of researchers’ attention as they highlight the relevance of studies in this area — primarily due to the fact that existing data is distorted by underreporting. Considering the fact that the note mentions only eleven indigenous persons in the entire state of Amazonas, a simple observation of prisons in the city of São Gabriel da Cachoeira should be sufficient to refute official data. As such, this study shows that the judiciary has impacted and continues to impact indigenous social organization — particularly with regard to the authority of indigenous leaders who could play a role in reconciling, mediating, or de-escalating conflicts as they emerge. Instead, these conflicts are managed by non-indigenous persons who use complicated terms and wear formal clothing, in official buildings where indigenous languages are not spoken, through the use of physical violence and imprisonment — following countless formalities and procedures as part of “criminal prosecution” or “criminal cases,” or, in many cases, simply going over their heads as though they were cooperating.

As such, it is possible to ascertain that the “effect of closure,” the hermetic effect, — which, following Bourdieu (1987, p. 834), is intrinsic to the juridical field — leads to the negation of the ethnic plurality that exists in a given territory. Disputes and different interests are excluded from debates advanced by legal operatives who focus “their own problems and their own solutions according to a hermetic logic unavailable to laypeople” (Bourdieu 1987, p. 834).

It becomes clear that the right to punish in Western legal systems — constructed through an epistemology that excludes indigenous knowledge — has gradually and violently usurped modes of conflict resolution based on “counseling” and constructive dialogue in favor of formal institutions of the state that privilege guns, handcuffs, trials, and prisons. Features of the justice system such as police stations, courthouses, prosecutors, lawyers, and judges may be alien to the ways of doing justice familiar to indigenous accused persons in their own communities and cities, as they embody forms of power that are difficult to grasp. This is not to say that accused persons do not have the intellectual capacity to understand, but rather than they have different forms of social organization, policies, and ways of resolving conflicts between individuals. As a strategy of domination, the state seeks to make everyone “equals,” controverting diversity, a current struggle of minority groups who seek political inclusion through the demand for recognition. On this point, it’s worth citing the words of Taylor:

“Non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being... misrecognition shows not just a lack of due respect. It can inflict a grievous wound saddening its victims with a critical self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need” (Taylor, 1994, p. 25).

<sup>13</sup> Technical Note n. 77/2020/DIAMGE/CGCAP/DIRPP/DEPEN/MJ, available at: [http://depen.gov.br/DEPEN/copy\\_of\\_SEI\\_MJ11751702NotaTcnicaLevantamen-toIndigena.pdf](http://depen.gov.br/DEPEN/copy_of_SEI_MJ11751702NotaTcnicaLevantamen-toIndigena.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> “For the preparation of the anthropological expertise, contact with the Brazilian Association of Anthropology (ABA) may be relevant for the identification of a professional with knowledge about the culture of the accused indigenous person” (p. 25).

Following the authors cited here, I argue that acts of the state that affect traditional populations should be analyzed through a plural vision, taking into account the different identities that exist in the Amazon region, such to construct new juridical approaches that contemplate traditional peoples and contribute to the eradication of social evolutionist and racist ideas that this study has shown to be prevalent. It is my hope that, with this new mechanism at the disposal of judges and other operatives in juridical field, that the rights of indigenous peoples be considered and guaranteed.

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# COVID-19 in Brazil

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Two years into the pandemic, the expressive numbers leave no room for doubt: COVID-19 has been the most tragic event in recent history. As of March 11, 2022, the Coronavirus Resource Center at John Hopkins University showed over 471 million confirmed cases worldwide and 6.07 million deaths. On the same day, the #PainelConass COVID-19 showed that Brazil had reached 657,000 deaths<sup>1</sup>. But it is not just the numbers and their important biomedical and epidemiological repercussions that need highlighting. Pandemics also provoke and deepen structures of inequality and social injustice, with a large number of devastating humanitarian, economic, environmental, political and cultural effects in the short, medium and long term (Grossi & Toniol 2020; Torales et al. 2020; Gamlin et al. 2021; Grisotti, 2020; Segata et al. 2021; Segata et al. 2022).

The Brazilian case is particularly disturbing. The COVID-19 pandemic has become a critical event of multiple proportions, exacerbated by the disastrous but no less premeditated combination of a president characterized as genocidal and a government commanded by economic capital. All over the country, in states and municipalities, pandemic management committees have multiplied, formed largely by political agents, their advisors, and representatives of the corporate interests of industry and commerce. Community leaders and union representatives of the working class were not invited to sit at these management tables, even when the agenda was the in-person reopening of industry, of commerce, or a return to in-person learning. The fate of the population during the pandemic has not been negotiated as if it were in a situation of vulnerability and at risk of contamination and illness (Mastrangelo, Segata & Rico, 2020). The same can be said of indigenous peoples, whose chronic neglect by Brazilian governments was once again intensely present, aggravating the historical conditions of structural violence to which they are subjected (Scopel et al., 2021). Thus, a myriad of problems provide evidence that the pandemic is a social event that goes well beyond biology and health issues, gaining broad ground in labour relations, while generating deeper structural inequality and social exclusion in Brazil.

<sup>1</sup> Coronavirus Resource Center. Available at <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu>. The *Conselho Nacional de Secretários de Saúde* (CONASS) [National Council of Health Secretaries], maintains daily updates on COVID-19 numbers in Brazil on its Twitter account. On August 15, the precise number of deaths was 569,068 and the cumulative number of cases was 20,364,099. Available at: <https://twitter.com/ConassOficial/status/1427012221968678912>. Both accessed August 16, 2021.

Mobilisations on the street and on social networks in defence of the Unified Health System (SUS), the activism of academics who disseminate science, the formation of a consortium of large media outlets to produce secure information, and institutional alliances of public and private entities in Brazil and abroad for the transfer of knowledge and technology to facilitate the production of medicines, vaccines and the development of treatments, have been in positive discord with this scenario of destruction. However, the reactions of political leaders and far-right reactionary groups hinder the consolidation of protection and care measures, while reducing the pandemic to a technocratic war between the virus and the market – to the dilemma of ‘life or the economy’ – have established an unprecedented attack on human rights in Brazil (Ventura, Aith & Reis, 2021).

This issue of *Vibrant - Virtual Brazilian Anthropology* presents the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil from different perspectives, themes and fields of anthropological research. The purpose of the works organized here is to highlight the unique forms and effects of the pandemic, producing knowledge that assists in the construction of situated policies for its mitigation.

An accurate understanding of the dynamics of social transformations resulting from the pandemic and the evaluation of actions to contain them are evidence of ethical and human rights implications that merit critical analysis; moreover, the uniqueness of the populations involved, their levels of vulnerability and exposure based on their diversity and their inequality need to be considered. Discourses, materialities and practices not only particularize individual and collective experiences and strategies, but also the risks, vulnerabilities, intensities and consequences of the pandemic (Segata, 2020). Therefore, analyses and responses to the pandemic impel interdisciplinary approaches and intersectoral policies that give pre-eminence to culturally situated knowledge and experiences, including tradition, religiosity, ethnicity, gender, age, labour relations and socioeconomic distinctions, which need to be tensioned at different scales, together with their local and global implications. This becomes evident in the first article of this issue, *Techno-politicizing pandemic scales*, by Moisés Kopper.

Based on the perspective of infrastructure anthropology and socio-technical studies, Kopper explores the multidimensional aspects of the pandemic and draws attention to the scalar dimensions involved in the dissemination and combat of COVID-19. According to the author, the pandemic has been analysed as an urban phenomenon, but dissemination of the virus has affected regions in the vast interior of Brazil, many of which lack the equipment and infrastructure to deal with it. Through analysis of official posts by the municipal government of Picada Café, Rio Grande do Sul, on its Facebook profile, and reactions to them by the residents, along with the application of an online survey among owners and employees of small businesses in two towns in the interior of Rio Grande do Sul, the author shows how the process of interiorisation of COVID-19 culminated in a wide range of political, economic and social negotiations. To achieve this, he investigated the symbiotic relationship between governments and citizens in the digital environment through analysis of, on the one hand, strategies developed by the municipality to combat the virus, such as regulations, indicators, the presentation of numbers, and policies of control and counting cases and victims of COVID-19, and on the other, the ways in which the controversies were translated into technical and moral terms, how local moralities were negotiated, and how the administration and attribution of responsibilities were configured.

In a work that similarly addresses the different scales of the pandemic and its local socio-political implications, the second article of this issue brings to the debate the lived experiences of the residents of the town of São Caetano de Odivelas, in the interior of Pará, in different moments of the pandemic. The town possesses characteristics that are quite different from other regions of the country, particularly regarding the close relationships between family members and neighbours. The article by José Guilherme dos Santos Fernandes, *COVID-19 pandemic in a local town in the Amazon*, shows how COVID-19 is a social phenomenon with important lacunae between the national, universalising norms and local models, values and practices. Through the application of a survey, the author analyses the characteristics of sociability in local towns that contribute to the clinical and epidemiological cases of the COVID-19 pandemic, the political obstacles in controlling the

disease and measures to minimise the effects of the pandemic. The article emphasises the role of anthropology in understanding the controversies caused when the suspension of social and economic activities causes ambivalent consequences: health protection and economic downturn, and the moralities created concerning 'outsiders' (tourists and non-resident workers), especially when they were included in the official statistics of infected or hospitalised cases. The article also problematises the impact of research in relation to the mistaken use of the survey by local authorities to justify their decree to reopen commercial activities.

Continuing within the sphere of political clashes and mistaken and malicious uses of information, the work of Gabriela Dias Blanco, Eleandra Raquel da Silva Koch and Camila Dellagnese Prates investigate the controversies that emerged during the production of the first vaccine against COVID-19 in Brazil, CoronaVac, and its relation to claims of pre-emptive treatment, evoked by different actors, including the federal government. Through a virtual ethnography of digital documents from government agencies and medical entities, journalistic articles and publications in groups on the social network Facebook, the authors mobilise Bruno Latour's (2005) actor-network theory to understand how facts and fictions are constructed, and Annemarie Mol's (2002) concept of *enact* to understand how relational practices create realities, and the principle of symmetry to map tensions that relationships generate in the construction of realities. Thus, the article maps the emergence of the CoronaVac vaccine and the groups against it, while presenting a chronology of the political and scientific controversies involved in prescribing chloroquine (and, later, other drugs) as preventive treatments for COVID-19. Next, the authors describe the process of approving the emergency use of the vaccine by ANVISA and end by reflecting on the effects of the controversies involved on the means of controlling the pandemic in Brazil.

In another analytical work, Caetano Sordi, Jean Segata and Bernardo Lewgoy show how the pandemic took shape and intensified under the harmful combination of political and corporate agents, the dismantling of social policies, and historical relations of power and inequalities that actuate together with the virus in the constitution of environments of risk and vulnerability. In their article *COVID-19 and disaster capitalism: 'Passando a boiada' in the Brazilian meat processing chain*, the authors present the social impacts of the pandemic among workers in the meatpacking sector and the labour and environmental issues related to this activity.

Accidents and occupational illness have already provided strong evidence of unsanitary conditions in the meatpacking industry, but the high rates of COVID-19 among its workers showed how much the meat chain enables the circulation of, exposure to, and contamination by the virus. Reports from people who worked even while they were sick with COVID-19 for fear of not providing their families, with imminent cuts in wages due to work absences, show the harmful effects of labour and environmental deregulation that form the performance infrastructure of the agribusiness. This scenario is even more concerning when correlated with the fact that agri-food production in Brazil, particularly meat, increased its yield and exports by approximately 10% in 2020, despite the pandemic: the same year, Brazil once again made international news regarding unsanitary food processing. These elements indicate the development of the sector at the expense of the precarisation of labour relations, including overexposure to the risk of contamination in a sector that notably employs young black people, migrants from Venezuela, Haiti and Senegal, and indigenous peoples from the western territories of the States of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina and Paraná, under extremely precarious working conditions (Granada et al. 2021; Segata, Beck & Muccillo 2021). Finally, the notion of multi-species health defended by the authors of this article is critical of well-known policies based on One Health, which inevitably echo models extrinsic to local sensitivities, a common practice in the sphere of global health, but also enables us to surmount an historical analytical dichotomy, by comprehending the movement of environmental, animal and human predation on the same plane. According to the authors, social, environmental and health crises are not isolated events; social inequalities, precarious, speciesist, racialised work and the intensive production of unhealthy ecologies that feed emerging pathogens together form a scenario of chronic destruction that exploits and sickens humans, animals and environments. This concerns what Bruno Latour (2017) called *a profound mutation*



*in our relation to the world* – and the authors perceive the COVID-19 pandemic as an evident manifestation of this ongoing catastrophe. Finally, the work of Sordi, Segata and Lewgoy discusses how the impacts of the pandemic on different social groups need to be investigated considering their syndemic characteristics and the forms of structural violence that intensify their effects (Singer & Rilko-Bauer, 2021).

This line of thinking also links up with the sixth article of this issue, by Soraya Fleischer and Júlia Vilela Garcia. From the perspective of studies on care, the article *'Early stimulation' in the scenario of Congenital Zika Virus Syndrome* analyses the adverse and synergistic interaction between diseases and debilitating conditions that are, according to Singer and Rilko-Bauer (2021), promoted or facilitated by social and environmental conditions and forms of frequently hidden structures of inequality, such as poverty, racism and discrimination, which negatively impact the lives and well-being of the affected populations.

Fleisher and Garcia describe three moments that pervaded the Zika virus and COVID-19 epidemics in Brazil: the onset of the epidemic and rehabilitation therapies for children in 2016, the decreasing severity of Zika virus in 2019, and the social isolation imposed due to the novel coronavirus in 2020. Based on these stages, the authors demonstrate the changes, articulations and crises imposed by such epidemic and pandemic scenarios. Therapies situated the Zika mothers in the epidemic and legitimised motherhood in the context of disability, such that these women learned to turn to specific health professionals. For them, this was something that was lost during the COVID-19 pandemic, where the space of in-person sociability was replaced, in practice, by the virtual one. Thus, they observe the emergence of numerous questions on the part of mothers and families regarding state power, particularly in relation to the precariousness of public policies and children's care, which brought irreversible consequences for those affected by this panorama of accumulated diseases.

Inspired by the proposition of Didier Fassin (2018) on inequality in the value of lives, the subsequent article by Fernanda Cruz Rifiotis uses other policies on life as an analytical key to understand the impacts of the pandemic among the older adult population. Entitled *Pour d'autres politiques de la vie*, the multiple, unequal event that characterises the COVID-19 pandemic, as experienced by older adult men and women during the pandemic, is subject to analysis that surpasses the common-sense approaches to public health policies through the principle of biollegitimacy (the legitimacy of biological life). In this ethnographic research, mediated by the report of three cases, the author retrieves the biographical dimension of these lives, showing how strategies of agency, networks of interdependence and of technologies constituted new experiences and meanings for understanding aging, in the context of social isolation and the conversion of older adult men and women into risk groups.

It is important to emphasise that older adults are subject to public discourses in which care is transformed into control, associating aging with a lack of autonomy, incapacity and dependence and, thus, contradicting contemporary trends that favour efforts of active, autonomous and independent self-production (Schuch, VÍctora & Siqueira, 2021). Research developed by the *Rede COVID-19 Humanidades MCTI* [COVID-19 Humanities MCTI Network], like that which resulted in Rifiotis' article, has shown that aging and the management of hazards associated with COVID-19 infection are better understood when viewed from the relationships between the person, their family and neighbourhood ties, and care networks, more than the exclusively normative character associated with chronological age (Schuch, VÍctora & Siqueira, 2020). In these works, a significant modification is also perceived in the family dynamics of living arrangements in the home, carried out to provide active forms of protection against contamination by the virus and the mitigation of risks caused by the pandemic. Homes have become important care infrastructures in the context of health vulnerability caused by the pandemic, revealing the importance of the domestic and family space in the social and political scenario of the pandemic (Schuch, VÍctora & Siqueira, 2020; Rede Vírus MCTI 2021). This is a topic that is also highlighted in the eighth article of this issue by Daniela Petti, *Precariousness and inequalities amidst daily uncertainty*.

Petti addresses the manner in which the production of precariousness and the intersection of inequalities are inscribed in the daily life of Arlinda, a research interlocutor, particularly in relation to her articulations with the state (social benefits), family networks and the neighbourhood. A reflection that, in the present pandemic context, connects to her narratives of hope as a constitutive part of the policy of the valuation and devaluation of life. Among other issues, the author notes that '*O cuidado de si*' [Caring for yourself] does not depend on how the individuals lead their lives, since people are compelled to face mechanisms of unequal valuation of life once socioeconomic and political dispositions are exposed. She highlights that the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world were quite heterogeneous, due to the fact that social markers of difference, like gender and social class, engender notably precarious bodies. According to Petti, the way in which Arlinda elaborates life in her narratives and practices demonstrates that hope is understood as a way of managing uncertainty in a daily life marked by the continuous production of precariousness.

The next article, *Hunger doesn't wait* by Milena Mateuzi Carmo, also highlights the solidarity networks articulated during the COVID-19 pandemic in peripheral contexts. Carmo reflects on how the pandemic superimposed violence in the peripheries and intensified the economic crisis that was unleashed a few years ago in Brazil. The author thus demonstrates how women are notably affected by state violence, unlike men, especially young, black men, who are mostly direct targets of cases of police violence, homicides and arrests. She observes that when women suffer these losses, they end up taking on the task of care that expands in these locations. In addition, she also explicitly elucidates a context marked not only by the lack of responsibility on the part of the state regarding access to social rights, but also by resistances and struggles that articulate race, gender, class and territory, which have grown in the last decade. To conclude, the author addresses the fundamental role of the women who produce these networks based on their daily experiences marked by care that is not limited to the domestic context, but rather by a gendered practice that produces relationships and struggles, with precariousness and interdependence being recognised and valued in this space.

Closing this issue of *Vibrant*, the article by Marco Aurélio Máximo Prado, Paula Sandrine Machado, Amana Mattos and Luis Felipe Rios, *Managing risk and sexuality in the COVID-19 context*, highlights important discussion points concerning sexual practices and the management of risk in the current scenario of COVID-19, in order to understand the impact of the pandemic on the sexual experiences of the population. To this end, the authors resume the category 'risk management' in studies on management and health in the context of HIV/AIDS investigations and mounting practices, blending different information in the management of offline sexual encounters in the pandemic context. Based on data originating from semi-structured interviews that form part of the ongoing research entitled *SEXVID*, they observe that, in Brazil, scientific information on 'risks' and forms of 'protection' are offered to people so that they can 'calculate' the degree of transmissibility of the virus, causing these persons to decide not only for themselves, but also for others. As analysed in the article, beginning with the production of denialist governmental acts, negative interferences are observed in care for the population, not only in the fight against COVID-19, but in general, disseminated throughout different policies on health.

Along broader lines, the set of cases analysed in this issue of *Vibrant* show us how investment in analysis and responses to the pandemic opens up new fronts not only in the human sciences, but for the population in general, for productive sectors and for the state, since this reflection on health crises is not focused specifically on the technical-biological mechanisms that constitute these events, rather on the relationships and transformations they cause in societies (Keck, 2010). In short, what these works do is to highlight 'forms of knowledge, scientific practices and intervention policies, focusing in particular on the effects of these articulations for certain historically situated subjects' (Fonseca, Rohden & Machado, 2012: 7).

In addition, the dynamics of the pandemic analysed in this issue are in line with what Charters and Heitman (2021) claim regarding the manner in which linear narratives of beginning, climax and end are exceeded. Pandemics and epidemics are experienced in cycles of intensity and temporality in which the end – or ends – do not imply the cessation of the circulation of the pathogen and the reduction of contamination and death through immunisation or treatment. Unlike the idealistic hope of ‘biological eradication’, the end of a catastrophe of this nature depends much more on continuous political, ethical, and social negotiations regarding ‘acceptable levels’ that are determined to be a ‘manageable part of normal life’ (Charters & Heitman, 2021). Thus, in this extremely harmful scenario of the (mis)government of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil, the question that arises concerns the disparities and social injustices involved in this nebulous, complex and uncertain zone that is often described as ‘post-pandemic’. After all, what is an acceptable level of contamination, illness, and death to the point where it becomes a manageable part of normal life? COVID-19 in Brazil is still an open question.

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# Techno-Politicizing Pandemic Scales: The Impacts of COVID-19 on the Interior of Southern Brazil

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## **Abstract**

This article contributes to an understanding of the multidimensional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic through a reflection on the dimensions and scales involved in the dissemination and combat of the virus in two towns in the interior of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil's southernmost state. It draws on a sociotechnical timeline of the events that characterized the pandemic in the town of Picada Café during a pivotal moment—the so-called “first wave” from March to September 2020. Additionally, the article discusses the results of a socioeconomic survey conducted in October 2020 among small business owners in the towns of Picada Café and Nova Petrópolis. As COVID-19 sprawls through the farthestmost hinterlands, the pandemic unveils how political, economic, and social predicaments in these areas differ from their urban counterparts. They deserve to be studied independently so as to promote more effective and target-driven public policy responses.

**Keywords:** Covid-19; pandemic; interiorization; scale; technopolitics; Rio Grande do Sul.

# Tecno-Politizando Escalas Pandêmicas: Os Impactos da Covid-19 pelo Interior do Sul do Brasil

## Resumo

Este artigo contribui ao entendimento dos impactos multidimensionais da pandemia a partir de uma reflexão sobre as dimensões e escalas envolvidas na difusão e enfrentamento à doença em duas cidades do interior do Rio Grande do Sul. Ele recupera a cronologia sociotécnica da pandemia em Picada Café durante um momento crítico—a chamada “primeira onda”, de março a setembro de 2020. O artigo também problematiza os resultados de um *survey* socioeconômico conduzido em outubro de 2020 entre pequenos comerciantes (proprietários e funcionários) situados nas cidades de Picada Café e Nova Petrópolis. No processo de *interiorização* do Covid-19, está em jogo um amplo conjunto de negociações políticas, econômicas e sociais que difere de seus mecanismos urbanos e que merece ser estudado em detalhes para subsidiar respostas mais efetivas e escalares para o enfrentamento da doença.

**Palavras-Chave:** Covid-19; pandemia; interiorização; escala; tecnopolítica; Rio Grande do Sul.

# Techno-Politicizing Pandemic Scales: The Impacts of COVID-19 on the Interior of Southern Brazil<sup>1</sup>

Moisés Kopper

## Introduction

The COVID-19 epidemic that has been unfolding since early 2020 is perhaps the first major event of truly global proportions of the twenty-first century, whose political, economic, and social consequences will be felt for decades to come. Besides the biological issues, which include the spread and lethality of the virus, the pandemic underscores the kinds of societies we want to build in the future (Leonhardt, 2020). More than any other phenomenon, the pandemic destroys existing future orientations to rewrite them in the accelerated time of the present (Bryant & Knight, 2019; Salazar et al., 2017).

Despite its universal scope, the pandemic produced consequences with varied local impacts. As localities devised their own responses, they rewrote the global contours and action guidelines of national and transnational organizations. In practice, pandemic-related disruptions conflated with many pre-existing problems, including political conflicts and socioeconomic inequalities, crystallized over decades of exclusion. The politics of counting and recognizing individuals infected with the virus mapped onto the unequal geography of urban centers and *favelas* and the institutionalized necropolitics (Mbembe & Corcoran, 2019) of “letting [people] die.” This became popularized in the controversial death of a housekeeper in Rio de Janeiro after contracting the illness from her employer.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the interior of the country, the advance of the pandemic has posed specific issues and created particular populations at risk. This is illustrated in the high transmission rates in indigenous reserves in western Santa Catarina,<sup>3</sup> among immigrant communities, and even among workers in base and supply industries, as is the case of meat processing plants.<sup>4</sup>

This article explores the multidimensional impacts of the pandemic by interrogating the *dimensions* and *scales* involved in the dissemination and combat of the disease. Anthropology is particularly apt to understand processes of interaction and friction between global, regional, and local scales. If, historically, the discipline developed the concept of culture as a response to the notions of acculturation and homogenization (Sahlins, 1997), more recent developments have analyzed the productive effects of scale-making on the production of

<sup>1</sup> This article is the result of postdoctoral research developed at the PPGAS-UFRGS and is part of the project “A Covid-19 no Brasil: Análise e Resposta aos Impactos Sociais da Pandemia entre Profissionais de Saúde e População em Isolamento” [COVID-19 in Brazil: Analysis and Response to the Social Impacts of the Pandemic among Health Professionals and the Isolated Population]. It is developed by the *Rede Covid-19 Humanidades* [COVID-19 Humanities Network] and integrates the set of actions of the *Rede Vírus MCTI* [MCTI Virus Network] financed by the *Ministério da Ciência, Tecnologia e Inovação* (MCTI) [Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation] to fight the pandemic (Contract ref.: 0464/20 FINEP/UFRGS). Writing took place under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie postdoctoral grant agreement No. 801505. I am grateful for funding received from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme.

<sup>2</sup> Available at: <https://noticias.uol.com.br/saude/ultimas-noticias/redacao/2020/03/19/primeira-vitima-do-tj-era-domestica-e-pegou-coronavirus-da-patroa.htm>. Accessed on: July 7, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> In June, for example, at least two deaths of indigenous people had already been registered in the municipalities of *Entre Rios* and *Ipuacu*. The latter is where the largest indigenous reserve in southern Brazil is located (*Reserva Chapecó*). Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/sc/santa-catarina/noticia/2020/06/18/avanco-de-covid-19-nas-aldeias-indigenas-do-oeste-de-sc-preocupa-ministerio-da-saude.ghtml>. Accessed on: July 24, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> There are Kaingang populations, for example, who work in a meat processing plant in *Xaxim*, a city that also hosts a huge contingent of Haitian immigrants employed under the same conditions by the same industries. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/amp/brasil-53477319>. Accessed on: July 24, 2020.

the locality (Appadurai, 2013). They have also paid attention to the meanings, practices, and materialities involved in this process and the conflicts arising from this juxtaposition of varying scales of interest (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2003; Tsing, 2000, 2005).

The pandemic – understood as a complex multi-sited assemblage of variables – is a privileged empirical window for understanding the construction of scalar distinctions. This includes how people who enforce such distinctions perceive them and their effects on their agency (Briggs, 2004; Carr & Lempert 2016; Marston 2000; Neveling & Wergin 2009). The challenge, according to Tsing (2005: 153), is to understand processes of “scale-making” through which “the spatial dimensionality necessary for a particular kind of view” is “brought into being: proposed, practiced, and evaded, as well as taken for granted.” As localities reorganize in the wake of trans-local disruptive events, they also participate circumstantially in the production of global scale-making projects, claiming and contesting scales in cultural and political projects.

“There is something disturbingly beautiful about precision, even when we know it fails us,” writes Tsing (2012: 505) on the interplays of scale and the controversies underlying their production. “As in digital media, with its power to make the great tiny and the tiny great in an effortless zoom, *scale* has become a verb that requires precision; to scale well is to develop the quality called *scalability*, that is, the ability to expand – and expand, and expand – without rethinking basic elements.” However, as the anthropologist also indicates, systems are intrinsically prone to failures in execution and coordination. Through these contingencies and their techno-politics, we can better observe how interplays of scale affect and produce localities. Drawing on the anthropology of infrastructure, I define techno-politics as the practices of translating eminently political issues into matters of technical and abstract knowledge (Larkin, 2013; Mitchell, 2002; von Schnitzler, 2013).

Thus far, the pandemic – and its prevention and containment measures and sociopolitical effects – have been analyzed as an urban phenomenon. However, the dissemination of the virus affected regions of Brazil’s vast interior – including rural and underpopulated areas, which often lack the tools and infrastructure needed to deal with the disease. At play in the process of *interiorization* of COVID-19, there is a wide range of political, economic, and social negotiations. These differ from urban mechanisms and deserve to be studied in detail to support more effective and focalized responses to combat the disease.

To shed light on these issues, the article retrieves the pandemic chronology of Picada Café, a small town in the interior of Rio Grande do Sul, initially considered one of the states with the lowest incidence of SARS-CoV-2 cases. From early on, the State Secretariat of Health produced quantitative indicators for measuring and controlling disease dissemination. As part of these efforts, the Secretariat devised a centralized system – called the *Sistema de Distanciamento Controlado* [System of Controlled Distancing] – to assess the degree of risk in each microregion of the state. This method assigned color codes (yellow, low risk; orange, medium risk; red, high risk; and black, very high risk) based “on criteria for health and economic activity, always prioritizing life.”<sup>5</sup> Advertised as a model technology to fight the pandemic,<sup>6</sup> the system lasted for more than a year until being replaced in May 2021 by a more decentralized structure for issuing warnings, alerts, and action plans in which municipalities directly assumed responsibility for proposing appropriate measures. By contrast, the color-coded system imposed the adoption of specific protocols for the behavior and functioning of public establishments by the municipalities; risks were distributed and administered through co-management, in which associations of municipalities presented their technical adaptation reports on a weekly basis, based on the overarching guidelines of the color-coded model.

5 Available at: <https://distanciamentocontrolado.rs.gov.br>. Accessed on July 12, 2020.

6 See, for example: <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/brazil-rio-grande-do-sul-covid19-exit-strategy-lessons-by-ngaire-woods-and-leany-lemos-2020-05>. Accessed on: May 31, 2021.



With this context as the backdrop, the article problematizes how Picada Café dealt with the technical recommendations and regulations imposed by the system at a critical moment—the so-called “first wave,” from March to September 2020—when adjustments to the model and structural uncertainties dominated public debates. It asks: how were risk rating systems appropriated, implemented, or challenged, and what types of actions have been put in place, either to implement guidelines or to challenge the indicators that informed the attribution of the system’s color codes? The anthropological research that serves as the basis for the analysis was conducted between July and December 2020 and involved in-person interviews with residents and political authorities (such as mayors and representatives of the tourism and trade sector), as well as media surveys and online research.

The article first provides a chronology of the sociotechnical events of the pandemic as they unfolded in Picada Café. I define sociotechnical events as the intertwined set of activities traceable by their concurrent material and technological nature (Dorrestijn, 2012). Based on official posts from the *Prefeitura Municipal de Picada Café* [Picada Café Town Hall] on their Facebook profile and on the reactions of engaged citizens, the session retrieves how preventive measures to combat the virus reverberated among the citizenry. Through the digital footprints of these interactions, we see how global and national scales interact with local contexts as tools to control the pandemic are created and put into circulation, producing zones of interest with their specific frictions and controversies.

The second part of the article is based on data collected through an online survey in October 2020 involving eight small businesses (owners and employees) located in the towns of Picada Café and Nova Petrópolis. The questionnaire contained 44 questions involving multiple choice and open opinion and was sent to dozens of commercial representatives from the clothing, health, tourism, accounting, and dollar store sectors.<sup>7</sup> Questions addressed social, economic, and political issues related to the pandemic and its disruptions. The survey complements the qualitative data discussed in the previous section, pointing to the techno-politicization of pandemic scales.

By exploring how everyday controversies are translated in technical and moral terms (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006), we gain an empirical grasp of the scopes and interplays of scales involved in the indigenization and management of the pandemic. In the conclusion, I reflect on three axes of controversy: the negotiation of local moralities, the management and attribution of responsibilities, and the politics of controlling and counting COVID-19 cases and victims in the region. Through these, I highlight the technopolitical maneuvering behind the production of pandemic scales in the interior of Brazil.

## **Sociotechnical Chronology of the Pandemic in Picada Café**

This section recreates the sociotechnical chronology of the pandemic as it unfolded in the town of Picada Café. Located at the foot of the Serra Gaúcha, 80 km from the state capital Porto Alegre, the municipality has an estimated population of 5738 inhabitants. It belongs to the Caxias do Sul microregion<sup>8</sup> in the *Sistema de Distanciamento Controlado*, developed by the state government. Picada Café was emancipated from

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<sup>7</sup> Potential participants were approached through the author’s existing network of contacts. This strategy is justified insofar as it was important to capture the immediate impacts of the pandemic on social and economic life. The sample is therefore not statistically representative of the population, but it still offers relevant elements from different sectors of the economy that complement the qualitative analysis.

<sup>8</sup> The Caxias do Sul microregion encompasses dozens of municipalities in the Serra Gaúcha with varying profiles, including: Alto Feliz, Antônio Prado, Bento Gonçalves, Boa Vista do Sul, Bom Jesus, Bom Princípio, Campestre da Serra, Canela, Carlos Barbosa, Caxias do Sul, Coronel Pilar, Cotiporã, Esmeralda, Fagundes Varela, Farroupilha, Feliz, Flores da Cunha, Garibaldi, Gramado, Guabiju, Guaporé, Ipê, Jaquirana, Linha Nova, Monte Alegre dos Campos, Monte Belo do Sul, Muitos Capões, Nova Araçá, Nova Bassano, Nova Pádua, Nova Petrópolis, Nova Prata, Nova Roma do Sul, Paraí, Picada Café, Pinhal da Serra, Pinto Bandeira, Protásio Alves, Santa Tereza, São Jorge, São José dos Ausentes, São Marcos, São Vendelino, União da Serra, Vacaria, Vale Real, Veranópolis, Vila Flores, and Vista Alegre do Prata.

Nova Petrópolis in 1992 and has since expanded the leather footwear industry. Due to the strong influence of German culture brought by immigrants in an effort to colonize distant regions during the nineteenth century, Picada Café has recently invested in the expansion of natural and cultural tourism. As part of the *Rota Romântica* [lit. Romantic Route] tourist itinerary, in 2004, the town placed a group of historic buildings under governmental trust, thus creating the Jorge Kuhn Historical Park, which currently functions as a center of events that attracts thousands of tourists from different parts of the state and the country.

I trace the trajectory of the pandemic in Picada Café in 2020 from posts made on the official Facebook profile of the town hall<sup>9</sup> and comments posted by residents and other interested parties.<sup>10</sup> Data were collected from the beginning of March until the end of the first half of September (roughly the end of the “first wave”). This rich framework of information provides an overview of the scalar strategies developed by the municipality to combat the virus, such as indicators, regulations, forms of calculation, and the presentation of numbers. It also shows how the locality iteratively absorbed these metrics, indicators, and protocols as the meanings attached to them changed. Digital platforms, including Facebook, constitute a significant new arena of political articulation—the challenge here is to apply existing analog ethnographic tools to the qualitative analysis of these networks (Dalsgaard, 2016; Miller & Venkatraman, 2018). The symbiotic relationship between governments and citizens in a digital environment illuminates the exercise of democratic accountability. As we shall see, such a process entails the construction of a democratic voice around common interests that transcend the typical political mistrust of our times and instead focus on the performance of pandemic solidarities.

## The First Months

The first trace of the pandemic appears on March 30th, 2020, in a publication on the flexibilization of business hours and closing rules and the “gradual return to economic activities.” It is worth noting that the *Sistema de Distanciamento Controlado*, which provided a unified color-coded model for business operation rules, only entered into force on May 10th of the same year. Until then, prevention measures were managed and enforced through municipal and state decrees. A so-called “Crisis Committee” was created in the same month, composed of the mayor, municipal secretaries, and businessmen, to manage and deliberate on the control measures to be adopted.

Assembled in Jorge Kuhn Historical Park, political authorities and small and medium businessmen deliberated on returning to commercial activities after two weeks of forced stoppage. Decree no. 67/2020 provided for incursions to monitor compliance with the restriction rules, “and it may even suspend the activities of enterprises that do not respect them in full.” The decree also authorized the return of industrial workers, initially limited to 25 people allocated in the same production area, and the return of businesses with an occupancy limit of 50% of maximum capacity.

Comments from locals made it clear that there was a mismatch between the various sectors managing the pandemic. While companies resumed activities, schools and daycare centers remained closed. “We all have to work, but we have to think about where to leave our kids. Relatives are not obliged to stay with our kids if daycare centers and schools don’t work either.”<sup>11</sup>

9 In an interview with the mayor of Picada Café, held in October 2020, I was informed that posts made on behalf of the town hall were written by their press office. Some responses from the town hall to questions from residents were also signed by doctors who work in the town’s primary care units.

10 Around 30 to 40 residents commented on town hall posts over the months of the survey. Some names, generally women between 30 and 50 years old, appear more frequently in the original posts. Finally, posts were not written anonymously but signed by actual residents.

11 Individual quotes were anonymized throughout the article to preserve the individual’s privacy. The texts of the comments were translated as closely as possible, with the minimum of modifications to help preserve meaning.

To these and other questions, the town hall replied that the return to work was optional and that the decree only “opened up the possibility” of returning to everyday life. “There is no other side right now. There is the side of everyone willing to give a little more of themselves for the good of all. The issue of [reopening] schools is being studied as well.”

Other issues addressed by citizens in response to the publication of the decree included calls for caution “so that these early measures do not create a climate of ‘everything is fine already.’” “IT’S NOT!” they argued in bold letters. “I think it’s too soon; we’re not at the peak of transmission yet,” others said, “but the authorities are in charge.” To the latter, the town hall replied: “Your opinion is valid, everyone has their parameters; certainly you do, to conceptually express your ideas! The Crisis Committee has been working day-to-day to get it right. It has not been an easy task, believe me. These people deserve our credit and respect for all their effort and dedication, especially for the transparent and democratic way they are dealing with this issue. Let’s forge ahead!”

In some comments, the early reopening was also associated with the presence and circulation of outsiders as a risk factor: “But what about those who come from other towns to work here, will they be allowed to come? Because there aren’t any cases here, thank God, but there are towns that do, and will people come here to work normally??” In response to these comments, the town hall affirmed the unconstitutionality of restricting the movement of “outsiders.” “It violates the right to freedom of movement. Municipalities do not have jurisprudence on the subject.” But the circulation of locals was also associated with the morality of work and seen as a potential problem. In the words of a middle-aged man: “There are a lot of people walking on the street, but when it comes to working, they want to stay at home.”

In early April, a new post from the town hall announced changes in the municipal decree due to adjustments made by the state government regarding the opening of trade, services, and industry. Attending the public was prohibited for two weeks for companies in the trade sector and service providers. Only activities considered essential could continue to attend in person.

The repercussions among the citizens were, again, catastrophic. “Put a coat on, take it off, put it on, take it off,” a man quipped. Residents also complained about the hygiene conditions and the absence of hand sanitizer in supermarkets and around ATMs. Debates erupted over whether bars were essential services, reviving the moral issues of earlier days. “That’s why I say... Half a dozen shops and salons can’t resume activities... while bars are in full swing around here. Is this minority the only ones who could be putting the town at risk?” In a later post, the same person suggested: “That’s why I defend the theory... Either only the essentials work, or they all do. Because like this is unfair.”

While some people argued that snack bars should be considered essential services insofar as they supported other essential activities, such as truck driver work, others considered opening bars morally problematic. “How many elderly people are going to leave the house to go play cards or have a beer,” a 35-year-old woman asked, “because they live alone and don’t have young people to instruct them to stay home or keep them inside? We live in a region where most of the older folks don’t understand and, excuse the tone, they’re stubborn!!”

The moral debate about opening up certain types of services to the detriment of others gave way to the controversy over the circulation of infected people from neighboring towns. One woman, who apparently owned a local business, pointed out that “many of us find this current decree unfair. We either close everything or open everything up with due care.” Implicit in this statement is the idea of an indeterminate collective (“many of us find”) that reveals the desire to build momentary solidarities with other citizens (real or imagined) in order to produce a consensus on the subject. Then she added: “if an industry with a large number of staff who even come from another town (that possibly has cases of COVID-19) are allowed to work here, I feel wronged in not being able to serve an individual customer who lives and works in Picada Café.” To the embodied collective

(the “individual customer who lives and works in Picada Café”), this woman opposed the Other collective, vaguely constructed as dangerous and detrimental.

Throughout April, the town hall published sparse bulletins to highlight the initiatives taken to deal with the virus. Thus, on April 11th, it was announced that the Secretariat of Health had set up an exclusive office for respiratory diseases on the ground floor of the Primary Care Unit in the town center (there are two PCUs in total in the town). The unit had a doctor who would treat only mild flu cases. The announcement was accompanied by photographs with medical care equipment and a team consisting of a doctor with two nurses wearing personal protective equipment (PPE). About a week later, the town hall posted another message accompanied by a video in which the doctor on duty appears offering instructions to residents on how to wash their hands and properly sanitize their environments—recommendations in line with the discourse of the mainstream television media at that time.<sup>12</sup> In the comments, many residents celebrated the initiative. Still, some used the space to seed new complaints, like this woman:

That’s good because apparently, the quarantine has ended in Picada Café, with so much movement in the street, the town center is full everywhere. Folks are using the mini-mart and the pharmacy as if they were a bar, going out with the whole family and chatting in the aisles. This is the exact opposite of what the WHO advised. Someone from Picada will have to die before the penny drops for these folks. I hope it’s not any of my relatives because I’m doing my part!

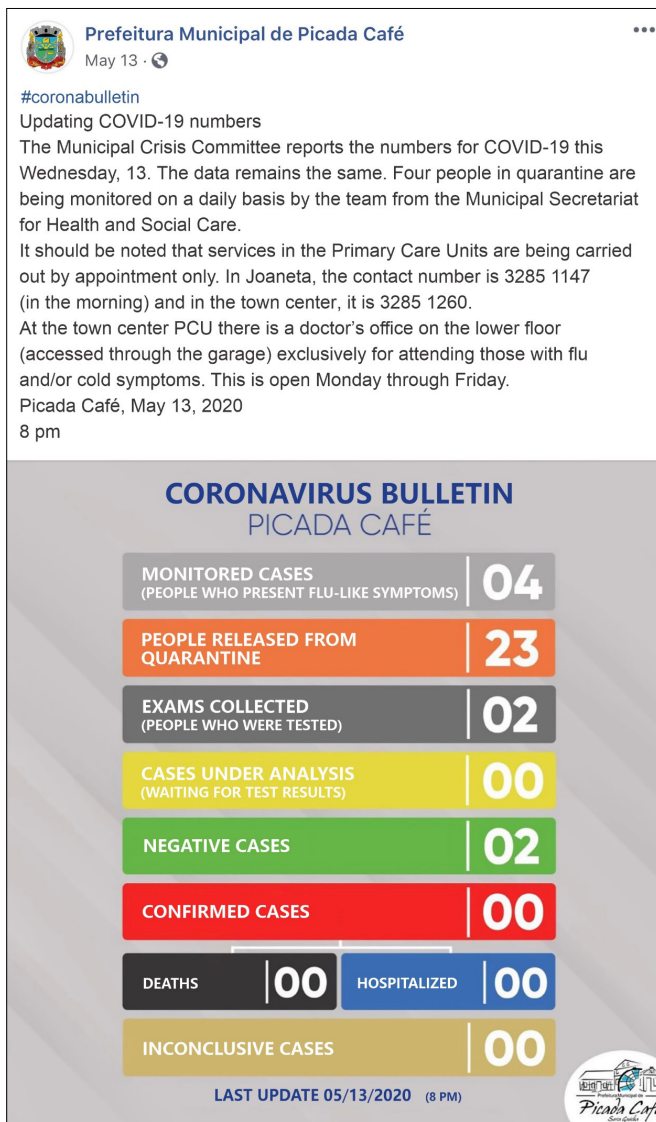
On April 16th, the town hall announced new flexibility in the measures to open up commerce and services, which, following a state decree, were now subject to the absence of COVID-19 cases in the municipalities. The Crisis Committee also established as reopening criteria the observance of hygiene rules and the offer of hygiene products to customers, with clear guidelines to avoid crowding, such as the limit of one person per 1,5 m<sup>2</sup>, individualized care, and by appointment only in beauty salons. Many residents applauded the resolution, urging their fellow citizens to wear masks in public spaces. “We also hope for the good sense of tourists, since in big cities, shops are still closed,” a woman added. Another person pointed out that, despite being closed, at the municipal park, “many people entered leaving their cars outside. No one respects [the rules], all folks from elsewhere.”

As of May, the town established a daily posting system for cases being monitored. The initiative was supported by the Crisis Committee and followed the implementation, by the state government, of the *Sistema de Distanciamiento Controlado*.

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<sup>12</sup> Rede Globo [Globo TV Network], for example, reformulated its programing schedule in mid-March 2020, including morning public utility programs with the presence of experts to promote the circulation of qualified information on the transmission and prevention mechanisms of the virus.

Example of a graph released by the town hall (original in Portuguese) containing daily updates on the pandemic numbers in Picada Café



Source: Facebook

The chart was updated daily throughout the month of May, although most of the indicators remained at zero. At first, the initiative was well accepted by the public. Again, however, the problem was redirected against outsiders. “Happy that our town is taking care of itself, but what worries me is these people who enter the town on weekends and generate agglomerations. Passing through the town yesterday [Saturday], I was terrified of how many people there were in some establishments, and worst of all, without masks!”

Meeting of the Municipal Crisis Committee in front of the town hall



Source: Facebook

On May 19th, a new post from the town hall about a meeting with the Crisis Committee stated that “in general, the numbers prove [that] the municipality is very well aligned in its dialogue with the community, especially concerning the widespread hygiene measures. (...) The next step is to carry out public awareness actions for the external public. This will be done through educational blitzes on the streets and incursions into commercial spaces, especially on weekends, when there is a greater flow of visitors.” It was a response from the town hall, articulated through numerical scales, to the anxiety manifested by several citizens to deal with the circulation of outsiders.

Locals praised the decision. “I liked the ‘exponential awareness actions with the population’! There are many people out there still denying the virus and failing to take care of themselves! We really need to make the population aware so that this virus does not reach our town!” Others, however, added that “last weekend’s crowds at the town’s tourist spots exceeded all limits. These individuals don’t even wear masks...” A woman pointed out that “Jorge Kuhn Park had several cars from far away cities; they leave their cars on the street and walk in the park without any care.” Still, others suggested that residents were also involved in agglomeration practices: “We need to inspect the riverbanks on Sundays. At Morro Pelado, there was a party last Sunday.” A woman recalled that the neighboring town of Nova Petrópolis already had its first case: “now we need to be more careful, because (...) many people from here go and come back every day.”

The mandatory use of masks also generated controversy among residents. “There are people who still pretend they forgot [their mask] or left it in the car,” a shop owner suggested, adding that “if it’s me, I say right away, GO GET IT FROM THE CAR.” Others reported that “people walk freely without a mask, including in front of the Police, and nobody does anything.” Resistance to the effectiveness of wearing masks was also expressed: “Have you ever thought about people who suffer from anxiety, rhinitis, or any respiratory allergy? (...) Don’t give me a speech that it’s to protect us from the virus. What’s the use of being protected from the virus and dying of suffocation[?] But now healthy people can go to the beach and walk by the sea. Townhall employees can walk nonstop up and down too, and no one complains. What hypocrisy...” The comment was not responded to or liked by any profile.

Liquid soap distributed by the municipal government in an action to raise public awareness on the BR-116 in May 2020.<sup>13</sup>



Source: author.

The month of May continued without significant changes. It ended with a controversy between the town hall and a citizen regarding the protocols for handling the virus and the attribution of legal responsibility for transmission. The episode gives a good idea of the interplay of scales between local morality and state and national pandemic response protocols.

It's good that we don't have cases in Picada Café, but I disagree with how care is being dealt with. The person goes to the Primary Care Unit with a cold or a sore throat, then they treat it as if it were COVID. They tell the person to isolate for 14 days without being able to work or even taking the test. This is nonsense. And on top of that, they threaten the person with a fine and other things if they leave the house. This is very disrespectful to the citizen who pays their taxes on time. If you have symptoms, do the test and if it's negative, release the patient, and that's it.

The town hall's response did not take long:

I understand your point, but things don't work that way. In fact, all cases of flu-like symptoms should be treated as suspected COVID. There is no way to know, at first, if they are not, through physical examination. And isolation is necessary and fundamental. By the way, a sore throat or any cold could be COVID too! As for the test, it is only valid if it is done from eight/ten days after the onset of symptoms and not at the beginning of the disease. Unfortunately, we have to wait (at home!) and then test. What is absurd is to have COVID and run the risk of transmitting it to an entire town for lack of care. As a matter of fact, it can even be seen as a crime, and this is not my position, nor

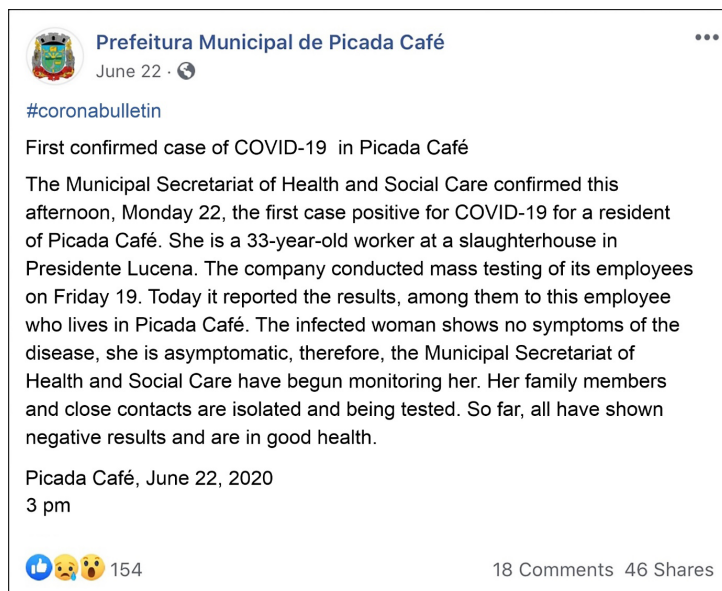
<sup>13</sup> The label reads: "Wash your hands and stay healthy - Liquid soap 60 ml [2 fl. oz.] / Valid: Feb/2022."

yours, nor the town hall's. *It is a decision of the judiciary!* No one is threatening anyone here; everyone is being guided and assisted! And that is how it should be. In addition, all conducts and guidelines given in the town follow the protocols and guidelines of the Ministry of Health. Nothing was *invented* here! I suggest accessing these protocols on the Ministry of Health website; it is in the public domain. [Emphasis added]

## The Politics of Testing

The month of May ended amid mass vaccination of the older adult population against the common flu, with a table of ten individuals monitored, 27 people released from quarantine, and four tests (either PCR or rapid test) collected and analyzed. The town continued without a single documented case of infection, only performing rapid tests and quarantining people with flu symptoms. On June 4th, the town reported the first hospitalization of a patient with flu-like illness.

This picture would only change significantly in the second half of June.



“Yes, now it has started”; “it would be a miracle to get through this without anyone getting it,” the comments followed. Among the reactions to the publication, many started to “tag” people from their personal network in an attempt to spread the word. The comments mentioned that “it’s certainly not the first nor the only one!” There were also new references to the unrestricted occupation of public spaces and essential businesses, followed by disbelief. “As everything passes, this too will pass,” one lady wrote, “may God protect us and let everyone do their part.”

The month of June showed a jump in the number of tests collected. On the 8<sup>th</sup>, the municipality had performed a total of 13 tests; the next day, that number jumped to 46 (44 rapid tests and 2 RT-PCR). A few days later, a female resident questioned the rationale for collecting tests – which, in her opinion, should only be administered to symptomatic people. “I’d like to know how this analysis is done? Only for health workers?” One of the doctors at the health unit promptly replied: “It’s being done! All patients who are in isolation for flu-like symptoms are being tested. And if they test negative, there is no reason to test their contacts!” In the same thread, another citizen intervened using technical language: “the main question is why only test 15 patients,



when there are more than 40 who were submitted to quarantine (and who are, from an epidemiological point of view, important actors in the survey of incidence). And why, since there is no record of infection, use tests on asymptomatic health workers in the first place (which brings to light the management and expenditure of supplies)[?].”

Almost defensively, the same doctor argued in his response that:

(...) the tests were only made available by the government a few weeks ago, in small quantities and with priority indication for symptomatic health professionals. We implemented this! As we received more tests, we increased the inclusion criteria to perform them. It was decided (not by me, but by the health committee!) not to perform the tests on patients retrospectively (merely for epidemiological records but with no practical value, since they were already cured of the flu syndrome). About performing tests on health professionals, it seems obvious to me, due to contact and because they can be asymptomatic transmitters. I understand your concern about management and spending, but it seems less difficult to analyze the situation in retrospect. For now, we keep fighting and doing what we can!

While the patient hospitalized in early June tested negative, another patient admitted to the same hospital in Nova Petrópolis was transferred to an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) in Caxias do Sul on June 24<sup>th</sup>, without yet having received the test results. At that juncture in the pandemic, results took at least seven days to return to the municipality after being examined at the *Laboratório Central do Estado* [State Central Laboratory], in Porto Alegre.

## The Specter of Tourism

More public awareness actions were carried out throughout June. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, in partnership with other municipalities in the Hortênsias Region, the town hall organized what it called an “educational blitz,” promoting guidelines on prevention and the distribution of items, such as hand sanitizer and masks. The action was supported by the Police and the Fire Department volunteers and was carried out along the BR-116, the access route to the “Serra Gaúcha” tourist region. Locals applauded the initiative, but also highlighted that the sanitizer could have been distributed instead to the population of Picada Café: “... because from what I saw, [there were] only imported cars and those with money, :( raise awareness, yess, wasteeee no.” In response, the municipal government stressed that the actions did not “target a social class, because the virus also does not choose whom to attack” and recalled that previous actions were aimed exclusively at the local population.

In this post, the issue of the municipal park and who has access to the town’s public infrastructure in times of pandemic reappeared with force. Suggestions were made for sanitizer and masks to be made available in the municipal park. “A lot of tourists go there. They leave their cars on the street and walk around the park without masks.” In response, the town clarified that the park was not open for visitation and that, therefore, the entry of vehicles was not authorized. “It is fundamental that the park’s vendors themselves be the watchful eyes warning about those who circulate [without a mask]. Taking care of each other is more than a gesture of solidarity; it is everyone’s duty. Help us!”

“Unfortunately, it doesn’t do any good for the vendors to say anything because the visitors say ‘but the town hall doesn’t even provide sanitizer in the park itself, so why do we have to wear masks?’” replied the complainant. The town hall, in turn, countered that in the park, only the commercial tents were open based on a “pick up, pay and leave” system and that *they* should offer hand sanitizer to their customers. “Insisting on a connection between the use of masks and the availability of sanitizer scares us. One thing does not make the other unfeasible. Moreover: the use of a mask is mandatory statewide. Not offering sanitizer does not

authorize the person to walk around without a mask. This kind of vision is worrying. (...) Requiring the use of a mask and the offering of sanitizer is a co-responsibility of the park's commercial spaces because – we stress again – they are the only ones with the prerogative of receiving an external public. Let's be vigilant, everyone!"

The month of June ended with the fourth case of COVID documented on the 29<sup>th</sup>. It was a citizen hospitalized in Sapiranga in serious condition. In the same post, the town hall dealt with the consequences of non-compliance with social isolation rules for individuals who presented flu-like symptoms without covid testing, the so-called "quarantined": "leaving home is only authorized in emergencies. Complaints can be made by phone [town hall officials] or through the ombudsman on the website." In the comments, residents highlighted the importance of these people remaining isolated at home and provoked: "it's known that some do not comply," or even "I know of many," to which the town hall replied, "Report them! Help!"

Other residents preferred to ask for more details about the fourth COVID case in town. "Is this the case of the young man who had his house burnt down and was hospitalized in Sapiranga?" one of them asked. "Is this information relevant to you?" the town hall countered. "It is strictly forbidden for us to report who the infected people are. We suggest that we concentrate our efforts and hope for the prompt recovery of these people so that they can soon be back here in Picada Café." The same individual replied: "It isn't relevant, but it is curious. There's no more news about this case (neither in official media nor in journalistic media), and then, out of nowhere, this information with the same profile as happened before. I agree with not informing the identity of those infected! But like I said, it's curious!" Another person responded in that same thread with a facepalm emoji in disapproval and disbelief. The post was deleted just a few days after collecting this material, in September 2020.

In the first few days of July, with the confirmation of three more positive cases – including the young woman admitted to the ICU in Caxias do Sul and two meat processing plant employees who worked in the town of Morro Reuter – reactions among residents began to change. "So, are the tourists still to blame?" one of them asked. "Jeez! What a thing, huh?" another person retorted, "I've read so much 'shit' here since this pandemic started. I even read the phrase 'pity this virus is not selective.'" "Of course, it's not [the tourists, but] people [who] live in Picada and work in other towns; the blame can't fall on us, tourists." At the same time, the town hall announced that one of the beds in the patient observation area of the town center PCU would be isolated "to provide a spectrum of greater security for the work team."

In the first few days of August, the confirmation of three more COVID-19 cases in a single day rekindled debates over the role of tourism in the region. "Those three new cases came by helicopter," a resident argued. Another person asked: "From the information I have, the hospitalized person has been in the hospital for a few days. Was it a tourist who infected them?" Criticism of the inspection of agglomerations also followed. "People are playing with their health; on weekends, the streets are full of cars with plates from other towns heading towards Morro do Vento. Nobody's wearing a mask; where's that thing about no crowds? Let's wake up, people." Another person agreed: "What's the use of the town's population taking all the necessary precautions, if on the weekend the town is full of people from outside, and they don't care about the pandemic... I think it's time to rethink the events that happen on the weekends...."

The first death from COVID-19 in Picada Café was announced on July 8th. It was a 63-year-old man admitted to the ICU of Caxias do Sul General Hospital on June 23rd. All 41 comments were of solidarity with the victim and his family. At the same time, amidst the shortage of PCR and rapid tests, the health department continued to opt to quarantine patients with flu-like symptoms and, as soon as the two-week period was fulfilled and the symptoms had disappeared, to consider them "cured."

## The Arrival of Chloroquine

On June 9th, a local inquired about the use of hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin in response to the town's daily numbers update. One of the resident physicians at the town center's care unit promptly replied that "the protocol is available for use by physicians, always following discussions with their patients regarding the needs and risks." The doctor also highlighted that, up until that moment, the medication had not been used in any case of flu-like illness. Social isolation and medical monitoring continued to be the preferred solutions in the treatment of COVID-19 symptoms.

Despite this, beginning in August – only two months before the municipal elections – the town hall's disposition seemed to change in favor of adopting these medication practices, which had already fallen into disuse in much of the world due to their serious side effects.<sup>14</sup> A municipal bulletin released on the 4<sup>th</sup>, entitled "Secretariat of Health has the medications for COVID-19 treatment," provided more details:

Azithromycin, Tamiflu, Prednisone, Ivermectin, and Chloroquine. These are the drugs that are currently used to control COVID-19. They are available at the pharmacy at the town center Primary Care Unit. The provision to patients is solely and exclusively through a medical prescription.

Excerpt from a town hall post concerning the presence of medications seen at the time as effective in the treatment of COVID-19.



Source: Facebook.

The post received 413 likes (counted in early September 2020), 154 shares, and 120 comments praising the initiative. "Congratulations to the responsible people there in Picada Café. Wish we would copy that here in Nova Petrópolis." Another person said: "Congratulations, finally someone shows us the medicine...." In a short time, the issue became political: "Look at that, the NP [Nova Petrópolis] councilors don't care about these medications. Congratulations to Picada Café's Secretariat of Health because these NP assholes are only good for closing squares etc. But their day is coming." The critical comment was followed by praise: "Let them come

<sup>14</sup> The insistence on adopting an emergency medications kit, including hydroxychloroquine, azithromycin, ivermectin and nitazoxanide – the so-called "COVID kit" – as early treatments for COVID-19 has become one of the hallmarks of the Bolsonaro administration. Several national and international bodies have taken a stand against the recommendation of these drugs due to their proven inefficacy and serious side effects. Despite this, between March 2020 and January 2021, at least four federal measures directly promoted or facilitated their use, according to a survey by the *Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas de Direito Sanitário* [Center for Studies and Research on Health Law] at the University of São Paulo (USP).

and ask for votes, bunch of bums, shameless living at our expense, and THEY DON'T DO ANYTHING, NOR ARE THEY GOOD FOR ANYTHING!!! WORST THAN MAGGOTS!!!!" And, suggestively, "I find it commendable that town mayors are concerned about their voters" [Emphasis added].

In general, the responses followed the idea that the medications would make it possible to extinguish uncertainties concerning the virus and lead to the reopening of economic activities as soon as possible. "My congratulations concerning the attitude. Now you have to end this 6-month quarantine and let Brazil move on." There was also the idea that neighboring municipalities should copy the medication provision model. Only one person was willing to question the initiative, noting that the use of the drugs mentioned was not yet proven to be effective, which was followed by timely reactions from other residents: "If your father is drowning in the middle of the river and beside him, there's a boat. You wouldn't take the boat to save him because the boat isn't approved?" Another citizen replied that the analogy was wrong. "The right thing would be: 'if your father is having a heart attack, are you going to give him a remedy for diarrhea?'" To not miss the point, the author of the first metaphor responded by saying, "if there is any possibility of helping, yes."

## Counting Disputes

In this subsection, I map some of the long-term controversies generated by the use of a system to count and monitor cases (the "*Boletim Coronavírus*" [Coronavirus Bulletin]) among citizens. As we have seen, every day, the town of Picada Café presented a table with the current count of the number of confirmed and suspected cases, patients admitted to hospitals, deaths, and cases considered "cured." However, these statistics were not always peacefully accepted by the community. On July 2nd, for example, a citizen asked: "Why did the health agent say today that he had no confirmed case when the table shows 4 cases?" In response, a community health worker stated that the health professionals had not yet been updated and that the "data will soon become clearer."

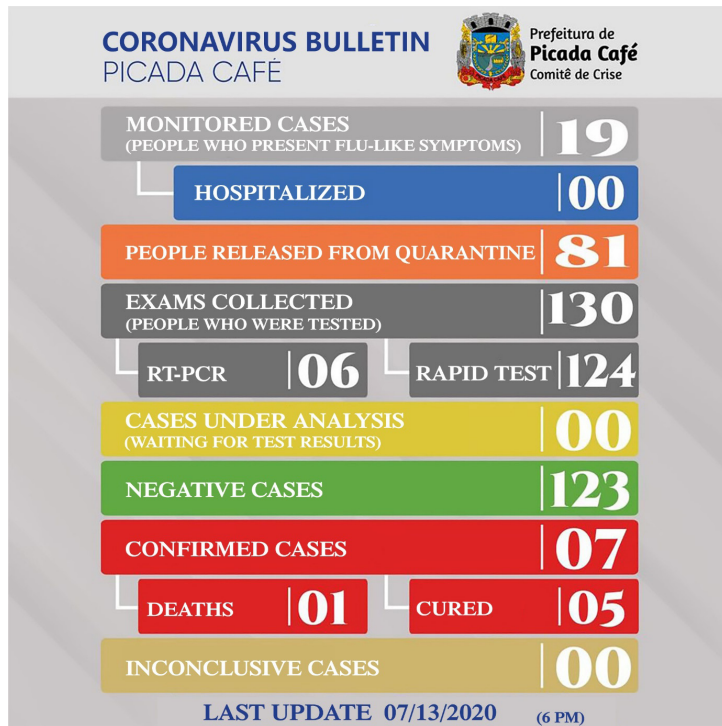
Citizens also expressed their opinion on how to improve the accounting system for cases and victims. On July 9th, for example, it was suggested to put "the number of those cured in blue, or another vivid color, because red is the number of those infected; when they're all the same color, those cured don't draw as much attention, and it's a very important number" [Emphasis added].

The system also proved to be prone to human failures, which were quickly criticized by residents. "This count [of tests performed] is not quite correct," one citizen wrote on July 11th; another joined in: "That's been wrong for a long time, lack of information! If you don't know, don't post!" In response, the town hall was quick to say that "due to a typing error, a negative result was not added to the negative exams. There are 120 in total. We don't make mistakes due to a lack of information. In fact, information is not lacking. We publish daily, even on weekends, updated data on the COVID-19 pandemic in Picada Café. We apologize if anyone felt violated by this small hitch. This is no reason to discredit the voluntary work in combating the coronavirus. We forge ahead, strong and safe!"

As the examples above demonstrate, residents quickly distrusted the transparency of the counting and monitoring process in the face of the slightest miscalculation by town officials. "It's bullshit," one of them said on another occasion, to which the town simply replied, "follow the channel for complaints," sending a link from the town's ombudsman. The reason for the divergence was that the table indicated a total of seven confirmed cases, which were then distributed between deaths (1) and cured (5). Many citizens, including a town councilor, then decided to "demand" explanations from the town about the seventh case. Given the number of questions, the town hall issued another clarification note about its monitoring system, stating that the seventh case referred to "a COVID-positive person who has not yet ended their period of social isolation. As soon as she completes this protocol, she will be added to those cured." Even before the town hall manifested itself, other citizens who had already deduced the misunderstanding sought to answer individual questions,

saying that ‘there are 5 cured, 1 active and 1 death, 5+1+1=7.’ One of the complainants seemed to be irritated with the response and replied: “It’s just a question of explaining things better, and everything will be fine; I studied math, and I know that 5+1+1=7.” The day after the controversy, the case accounting system received a new update in its design, now incorporating the category “active cases” to avoid new interpretation divergences.

Sample chart (original in Portuguese) showing the daily case count in July 2020.



Source: Facebook

On July 29th, there were new inquiries about the Coronavirus Bulletin. “These data here are strange.” In response, the town hall provoked: “Hello, can we help with your strangeness so that there are no doubts?” Another resident posted that her husband was admitted to the hospital and incited: “or is he not [considered to be] from the municipality?” followed by an angry emoji. In response, a citizen asked whether his exam had not been negative, to which the complainant replied: “no one has contacted us; they said that the test will be ready on Friday, and he’s hospitalized.” After a few more comments that followed in the same thread, the town hall reacted, saying that a hospitalized patient had tested negative that day. “If your husband is the patient, you can remain calm and happy. His illness is not related to coronavirus. Regarding the exam deadline, the results have been sent in UP TO 72 hours. If it comes before this, it is thanks to the efficiency of the analysis laboratories. The information was sent to the hospital at the end of the day, and the hospital should pass it on to the patient.” The complainant replied: “But so far, I have not received anything, much less the patient. He doesn’t know anything.” Finally, another citizen joined in the responses: “I thought there were 00 hospitalized from the data in the table. But I hope your husband improves. I went through this, and I know well what they are going through. But my case was confirmed, and thank God I’m home and cured! May everything be fine. I’m rooting for his exam to be negative. [Have] faith.”

## What do Small Businesses Think about the Effects of the Pandemic?

In this section, I present the results of the socioeconomic questionnaire conducted among small business owners in Picada Café and Nova Petrópolis in October 2020. As discussed in the conclusion, these results help to understand and locate behaviors and reactions observed in the previous section among residents of the interior of Brazil during the first cycle of the pandemic.

Eight responses were obtained, of which three were from business owners and five from employees. The areas of activity of these businesses included clothing, tourism, lumber, accounting, healthcare, dollar stores, and retail trade in general. Two businesses had only one employee each; four businesses had between two and four employees, one business had nine employees, and one business had ten or more employees. Among the 40 employees of these establishments, only one did not have a formal contract; 21 were men, and 19 were women; 14.3% were aged between 16 and 21 years, 19% between 22 and 28 years, 19% between 29 and 35 years, 19% between 36 and 42 years, 9.5% between 43 and 49 years old, 9.5% between 50 and 56 years old, 4.7% between 57 and 63 years old, and 4.7% between 64 and 70 years old.

Most of the businesses interviewed were quick to apply isolation or social restriction measures at the onset of the pandemic. As of March 2020, seven establishments had already aligned themselves with the health recommendations to keep their doors open. Among the protective measures, the mandatory use of masks by employees and customers was incorporated by all the establishments. The minimum distance between customers of at least 1.5 m was observed by five businesses, while the minimum distance between employees, by four. Six establishments worked reduced hours, and five worked with reduced customer capacity.

The use of technologies and alternatives to keep businesses open has also become a reality: two firms adopted home delivery, and one adopted remote work. In addition, six attended customers via social networks (Facebook, WhatsApp, or others). The use of these platforms was already a reality for all the establishments surveyed, but five stated that the demand via these channels increased during the pandemic. In the case of home delivery, only two companies reported an increase compared with the pre-pandemic period; three did not perform this type of service, and three continued to meet the exact demand prior to the pandemic.

Although all respondents rated the adoption of these measures as important or very important, they stressed that it was not always possible to maintain official distancing norms between customers and employees. Evaluating the open responses regarding the importance of the measures adopted, I observed the formation of a kind of health awareness in relation to the effects of the transmission of infectious diseases, which is evident in this statement: “it’s prevention not only for the virus that appeared like a bomb but also for much more common everyday illnesses. (...) These are hygiene issues.”

As of October 2020, six businesses said they were still following these guidelines. When asked which of the current measures they would like to maintain in the future, regardless of the pandemic, many mentioned the practices of cleaning the environment and the people through the use of disinfectants and sanitizer. Social distancing and the use of masks were also mentioned, although in lower numbers. However, uncertainty about the future prevailed among the responses due to fluctuations in the official guidelines of public bodies and because employees depended on the owners to implement procedures, which often put them in an uncomfortable position. This dollar store employee aged between 16 and 21 stated:

I don’t know if [the measures] will be maintained, as the owner is very liberal. Up to now, during the pandemic, if the customer doesn’t want to use a mask, he says he doesn’t need to, totally disregarding the recommended sanitary protocols. As an employee, I’d continue with the mandatory use for employees to wear masks and use sanitizer since there’s a lot of movement of people from other towns. It’s a protection for yourself and for others.

During the pandemic, between March and October 2020, to remain in operation, all the businesses interviewed had to shelve employees, and one had to fire employees (five in total, rehired months later). Three businesses shelved one employee, one shelved two employees, one shelved three employees, and one shelved ten or more employees. On the other hand, two businesses were also able to hire one employee each during the same period. Six of the eight establishments interviewed closed their doors for at least two weeks during the first quarantine period in April 2020. Three businesses reported periods of closure that totaled three, four, and up to twelve weeks, respectively.

Four respondents rated the impact of the closure on their business as bad or very bad, while three showed indifference. The reasons listed for the responses varied according to the profile of each establishment. One owner, for example, reported her concern that since it was a small family business, “once the doors are closed, we don’t have any income during this period, while some bills always need to be paid.” Others suggested that “it could have been worse.” “Even though the store is closed, we continue to attend to customers, but with the doors closed, very carefully. I can risk saying that it was somewhat better than when we were open.” And finally, some reported earnings after reopening: “Everyone closed at the same time, and so people were idle at home; upon return after closing, many customers were still in lockdown and thus the sale of products increased.”

Six businesses also reported seeing changes in their consumer profile. Some pointed to the fact that they were now “buying what they really need.” Others indicated that people “began to consume more locally instead of going to shopping malls,” which presumably implied traveling to cities nearby, such as Novo Hamburgo or Caxias do Sul. Still, others reported the arrival of new customers “who didn’t even know about us or have any idea of our products for sale in the store. Our customers have increased.”

In the respondents’ evaluation, the economic sectors that suffered the most from the measures to restrict movement and the closing of stores were: hotels and accommodation (100%); bars and restaurants (87.5%); sales in goods and services in general (75%); parks and squares (75%); the textile and furniture industries (37.5%); tanneries (25%); and even electoral campaigns (12.5%). Of these, it is essential to remember that the leather tanning and textile and furniture industries play a predominant role in the economy of Picada Café, and the tourism sector (active in bars, gastronomy, hotels and parks, and squares) is one of the pillars of the economy of Nova Petrópolis.

In the respondents’ opinion, the primary vectors for disseminating the virus in the region were the movement of tourists (87.5%), the movement of outside visitors (75%), the opening of sales in goods and services in general (75%), the opening of bars and restaurants (62.5%), the opening of meat processing plants (50%), and the conducting of electoral campaigns (37.5%).<sup>15</sup> Two people considered primary care units and hospitals as important centers of disease transmission. Two people viewed parks and squares and the movement of residents as dissemination vectors. Among the items on the same list, respondents considered that the movement of tourists (50%) and the movement of outside visitors (50%) needed to be prohibited; hotels and lodgings needed to be closed (37.5%), and the circulation of older adults (37.5%) needed to be banned. One person also considered that election campaigns needed to be canceled because of the pandemic. However, two out of the eight respondents thought that “it’s not necessary to ban activities if precautions are taken and protocols are respected.”

Three out of the eight respondents emphasized their businesses’ revenue losses during the pandemic and estimated them to be between R\$1,000 and R\$7,000, or the equivalent of three months of sales. According to respondents’ evaluations, these economic losses occurred due to reduced customers and the compulsory closure of businesses. Two other respondents evaluated gains due to the pandemic, as sales increased considerably when the stores reopened. Finally, two firms reported not having noticed any difference in income.

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<sup>15</sup> Respondents were presented with a list of fifteen variables, from which they could select up to five options.

The representative of the tourism sector stated that this sector “was certainly one of the most affected since it’s not an essential activity. Still, many people did not respect the recommendations of isolation and distancing and continued their tours anyway, which ended up helping maintain the business and the gradual resumption later.”

## Impact Perceptions

Respondents were also asked about their perceptions of the social and economic impacts of the pandemic on the towns. In the table below, we see the degree of agreement among participants in relation to statements that aim to determine the dynamics of responsibility for the contagion, the dissemination of the virus, and its effects on specific populations.

Do you agree with the following statements?	Strongly Disagree	Partially Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Partially Agree	Strongly Agree
<i>Businesses that do not respect social distancing protocols must be held legally responsible.</i>	0% (0)	25% (2)	12.5% (1)	37.5% (3)	62.5% (5)
<i>Not all businesses in the town should comply with social restrictions and/or isolation measures.</i>	62.5% (5)	0% (0)	25% (2)	12.5% (1)	0% (0)
<i>In the region, the pandemic has affected all types of business equally.</i>	12.5% (1)	25% (2)	37.5% (3)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)
<i>In the region, the pandemic has affected all people equally.</i>	0% (0)	37.5% (3)	12.5% (1)	50% (4)	0% (0)
<i>In the region, the pandemic has been affecting older adults in particular.</i>	25% (2)	0% (0)	25% (2)	25% (2)	25% (2)

Respondents generally agreed with the idea that businesses that disrespected social distancing protocols during the pandemic should be held legally responsible. Likewise, respondents agreed that all businesses operating in these towns should comply with restriction measures or social distancing without distinction. At least three respondents disagreed with the statement that the pandemic affected different types of businesses equally, although half of them agreed with the statement that people were similarly affected by the pandemic in these towns. Older adults were especially impacted by the pandemic in the opinion of half of them, although the disagreement of two people may indicate that, even in small towns, the pandemic has reached populations in multiple age groups.

The questionnaire also sought to gauge the role of specific industry sectors in these towns, such as tourism and meat processing plants. In the table below, half of the respondents agreed, at least in part, with the statement that residents and businesses could not be considered mainly responsible for disseminating the virus. Regarding tourism, there was no clear definition of its importance during the pandemic as a dissemination vector, although at least three respondents agreed that it had become a problem for the region. Moreover, few agreed to apply restrictive measures to the sector, such as closing establishments until the conditions for reopening were feasible. Concerning meat processing plants, most respondents disagreed that they had become a critical dissemination vector or that they had to close their doors until sanitary conditions for reopening



were established. This can be explained, in part, by the absence of large meat processing plants in these towns, even though Picada Café has residents who work in this sector at a large plant in the nearby town of Presidente Lucena, one of the documented sources of transmission by meat processing plants.<sup>16</sup>

Do you agree with the following statements?	Strongly Disagree	Partially Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Partially Agree	Strongly Agree
<i>Residents and businesses in the municipality are not those mainly responsible for the spread of the virus.</i>	25% (2)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	50% (4)	0% (0)
<i>Tourism has become a problem for the region.</i>	12.5% (1)	0% (0)	50% (4)	25% (2)	12.5% (1)
<i>Tourism in the region needs to close its doors until the sanitary conditions for reopening are established.</i>	12.5% (1)	25% (2)	37.5% (3)	25% (2)	0% (0)
<i>Slaughterhouses have become a problem for the region.</i>	12.5% (1)	50% (4)	25% (2)	12.5% (1)	0% (0)
<i>Slaughterhouses in the region need to close their doors until the sanitary conditions for reopening are established.</i>	50% (4)	25% (2)	25% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)

Respondents were also heard regarding their evaluation of the *Sistema de Distanciamento Controlado*, initially developed by the state government to control dissemination of the virus. In the table below, it is evident that not everyone agreed with the effectiveness of the color-coded system to control the pandemic in Rio Grande do Sul. Likewise, we see that respondents were divided regarding whether such a system was the best option to prevent dissemination of the virus.

Do you agree with the following statements?	Strongly Disagree	Partially Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Partially Agree	Strongly Agree
<i>The state government's color-coded system helped control the spread of the virus.</i>	12.5% (1)	25% (2)	12.5% (1)	37.5% (3)	12.5% (1)
<i>The color-coded system was the best solution to prevent the spread of the virus.</i>	25% (2)	0% (0)	50% (4)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)

Three out of eight respondents said the impact of the color-coded system on their business was good or excellent, and three said it was bad or very bad; two people did not provide an opinion. Among the justifications presented for the positive evaluations was that “you can’t think only about the good of the business; we must think about the good of who’s behind it. Because without them, the business won’t open.” However, among those who presented negative evaluations, they said that “I believe my business wasn’t the focus of agglomeration and, while I needed to close, other businesses that were focal points for the virus were allowed to continue operating.” However, one of the responses highlighted that the *Sistema de Distanciamento Controlado* generated inconsistency and uncertainty for both customers and employees: “people were lost; they didn’t know if places were open or not.”

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, <https://gauchazh.clicrbs.com.br/coronavirus-servico/noticia/2020/07/rio-grande-do-sul-tem-14-frigorificos-com-mais-de-cem-trabalhadores-infetados-pelo-coronavirus-ckckoop7600oi013gvavz5j2.html>. Accessed on Jan 20, 2021.

Regarding perceptions of the *political* response to the virus, respondents were asked about their assessment of the role of the town hall in controlling the pandemic. The table below shows that there was no agreement: three respondents disagreed, and three agreed with the statement that the town hall had taken all the necessary measures, which could also indicate political polarization. However, when asked whether the town hall of their town took all the steps to avoid economic damage, the answers were more pessimistic.

Do you agree with the following statements?	Strongly Disagree	Partially Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Partially Agree	Strongly Agree
<i>The town hall took all measures to prevent the spread of the virus.</i>	0% (0)	37.5% (3)	25% (2)	37.5% (3)	0% (0)
<i>The town hall took all measures to avoid economic damage to the town.</i>	12.5% (1)	25% (2)	37.5% (3)	25% (2)	0% (0)

The respondents were then asked whether they agreed with the assertion that corruption in politics had increased at the federal, state, and municipal levels. The table below shows a very similar response curve: half of the respondents said they neither agreed nor disagreed, which may indicate political apathy and distrust in political institutions. Among the remainder, the majority said they agreed with the statement. Finally, the vast majority (six out of eight respondents) agreed that the pandemic had increased the circulation of “fake news” in the public sphere. This perception is in line with the increase in the number of journalistic articles containing the expression in the context of the expansion of the pandemic between February and July 2020.

Do you agree with the following statements?	Strongly Disagree	Partially Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Partially Agree	Strongly Agree
<i>There was an increase in political corruption due to funds allocated to fight the pandemic in the federal government.</i>	12.5% (1)	0% (0)	50% (4)	25% (2)	12.5% (1)
<i>There was an increase in political corruption due to funds allocated to fight the pandemic in the state governments.</i>	0% (0)	12.5% (1)	50% (4)	25% (2)	12.5% (1)
<i>There was an increase in political corruption due to funds allocated to fight the pandemic in the municipal governments.</i>	0% (0)	25% (2)	37.5% (3)	25% (2)	12.5% (1)
<i>There was an increase in the circulation of “fake news” due to the pandemic.</i>	0% (0)	0% (0)	25% (2)	25% (2)	50% (4)

Information on corruption in politics at different levels is consistent with perceptions of self-interest in politics during the period. The table below shows that, for five out of eight respondents, interest in politics declined. On the other hand, confidence in science increased among six out of eight respondents.

	Decreased a lot	Decreased somewhat	Neither decreased nor increased	Increased somewhat	Increased a lot
<i>Did your interest in politics increase or decrease during the pandemic?</i>	37.5% (3)	25% (2)	0% (0)	25% (2)	12.5% (1)
<i>Did your confidence in science increase or decrease during the pandemic?</i>	0% (0)	12.5% (1)	12.5% (1)	25% (2)	50% (4)

It is worth remembering that, for months, several of the leading open television channels with national circulation in Brazil broadcast public interest programs that included the presence of specialists and researchers to discuss the topic, which may have influenced the responses. This is because at least 50% of respondents used television as a vehicle for information. Other sources of information were local print newspapers (used by half), scientific articles (used by half, which is perhaps oversized and could be explained as a response to academic research); Facebook (used by half); and friends (used by half). Three people said they were kept informed through coworkers, on the radio, and through speeches by the governor of Rio Grande do Sul, and two through speeches by their town mayors. Only one person mentioned staying informed through WhatsApp and YouTube networks. Perhaps most interesting, no one mentioned their neighbors, church, relatives, speeches by the President of the Republic, or national and international newspapers as a source of information.

When asked about the degree of trust in relation to a wide range of information sources, most said they trusted (“completely trust” and “partially trust”) local newspapers (five out of eight) and national and international newspapers (five out of eight), coworkers (five out of eight), speeches by the governor of Rio Grande do Sul (five out of eight), and speeches by the town’s mayor (six out of eight). However, few trusted WhatsApp (two out of eight), television (three out of eight), neighbors (three out of eight), their church (two out of eight), friends (three out of eight), relatives (three out of eight), or speeches by the President of the Republic (three out of eight). Other social networks, such as Facebook and YouTube, received an ambivalent assessment, with four out of eight respondents saying they trusted these services.

## **Conclusions: Pandemic Solidarities**

As we look to generate explanations for the globalized problem of a pandemic, “an effort is made to name the experience of the virus and thereby somewhat pacify the uncertainties generated by this difficult experience” (Rui, Machado, & Rossi, 2021: 36). It so happens that the understanding of its actual effects inevitably begins from situated experiences since it is “an experience lived in bodies and collective sensibilities” (Segata, 2020). In other words, the pandemic does not map onto a social, racial, or gender vacuum (Harvey, 2020); rather, it radicalizes and modifies existing vectors of difference. In a world that is absolutely not reducible to universal scales of precision, we must think through “the mounting pile of ruins that scalability leaves behind” (Tsing, 2012: 506) and indigenize the scale mutations that remake local experience.

The material discussed here is illustrative of the interplay of scales set in motion by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, an event of global proportions, but which acquires its contours as we turn our gaze to the micro-sociological everyday existence. By analyzing the repercussions of the virus among citizens and small business owners in the towns of Picada Café and Nova Petrópolis, in the interior of Rio Grande do Sul, we can summarize the interplays of scale in three dimensions: a) controversies surrounding the negotiation of moralities; b) controversies surrounding the management and assignment of responsibilities; and c) controversies surrounding the politics of controlling and counting COVID-19 cases and victims in the region. These empirical controversies reveal how global concerns and phenomena rescale, acquiring local relevance and producing situated forms of legibility and biopolitical governance (Preciado, 2020).

As Larkin (2013) shows, the daily intersection of these dimensions is eminently a technopolitical fact, as actors defend and make decisions that are eminently political and moral in a technical language. In this process – which is also a process of preempting the public sphere of politics and morality – people construct specific typologies of pandemic solidarity. Pandemic solidarities are ephemeral social relations that emerge as people resignify the contours of social life through the experiences and senses of the pandemic.

Moral attributions were the basis of many of the controversies observed between citizens and public bodies during the unfolding of the pandemic and its events. Monitoring reactions to the online posts from Picada Café Town Hall during the first wave of the pandemic (March to September 2020), it was possible to infer that moral negotiations coalesced around the axis of “established” and “outsiders,” in the classic terminology of Norbert Elias and John Scotson (1994), who discuss the justification of perceived differences and the power structures associated with such differences in Winston Parva. In the context of Picada Café during the pandemic, the category “outsiders” was modulated to encompass foreigners to the place, that is, individuals who should be blamed for the rampant and irresponsible dissemination of the virus because they did not work and/or reside in the town. As Elias and Scotson highlight, it is through common support, self-praise, and self-assertion that the established manage to prevail, representationally, over the outsiders, whom they come to define as lacking cohesion and the moral attributes considered valuable to navigate community spaces.

Thus, the tourist population and workers from outside Picada Café were consistently the targets of comments and criticisms by inhabitants who, in theory, appeared as “more” concerned—and consequently more legitimate—with sanitary measures, the government regulations, and ultimately the value of life itself (Fassin, 2018). Attributions of responsibility to tourists regarding the emergence of newly infected people abounded throughout the period. They were accompanied by constant criticism about who was authorized to make the best use of the municipality’s limited resources and public infrastructure. This was present, for example, in the endless debates concerning access to the Jorge Kuhn Park, or even in public awareness actions and the distribution of soaps and sanitizer, aimed above all at tourists. However, non-resident workers were also the target of these exclusionary defensive moralities, particularly when they were included in official counts of infected or hospitalized cases. The moral issue appeared again strongly in the responses to the socioeconomic questionnaire when most respondents suggested that residents and businesses should not be considered mainly responsible for dissemination of the virus, although there was some reluctance to associate the phenomenon with tourism. Finally, moralities were present around the issue of what constitutes essential and non-essential work in times of pandemic, especially when closure negatively affected local businesses (run and attended by residents) to the detriment of businesses that remained open to tourism. But moral accusations have also been leveled against local bargoers, including the older adult male population, triggering moralities associated with the work ethic among German descendants in the town (Kopper, 2013).

The second axis of controversies gravitated around the management and attribution of responsibilities. It took on numerous facets and scales, depending on the moment. Questions traversed what was considered excessive and invasive in measures of social distancing, particularly the guidelines from the state government on the closure of businesses. From the viewpoint of the responses offered by the town hall, there was a constant return to the question of legal responsibility for what it meant to preserve life during the pandemic: in the name of this primary duty, isolation protocols, technical norms, and ambivalent testing procedures were justified.

Amidst the technopolitical game of responsibilities, different agents – whether public, private, or citizen representatives – were concerned with invoking translocal criteria to justify their positions. These criteria included sporadic appeals to consolidated public health standards established by the World Health Organization to legitimize difficult decisions. Alternatively, they included references to norms established at the state or federal level to deflect responsibility for decisions deemed unpopular. They even entailed decisions concerning the use and presence of controversial drugs, such as hydroxychloroquine, during key moments in the fight against the pandemic.

These various appeals to extra-local records again invoke the power to produce and rescale amid (catastrophic) events of global proportions, as is the case of COVID-19. Illustrative of this process is the politicization of controversies – or the making of politics through technical language – evident in the repercussions of the mayor of Picada Café’s post announcing the arrival of chloroquine in town, supposedly to help treat the virus,

weeks before municipal elections. Many of the critics pointed to the neighboring town's politicians to refuse to offer such treatments, construing such refusals as affronts to citizenship and as reasons for their ambivalence toward politics. Rapidly (and perhaps dangerously), offering chloroquine became synonymous with responsiveness and "good politics" ("something must be done") and respect for elementary citizen rights.

As we can deduce, the techno-politicization of scales responds to political, economic, and social imperatives that underscore the production of new responsibilities and pandemic solidarities. New systems for the foundation of collective life emerge as engaged citizens scavenge for responsible parties and advocate for quick and responsive modes of reacting. The relentless search for daily surveillance, inspection practices, notification, and fines for businesses that do not comply with established guidelines exposes the new records in which the "ethics of self" unfold (Foucault, 1986). Here, the meaning of "caring"—its targets and contents—changes constantly and is actualized in the very political act of criticizing, demanding, and asserting its voice in the democratic accountability process of the pandemic.

This brings me to the third and last axis of problematization of the material presented here: the controversies surrounding the politics of controlling and counting COVID-19 cases and victims (Camargo, Motta & Mourão, 2021; Menezes, Magalhães & Silva, 2021) in the region. In the search for responsiveness and transparency (values deemed important in the translocal administration of the pandemic), the Picada Café Town Hall decided to create a daily chart for monitoring cases, the "*Boletim Coronavírus*" [Coronavirus Bulletin]. However, persistent controversies surrounding the numbers presented and the counting mechanisms characterized the social life of this sociotechnical instrument throughout 2020 so that technology itself was the target of criticism and constant restructuring. An illustrative example to which I should return to here is the criticism of the color used in the chart to count the so-called "cured" cases: "it's a very important number," according to one resident, one that ought to be highlighted by using a color other than red to confer political prominence to the count of those considered recovered from the pandemic and ready to resume the economic cycle.

Furthermore, the politics of large numbers exposes a vital debate that materialized during the pandemic: the concern, on the part of public bodies, to assert that (human) errors in the counting system are not the same as lack of information. "Information is not lacking," declared a Picada Café Town Hall representative in response to a complaining resident. In addition, at the end of 2020, the town incorporated the phrase "avoid misinformation!" in its daily charts. The terms used are suggestive and indicate a concern with controlling the circulation of rumors and popular beliefs that go against official protocols for individual behavior and control of the pandemic. Moreover, they seem to indicate an interest in producing epidemiologically based responses, that is, based on reliable indicators and solid evidence—in opposition, therefore, to the political field associated with the scientific denial of the pandemic, a fact that is also evinced by the concern of owners of small businesses with the circulation of "fake news" and the increased degree of trust in science during the pandemic.

Despite this, official logics of pandemic administration constantly rub shoulders with local systems of government and management of social life, generating frictions and unusual arrangements of moralities, responsibilities, and solidarities. At stake is the reformulation of life regimes, everyday normality, and the ethics of coping that offer local nuances to global problems. "I think we've learned a lot, and we have many measures that will remain forever (hand sanitizer for hygienization, for example). Business will likely normalize after this period and the vaccine arrives, but it will be an important lesson," one owner said. From another employee, however, I heard: "Without the recovery of the economy, a large part of small business owners will tend to close their doors. Because consumption is retracted and revenues are low. New entrepreneurs don't take chances with the instability of the color codes." Between life, economy, and politics, the resumption of a "new normal" is turning out to be a controversial project in constant construction, subject to the disruptive,

shifting temporalities raised by the pandemic and its aftermath. Paying attention to the production, reproduction, and reinvention of scales in this process helps understand how experiences were formatted and resignified to make post-pandemic futures palatable and habitable.

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# COVID-19 pandemic in a local town in the Amazon: socio-political and socio-cultural scenarios in São Caetano de Odivelas, Pará

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## Abstract

This study aims to record clinical and epidemiological data on COVID-19 in the local town of São Caetano de Odivelas (PA), in order to propose guidelines for the control of the pandemic and to reverse the socio-economic impacts. A form elaborated in the Google Docs application was used, by 200 respondents, followed by analysis and interpretation based on discourse and socio-cultural characteristics, revealing the ideology of political groups that hinder public policies, as well as the absence of socio-anthropological aspects in the consideration of sanitary measures. To conclude, three lines of action are proposed: awareness and clarification for the public concerning the pandemic, configuration of contagion networks based on families, and the guarantee of income and provisions for workers.

**Keywords:** COVID-19. Local town. Amazon. Socio-anthropology. Public policy.



# Pandemia de COVID-19 em cidade local na Amazônia: cenários sociopolítico e sociocultural em São Caetano de Odivelas, Pará

## Resumo

Este estudo tem por objetivo registrar dados clínicos e epidemiológicos sobre a Covid-19 na cidade local de São Caetano de Odivelas (PA), a fim de propor diretrizes para o controle da pandemia e para a reversão de impactos socioeconômicos. Utilizou-se formulário elaborado no aplicativo Google Docs, através de 200 informantes, com análise e interpretação baseadas no discurso e em aspectos socioculturais, relevando-se a ideologia de grupos políticos que dificultam as políticas públicas, bem como a ausência de aspectos socioantropológicos em consideração às medidas sanitárias. Ao fim, propõe-se três eixos de ação: conscientização e esclarecimentos ao público sobre a pandemia, configuração de redes de contágio a partir de famílias e garantia de renda e abastecimentos aos trabalhadores.

**Palavras-Chave:** Covid-19. Cidade local. Amazônia. Socioantropologia. Políticas públicas.

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## Introduction

The global crisis provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic affected not only large cities, but, on a reduced scale, had its reflection in local towns in the interior of the Amazon, since these towns are linked to large regional urban centres and are dependent on them, for supplies, for services, or through the internal migration of productive force from local towns, who later send financial resources to the families who remain in their towns of origin. What characterises a local town for Santos (2008: 87) is ‘a polarising activity and, given the functions they exercise at the primary level, we could almost speak of *subsistence towns*’. This is the case of São Caetano de Odivelas<sup>1</sup>, the town which this research focuses on, due to its polarising extractive fishing activity that characterises it as a society of primary economic activity and traditional cultural practices. Following the need for social isolation and the limitations of lockdown, much was lost in this flow between metropolises and towns in the interior, causing local towns to collapse due to the unemployment of migrant workers, in addition to the lack of local perspective following the closure of non-essential activities for the self-employed and restrictions on freedom of movement in these communities marked by close daily relationship among families and within neighbourhoods. Because local towns are marked by polarising, borderline subsistence activities, which in our *locus* translates into the prioritisation of artisanal fishing activities and sport fishing tourism that the local economy revolves around. In addition, only public services provide employment, and the remainder mostly survive on resources from social programmes, primarily *Bolsa Família* (a direct income programme for families in extreme poverty), which constitutes a second source of income (27.5%) according to those interviewed in this research.

In this scenario, the pandemic becomes an aggravating factor, more social than sanitary, as local residents must choose between protecting their health, remaining isolated or socially distanced in their homes, or draw on their survival activities in which they need to go out into the streets and public spaces daily, where the necessary precautions to avoid contagion are not always present. This lack of options for both survival and protection from conditions that promote transmissibility are factors that favour the pathological nature of the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, responsible for COVID-19, since its means of transmission are air dispersal

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<sup>1</sup> A town located in the coastal region of the State of Pará, in the micro-region of Salgado, with a population of 18,050 inhabitants, according to IBGE projection (2019). Its economy is based on fishing several species of fish and crustaceans, and it provides this product for the state capital, in addition to the incipient provision of services. The town was founded in the eighteenth century, but did not fully develop to become a pole in the region, which has been assumed by the town of Vigia, 18 km away. Its population has a reasonable level of education, predominantly high school and some higher education, since the town has a university centre of the Federal University of Pará (UFPA).

(in droplets) or contaminated surfaces (depending on the material), which are very common in highly crowded public spaces with no proper hygiene. The severity and speed of contagion and manifestation means that, after around five days of incubation, the virus reaches the respiratory system following entry through the mouth, nose and eyes (mucosa), settling in the throat, larynx and trachea, later passing to the lungs, and from there to the blood system, disseminating throughout the body. It is a virus, that is, an acellular (primitive) organism, so it needs a host cell to reproduce and propagate, which is why it can be lethal in human beings.

This study seeks to unveil the reasons and practices of the socio-cultural relationships that resulted in the consequent clinical and epidemiological status of the pandemic in São Caetano de Odivelas, provoking socio-economic consequences. This is already sufficient a contribution to highlight the need for this research to generate information in relation to an invisible reality in the view of large urban centres and that of the nation-state, to which a huge part of the medical and financial resources are sent to combat the effects of the novel coronavirus.

This pandemic originated in China at the end of 2019 and quickly disseminated throughout the world, reaching Europe in February 2020 and Brazil in mid-March of the same year, due to its high degree of transmissibility and severity. Thus far, cases and doubts concerning COVID-19 have only increased, such that just over a year after its onset in Brazil (May 29, 2021), the COVID-19 numbers reported are as follows:

**Table 1.** Numbers for COVID-19 in Brazil

Total no. of deaths: 461,142
Deaths in 24 hours: 1971
Average of new deaths in the last 7 days: 1,836
Total confirmed cases: 16,471,009
Cases confirmed within 24 hours: 78,352
Average of new cases in the last 7 days: 60,644 per day

(Source: G1 – *Consórcio de Veículos de Imprensa* [Press Media Consortium]<sup>2</sup>)

In São Caetano de Odivelas, in addition to the lack of regular information regarding the disease in the town, the only official vehicle for disclosing data, the website of the *Prefeitura Municipal* [Town Hall; municipal government], is updated irregularly, on a weekly basis at best. On April 24, 2021, 1,058 confirmed cases were indicated, with 24 deaths<sup>3</sup>, which implies a rate of mortality of 2.27%, considered low compared to the initial expectation of 3.4% of deaths published by the World Health Organisation (WHO)<sup>4</sup>. However, the lack of up-to-date information, low levels of testing and under-notification means we have certain reservations regarding official data.

The probable origin of COVID-19 disease is the proximity between humans and wild animals, specifically the consumption of live animals in the market in the city of Wuhan, China (Frutos et al., 2020), which caused the passage of the **causative pathogen from the outbreak** (condition 1) to its **transmitting human reservoir** (condition 2). Condition 3 is the presence of **human events** that can enhance transmission from the host to other humans, which is at the core of the hominid characteristic, that is, sociability. It is exactly these human

<sup>2</sup> Given the discrepancies and unreliable information from the federal government regarding statistical data on the pandemic in Brazil, several press agencies decided to join forces to disseminate data based on information directly collected from the state health secretariats: *Folha de São Paulo*, *O Estado de São Paulo*, *Extra*, *O Globo*, UOL and G1. Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/bemestar/coronavirus/noticia/2021/05/29/brasil-registra-1971-novas-mortes-por-covid-em-24-horas-e-vitimas-passam-de-460-mil.ghtml>.

<sup>3</sup> Available at: <https://saocaetanodeodivelas.pa.gov.br/boletim-epidemiologico-14-04-2021/>

<sup>4</sup> In early March 2020, the WHO estimated a mortality rate of around 3%, indicating that COVID-19 effectively kills more than seasonal flu: “Globally, about 3.4% of reported COVID-19 cases have died. By comparison, seasonal flu generally kills far fewer than 1% of those infected” (WHO, 2020).

events that potentiated the transmission and caused the pandemic, since the main problem with regard to stopping the spread of the disease is the control of agglomerations and the maintenance of social distancing, with the use of masks in collective spaces. This seems to be the challenge central for public policies, particularly regarding leisure and commemorative events and in the organisation of work activities to guarantee survival. Furthermore, in local towns, dependent on closer relationships between humans and the environment due to subsistence practices linked to extractivism and primary economics, the possibility of initial contagion between humans and animals is indeed possible, thus making these towns and their livelihood practices the focus of future epidemics.

It is from these considerations that the main research questions arise: what are the characteristics of sociability and conviviality in local towns that contribute to the clinical and epidemiological characteristics of the COVID-19 pandemic? What are the political obstacles to the success of actions to combat COVID-19? What are the most effective measures to minimise the effects of the pandemic, whether these are sanitary or socio-economic? Our objectives in this research were: to record the clinical and epidemiological data of the population of the São Caetano de Odivelas; propose actions to minimise contagion and transmission and the socio-economic impacts on the population; and understand the socio-anthropological interventions in the execution of public policies.

Our hypothesis is that more investment is required to clarify the clinical and epidemiological characteristics of the disease among the local population – hence the need for information and clarity concerning the behavioural data of the pandemic –, together with a lack of public policies to minimise the socio-economic impacts of unemployment and impoverishment of the population due to the suspension of survival activities, which mark the polarisation between health and economic survival in local towns. Similarly, there is a lack of determination for systematic actions to inspect and control economic activities and commemorative and leisure practices, where agglomerations are potentiated, elements of socio-anthropological aspects that are not considered in the planning and execution of public policies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, it is worth highlighting that

Il n'y a pas de société où la maladie n'ait une dimension sociale et, de ce point de vue, la maladie, qui est aussi la plus intime et la plus individuelle des réalités, nous fournit un exemple concret de liaison intellectuelle entre perception individuelle et symbolique sociale (Augé, 1986: 82)<sup>5</sup>

This means that the disease is a social phenomenon since the sick body threatens the cohesion of the individual in relation to their social group, either because of the affectivity of the condition or because of the patient's inability to exercise their regular functions in their community. Therefore, based on this relationship between the patient and society, implications are established in accordance with cultures and particular contexts, such as solidarity, marginalisation, integration in new social structures, access to new statutes or forms of expression (Meyer, 2008).

The COLINS Research Group – *Colaboratório de Interculturalidades, Inclusão de Saberes e Inovação Social* [Collaboration on Interculturalities, Inclusion of Knowledge and Social Innovation], linked to the *Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos Antrópicos na Amazônia* (PPGEAA) [Post-graduate Programme in Anthropic Studies in the Amazon] of the Federal University of Pará (UFPA), Castanhal Campus –, has already conducted an initial research survey related to the COVID-19 pandemic, though primarily addressing social issues related to social isolation and distancing, considering the characteristics of the local town of São Caetano de Odivelas. This study was entitled '*Fatores de Antropização no Isolamento e Distanciamento Sociais durante a Pandemia de Covid-19*:'

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<sup>5</sup> 'There is no society where illness does not have a social dimension and, from this point of view, illness, which is also the most intimate and the most individual of realities, provides us with a concrete example of intellectual connection between individual perception and social symbolism.'

*estudo de caso em cidade local da Amazônia estuarina* [Factors of Anthropization in Social Isolation and Distancing during the COVID-19 Pandemic: a case study in a local town in the estuarine Amazon] (Fernandes et al., 2020), and reached the conclusion of that public policies of central governments are not always accepted or followed by local populations, since there exists a hiatus between national universalising standards and models and local practices and values. Therefore, these deserve to be adapted in accordance with local towns, implying recognition of different forms of anthropization that consider local groups based on their ways of establishing and maintaining their territory, as concerns property, affective bonds, history of occupation in collective memory, social use, and forms of defence; at this time, these aspects are materialised in the autonomy of these places to use and move in their ancestral territory, with impediments due to social isolation.

## Material and Methods

Data collection was performed from June 1 to 16, 2020, and involved around 200 residents of the municipality of São Caetano de Odivelas (slightly more than 1% of the population), in the town hall. Collection was performed by the COLINS research group, responsible for this initiative, linked to the PPGEEA of the UFPA.

The town has an estimated population of 18,050 inhabitants (IBGE, 2019), thus the selected sample is approximately 1.1% of the population. Due to the limitations of transport, the limitations of the internet and mobile phone networks, and restrictions regarding social distancing resulting from the pandemic, we chose to perform the data collection in the town hall building, where we were able to provide mobile phone access to apply the questionnaire. The town was divided into six neighbourhoods or communities: Centro (21.6% of the sample), Umarizal (16.2%), Pepéua (14.2%), Marabazinho (24.5%), Cachoeira (13.7%) and Belém Nova (9.8%).

We used Google Forms to develop the questionnaire, available at: <https://forms.gle/aXirMdNe3qkqWB87A>. After contacting possible participants, and after they agreed to take part in the research, the researchers sent the form to their mobile phone. Initially, a term of free, informed consent<sup>6</sup> was presented, to which the participant had to agree, and only after they agreed could they access the form. There is a record of mobile phone numbers for further auditing of the participants' agreement. The complete results of the interviews conducted, in terms of percentages, can be accessed at this link: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeISSgozpKf9InYQKk5eWymGivoQffMOrUmyeL3\\_\\_KUIMozVA/viewanalytics](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeISSgozpKf9InYQKk5eWymGivoQffMOrUmyeL3__KUIMozVA/viewanalytics).

The universe surveyed is composed of 53.9% women and 46.1% men, in the following age groups: 10-19 years old, 1.4%; 20-29 years old, 15.3%; 30-39 years old, 22.2%; 40-49 years old, 20.7%; 50-59 years old, 15.35%; and ≥ 60 years old, 25.15%. The origin of their main income is: 33.8% self-employed; 27.5% on social benefits; 19.6% public servants; and 9.8% unemployed. Given this profile of work activities, in which the majority of individuals had to guarantee their survival on a daily basis, the conditions of work activities were as follows: 40.4% in-person work activities; 29.1% in suspended activities; 27.1% of unemployed individuals; and only 3.4% in remote work. When you add the workers performing in-person activities (40.4%) to the percentage of unemployed (27.1%), you have 67.5% of the population surveyed that needs to leave home every day to guarantee

6 The text of the term of free, informed consent: "Você está convidado(a) a participar da pesquisa Pandemia em Cidade Local – PANLOC, que tem por objetivo registrar dados clínicos e epidemiológicos da COVID-19, no Município de São Caetano de Odivelas, Pará. O motivo que nos leva a estudar este fenômeno é a falta de testagem para o público e a possibilidade de grande número de casos suspeitos, fatores que têm impedido o real planejamento de estratégias para a minimização dos efeitos da Pandemia a curto e médio prazos. Para esta pesquisa utilizaremos formulário com perguntas objetivas. O motivo deste convite é que você se enquadra no perfil, pois é morador (a) desta Cidade. Você será esclarecido(a) sobre a pesquisa em qualquer aspecto que desejar e estará livre para participar ou recusar-se a participar, retirando seu consentimento ou interrompendo sua participação a qualquer momento. Para participar desta pesquisa, Você não terá nenhum custo, nem receberá qualquer vantagem financeira. O pesquisador irá tratar sua identidade com padrões profissionais de sigilo e privacidade, sendo que seu nome ou material que indique sua participação não será liberado sem sua permissão. Os resultados desta pesquisa estarão a sua disposição quando finalizada. Ao responder às questões do formulário e enviá-las, automaticamente Você estará concordando com sua participação, declarando ter sido ESCLARECIDO dos objetivos e ACEITADO LIVREMENTE o uso de suas respostas para finalidades acadêmicas-científicas".

basic provisions, which strongly determines any policy to minimise contagion by COVID-19, since it is evident that the greater the flow of people in public spaces, the greater the chances of contagion and dissemination of the disease. Naturally, any public policy must consider this socio-economic reality in the town, one which likely has echoes in many towns throughout the interior of the Amazon.

Add to this socio-economic reality, which drives workers in their daily search for resources to guarantee their provisions, another historical and cultural aspect in local Amazonian towns, that of prolonged residence in the same house: 69.6% declared that they had lived longer than 5 years in the same residence, while 22.1% declared between 1 and 5 years of residence, and 8.3% less than 1 year. This data implies that a large portion of the population surveyed maintains close social relationships with their neighbours, when the latter are not relatives who live within the same perimeter, leading us to conclude that social isolation is almost impossible to accomplish, since parents, godparents and surrounding relationships are prioritised. Hence, a good portion of the interviewees stated that they probably acquired the disease at home, an aspect discussed below. We can even highlight this cultural practice as one answer to the research question – what are the characteristics of sociability and conviviality in local towns that contribute to the clinical and epidemiological features of the COVID-19 pandemic? – since sociability in local towns is established daily, in close relationships between family members and neighbours.

The characteristics of the identification profile (questions 1 to 10, in the form) of the interviewees present a scenario that largely explains the failure of general policies to control contagion and transmission, since controlling the population in their homes and among family breaches the constitutional guarantee (Art. 5, Clause X, in Brasil, 2006) of the inviolability of intimacy and private life. By getting to know the identity and cultural aspects of the local reality better, it is possible to attain greater success in raising awareness of the facts and orientations, through assertive public policies aimed at combating the pandemic.

The form was elaborated as follows<sup>7</sup>:

**Table 2.** Clinical and Epidemiological Data Form

CLINICAL DATA
11 – Approximate date of the first symptoms ____/____/2020
12 – Average duration of the first symptoms ( ) 1 week ( ) 2 weeks ( ) > 2 weeks ( ) Still present
13 – Type of care ( ) Hospital ( ) Outpatient ( ) Home ( ) None of the above
14 – Intensity of symptoms ( ) Mild ( ) Moderate ( ) Severe

<sup>7</sup> The Ministry of Health *Ficha de Notificação do SINAN - Sistema de Informação de Agravos de Notificação* [Notifiable Diseases Information System (SINAN) Notification Sheet] was used as a reference for this form. Available at: [http://portalsinan.saude.gov.br/images/documentos/Agravos/NINDIV/Notificacao\\_Individual\\_v5.pdf](http://portalsinan.saude.gov.br/images/documentos/Agravos/NINDIV/Notificacao_Individual_v5.pdf).

15 – Tests

- Rapid Test
- Laboratory
- Imaging
- None of the above

16 – Test results

- Positive
- Negative
- Inconclusive
- No test performed

17 – Local healing practices

- Tea (leaves and roots)
- Garrafadas*<sup>8</sup> (maturation)
- All of the above
- None of the above

18 – Use of medication (check all that apply)

- Analgesic/antipyretic
- Anti-inflammatory
- Antibiotic
- Anticoagulants
- None of the above

19 – Pre-existing diseases (check all that apply)

- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Cancer
- Respiratory diseases (rhinitis, sinusitis, asthma)
- Hypertension
- Lung diseases
- None of the above

20 – In cases showing recovery from symptoms, which of these measures were taken

- Clinical tests
- Laboratory tests
- Imaging tests
- All of the above

EPIDEMIOLOGICAL DATA

21 – Possible place of contagion

- Residence
- Neighbourhood
- Public space/road
- Workplace
- Business or commercial space
- Don't know

22 – Frequency of domestic purchases and services

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly

23 – What preventive measures are most frequently used. (Check all that apply)

- Hand sanitisation
- Avoiding close contact
- Use of masks
- Household cleaning
- All of the above
- None of the above

<sup>8</sup> In general, these are alcohol-based infusions of herbs and plant materials made in a bottle – a '*garrafa*'.

24 – Measures taken at the onset of symptoms  
 Isolation  
 Distancing  
 Neither

25 – Preconditions for contagion  
 Travel to an area of risk  
 Contact with suspected case  
 Contact with confirmed case  
 All of the above

26 – Told health authorities about the symptoms.  
 Yes  
 No

27 – If you told health authorities about the symptoms, how would you classify the service?  
 Good  
 Regular  
 Poor  
 Excellent  
 Did not communicate

28 – What activities need preventive control during the pandemic. (Check all that apply)  
 Domestic/Family events  
 Religious events  
 Sports event  
 School  
 Parties and festivities  
 Work

29 – What conditions do you believe increase the aggravation of transmission. (Check all that apply)  
 Sanitary conditions  
 Housing conditions  
 Transport conditions  
 Food conditions  
 Health care service deficiencies  
 All of the above

30 – How would you evaluate local actions to fight the pandemic.  
 Good  
 Regular  
 Poor  
 Excellent  
 Don't know

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The data prioritised in this research is composed of the clinical and epidemiological characteristics of those surveyed. The reason for this is the lack of supplies for laboratory tests, which are applied to a large part of the population, especially serological tests. This restricts us to the possibility of inferring the occurrence of the disease in the participants, while providing us with signs for possibly tracking carriers of the virus and antibodies, and tracing the epidemiology of COVID-19 in the town. Clearly, the data presented here are insufficient to define public policies to combat the disease at the local level, and this now urges us to conduct extensive testing on the population so we can define the real panorama of people who have already acquired the disease and who are apparently immune, which will provide us greater certainty in actions to open up and control economic, social and cultural activities. However, the possibility of testing is beyond our purview, and at this time, we can only strive to present the data collected and suggest that the local government officials apply the proper means to ensure the full health of the contributors, since more than two thirds of the population that participated in the research presented symptoms, without undergoing any type of testing (72.3%).



Furthermore, of those who were tested through their own efforts, virtually all were positive for contagion (27.2%), while a mere 0.5% had an inconclusive response to the test. This demonstrates that a large part of the population consists of underreported cases, which further justifies an action for mass testing.

## Results and Discussion

First, we briefly discuss the **clinical data** generated by the application of the survey form:

a) There was a peak in symptoms in the first fortnight of April, with the majority of symptoms lasting up to two weeks (65.8%), in line with that currently observed elsewhere; in a few cases the symptoms lasted for more than a month (5.5%), in such cases this configures more permanent sequelae;

b) Most of those who participated presented mild symptoms (63.4%), and thus were treated at home (53.0%) and/or in outpatient clinics (32.2%). Those who were moderately symptomatic stood out (34.2%), with some likely being cared for in hospital (9.4%). Around 5.4% of respondents received no medical care;

c) Tests were not performed on the vast majority respondents (72.3%), while the rapid test was performed on about one in five participants (17.8%). The test results indicated 27.2% were positive and 0.5% were inconclusive;

d) During the curative process, respondents indicated priority use of analgesics and antipyretics (97.0%), followed by anti-inflammatory drugs (67.3%) and antibiotics (59.9%). The use of traditional healing practices is surprising, including teas (75.7%) and *benzimentos* [blessings] and/or massages (1.1%), with 15.8% claiming the use of all these traditional medicine practices, including the use of *garrafadas* containing herbs and roots;

e) Respondents claimed pre-existing diseases of the respiratory tract – asthma, sinusitis, respiratory allergies in general, lung diseases (29.0%) –, followed by hypertension (29.0%), and diabetes (19.5%), but a good portion did not claim any pre-existing disease (37.5%). After recovering from symptoms, 86.1% did not undergo any exams to confirm the infection, but 11.4% were submitted to clinical tests and 2.5% to imaging exams.

Regarding the **epidemiological data**, they were organised as follows:

f) For 35.6% of respondents the contagion occurred at home and 12.9% believe it occurred in a public space/street. Contagion was favoured in these environments because 48.0% confirmed that they left the house daily for domestic supplies or worked in-person (40.4%) or as self-employed workers (33.8%). Only 31.7% purchased supplies weekly, and 20.3% monthly;

g) Routine contact with the neighbourhood suggests that 22.8% became infected through this means, while 17.3% believed that contagion occurred at work, and 11.4% did not know where it occurred. Frequent contact with the neighbourhood is supported by the fact that 69.6% have lived in the same house for more than 5 years;

h) During their symptoms, 60.4% practiced social distancing and 19.3% isolation. One in five respondents (20.3%) did nothing to prevent transmission to others; however, they claimed to practice preventive measures like hand sanitising (62.6%), use of a mask (61.1%), house cleaning (40.9%), or all of these measures (37.9%), even though only 7.4% had avoided close contact;

i) More than half informed the health authorities of their symptoms (56.4%), even though 44.6% said they had not received a return concerning their demands. Despite this, 46% classified health care by local authorities as regular or good;

j) Regarding the need to control social and collective activities, respondents said that parties and festivities (98.5%), sporting events (97.5%), religious events (91.1%), and school activities (90.6%) should be avoided. Concerning the conditions that aggravate transmission, respondents affirmed that attention should be paid to sanitary conditions (73.9%), transport conditions (70.4%), deficiencies in health care (69.8%) and housing conditions among the population (24.6%).

Before proceeding with a discussion of the data presented so orientations for municipal public policies can be indicated, there must be factors that can ascertain these policies, since this implies ideological perceptions that determine priorities regarding official actions that should be followed to combat the pandemic.

### Local political barriers to the success of actions to combat COVID-19

We observed that the internal political relationships between the groups participating in local government implicated the partial private use of medical information concerning the disease, and this has generated public policies in accordance with the interests of these groups, based on the need to open up economic activities and prevent contagion, through limiting economic activities in the municipality, which has led to misunderstandings concerning the scientific conditions of the pandemic.

A clear example of this bias was the participation of our research group, COLINS, acting at the *Núcleo Universitário de São Caetano de Odivelas* (NUSC) [University Centre of São Caetano de Odivelas] of UFPA, in official actions to combat COVID-19. Following the establishment of the Crisis Management Committee by the town hall, resulting from the decree of a state of public calamity (Decree no. 008/2020 – Municipal government of São Caetano de Odivelas, on May 6, 2020), the scientific and higher education institution acting in the town was initially not invited to participate, in spite of an urgent need for the scientific evaluation of actions to combat the pandemic, a notorious public fact. This despite municipal law no. 166/2018, which created the university centre, and guarantees that one of the objectives of the centre is to ‘foster institutional and local development, through research and the application of methodologies that meet local-regional demands.’ Worse still, the decree of a public calamity did not specify the university’s participation in the composition of the Crisis Management Committee (Art. 3).

Only after communication from the NUSC, and the intervention of the Municipal Secretariat for the Environment, did the local government formalise an invitation for the results of this research to be presented, through Official Letter no. 026/2020, from the Mayor’s Office. Even so, the presence of the university was subject to the condition of assisting in the committee’s actions, and not as an institution with the right to debate the issues with the committee. The meeting took place on June 24, 2020, and during the presentation it was highlighted that the research was not conclusive, because up to that time it had not generated a final report. We observed that the interests of the conflicting groups in the municipal administration were using the partial results presented to justify the maintenance of the state of calamity, on the one hand, or the opening of economic activities, on the other. The Secretariat for Municipal Planning even advocated the creation of a specific protocol so that a circus group, which had arrived in the town in the beginning of March 2020, could present to the community in order to generate money and leave. At that time, the group had been stuck in the town because it had insufficient funds to leave and continue to entertain in other towns, causing an inconvenience to the mayor, since they asked the town hall for financial aid almost daily to maintain the troupe. This indicates that the committee had no strategic plan up to this point, except for the presentation of the particular demands of each participant, in general, the heads of municipal departments. Given this reality, the COLINS research group, representing the NUSC/UFPA, suggested it should be included in the Crisis Committee and, should its membership in the group be approved, take charge of presenting a strategic planning proposal.

To our surprise, two days after the meeting, on June 26, 2020, the town hall issued Decree no. 027/2020 revoking Decree no. 008/2020 and suspending the state of calamity, thus extinguishing the Crisis Management Committee. In this manner, the participation of the university as a member of the committee was extinguished before it could be approved. Could it be apprehension about considering scientific research in the decision-making process, because scientific facts might bar private interests? Or perhaps the university institution

might compete with private interests? However, the most serious part in this situation was to come, because Decree no. 027/2020 cited, as a condition for ending the state of public calamity and the consequent institution of flexibility in opening up economic activities, the research presented at the meeting on June 24, 2020, clearly declaring in its text:

CONSIDERING the survey conducted by the UFPA – University Centre of São Caetano de Odivelas publicized at link <https://forms.gle/aXirMdNe3qkqWB87A> **which shows a drop in rates for the current period.** (Emphasis added)

At no time, in the presentation of our results, did we issue an opinion that the rates of contagion and mortality were falling, mostly because the link indicated as a research source in the document directed respondents to a blank form to be filled in; it never presented results, which were only completed after a subsequent research report was carried out. In other words, scientific and academic sources were improperly used to endorse the particular interests of local government, since they were aware that the academic referendum could justify the suspension of the state of calamity and thus allow the opening up of economic activities. However, once aware of the improper and misleading use of the research, the research coordination contacted the Municipal Prosecutor's Office to demand a correction, which resulted in a second Decree, no. 028/2020, in which the text only refers to the research conducted, without presenting an opinion on our part.

Based on these facts, it is evident that the political relations and particular interests of the actors involving in the management of the pandemic must be treated with institutionality and transparency, hence it is necessary for the local public to act and for the constant transfer of information to this public, so as to ensure due awareness of the facts and monitoring by public opinion of socio-economic conditions. This is because in a pandemic the macro-economic impacts will be more accentuated according to (i) the containment measures taken, (ii) the structural economic conditions of the countries, (iii) the economic policies implemented and (iv) the social assistance offered by governments (Lanchimba, Bonilla-Bolaños & Díaz-Sánchez, 2020). Even as a local town, our research space is not immune to the impacts considered by the authors regarding the reality of Latin America and the Caribbean, given that in these pandemic conditions, global supply chains are being disrupted and the consumption of durable goods and services is reduced.

## Pathways to a safe transition in the town

Overlooking this political concern, the question is: what are the most effective medical-sanitary and socio-economic measures to minimise the effects of the pandemic in a local town? Taking into account the objectives outlined for this research, which are to propose actions to minimise contagion and transmission among the population and to propose actions to minimise the socio-economic impacts in the post-pandemic, we indicate the following possibilities for action.

1. Public awareness campaigns and clarifications regarding the severity and transmissibility of the novel coronavirus, together with prevention strategies using audio-visual support and actions directed towards families and communities, since the basic conformation of local towns is the family unit and surrounding neighbourhood. It is worth highlighting, however, that insisting on social isolation in these communities goes against their form of sociability and can lead to worsening mental health. According to a United Nations report, there was an increase in symptoms of depression and anxiety in several countries (ONU, 2020). For Pereira et al, 'it can be said that together with the COVID-19 pandemic there is a state of social panic at a global level and the sensation of social isolation triggers feelings (e.g. of anguish, insecurity and fear), which can extend even after control of the virus' (2020: 5). Hence, social distancing is more appropriate when there is coexistence outside the family, understood as maintaining a safe distance between individuals and the use of PPE to avoid contagion, but not impeding the coexistence between people in public places.

However, in the case of the family-parental-neighbourhood environment, in this social nucleus we should advocate for more effective awareness of preventive mechanisms in relation to contamination and for stricter monitoring, through community health agents, of sanitary conditions and family health. Because applying restrictions to and fines on families in their living spaces is unfeasible and violates the constitution, which guarantees that the home is an ‘inviolable asylum of the individual’ (Art. 5, clauses X and XI of the Federal Constitution).

Here, we remember that the institution of the family is a crucial group for the success of public actions in local towns. This is because, in addition to the characteristic of a conjugal cell for the purposes of procreation, in these towns and traditional communities, the family is most commonly one that is extended, that is, ‘a unit composed of two or more nuclear families, linked by consanguine ties’, which coexist in the same space for generations, with kinship that binds them ‘to each other, by mutual, recognised duties and rights’ (Marconi & Presotto, 2008: 93), who share a common or contiguous residence, practicing economic cooperation, education shared by common ethical and moral values, which constitutes a collective identity of reference as interactive families, consanguineous or by ‘inclusion’. This long-lasting and close co-existence is reflected, in the survey, by the fact that most interviewees have lived longer than five years in the same residence, which enables the consolidation of more emphatic social relationships with their surroundings, resulting in resistance to social isolation, which means strictly staying at home, without contacting their neighbours, and with no social-family interaction;

2. The establishment of traceability for the configuration of **contagion networks** based on families and kinships, involving the traceability of suspected cases and the application of tests. This action can be facilitated if the family-parent and surrounding nucleus is used as a reference, since recent studies on the dynamics of contagion have shown that the increase or decrease of cases may be related to transits and confinement of these social groups, in true ‘bubbles of protection’, which may explain why the number of deaths and hospitalisations is falling even in towns that did not enact a total blockade on the movement of people or that were inefficient in health surveillance, such as Manaus and São Paulo. According to Magenta (2020) in some Brazilian towns and cities, there are protection bubbles, which indirectly cause social distance and collective immunity, due to a certain isolation of the communities. In these, the disease has difficulty circulating because the population, even if initially exposed, does not coexist as much with other social groups, generating ‘bubbles’ in which confinement impedes dissemination.

When we consider that one of these groups is the extended family, in local towns, the traceability of cases should be structured based on this group, with the application of research forms on the conditions of occurrence of the disease in the town, since sociabilities, and consequent routine agglomerations, commonly involve the family and its extension as the nucleus. This scenario allows us to perceive that the family is a space of private access, which is difficult for the government to inspect, and is better suited to public awareness campaigns regarding prevention procedures – the use of masks, preventing bodily contact in public and with strangers, respiratory etiquette, hand sanitising, avoiding touching surfaces exposed to possible contamination.

Allied to these actions, epidemiological data must be observed and monitored by determining the rate of transmission, real-time monitoring of the capacity of the municipal health system to attend the public, with some latitude in outpatient and hospital care, as well as the ability to evacuate the most seriously ill to medical centres better equipped to provide care, since, contrary to the precepts of the WHO (a minimum of one ICU bed for each group of 10,000 inhabitants), the municipality does not have any intensive care beds.

Apart from this, it is necessary to understand the susceptibility to the disease, that is, the possibility of another person contracting the virus, paying attention to which practices and actions of the population favour contagion (probability of transmission). This factor is closely linked to the clarity that is required in relation to the forms of sociability in local towns, due to the intense bonding and routine between

inhabitants of the same block or street. In this we refer to Da Matta (1997), who states that social roles ‘connected to body and blood (as is the case with roles related to kinship) must occur and be engendered by the *house*’ (p. 96), in contrast to the roles of will and choice, such as the forms of civil corporation as part of the public world, these are linked to the street.

But there is, in local towns like Odivelas, an expansion of the house and nuances between the public and the private. The house presents itself on a *continuum* both towards the street and towards the backyard. The house, being a cell of an extended family, communicates daily with the neighbourhood, both relatives (primary, secondary, tertiary) and ‘kindred’ (pseudo-relatives, aggregates, godparents), who may be arranged in houses adjoining on the same street or neighbours through open yards with common boundaries; in this case, the location of the residence of children and other close relatives is at the ‘back’ of the house-ego. This factor must necessarily be considered in screening actions for COVID-19 cases, since it is a probability factor of transmission.

3. A guarantee of **income and provisions** for families, with predictability of spending on food and health in the municipal budget (a minimum universal income) and the rearrangement of economic activities to avoid broad circulation and large agglomerations of people, with the recovery of jobs/occupations, and the establishment of protocols to control environments, together with investment in agricultural and extractive activities that are the town’s vocation. According to *Carta Capital* magazine, poverty resulting from the pandemic will affect 230 million people in Latin America, with job losses for about 44 million people (Carta Capital, 2020). If the growing poverty in Brazil was attested to prior to the pandemic, with it the need for a minimum income has been accentuated, because as Suplicy and Buarque remind us ‘a development project for Brazil must consider the elimination of absolute poverty and the reduction of disparities in income distribution’ (1997: 80). The pandemic has demonstrated the frightening difference between rich and poor that has prevented the implementation of safe practices to control the pandemic due to the need to survive of a large portion of the population, a fact corroborated by the results of this research, since the largest group of respondents are self-employed (33.8%) and must leave home daily to ensure enough food, which is otherwise reflected in the need for daily supplies of food (48.0%). Only by considering a minimum income programme will we be able to contemplate a post-pandemic recovery.

In the coming post-pandemic condition, we must also pay attention to self-sufficiency and food security, since the growing need to import the food that citizens consume is a sign of lack of food sustainability, in addition to contributing to the imposition of food standards in disagreement with local cultural nutritional values. It is also important to consider that, even though there is no data that can link food to the prevention and treatment of COVID-19, a balanced diet can be a good ally in combating the disease, since ‘it is known that some nutrients act on the human body, strengthening our defence system’ (UFRJ, 2020). These nutrients, called immunomodulators, are found in natural foods, through ‘a varied diet that combines *fresh*, minimally processed and properly sanitized foods can be the basis of a healthy diet and, therefore, guarantee the body’s immunity’ (id.). That is why it is important to invest increasingly in local agriculture (fruit and vegetable) and extractivism (fish and crustaceans), as a means to ensure the quality of food, which because it is produced in the municipality, can reach the table fresher and with its nutritional qualities preserved. In addition to its supply, safe conditions of access to food produced in the municipality must be ensured, such that it is essential to maintain the local commerce booming, but also to guarantee sanitary safety to avoid contagion. Therefore, COLINS, in association with the Municipal Secretariat of Agriculture (SEMAGRI), developed a social technology that would keep the São Caetano de Odivelas Farmer’s Market open through a ‘buying and selling circuit’ (see Appendix 1), which was a fenced in space to control entry and exit. At the entrance, with a means of sanitation provided, buyers viewed a layout of the location of stalls according to the products on sale, allowing buyers to know in advance which stalls they could go to purchase, optimising and

minimising the time spent at the market. This technology was produced by COLINS and SEMAGRI's fishing technician and engineer Talita Vieira Aranha, demonstrating that good relationships between the university and public authorities can achieve excellent solutions for local social demands.

Recently, the World Economic Forum pointed out the need to review the economic standards that have been prioritised by capitalism up to now, implying that new business ventures should pay attention to environmental issues. An article on the WEF report entitled *Fórum Econômico Mundial: "novos negócios terão de levar em conta o meio ambiente"* [World Economic Forum: 'new business will have to take the environment into account'] stated that 'the current crisis highlights the urgency of remodelling food production, land and ocean use; infrastructure and buildings; in addition to activities related to energy and the extractive industry' (RFI, 2020). This implies that we must avoid the loss of species and promote better land use in agriculture and in the construction of urban and transport infrastructures.

## Conclusion

What the study indicates is that ways to minimise the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are not only those that lead us to solve the effects on sanitation and health. In reality, we would only be combating the consequences when we should be following the path of socio-cultural and socio-economic causes. The pandemic took shape among the wealthier classes, those who could afford international travel, spreading until it affected the impoverished populations of the urban peripheries and local towns in the interior of Brazil, notably in the Amazon region, as seen in São Caetano de Odivelas. It is precisely in these social peripheries – whether in the Amazon or on the African continent – that the effect of the pandemic is most destructive, not only for the economy, but for social life, as the UNESCO document (2020: 6) attests to: 'The ban on public gatherings, for instance, in response to the pandemic has had consequent impact on family and community life, increased the possibility of fracturing relationships and undermining trust between states and their citizens, with long-term implications for cohesion and social harmony'.

It is in these places that are not in the daily news bulletins on the pandemic, which makes them invisible and non-existent for public policies, that there is a need for research to bring to light the facts and government actions. The situation is further aggravated when we observe that in these local towns in the Amazon, many, like Odivelas, originated from religious missions of Portuguese colonisation, a certain ethnic transfiguration is still recurrent with regard to historical reconstruction due to the impact of civilisation, since, being on the margins of modern medical and therapeutic instruments and processes, it remains for the *cabocla* population to resist like their indigenous ancestors: 'the survival of indigenous peoples is explained, in large part, by a biotic adaptation to the plagues of the white man' (Ribeiro, 1995: 332). The neo-colonisers, like those behind Bolsonarism and its minions, who have established themselves in Brazil since 2019, seem to re-enact the ethnic and racial wars, when on the one hand, there were tribal societies based on kinship and solidarity, and on the other, the state structure based on conquest and domination. Today, domination occurs through alleged herd immunity, promoted by state Bolsonarism, imposed by a lack of testing, sanitary guidance and adequate hospital resources, leading the inhabitants to be passive actors of natural selection in this pandemic war.

In these towns, due to a lack of information and transparency on the part of local authorities, there is a lack of knowledge on health data, because even supplies for tests are insufficient or non-existent. The importance of this research, even though it does not deal with important laboratory data, by bringing clinical and epidemiological data to the fore, it unravels a possible scenario of reality in these local towns. Beyond the data, when we glimpse the political approach and the various interests in play, certain dubious attitudes of local officials are called into question, contradicted by information of a more scientific nature, ascribing the university its natural destination, that of meeting the demands of society in general.

This, in addition to applied research, an appanage of this study, is concerned with interpretations based on data, which led us to consider the socio-anthropological aspects when considering sanitary measures. This is because, in recollection of Meyer (2008), understanding the disease in a local town is considering the way in which the patient is welcomed in their environment, like family solidarity, which should have been addressed by local government officials. In a situation of imminent marginalisation, at the onset of the pandemic, the discovery that someone had contracted COVID-19 was akin to a death certificate, given the likelihood of a vaccine, which in 2021 is fast approaching. For this reason, in these spaces, the extended family acquires a role that transcends mere coexistence, even nullifying medical experiences with symbolic logics (Augé, 1986), hence the broad use of medicinal plants.

Finally, with this research, we undertook to highlight a specific reality, in an authentic case study; however, we are conscious that reality treated in its specificity can easily reflect what happens in other local towns in the Amazon, hence, conveying this research to other secluded corners can and should be the main outcome of our work.

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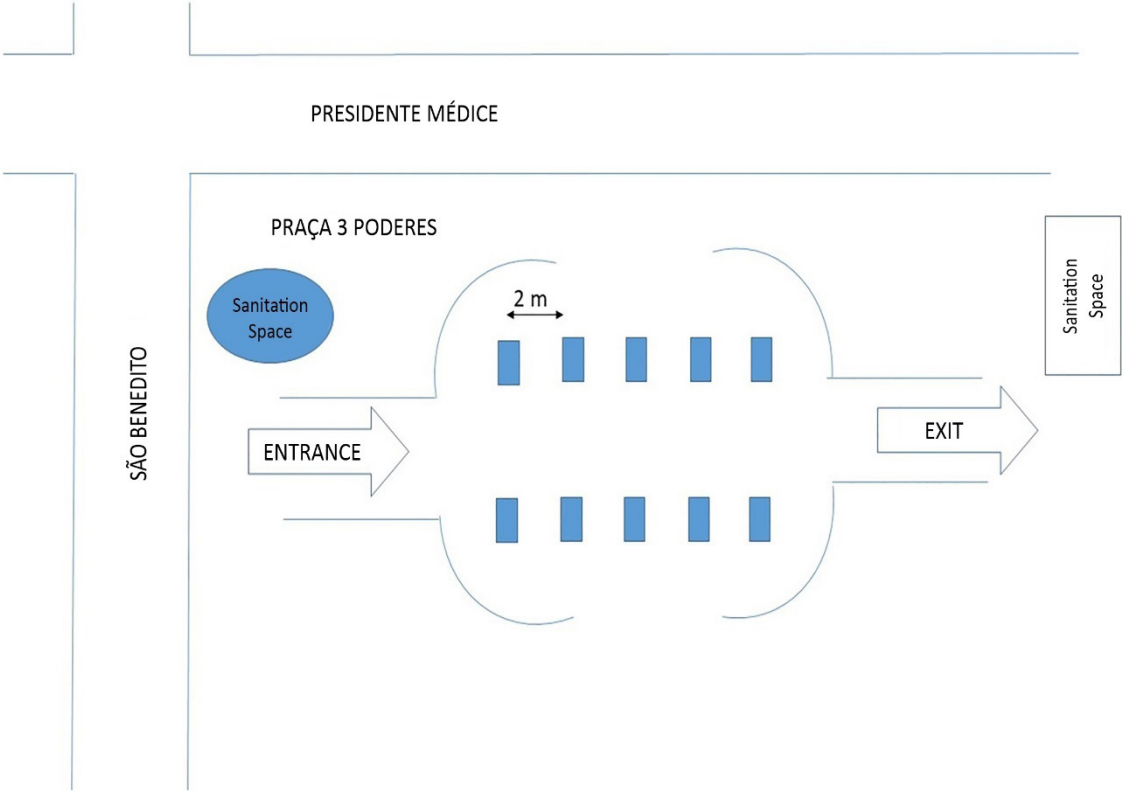
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**APPENDIX 1**

Layout of the Farmer’s Market of São Caetano de Odivelas (PA)



Source: Talita Aranha, São Caetano de Odivelas Municipal Secretary of Agriculture

# Facing the Pandemic in Brazil: controversies surrounding “early treatment” and vaccination

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## Abstract

The article investigates the controversies that emerge with the production of the CoronaVac vaccine, the first Covid-19 vaccine available in Brazil, on June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Based on Actor-Network Theory, this study is inspired by virtual ethnography. We thus privilege digital documents from government agencies and medical entities, specialized publications, publications in Facebook groups, and the writing of a virtual field diary. Our investigation ends with the approval of the CoronaVac and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines by the National Health Surveillance Agency (Anvisa). We identify the construction of factoids by groups that were critical of social distancing measures, basing themselves on the use of purportedly scientific arguments. The alliances established between doctors and the federal government through the Ministry of Health challenged the vaccine as a technoscientific artifact, and advocated for drugs that were part of the so-called “early treatment” as the “cure” for the pandemic in Brazil.

**Keywords:** Covid-19; Controversies; Early treatment; CoronaVac; Socioanthropology.

# O Enfrentamento à Pandemia no Brasil: controvérsias em torno do “tratamento precoce” e da vacinação

## Resumo

O artigo investiga as controvérsias que emergem com a notícia do início da produção da primeira vacina contra a Covid-19 no Brasil, a CoronaVac, em 11 de junho de 2020. Apoiando-se na perspectiva da Teoria Ator-Rede, realiza-se um estudo com inspiração na etnografia virtual. Assim, privilegiam-se documentos digitais de órgãos governamentais e entidades médicas, matérias jornalísticas, publicações em grupos da rede social *Facebook* e escrita de diário de campo virtual. A investigação é finalizada com a aprovação das vacinas CoronaVac e Oxford-AstraZeneca pela Agência Nacional de Vigilância Sanitária. O estudo identifica a construção de factóides por grupos críticos ao distanciamento social, tendo como base o acionamento de argumentos pretensamente científicos. Identifica-se que as alianças estabelecidas entre médicos e o governo federal por meio do Ministério da Saúde procuraram desestabilizar a vacina, enquanto artefato tecnocientífico, performando medicamentos do chamado “tratamento precoce” como a “cura” para a pandemia no Brasil.

**Palavras-chave:** Covid-19; Controvérsias; Tratamento precoce; CoronaVac; Socioantropologia.

# Facing the Pandemic in Brazil: controversies surrounding “early treatment” and vaccination

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## **Introduction**

At the start of 2020, the world watched, stunned as a new virus, SARS-CoV 2<sup>1</sup> and the Covid-19<sup>2</sup> disease it causes, rapidly spread throughout the globe. The first case of the disease was reported in December of 2019 in Wuhan, capital of Hubei Province, in central China. A number of measures to contain the virus were immediately discussed. First and foremost was the use of medications and the production of a vaccine. Since the very first reports of the virus, it became clear that drugs used for other diseases would need to undergo further controlled testing, as research also targeted the production of new drugs and vaccines. A further measure, backed by the World Health Organization (WHO) was a common protocol during times of pandemic: restrictions on the circulation of people through social distancing or quarantine. Yet this measure was subject to harsh criticism and bitter reactions, raising allegations that it would cripple the economy and generate more deaths, ultimately proving more deadly than the virus itself.

Among the studies and tests carried out worldwide on drugs that might be used for treating Covid-10 was “Hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin as a treatment of Covid-19: results of an open-label non-randomized clinical trial”, derived from research coordinated by the Méditerranée Infection University Hospital Institute in Marseille and published in March 2020 (Gautret et al., 2020). The study popularized the use of drugs such as chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine as treatments for Covid-19 in various countries, including the United States and Brazil (Corrêa et al., 2020). These drugs, long used in treating malaria and other diseases, became the focus of research on their efficacy in treating the symptoms of Covid-19. According to Correa et al’s survey of data from clinical trials, there were 469 clinical trials against Covid-19 registered worldwide by the 13<sup>th</sup> of April 2020, some 20% of which (68 studies) involved the use of hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine in treating the disease. Only one study, however, “Efficacy and Safety of Hydroxychloroquine for Treatment of Covid-19”, carried out between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of February in Shanghai, involving 30 patients, had been concluded at that time. The study revealed “the importance of using the drug to reduce the viral load, but it did not reach conclusions on its possible impacts viz mortality and hospitalization rates” (Corrêa et al., 2020: 8).

Since the start of the pandemic, the WHO’s has sought to contain the virus through detection, testing, isolation, and tracing, thereby avoiding community transmission, while also underscoring that each country is free to develop its own protocols (OPAS, 2020). In March 2020, the WHO initiated a collaborative global study called “Solidarity”, which investigated the efficacy of four drug treatments for Covid-19, among which was

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1 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2.

2 Coronavirus Disease 19.

hydroxychloroquine<sup>3</sup>. However, by June 2020 the study had dropped hydroxychloroquine from clinical trials in hospitalized patients since it was not delivering the expected results.

Even in the absence of consolidated scientific results confirming the efficacy of the above-mentioned drugs in treating Covid-19, heads of state such as Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro advocated for their use as a solution for the propagation of the virus. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of March, the then-president of the United States, Donald Trump, defended the use of chloroquine<sup>4</sup> in the treatment of Covid-19 patients. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of March, Jair Bolsonaro announced that he would “ensure that the Armed Forces would boost the production of chloroquine” (Bárbara, 2020: 91)<sup>5</sup>.

Note that despite a lack of consensus in the biomedical community concerning the use of drugs for “early treatment”<sup>6</sup>, or even on the existence of an effective treatment for Covid-19, chloroquine was, from the start, touted by the Brazilian president as a solution for the global sanitary crisis (Nascimento et al., 2020). In an interview to Piauí Magazine, Luiz Henrique Mandetta, the former Health Minister, who was fired on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 2020, stated that Bolsonaro used chloroquine as a political tool in the hope of economic recovery, all the while diminishing the gravity of the disease by referring to it as a “little flu” (Esteves, 2020).

These early debates were generative of realities and performativities. In this article we will argue that there is a performative aspect to the claim that “early treatment does not need scientific evidence”, through agency of different actors, including the federal government. To this end, we will investigate the controversies that stem from news of the production of the first vaccine against Covid-19, known as CoronaVac<sup>7</sup>, and trace the arguments that sustain these debates. That is, we will seek to understand how the statement quoted above performs the construction of a *factoid* (Marras, 2020).

For Bruno Latour (2000, 2016), the construction of facts and fictions is diagnostic of the construction of social reality. His interests stem from reflections on the construction of ‘society’ and ‘nature’, which are produced during modernity with the help of science. His view is that social anthropological investigation should suspend modern social and natural constructs. Thus, insofar as the aim of this article is to understand how facts and fictions are constructed, it relies on a reform of the hegemonic idea of the social (and the natural) through the exercise of describing experiences, taking into account the criteria of the relational pragmatics of association which stabilize and destabilize facts (Latour, 2016).

The attainment of consensus on the objectivity of facts through scientific practices has been criticized for excluding worlds and organizational forms that remain unseen by a vitiated modern epistemology. However, to carry forth this epistemic critique, it must be recognized the Latourian post-natural and post-social approach is not related to post-truth (Marras, 2020). In post-truth, according to Marras, “facts give way to factoids; the production of knowledge to the production of obscurities; scientific controversies are reduced to the most empty and petty sense of politics” (Marras, 2020: 41). Thus, for Actor-Network Theory (ANT) the post-social and post-natural do not entail the loss of realism (qua neorealism) nor of scientific objectivity (qua consensus among peers, with results open to critique and discussion).

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3 “i) Remdesivir, used in the treatment of ebola; ii) Chloroquine, used in the treatment of malaria; iii) Ritonavir and Lopinavir, part of the cocktail used to treat HIV; iv) Interferon-beta, a molecule developed in treating bodily inflammation, and which, in earlier tests, had shown results in monkeys and macaques infected by MERS” (PebMed, 2020, s/p).

4 Chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine are distinct drugs, both of which play a part in the controversy under study. Nonetheless, for the sake of economy, we have chosen to use only the term ‘chloroquine’ when we refer to positions in favour of “early treatment” in Brazil.

5 The Laboratório Químico Farmacêutico do Exército (Chemical Drug Laboratory of the Army), founded in 1908, is the oldest in Brazil (ALFOB, 2019).

6 Throughout the article, we use the expression “early treatment” in quotation marks since it is an object of public dispute surrounding the disease regarding which there is no consensus.

7 The vaccine known in Brazil as ‘CoronaVac’ is generally called the “Sinovac vaccine” or the Sinovac Biotech vaccine” in the English-language media and academic literature. As we are discussing Brazilian phenomena, we have opted to retain Brazilian usage throughout this article.

The idea of *performance*<sup>8</sup> proposed by Annemarie Mol (2002) means “to make exist, enact, make effective”. When we speak of performativity and performing we are hence describing how practices, in a variety of ways, “make [something] take place”, which helps us to think about the construction of facts. We are not, therefore, thinking through a reality that exists beyond practices, but, rather, that is embedded in practice, in the understanding that relational practices create realities. Practices leave traces – that is, materialities (documents, recipes, statistical data) that enable us to retrace preceding steps to thereby understand: (i) which actors were selected to delineate the construction of a fact; (ii) its effects on the creation of new realities. We argue that the public debate surrounding “early treatment” overflows its initial boundaries, generating realities that become materialized as the development of vaccination in Brazil gets underway.

We have sought out ways of approximating and observing situations in which reactions to the vaccine and its developments were in evidence. Our inspiration in ANT points to a path: from a starting point, we describe relations that develop from it through a descriptive practice that aims to explore the existence of mediators while the construction of reality unfolds (Latour, 2012).

Description is not restricted to action, usually associated with human activity, but is extended to processes of mediation between humans and nonhumans interrelated in networks of socio-technical relations (Latour, 1994). This is possible because ANT suggests that, by extending symmetry of action to the heterogeneous relations between humans and nonhumans, we can amplify the scientific and political interpretations that ensue from co-constructed realities that are unstable and alterable (Latour 1994, 2000, 2012, 2016). It should be noted that we did not observe directly the processes and practices we describe, but rather accessed them through official rhetoric, documents, or statements by specific actors as reported in the media or in social networks.

We have chosen to describe relations through the lens of symmetry<sup>9</sup> because: (i) we avoid explanatory *a priori*s in the analysis of public debates; (ii) we have chosen to describe relations in such a way that the asymmetries between versions, involvement<sup>10</sup>, and the mediators that promote them become visible; and (iii) we can map the tensions, frictions, and transformations that relations generate in the construction of realities.

Mapping begins on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2020, with the announcement of the partnership between the government of the state of São Paulo<sup>11</sup>, the Butantan Institute<sup>12</sup>, and the Chinese Sinovac Biotech Laboratory for the production of the CoronaVac vaccine in Brazil. Taking this factual signpost, we mapped critical comments that began to circulate in: (i) far-reaching news portals; (ii) Facebook pages and groups; (iii) documents produced by Brazilian medical institutions and organizations; (iv) social media profiles of actors considered to have played a key role in the controversy. The period we mapped extended from June 2020 to January 2021.

Facebook pages were chosen through web searches using the following key words: “anti-vaccine (antivax)”; “against the vaccine”; and “early treatment”. Two pages emerged from these searches: “O lado obscuro das vacinas” (“The dark side of vaccines”, created on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2017 with over three thousand likes) and “Movimento contra a vacina no Brasil” (“Antivax movement in Brazil”, created on the 21<sup>st</sup> of August 2020, with over one thousand likes)<sup>13</sup>. Although the first page had a greater number of likes, it was less active during the period under consideration, with few publications referring to Covid-19 vaccines. A web search for “early treatment” took us to the Facebook group “Covid tratamento precoce – Médicos pela vida Campo Grande”

8 Mol also uses the term ‘enactment’ and ‘enact’ with the same meaning as ‘performance’.

9 Symmetry is the epistemic proposal which expresses the heterogeneity of relations (Latour, 2012).

10 Involvement is the term used in ANT to express that relations do not occur outside of relations of convincing and power, and that they do not occur in a spontaneous manner (Latour, 2016).

11 Brazilian states adopted specific measures for social distancing, and, specifically in the case of São Paulo, for developing research on immunity. These acts were unsuccessfully challenged by the Bolsonaro government in the Supreme Court.

12 The Instituto Butantan (Butantan Institute), founded in 1901, is the largest producer of immunobiologicals in Brazil.

13 Although the page is called “Antivax movement in Brazil”, and despite remaining active in terms of the number of posts and interactions during the period under analysis, it is the initiative of an individual, a member of the social network known as “The interventionist”.

(“Covid early treatment – Doctors for Life Campo Grande”), created on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2020 by a doctor from the city of Campo Grande, in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul. This group was highly active, with over four thousand members at the time of writing.

Finally, we also analysed the protracted meeting of the Board of the Associação Nacional de Vigilância Sanitária (ANVISA, National Association for Health Surveillance) which took place on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2021, and which authorized emergency use of the CoronaVac and AstraZeneca vaccines. We followed the meeting and took fieldnotes, registering the fact that the decision was made at a time of tension, since it would bring to a close some of the debates which were involved in the controversy.

Research techniques were inspired by the methods of ‘virtual ethnography’ (Mercado, 2012), which observes interactions mediated by tools of communication, online interviews, the analysis of digital documents, among other techniques that allow us to understand social relations unfolding in virtual space. In order to write this article, we analysed digital documents, observed the activities of the selected Facebook pages and groups (but did not participate in them), and kept fieldnotes. Taking official documents, videos and social media posts which were critical of the development of the CoronaVac vaccine and defended “early treatment”, we analysed how these debates, which evoked “medical authority” and scientific backing from different angles, both reverberated in Facebook groups contrary to vaccination and fed back into them. When mapping was complete, we were able to identify how the groups involved in criticizing vaccination organized their practices, channelling the Brazilian reality towards accepting chloroquine as a “cure” for the pandemic.

The remainder of this article is divided into three parts. The first part tracks the emergence of the CoronaVac vaccine and of groups which were against it. We return to the start of the pandemic to understand ‘early treatment’ as a relevant actor in the controversy. The second part describes the reception of the vaccine through the Anvisa meeting that approved its emergency use. Finally, the third part returns to some of the points raised in the article and weaves reflections on the effects of the controversy on the fight against the pandemic in Brazil.

## **Reactions against vaccination during the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil**

Before we describe some of the contrary reactions against news of the development of the CoronaVac vaccine in Brazil in June of 2020, we present certain prior events that aide us in understanding the connections that would later be established and the arguments that would be engaged.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2020, Law 13.979/2020 was approved, laying out measures for tackling Covid-19 in Brazil. These included isolation, quarantine, social distancing, and the use of masks to avoid exposure to the virus by strategies of “horizontal contention” (CFM, 2020: 2). These policies were to reduce levels of contagion, and to thereby prevent the collapse of the healthcare system until such time as it would be able to adapt to the growing demand for hospital beds (Pereira, 2021). As Covid-19 became a global phenomenon, the pandemic produced landscapes that “compose new rhetoric and practices that intervene in the daily affairs of people and institutions” (Segata et al., 2021: 8). However, the scale of the pandemic does not transform it into a homogenous event; on the contrary, the pandemic is “a multiple and unequal event” (Segata et al., 2021: 8).

Among the difficulties in maintaining sanitary measures as barriers to the spread of the virus is a characteristic of the virus itself: its long period of incubation, which means that the disease can be transmitted by those who are still asymptomatic. There are also cases in which infected people remain asymptomatic during the full cycle of the virus, but transmit it nonetheless. These two characteristics of the virus, compounded by the difficulty in carrying out large-scale tests, resulted in heterogenous and disordered measures of isolation, social distancing, quarantine, and, in more extreme cases, lockdown, during different stages of the pandemic. These measures furthermore met with harsh criticism, being considered harmful both to the economy and to the popularity of president Jair Bolsonaro (Nascimento et al., 2020).



Alongside attempts at establishing isolation and social distancing strategies to combat the pandemic, the Ministério da Saúde (MS, Health Ministry) initially declared itself in favour of the use of chloroquine only in severe cases of the illness, on patients who were hospitalized and under medical care. The theme meanwhile assumed the contours of a political dispute between the president's will and the position of the MS, as we can see in the conflicting technical statements that follow.

In a statement released on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2020<sup>14</sup> the Sociedade Brasileira de Infectologia (SBI, Brazilian Infectiology Society)<sup>15</sup> considered the use of chloroquine in treating Covid-19 to be a “life-saving experimental therapy”, which should only be used as a clinical trial approved by an ethics commission, such as Comissão Nacional de Ética em Pesquisa (CONEP, National Commission for Research Ethics), or by the ethics commission of the hospital in which the procedure is to be adopted. The statement furthermore established that treatment should be decided on a case-by-case basis, that it must be evaluated by the attending doctor, and that it was counter-indicated as a prophylactic or in non-critical cases.

However, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, the very day in which the Health Minister Henrique Mandetta was removed from office, the Conselho Federal de Medicina (CFM, National Medical Council), the agency responsible for regulating professional medical conduct, released technical report n° 4/2020 which considered that chloroquine could be used on patients who had just been diagnosed with infection, presenting mild symptoms, so long as it was approved by doctor and patient. The doctor had to explain to the patient that there were no studies that proved the efficacy of the drug in treating the disease. The report furthermore stated that doctors who used the drug during the pandemic would not be deemed to have committed an ethical infraction (CFM, 2020). On the 17<sup>th</sup> of April, Dr. Nelson Teich took over as Health Minister, but remained less than one month in office because of disagreements concerning the protocol that authorized use of chloroquine, the so-called “early treatment”, which was defended by the president of the republic (Junqueira e Machida, 2020).

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2020, in the presence of the new Health Minister, General Eduardo Pazuello, the MS approved the use of chloroquine in “early treatment” and suggested it be used in the Brazilian Sistema Único de Saúde (SUS, National Health Service)<sup>16</sup>. The protocol authorized and indicated the use of drugs in “early treatment” at the onset of Covid-19 symptoms. These drugs included chloroquine, as well as others such as azithromycin and ivermectin<sup>17</sup>. It was the doctor's responsibility to inform the patient that there was no scientific evidence for the efficacy of the drugs before they made a joint decision, which would require that the patient sign a term of consent. The protocol also advised the population to seek medical or hospital care as soon as symptoms manifested themselves, and not only when or if they were aggravated.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2020, the Conselho Nacional de Saúde (CNS, National Health Council), released Statement 042, recommending immediate suspension of the MS protocols for treating patients diagnosed with Covid-19. The statement claimed that use of chloroquine was a political, rather than technical decision, and that any treatment needed to be anchored in the criteria of health experts. The statement claimed that “the search for solutions for preventing and treating Covid-19, as well as the conclusions already published in scientific journals, such as *The New England Journal of Medicine*, *JAMA*, *The BMJ* 1 and the *BMJ* 2” (CNS, 2020), showed that these drugs had not delivered the expected results in combating Covid, but instead had produced adverse effects, such as cardiac problems. The technical statement also referred to medical organizations such as the

14 The statement also observes that Gautret et al.'s 2020 study “Hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin as a treatment of Covid-19: results of an open-label non-randomized clinical trial”, which claimed to show some ‘benefit’ in the use of these drugs, is questionable because of the small sample analysed.

15 Created in 1980, the Brazilian Infectiology Society is a medical association that promotes the development of infectiology in the country, through scientific, technical, cultural, and social exchanges between its members.

16 The National Health Service (SUS), enshrined in the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, is one of the largest public health systems in the world providing full, universal and free healthcare. It is managed by the the levels of the federation: the Union, states, and municipalities.

17 The documents were removed from the internet after the Health Minister Marcelo Queiroga claimed, under oath, in the Covid-19 Parliamentary Enquiry Commission that there was never a protocol for “early treatment” of the disease (Junqueira, 2021).

Brazilian Infectiology Society, the Sociedade Brasileira de Pneumologia e Tisiologia (SBPT, Brazilian Society for Pneumology and Phthysiology) and the Associação de Medicina Intensiva Brasileira (AMIB, Brazilian Association for Intensive Medicine), learned societies which were against the use of chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine as treatments at any stage of Covid-19 (CNS, 2020).

This brief chronology of the position of government agencies and medical organizations in the first months of the pandemic in Brazil reveals how the government's defence of protocols for "early treatment" was gradually being strengthened by the controversial support of entities such as the CFM. The 11<sup>th</sup> of June 2020 emerges as a prime candidate for a kick-off date for reactions against vaccination in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil. This was the day the government of the state of São Paulo announced a partnership between the Butantan Institute and the Chinese Sinovac Biotech Laboratory for phase 3 of randomised trials of the CornaVac vaccine to take place in Brazil. According to the terms of the agreement, once the *efficacy* and *safety* of the vaccine were assured, the Institute would have the technical know-how for large-scale production of the vaccine for use in the country.

Soon after this agreement was announced, supporters and representatives of the government of Jair Bolsonaro attacked the partnership, stressing the "Chinese origin" of the vaccine as a reason for doubting its efficacy and safety (Eller, 2020). The main theory that began to circulate in social media was that of a Chinese political conspiracy that: (i) *produced the virus* and (ii) *made a vaccine available*. Two days after the partnership between the Butantan and Sinovac was announced, the hashtag "Chinese vaccine" became one of the most discussed Twitter topics in Brazil.

The first challenge to the announcement of the partnership were not an openly declared "antivax" movement, but reactions against the "Chinese vaccine". Triggered by representatives and supporters of the federal government, the reactions came to perform CoronaVac as a political artifact associated with a Chinese/Communist virus. At the same time that a bi-partitioning of science and politics was stressed – underscoring the purported neutrality of the former – the acceptance or refusal of a scientific artifact was associated with a xenophobic politics. Meanwhile, alongside efforts at weakening the network established around the CoronaVac vaccine, a second movement becomes constituted, targeting the defence of the network of drugs that came to be associated with "a cure for the virus" – which came to be known as the "early treatment for Covid-19" – generated mistrust of vaccines in general.

In the remainder of this article, we will describe each of these constitutive elements of the controversy, starting from statements that "the Chinese vaccine is not scientific" and "early treatment does not need scientific evidence". We map the shifts in premises and the scientific arguments mobilized and/or challenged by the actors of the movements in question.

### "The Chinese vaccine is not scientific"

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 2020, the Health Ministry announced an agreement to produce the "Oxford vaccine", in partnership with the AstraZeneca lab. The Brazilian institute charged with developing the technology for producing the vaccine was the Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz, Oswaldo Cruz Foundation). The agreement included the transfer of technology and the start of vaccine production in Brazil as early as December. The announcement of this deal with the federal government led to the construction of a sharp polarization between the "Chinese vaccine" and the "Oxford vaccine", which aligned itself with the polarization between João Doria, governor of the state of São Paulo, affiliated with the Partido Social Democrata Brasileiro (PSDB, Brazilian Social Democratic Party), and the government of Jair Bolsonaro (who has been unaffiliated since 2019). In the midst

of this polarization, Jair Bolsonaro stated, in a 'live' intended for his supporters and transmitted on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July, that: "We got into that consortium from Oxford. Everything suggests that it's going to work out and 100 million units will arrive for us. It's not from that other country, OK people? It's from Oxford" (Carvalho, 2020).

The defence of a "reliable science" produced in England, in contradistinction to an unreliable science produced in China, was more than mere rhetoric which only had a passing effect on the sociotechnical network of vaccination in Brazil. Indeed, the opposition set up by Jair Bolsonaro and his supporters had important effects on the Brazilian population, which either engaged with or rejected vaccination against Covid-19. In the Facebook page 'Antivax Movement in Brazil' we see associations between the CoronaVac vaccine and a "New World Order" which would subsume the people of the world to Chinese communism. Similarly, many advocated for the non-obligatoriness of vaccination in defence of individual freedoms<sup>18</sup>.

Doubt-mongering, exploiting the uncertainty that is intrinsic to the production of scientific knowledge, is not a new strategy. Authors such as David Michaels (2005) and Naomi Oreskes (2015) describe how large industries from different sectors have long used similar strategies to question scientific consensus, raising doubts concerning the harmful effects of their practices. The authors argue that there is a clear pattern to these industrial strategies, including tactics such as drafting in specialists to produce "alternative facts", which suggests that such strategies are wilful and organized rather than irrational or based on ignorance. As Oreskes (2015: 2) stresses, what we see is the key role of uncertainty, "insofar as the centrepiece of the doubt-mongering strategy is to insist that the relevant science is too uncertain to provide a good basis for decision-making".

In the case under analysis, the same phenomenon can be seen in challenges to the efficiency of CoronaVac, and, later, in the rejection of a mass vaccination campaign in Brazil. These challenges are justified by an ideological base, which is also made viable by exploiting uncertainty to construct political claims (Oreskes, 2015). References to the "Chinese virus" and to a "New World Order" thus sow doubt regarding robust scientific knowledge, and produces affectations of daily life which are not restricted to "scientific answers".

In this sense, the statement originally meant to fight the production of the CoronaVac vaccine by the São Paulo government, unfolds into three other positions: the first in support for the production of the "Oxford vaccine"; the second against a compulsory vaccination policy; the third in favour of "early treatment" instead of vaccine production. These developments are synthesized by Jair Bolsonaro on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 2020, after a Supreme Court Justice raised the possibility of legal action regarding the matter of compulsory vaccination. In a meeting with supporters at the presidential palace he claimed: "As I see it this is not a matter for justice, it's a matter of health above all. A judge can't decide if you're going to get vaccinated or not, that doesn't exist". In the same meeting, Bolsonaro brought up the issue of a "cure" in support of his "early treatment" policy. In his words:

Isn't it cheaper or easier to invest in a cure than in the vaccine? Or try for both, but to not forget the cure? [...] The cure, me, for example, I am living proof. I took hydroxychloroquine, others took ivermectin, other took Annita, and it worked. Everything suggests that everyone who treated early with one of these three options was cured (Mazui, 2020, available at: <https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2020/10/26/nao-pode-um-juiz-decidir-se-voce-vai-ou-nao-tomar-vacina-diz-bolsonaro.ghtml>).

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<sup>18</sup> Similar associations feature in Brazilian conservative and right-wing news shows. One example is "Os Pingos nos Ís" (Dotting the I's), on the Jovem Pan station, which, systematically throughout 2020, produced programmes on the "Chinese origin of the pandemic", the "unsafety of vaccines", and the purported inefficiency of lockdown and social distancing strategies. The programme regularly invited doctors who defended "early treatment". The programme is available in the eponymous YouTube channel (Jovem Pan, 2020).

As we will see, the network established around “early treatment” received backing from an important part of the Brazilian medical community, more so than policies targeting the production of vaccines. By engaging specialists in support of “early treatment”, a debate which had been superseded by the international community is revived, producing a web that sustains the federal government’s policies.

Reactions against the vaccine can also be seen in the results of two polls carried out by the Datafolha Institute between August and December of 2020<sup>19</sup>. In the first poll, published in the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, 9% of those interviewed claimed that they would not take a vaccine to deter the pandemic, and 3% could not offer an opinion on the matter. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2020 the percentage of people who claimed that they would not get vaccinated rose to 22%, and those who could not provide an opinion to 5%. In the December poll, those who claimed that they would accept being vaccinated were asked about the origin of the vaccine. According to the pollsters, “an approved vaccine that had been developed in China would be rejected by 50% of adult Brazilians”, while “the majority would accept vaccines developed by Russia (60%), the United States (74%) and the United Kingdom (70%)” (Datafolha 2020: 4). The December poll furthermore registered that, although the majority (56%) of interviewees claimed to be in favour of compulsory vaccination for the whole population, among those who declared that they always trusted the claims of President Jair Bolsonaro this figure fell to 39%.

We can thus see that the polarization, which originally pitted the “Chinese vaccine” and the “Oxford vaccine”, associating the CoronaVac vaccine to a supposed “Communist threat”, reverberated in these polls. Furthermore, the idea that “the Chinese vaccine is not scientific” developed, first, into support for the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine and ensuing political polarization, and, later, into a generalized mistrust of the safety and efficacy of the vaccines against Covid-19, generating, in the end, a weakening of the mass vaccination campaign in Brazil. For a parcel of society, vaccination came to be associated with a policy of curtailing individual freedoms. As we will see shortly, it is precisely the idea of individual freedoms that proponents of “early treatment” uphold, claiming that, unlike vaccination, such treatments do not require scientific evidence to be adopted wholesale.

### “Early treatment does not need scientific evidence”

Along with the early deals for vaccine production between Brazilian institutions and international laboratories, president Jair Bolsonaro pushed for the adoption of “early treatment” protocols. Treatment was a central element in official discourse, emerging as a means to halt the spread of the disease. However, treatment was hardly consensual among medical institutions. The new protocols for ‘early treatment’ were not endorsed by the Brazilian Infectiology Society (SBI), which assumed a public position against it, including releasing statements to the population at large. Statement n° 15, issued on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2020, for example, refers to the Medical Code of Ethics and the resolutions of the Federal Council of Medicine:

We are living through a serious public health crisis. We cannot put the health of the Brazilian population at risk through *guidelines with no scientific evidence*. The use of any substance for purposes other than those it has been approved (off-label) must be an individual decision of the doctor, on a case-by-case basis, and making the possible benefits and risks known to the patient, although publicizing this conduct is forbidden. According to the Federal Council of Medicine, in the Medical Code of Ethics, CFM Resolution n° 2.217, issued on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2018, modified by CFM Resolutions n° 2.222/2019 and 2.226/2019, Chapter 13, concerning MEDICAL PUBLICITY: “The doctor is forbidden: Art. 113. To promulgate, outside of the scientific community, treatment processes or discoveries the

<sup>19</sup> The polls were undertaken by phone calls, spanning representative samples of the adult population of Brazil. In the August poll, 2065 people were interviewed; 2016 people were interviewed in December. The statistical margin of error was calculated at 2%.

value of which has not been explicitly scientifically recognized by competent agencies” (Sociedade Brasileira de Infectologia, 2020: 4, *emphasis added*, available at: <https://infectologia.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/nota-6-esclarecimento-hidroxicloroquina-Covid-19.pdf>).

A further statement from the SBI, issued on the 17<sup>th</sup> of July 2020, analysed randomized trials with control groups. One study evaluated Covid-19 patients in 40 US states and 3 Canadian provinces; another, carried out in Spain, evaluated virological (reduction of the viral load in the nasopharynx) and clinical (reduction of symptom duration and hospital stays) efficacy. In none of these studies were any virological or clinical benefits observed in patients that took chloroquine when compared to those who received no pharmacological treatment (the placebo group). The statement warns that the Health Ministry, states, and municipalities should not use public funds to invest in these drugs:

“With this scientific evidence, the SBI abides by the orientations of all medical scientific societies in developed countries, as well as of the World Health Organization (WHO), that hydroxychloroquine should be discarded in any phase of the treatment of Covid-19” (SBI, 2020a, available at: <https://infectologia.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/nota-6-esclarecimento-hidroxicloroquina-Covid-19.pdf>).

In the wake of a movement that contested and denied the scientific legitimacy of the drugs used in “early treatment”, we also find the statements of the Agência Nacional de Vigilância Sanitária (Anvisa, National Agency for Health Surveillance), Fiocruz and the Butantan Institute, among others. Nonetheless, president Bolsonaro’s remarks on ‘early treatment’ reverberated and fed back into the position of medical entities and groups that started to become articulated throughout the country.

In what concerns medical entities, we must highlight the positions of the Associação Médica Brasileira (AMB, Brazilian Medical Association), the Conselho Federal de Medicina (CFM, Federal Council of Medicine) and the Sociedade Brasileira de Cardiologia (SBC, Brazilian Cardiological Society), which, during 2020, either remained neutral or declared themselves to be in favour of the right of doctors to choose treatment for Covid-19 patients. The main document adduced to sustain this position is the Helsinki Declaration, which concerns the ethical principles for medical research on human beings and was adopted by the 18<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the World Medical Association, held in 1964 in Helsinki, Finland. Paragraph 37 of the declaration states that:

In the treatment of an individual patient, where proven interventions do not exist or other known interventions have been ineffective, the physician, after seeking expert advice, with informed consent from the patient or a legally authorised representative, may use an unproven intervention if in the physician’s judgement it offers hope of saving life, re-establishing health or alleviating suffering. (General Assembly of the World Medical Association, 1964, available at: [https://www.fcm.unicamp.br/fcm/sites/default/files/declaracao\\_de\\_helsinki.pdf](https://www.fcm.unicamp.br/fcm/sites/default/files/declaracao_de_helsinki.pdf)).

It is in this sense that the Helsinki Declaration, which authorizes doctors who obtain patient consent to make use of drugs that are not scientifically proven to work, becomes a relevant actant in the network established around the defence of “early treatment” during the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil. It is in light of this mobilization that the SBI assumes a position against the use of these drugs (as seen in the previous quotation), while, at the same time, entities such as the AMB will make an extensive plea for medical autonomy. Claiming to be a signatory of the Declaration, the AMB published a statement on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July 2020, titled “Hydroxychloroquine: AMB defends medical autonomy”, which ends with the following observation:

We cannot allow ideologies and vanities, dazzled by the spotlight, to suddenly make us regress in practices that have long been respected. One cannot cry out for science and assume positions based on ideology or partisanship, ignoring practices that are consolidated in medicine. This is a crime against medicine, against patients, and,

above all, against science itself (Associação Médica Brasileira, 2020, available at: <https://coronavirus.amb.org.br/hidroxicloroquina-amb-defende-autonomia-do-medico/>).

For the AMB, prohibiting doctors from using unproven prophylactic, diagnostic, and therapeutic measures on their patients would thus be a partisan/ideological act, which would be harmful to science itself. By labelling those who disagree with them “partisan”, the AMB, far from creating neutrality, reaffirms the intentions of actors to assume central roles in a dispute that, in this case, refer back to critiques of the federal government’s adoption of “early treatment” protocols. The arguments engaged reveal attempts to isolate “science” from research and peer-review practices, associating it with a clinical, *empirical knowledge* that, in the final analysis, must be operated and validated on an individual basis.

The fact that important actors from the Brazilian medical community defended treatment which, as we saw earlier, had been discredited by the international scientific community, cannot be neglected. Crucially, although representatives and supporters of Jair Bolsonaro’s government sought to resurrect a controversy that had largely been overcome by the international scientific community, a simplistic opposition of the sort “Bolsonaro *versus* specialists” does not account for the multiplicity of the network. Not only were there solid alliances between the groups mentioned above, but the defence of “early treatment” became integral to the practices of different actors linked to the Brazilian medical community.

Examples of these alliances and associations can be found in the Facebook group “Covid early treatment – Doctors for Life Campo Grande”. The group was created on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2020 by a cardiologist. With over 4000 members at the time of writing, the group actively shared videos, texts, and images touting the supposed benefits of the use of the drugs advocated by the Bolsonaro government. The group furthermore reached beyond Facebook, as can be seen in a publication dated 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2020, in which a group of doctors, among them the founder of the group, are pictured with the mayor of Campo Grande<sup>20</sup> in a meeting to approve “early treatment” protocols. In the caption we learn that a WhatsApp group of over 200 doctors formed spontaneously in the space of two days.

For the period in which we mapped publications in the Facebook group – June 2020 to January 2021 – we observed that the Helsinki Declaration, as well as the statements of the aforementioned entities, were widely disseminated with the aim of giving *scientific credibility* to the medical practices advocated. Texts and videos produced by the Health Ministry were shared with the same aim, advising healthcare workers to adopt the treatment protocols; statements by regional councils favourable to the adoption of “early treatment” were reposted, including the Regional Medical Councils of Mato Grosso do Sul and Santa Catarina, and reviews by the Federal Medicine Council stating that the use of drugs such as chloroquine would not amount to an ethical infraction by professionals treating Covid-19 patients.

Along with the construction of scientific credibility, an association was established between “early treatment” and the “struggle against social inequalities”. The claim made here was that, while doctors were already protected from the virus through drugs such as chloroquine, the population at-large would have to treat themselves with dipyrrone or paracetamol. In these situations, drugs are performed as *political actors* in entrenched debates, conveying not only the greater or lesser efficacy of a treatment but also the existence of social markers (such as “doctors” *versus* “the populace”) which would, in the end, determine who was saved and who would die by the technoscientific network established around the non-validation of a “cure” for Covid-19.

A further point worth highlighting in the messages that come to compose the network of “early treatment” is how the challenge to a specific premiss of scientific practice, to wit, the *validation of scientific knowledge through the peer-review process*, becomes inscribed in the acts of the actors of the medical community.

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<sup>20</sup> Campo Grande is the capital of the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, part of Brazil’s Central-West Region.

A detailed construction of this movement can be seen in a post by a doctor based in the Federal District on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 2020, in the group that we have been following. Addressing her fellow doctors, she claims:

“(…) Remember that *scientific consensus* should play a minimal role in medical practice, serving only as guidelines and not as absolute orders that colleagues must follow or else be penalized by sanctions or harsh criticism by their reviewers (almost always chosen by political criteria within the field). It is not a ‘society’ that defines what is best for a patient, it is an individual doctor, A PERSON or A GROUP OF PEOPLE who is, or are [sic], charged with the case [...] It is dangerous when advocates of the (wonderful, to be sure) ‘medicine based on evidence’ do not take into account their own limitations, and that, in the final analysis, ‘*absence of evidence*’ is not ‘*evidence of absence*’. Even worse is when the societies and agencies of the field think that they is [sic] more important that they really is [sic] in handling individual cases. It is the doctor, the patient, and medicine. These are the actors. Full stop.” (Doctor based in the Federal District, *emphases added*).

As Oreskes (2015) makes clear, challenging the existence of a scientific consensus, accentuating dissidence, pinpointing and encouraging individuals who diverge from the consensus, or even fabricating new divergences, is a recurring strategy for sowing doubt in the minds of the public at-large. A movement of specialists, associated with political actors situated “outside” science, thereby gains momentum, seeking to destabilize a scientific consensus even if that means adopting a strategy that denies the very legitimacy of the production of consensus in science.

It is interesting to note how scientific consensus is disqualified, while the construction of a medical individuality is strengthened. An *evidence-based medicine* is performed as a medicine that, rather than ensuring the scientific merit of medical practices, inhibits individual autonomy by way of “political criteria”. Thus agencies in the field, and medical societies, are construed as lacking the legitimacy to interfere in decisions, since it is the individual doctor, and not the medical community, who can provide the “best appraisal” of a given case.

The strategy of denying the requirement of consensus, or even of weakening the premiss through which scientific knowledge is validated by peer review, tellingly unravels when the same actors who claim that there is “no need for scientific evidence” rush to assert that “there already is scientific evidence”. This strategy is found with greater frequency after October 2020, when international scientific publications – such as Ladapo et al. (2020), become disseminated through social networks, showing research results that prove the efficacy of chloroquine in reducing death rates. However, these studies were invariably *preprints* – that is, research reports published in online repositories that had not yet undergone peer review.

Finally, the same actors who were on a quest for “scientific evidence” for ‘early treatment’, raise doubts about the scientific evidence for the efficacy of vaccines. These were in an advanced stage of production by the end of 2020. It is noteworthy that the very same arguments the challenge “early treatment” are not engaged in challenges to vaccination. One example is Facebook post on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2020. Remarking on news that a trial volunteer for the CoronaVac vaccine had committed suicide, a doctor argued that further research needed to be carried out, since “suicide can be an adverse effect of any medication”. Furthermore, he noted that:

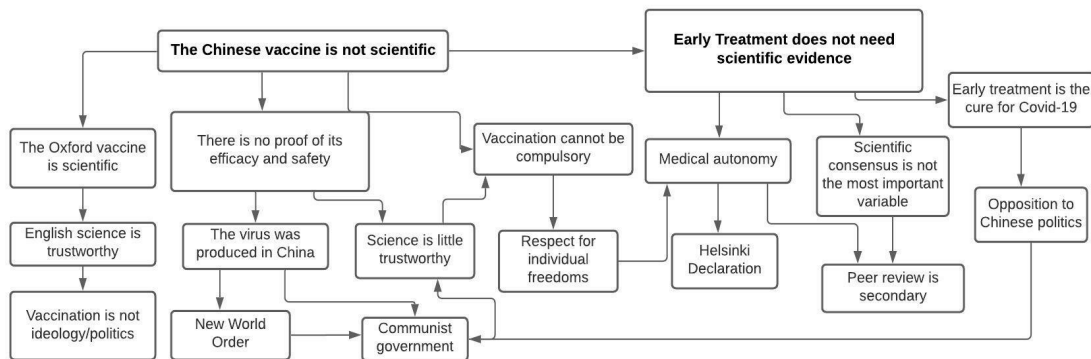
The clarity of the data and scientific honesty beyond the publication of the research in specialized medical journals where it is subject to harsh critique from peers, is part and parcel of the incorporation of new drugs and new medical technologies!! This is why I counter-indicate vaccination against COVID to my patients, with any of the vaccines in the current circumstances (Doctor from Campo Grande, 2020).

As we noted above, the hostility constructed by Jair Bolsonaro and his followers toward vaccine production had considerable effects on the Brazilian population’s engagement with vaccination against Covid-19. The same can be said of the alliances established between government policies and a *part of* the Brazilian medical

community that performed a set of drugs as cures for the pandemic, all the while generating mistrust in the efficacy and safety of vaccines and criticizing social distancing and lockdowns as strategies that “lacked scientific evidence”.

As we will now show, Anvisa’s approval of the CoronaVac and AstraZeneca vaccines for emergency use on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2021, became an important event for securing vaccines as scientific artifacts, weakening the contrary reaction that we have thus far described and which we synthesize in the diagram below. Nonetheless, the controversy continued to produce important effects on the pandemic in Brazil.

**Figure 1:** Synthesis of the statements mapped in reactions against Covid-19 vaccination in Brazil



### Approval of the CoronaVac vaccine for emergency use by the Agência Nacional de Vigilância Sanitária (Anvisa, National Agency for Health Surveillance)

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2021, Anvisa held a meeting of its Directory Committee to analyse the authorization for emergency use, in an experimental capacity, of the CoronaVac and AstraZeneca vaccines developed in Brazil by, respectively, the Butantan Institute and Oswaldo Cruz Foundation. At the moment the pandemic had reached alarming figures in Brazil: 209,000 dead and more than 8 million recorded cases (R7 2021). In this context of severe sanitary crisis, there were high expectations for the start of vaccination against the coronavirus.

When phase 3 testing for the CoronaVac had been concluded<sup>21</sup>, controversies surrounding the efficacy and safety of the “Chinese vaccine” mellowed.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, the politicization of the debate pitting “early treatment” versus vaccine development continued to reverberate. There was thus apprehension surrounding the possible outcome of the meeting of Anivsa’s Directory Committee. Uncertainty was compounded by the fact that, a few days before the meeting, the Butantan Institute had reviewed CoronaVac’s general rate of efficacy.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of January 2021, the Butantan Institute announced an efficacy rate of 78% for the vaccine; however, four days later – on the eve of Anvisa’s analysis of the vaccine – the efficacy rate was rectified to 50,38% after tests with all people involved in all phases of the trials was considered. This review was preceded by challenges, raised by scientists and health professionals, against the Butantan Institute’s standards for evaluating efficacy. The Institute, in turn, alleged that the data initially released referred to “a specific group of patients during one of the stages of the study, which had concerned prevention of mild cases of Covid-19 and not all cases” (Barifouse, 2021). The data thus initially released were merely “secondary”.

21 Phase 3 is when clinical trials of the vaccines are carried out. For a vaccine to be authorized by Anvisa, it must prove to be at least 50% efficient.

22 The CoronaVac vaccine had already been approved for registry in three countries: The People’s Republic of China, Indonesia and Turkey.



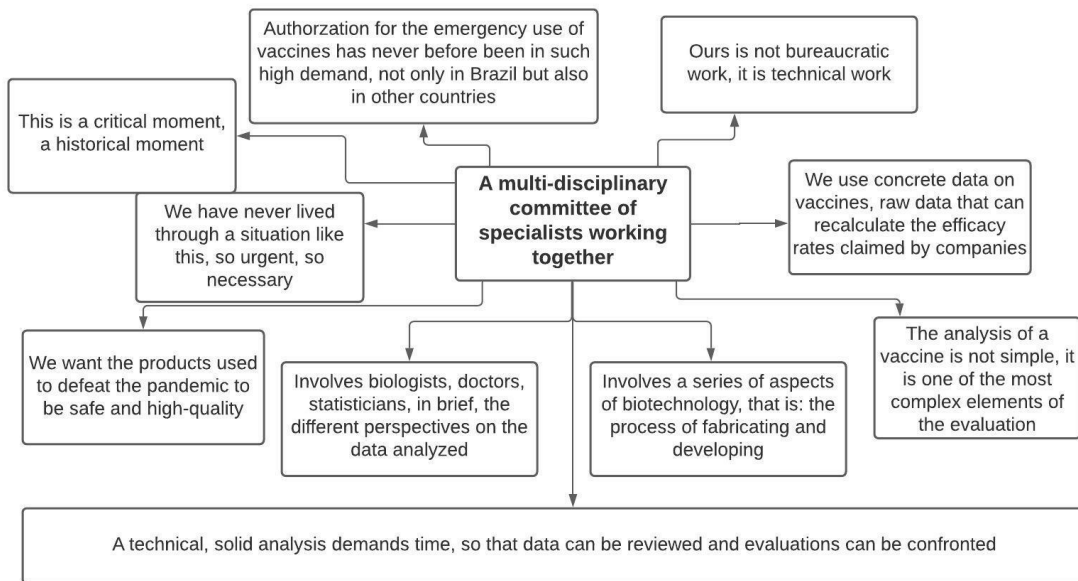
In its defence, the government of São Paulo also declared that the global efficacy rate of the CoronaVac vaccine had yet to be released. That is: data corresponding to “the results that include all people who got ill regardless of the severity of the illness” (BBC, 2021). The main argument raised by the government of São Paulo and the Butantan Institute was that the vaccine offered 100% protection against deaths and severe cases, having prevented hospital admittance of trial volunteers who had been vaccinated. At the time, Governor João Doria was the main spokesperson for the data issued by the Butantan Institute: “[...] these results mean that the Butantan Institute’s vaccine has a high degree of efficiency and efficacy to protect the lives of Brazilians against Covid-19” (Cruz, 2021).

As studies of the CoronaVac vaccine developed and testing progressed, a struggle was waged, for a few weeks, over who would administer the vaccine produced by the Butantan Institute, whether it fell to the government of São Paulo state or to the Health Ministry. However, before Anvisa’s meeting it had already been decided that all vaccines, whether produced in the country or imported, would follow the National Immunization Plan (Plano Nacional de Imunização (PNI)). It was thus the federal government which would be responsible for distributing the vaccines to municipalities. Following the then-Health minister Eduardo Pazuello’s declaration that vaccination would start on “D-Day and H-Hour” (Teófilo and Cardim, 2021), the executive coordinator of the Coronavirus Contingency Centre in São Paulo, João Gabbardo, admitted that the vaccines produced by the Butantan Institute would go to the PNI, with the caveat that “if the government’s answer is that we should start after the 25<sup>th</sup> of January, we will not be following that guideline. The state of São Paulo will start vaccinating on the 25<sup>th</sup>” (G1, RS 2021). We will see, however, that vaccination started in the state of São Paulo before that date, right after the meeting of the Anvisa’s Directory Committee.

## The Anvisa Meeting

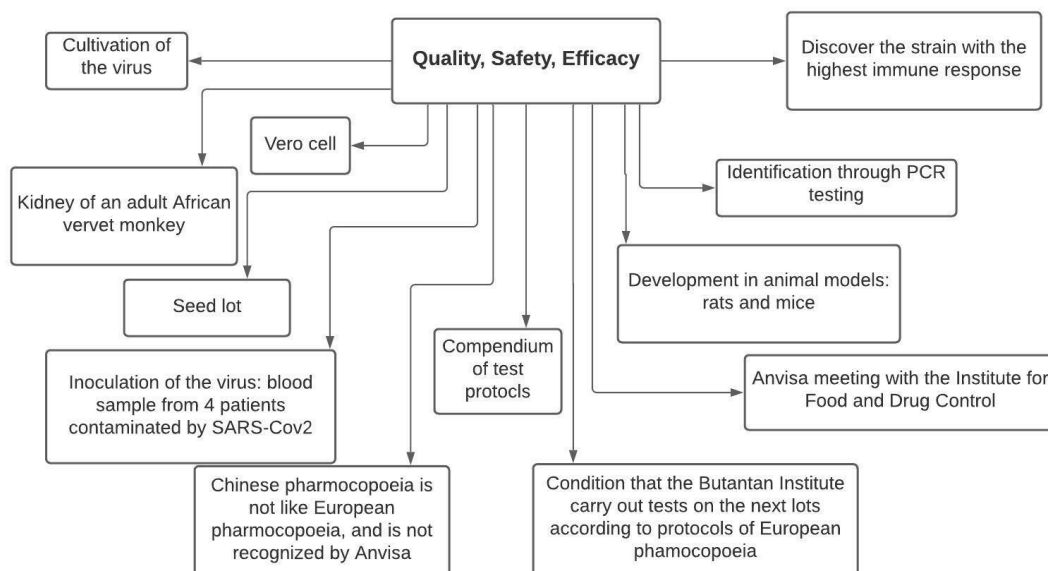
On the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2021, after a meeting that lasted over five hours, Anvisa approved the emergency use of 6 million doses of the CoronaVac vaccine and 2 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine. The debate preceding the approval of the “Chinese vaccine” was particularly meticulous and protracted. The General Manager of Drugs and Biological Products, Gustavo Mendes Lima Santos, spoke first. He began by stating that it was “an honour to represent all the civil servants of the agency” (Anvisa, 2021a). Considering the politicized context in which debates surrounding the vaccine were taking place, reference to “career servants” and to the existence of a “multidisciplinary committee of specialists working together” served as markers of techno-scientific distinction. A range of arguments that sought to underscore the specialization and domain of science were advanced by the manager. This can be observed in excerpts from his presentation at the Anvisa meeting, transcribed below.

**Figure 2-** Synthesis of the arguments on the techno-scientific specialization of science in the development of a vaccine



This concern with distinguishing technical work from evaluations of a different nature was intended to underscore that the analysis in favour of the emergency use of the CoronaVac vaccine was carried out by multi-disciplinary specialists according to objective criteria. In this sense, ‘safety’ and ‘quality’ were evoked as principles that had to be rigorously followed. It should be noted that time was considered an essential element in ensuring scientific parameters; that is, time was needed to challenge, test and re-test the data. However, these specialized evaluations were referred to the singular historical context in which they were situated. No one pretended to sustain a technical evaluation that did not take into account the emergency and urgency of situations that demand scientific solutions. Nonetheless, a number of procedures, repertoires and terms proper to science and technical work were used, and these could only be contested from within that very field – which we make explicit in the figure below.

**Figure 3 –** Connections between different actors and networks actualized by Anvisa’s General Manager of Drugs and Biological Products



The extracts in the Figure above indicate the existence of a wide network of actors, artifacts, and nonhumans involved in the process of fabricating, testing and approving the use of a vaccine. All elements are interlinked in the sociotechnical network via a number of associations. An example of the role played by nonhumans is the “normal kidney of an adult African vervet monkey” (Anvisa, 2021a). It is from this kidney that a vero cell is produced. Without this monkey the inoculation of the virus would be impossible as would the “discovery” of the strain with the highest immune response”, as argued by the Anvisa servant.

On this issue, in what concerns tracking the connections between the different actors that compose the networks, we resume Latour’s approach to the analytical exercise of mapping the sociotechnical networks involved in the controversies that are in evidence. As he notes, “to trace a network is thus always to reconstitute by a TRIAL” (Latour, 2019: 46-47), through the description and listing “of the other beings through which it is necessary to pass so that this situation can endure, can be prolonged, maintained, or extended” (Latour, 2019: 46-47). For ANT, the agency of actors is always thought of in relation, or, better still, in the relations exercised by actors within sociotechnical networks”. Hence it is not an approach that focuses on the agency of humans, nonhumans, or artifacts “themselves”, nor is it a matter of seeking out “intentionality” (Tonioi 2021). Rather, its focus lies in the description of the associations and mediations exercised by different actors that coexist within sociotechnical networks.

In the general manager’s presentation, the recourse to pharmacopoeia, which is the compendium of protocols for testing a drug, illustrates the numerous associations exercised by the different artifacts involved in the sociotechnical networks of vaccine production. Anvisa advocates that the fulfilment of its demands depends on the approval of drugs. In what concerns the CoronaVac vaccine, the fact that it was developed in accordance with Chinese pharmacopoeia, which is considered to be “more recent and unaligned with European [pharmacopoeia]” (Anvisa, 2021a)<sup>23</sup>, led to the suspension of some of the procedures adopted by the Butantan Institute relating to immunogenicity tests<sup>24</sup>. According to Anvisa (2021a), these results were not presented during the study, since the only test presented was considered inadequate for a conclusive analysis. This fact, however, did not prevent emergency approval of the vaccine, but it did make continued approval conditional on the next lots produced in Brazil following European pharmacopoeia.

After the presentations and the endorsement of the technical areas, Meiruze Freitas, the director of Anvisa, the chair of the process of vaccine approval, voted in favour of the emergency use of the CoronaVac and AstraZeneca vaccines. However, she observed that there were “critical issues” surrounding the CoronaVac vaccine and therefore conditioned approval on the Butantan Institute signing an agreement to report on data concerning the immunological response of that vaccine<sup>25</sup>. This is how she justified her requirements:

“[...] the known benefits of vaccines outweigh their risks. But we need continuous monitoring of adverse effects. A vaccine is only efficient if people are willing to take it. A vaccine against Covid-19 will aid in individual and collective protection” (Anvisa, 2021b).

However, even after the start of vaccination in Brazil, so-called “early treatment” continued to be proposed as a solution for the pandemic and the flexibilization of social distancing. In the first trimester of 2021, at least 8 people died in Brazil after being treated with inhalations of chloroquine. Four cases were notified in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, and four in Amazonas (Rocha, 2021). The procedures were publicly backed by president Jair Bolsonaro. It can thus be considered that the positive decision concerning the emergency use of the CoronaVac vaccine helped consolidate vaccination as a means to face the pandemic, but that it was unable to bring the controversy to a close.

<sup>23</sup> Anvisa follows European pharmacopoeia.

<sup>24</sup> Immunogenicity is a vaccine’s capacity to induce the immune system to produce antibodies.

<sup>25</sup> The Butantan Institute handed Anvisa the immunogenicity studies on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2021 (Albuquerque, 2021).

## Concluding remarks

When the mapping of the controversy was concluded, we were able to identify how reactions to the vaccine delimit a group that buttressed the antivax movement, initially challenging the efficacy and safety of the CoronaVac vaccine, and later advocating for the adoption of “early treatment” as the main strategy for fighting the pandemic in Brazil. The performance of the statement “early treatment does not need scientific evidence” is part of this, building on the federal government’s decision to push for chloroquine as a “cure” for the pandemic.

This direction can be interpreted as the performance of a *factoid* (Marras, 2020), which, instead of aiming for consensus anchored in the objectivity of facts, gives weight to a movement that allows actors to choose what is more convenient (Marras, 2020). The early use of drugs is adopted: (i) without the backing of Brazilian or foreign science, nor that of global organizations such as the WHO; (ii) channels the decision to use certain drugs to the doctor and to patient consent; (iii) exempts doctors who use these drugs from having to justify themselves before their peers, in ethical councils; (iv) operates a network of regulations which dodge controversies based on political decisions, using artifices which invert the criteria of science.

Doctors who engage science to try and justify “early treatment” do so on the basis of the individuality of treatment choice, which is ultimately the decision of each doctor. We can see how the argument for the autonomy of medical choice is replicated in groups that support the efficacy of this treatment. Doctors use this justification to continue with “early treatment” based on medical *expertise*, sustaining the treatment through non-peer-reviewed empirical data. We can also see, however, an attempt to transgress a certain “hierarchy” of the scientific field itself, attempting to perform “early treatment” a fact.

The phenomenon of epistemic individualization was described by Zonnen as an “*I-pistemology*”, an epistemology of the I, a return to “seeing is believing” as an effect of the loss of trust in the production of reality through a scientific lens. Cesarino (2021) analyses that this epistemic reorganization is promoted by digital infrastructure and the incorporation of a (failed) neoliberal effort to remove mediators (such as regulatory mechanisms, scientific procedures, controlled tests) in order to allow relations to flow more quickly (Cesarino, 2021).

Faced with this, Bruno Latour’s (2014) claim that we live in a war between ontologically distinct worlds is bolstered. How, after all, are we to deal with alliances that sustain the inexistence of a pandemic? Or which resolutely uphold drugs that are contested by the international scientific community, while living in a country that, until May 2021, had seen over 430,000 deaths by Covid-19 and witnessed an unprecedented collapse of its healthcare system? How are we to promote deals, coalitions? How are we, in the end, to coexist? Without pretending to provide answers to the great philosophical and scientific questions of our times, we feel that we can point towards certain clues that will allow new lines of research to be envisaged, starting, specifically, from a pragmatist relational perspective on science.

As Naomi Oreskes (2015) stressed, John Dewey had already observed that there are many answers to uncertainty, so that eliminating it is bound to fail. Attempts by scientists to create social consensus by redoubling efforts at making their technical claims less uncertain does not, therefore, seem to be the best option. The univocal view that opposition to a “scientific fact” is tantamount to a “*lack of information*”, rather than suppressing demands, closing debates or filling in gaps, actually in most cases perpetuates chasms since attempts at silencing the other through accusations of disinformation raises a number of problems. This is all the more evident when we consider the alliances between the federal government of Brazil and the country’s doctors in favour of “early treatment” of Covid-19, as described in this article.

Instead of trying to eliminate uncertainties, we should perhaps strive for the criterion of a *pragmatic truth* (Almeida, 2021) by means of which upholding a fact occurs through the description of the conditions that enable its verification. Pragmatic truth should be activated as a way of acting between worlds, between

ontologies which are, and will remain, distinct. The challenge is hence to think of ways of amplifying other social correlations, ways of life, in the production of knowledge, withholding collective criteria such as peer review and the production of scientific consensuses.

This issue, which we are unable to develop here, follows the work of Nascimento, Cesarino and Fonseca (2020), and their reflections on i-pistemological choices. How can we hold the doctor's actions to account when the doctor is exempt from defending his choice to use "early treatment" before an ethics committee? The production of pragmatic truth is invariably the production in the order of multiplicity. Realizing it is hence to oppose a staunch defence of the primacy of "individual choices" over experiences that are profoundly collective.

As we are concluding this article (May 2021), a parliamentary hearing commission (Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito, CPI) has been instated, the Covid-19 CPI, also called the Pandemic CPI or the Coronavirus CPI. The instatement of the CPI involved a range of congressmen, and was determined by the Supreme Court (STF, 2021). The aim of the CPI is to investigate purported omissions and irregularities in government spending during the Covid-19 pandemic. The testimonies have already brought to light a number of debates, including those concerning "early treatment" as an aim of government policies, the refusal to purchase vaccines in 2020, and the endemic delay in the vaccination schedule in 2021. Even with the vaccination of the Brazilian population, "early treatment" continues to be disputed as a solution to the pandemic, and is thus performed, in myriad ways.

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# Covid-19 and disaster capitalism: “*Passando a boiada*” in the Brazilian meat processing chain

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## Abstract

The article discusses the social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the meat processing industry in southern Brazil. Based on the notion of *disaster capitalism*, we examine how political and corporate agents have taken advantage of the health catastrophe to create a privileged space for simplifications and deregulation in this sector. According to our reasoning, they accelerate precarious work in the meat industry and amplify the harmful effects of agribusiness on local ecologies and global ecosystems. In light of this, we also emphasize the analytical potential that results from the intersection between the categories of *syndemics* and *structural violence* to displace the traditional analyses of risk groups and behaviors in highlighting environments and their agents.

**Keywords:** COVID-19; Meat processing industry; Disaster capitalism; Syndemics; Brazil.

# A Covid-19 e o capitalismo de desastre: “Passando a boiada” na indústria de processamento de carne no Brasil

## Resumo

O trabalho discute os impactos sociais da pandemia de Covid-19 na indústria de processamento de carne no sul do Brasil. A partir da noção de *capitalismo de desastre*, examinaremos o modo como agentes políticos e corporativos têm tirado proveito da catástrofe sanitária para constituição de um espaço privilegiado para simplificações e desregulações neste setor. Em nosso argumento, elas aceleram a precarização do trabalho na indústria da carne e amplificam os efeitos nefastos do agronegócio sobre as ecologias locais e os ecossistemas globais. Face a isto, destacaremos ainda o potencial analítico que resulta da intersecção entre as categorias de *sindemia* e *violência estrutural*, como forma de deslocar as tradicionais análises de grupos e de comportamentos de risco para colocar em relevo os seus ambientes e os seus agentes.

**Palavras-chave:** Covid-19; Indústria de processamento de carne; Capitalismo de desastre; Sindemia; Brasil.

# Covid-19 and disaster capitalism: “*Passando a boiada*” in the Brazilian meat processing chain

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The recording of a ministerial meeting made public in May 2020 exposed the intricacies of the destructive policy underway in Brazil, led by agents of the federal government.<sup>1</sup> In an emblematic scene, the then Minister of the Environment, Ricardo Salles, praised the opportunity to “pass the infra-legal reforms of deregulation” and “simplification,” which “the whole world demands,” while the press turned its attention to pandemic. In his words:

So, to do this we need to make an effort here while we are in this moment of tranquility in terms of press coverage, because they’re only talking about COVID, and *get on with “passando a boiada” and changing all the regulations and simplifying norms*. From IPHAN, from the Ministry of Agriculture, from the Ministry of Environment, from the Ministry of This, from the Ministry of That. Now *it’s time to join forces to push through simplification*, it’s regulation that we need, in all aspects (Salles, 2020: 19-29, emphasis added).

The expression “*passando a boiada*” [pushing through further deregulation]<sup>2</sup> – evoked by the minister in the form of facilitating a deregulation project that tends to favor corporations over populations in the midst of a global health catastrophe – echoes the operational complex of *disaster capitalism*. This concept, put forward by Naomi Klein (2008), concerns the way in which contemporary capitalism uses self-engendered crises as opportunities for its facilitation and expansion. In its soft form, disaster capitalism offers corporate solutions to systemic risks, such as carbon credit markets to mitigate the effects of global warming or actuarial interests, which valorize life in the face of imminent health crises (Fletcher, 2012; Lakoff, 2017), while in its hard form, it manifests as that which Klein (2008) calls the “shock doctrine.” This concerns exploiting crises and disruptive events to implement otherwise unpopular measures, drawing on the context of chaos and disorientation in which citizens are immersed. In this respect, the doctrine represents the most advanced chapter of the *neoliberal offensive* against structures that aim to protect society from the satanic mill of absolute free competition, such as labor, environmental and tax regulations (Polanyi, 1985).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The ministerial meeting took place on April 22, 2020, and the recording was made public on May 22 of the same year by a Supreme Federal Court ruling (Brasil 2020a). At the time, it became the center of attention due to the resignation of then Minister of Justice and Public Security, Sérgio Moro, on April 24, 2020. At the press conference where he announced his departure from the government, the former judge stated that the reason for his decision could be found in this material – namely, that he had been pressured by the president to make changes in the command of the Federal Police – which is why the release of the recording’s content was subject to the remit of the law. See more in: “*Sergio Moro acusa Bolsonaro...*” [Sergio Moro accuses Bolsonaro...], 2020; “*Ex-ministro Sérgio Moro...*” [Former Minister Sérgio Moro...], 2020 and “*Celso de Mello retira sigilo de vídeo...*” [Celso de Mello removes confidentiality of video...], 2020. However, besides being the alleged reasons for Moro’s departure from the government, the recording showed a frank debate in which several ministers were outspoken concerning projects and criticisms that openly confronted the constitutionality of a democratic rule of law. The discourse of Minister Ricardo Salles forges an example of this. See “*Ministro do Meio Ambiente*” [Minister of the Environment], 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Though the idiom is translated here as “pushing through further deregulation,” its literal expression in Brazil means “setting the cattle loose” – a metaphor about enabling the breaking of rules that alludes to opening gates that let animals escape from a farm.

<sup>3</sup> As Chamayou (2018) well notes, since the 1970s, this counteroffensive has gained discursive characters increasingly anchored in strategic-military logic. Thus, in parallel with Boltanski and Chiapello’s “new spirit of capitalism” (2009), on flexibility and entrepreneurship, a normativity of war, attack and defense is in force – “a new front on which to mobilize” (Chamayou 2018: 26).

Following the idea of *disaster capitalism*, we begin to ask ourselves how “simplification” (often translated by the word flexibilization) and “infra-legal reforms” – so valued by Ricardo Salles at the ministerial meeting – have increased the vulnerability of certain populations during the pandemic.<sup>4</sup> To highlight the pertinence of the issue, we analyze the situation of the meat processing industry in southern Brazil. Here, it is understood as one of the sectors where “*a boiada está passando*” [the cattle are being set loose; deregulation is ongoing]. This process has taken advantage of the pandemic to constitute a privileged space for deregulation that further accelerates the precariousness of work in this sector.

Accidents and occupational illnesses have already provided strong evidence of the unhealthy conditions in the meat processing industry, but the high COVID-19 rates among the workers show how much the meat chain favors the circulation of, exposure to, and contamination by the virus. On a broader plane, the very emergence of new pathogens comes into play in this field, considering the disastrous effects of agribusiness on local ecologies and global ecosystems. Regarding this topic, we also follow the suggestion of Singer and Rylko-Bauer (2021) to examine the impacts of the pandemic on different social groups based on the concepts of *syndemics* and *structural violence*.

Singer and Rylko-Bauer (2021) understand *syndemics* to be the adverse synergistic interaction between two or more diseases or debilitating conditions, promoted or facilitated by social and environmental conditions. Regarding *structural violence*, in the wake of Farmer (2004), they refer to this as “the often-hidden ways that structures of inequality, such as poverty, racism, and discrimination, negatively impact the lives and well-being of affected populations” (Singer & Rylko-Bauer, 2021: 8). In more precise terms, what interests us is how the intersection between syndemics and structural violence displaces the traditional analyses of “groups at risk and risky behaviors” to highlight “environments of risk and agents promoting risk” (Singer & Rylko-Bauer, 2021: 9; Nichter, 2008). According to our reasoning, the meat processing industry is one of many environments of risk where politicians who want to *passar a boiada* are some of the most prominent agents.

## The triumph of neoliberal flesh

The turmoil arising from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international trade does not seem to have unsettled the Brazilian meat processing industry. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2021), 7.31 million heads of cattle, 12.50 million swine and 1.55 billion chickens were slaughtered in Brazil in the last quarter of 2020 alone. Animal protein (processed and *in natura*) continued to represent a considerable share of Brazilian exports, particularly to China. China absorbed more than half of the beef and swine production – respectively, 56.8% and 58.3% of the total for each sector – and just over 16% of the poultry production during this period (IBGE, 2021).

The backdrop to the impressive figures for this Brazilian industry and its trade is the existence of one of the largest herds on the planet. It is composed of around 200 million cattle, in addition to huge chicken and swine stocks slaughtered, processed and packaged daily by more than half a million workers who labor in thousands of cold storage plants distributed throughout the country. Overall, in a year marked by a 4.1% decline in the gross domestic product, the agricultural sector was the only one to register some growth (2%) in Brazil. This situation has reinforced the grandiloquent narrative cultivated by the employer class, that agribusiness is the rock that sustains the country’s development, even in times of a profound global health crisis.

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4 This topic is developed by us within the scope of the project “A Covid-19 no Brasil: análise e resposta aos impactos sociais da pandemia entre profissionais de saúde e população em isolamento” [Covid-19 in Brazil: analysis and response to the social impacts of the pandemic among health professionals and the population in isolation] (Contract ref.: 0464/20 FINEP/UFRGS). Financed by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MCTI), the research is developed by the Rede Covid-19 Humanidades MCTI [MCTI Covid-19 Humanities Network] and forms part of a set of actions by the Rede Vírus MCTI [MCTI Virus Network] to fight the pandemic.

Several factors contributed to the good results of Brazilian agribusiness during the first year of the pandemic. Twenty days after the state decree of public calamity by Congress (Brasil, 2020b), the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (MAPA) published an ordinance that defined practically all links in the food production chain as “essential services” (Brasil, 2020c). This shielded the primary sector from many of the restrictions on the movement of people and goods that affected other niches in the economy, especially that of services. Likewise, the accelerated resumption of consumption in China, beginning in the second half of the year, also helped agribusiness to present better results than the rest of the Brazilian economy. The meat sector, in particular, had already shown the benefits of trade with China since the second half of 2018, when an outbreak of African Swine Fever decimated a large part of its herd. According to the IBGE (2021), China increased the volume of pork purchased from the Brazilian meat packing industry by 52% in the comparison with the final quarters of 2019 and 2020. In some aspects, the pandemic has even been perceived as a favorable business context for Brazilian agribusiness – a crisis transformed into an opportunity. In this regard, in April 2020, a report by the international consultancy PricewaterhouseCoopers indicated that:

Up to now, Brazilian agribusiness has been overcoming the challenges that social isolation imposes on food supply. While important food exporting countries restricted their shipments to guarantee the internal supply of these products and other countries suffered from the lack of labor to produce food, Brazil presented a 13.3% increase in the exported value of agricultural *commodities* in March 2020 compared to March 2019, positioning itself as a reliable food supplier (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2020: 13).

However, in parallel with the apparent resilience of agribusiness to the context of the pandemic, its workers have suffered from recurrent outbreaks of contamination by the novel coronavirus in Brazilian meat plants. This situation is especially critical in the three states of the southern region – Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul – where most of the plants dedicated to the slaughter and processing of farm animals (pig and poultry) are concentrated.<sup>5</sup> As Segata et al. (2021: 99) reported, in Rio Grande do Sul alone “there were 5,804 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among workers in the meat processing sector in the first six months of the pandemic between March and September, 2020,” which initially led to the suspension of activities for several establishments in the sector.<sup>6</sup>

The issue is that the SARS-CoV-2 arrived in Brazil through international air travel and initially spread in large metropolitan centers. Thus, the high prevalence of contagion in meat processing sector suggests not only that this one of the main sectors responsible for internalization of the virus and the disease in the country, but also for its dissemination in indigenous communities in the three southern states, given the large number of indigenous people hired by meat processing plants (Brasil, 2020d; Granada et al., 2021; Heck et al., 2020; Ripplinger et al., 2020; Segata et al., 2021). Indeed, the COVID-19 outbreaks that also occurred in British, German and North American refrigeration plants throughout 2020 indicate that there is a strong correlation or material proximity (Brown & Kelly, 2014) between the way in which these productive structures function and the conditions favorable for dissemination of the novel coronavirus. In this regard, a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the United States, from July 2020, affirms that:

<sup>5</sup> For this reason, in the framework of socioenvironmental ethics, Florit et al. (2019) characterize these territories as “regions of intensive speciesism.”

<sup>6</sup> In March 2021, after a year of pandemic, the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 among workers in the slaughterhouse sector in Rio Grande do Sul had reached 7,993, according to surveys published on the site *Boletim Epidemiológico (Análises sobre os casos de Síndromes Respiratórias Agudas Graves - SRAG do Rio Grande do Sul)* [Epidemiological Bulletin (Analyses of cases of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome – SARS in Rio Grande do Sul)]. Available at: <https://coronavirus.rs.gov.br/informe-epidemiologico>. Accessed continually, the last time on April 9, 2021.

Distinctive factors that increase meat and poultry processing workers' risk for exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, include prolonged close workplace contact with coworkers (within 6 feet [2 m] for ≥15 minutes) for long time periods (8-12-hour shifts), shared work spaces, shared transportation to and from the workplace, congregate housing, and frequent community contact with fellow workers. Many of these factors might also contribute to ongoing community transmission. (Waltenburg et al., 2020: 887)

However, the rapid escalation of COVID-19 cases in North American meat packing plants and the protests from within the industry against the shutdown of its production units led the Trump government to make use of the Defense Production Act. This is an exceptional legislation for times of war, in this case, triggered to keep meat packing plants open and operating. In Brazil, since the beginning of the pandemic, employers like the *Associação Brasileira de Proteína Animal* (ABPA) [Brazilian Association of Animal Protein] and the *Associação Brasileira das Indústrias Exportadoras de Carne* (ABIEC) [Brazilian Association of Meat Exporting Industries]<sup>7</sup> have manifested against the sanitary ban on meat processing plants, raising fears of shortages, the escalation of inflation, and social chaos. In a note of repudiation against the closing of two meat packing plants in Rio Grande do Sul, issued in conjunction with other industry associations, the ABPA warned about

the serious risks of imposing actions based on emotional decisions that might be engendered for the entire community and the country, particularly in the current situation of quarantine decreed to fight the COVID-19 epidemic. The stoppage of food production increases the risk of inflation and shortages. Closed units could mean an absence of products in supermarkets. Processes that promote a reduction in the supply of food could lead to social chaos, in the future.<sup>8</sup>

Regarding these apocalyptic warnings, it is worth emphasizing the material and symbolic weight of meat in the Brazilian food code (Sordi, 2016). It has historical roots. On the one hand, it upholds the status of meat as a type of “absolute food” for most modern societies (Fischler, 2001), while on the other, it affirms the centrality of the process of the occupation of Brazilian territory by fronts of agricultural and pastoral expansion. In addition, the theme of inflation, in particular, has determined a large part of the political and economic discussion in Brazil since the late 1970s, marking the entire process of the opening of democracy and the consolidation of the República Nova (Nobre, 2013; Carvalho, 2018). Here, as in other emerging or low-income countries, protein indicates the materialization of social and economic conquest more than food security: the neoliberal triumph, on which governmentality operates based on the reasoning that “meat on the table calms the people” (Lapegna & Otero, 2016).

By evoking the possibility of shortages and scarcity, the large-scale meat industry meddles with fears deeply rooted in the Brazilian imaginary, especially among the less favored sectors of society, for whom the consumption of this food is an indication of well-being and material prosperity.<sup>9</sup> This imaginary leads us to understand why fluctuations in the price of this type of protein and fears regarding its supply have historically operated as a harbinger of social discontent and disruptive political experiences.

7 The ABPA is the main representative of the poultry and swine sector, while the ABIEC convenes the main suppliers in beef production.

8 See “Nota de repúdio...” [Note of repudiation...], 2020.

9 One of the classics of Brazilian cinema from the 1980s, *A Marvada Carne* [lit. The Wicked Meat], by André Klotzel (1985), tells the story of Nhô Quim, a hillbilly figure obsessed with the desire to eat beef. It is a modern, Brazilian variation on the old theme of peasant fixation on meat consumption, analyzed in numerous works on popular culture and food (Cândido, 2010; Fischler, 2001). In addition, *A Marvada Carne* also offers a comical portrayal of the socioeconomic situation in Brazil during that time, squeezed between the structural crisis of the national-developmental model and the lack of inflationary control of the so-called “lost decade,” which eroded the population’s purchasing power. A year after the film’s premiere, the emblematic “hunt for fat cattle” took place, an episode in which then-president José Sarney, in an effort to combat the crisis of shortages caused by the Cruzado Plan, mobilized the Federal Police to apprehend cattle for slaughter and fight alleged “speculators” that retained herds in the countryside to increase the price of the product.

Taking advantage of this symbology, the logic of these companies also reverberates the tone of confrontation adopted by the President of the Republic, Jair Bolsonaro, who since the beginning of the pandemic has attacked restrictive measures taken by subnational governments based on the argument of imminent economic collapse.<sup>10</sup>

In the day-to-day production, however, it is the non-stop imperative which characterizes the functioning of the meat industry that has taken its toll on the health of workers (Porcher, 2011; Schlosser 2013; Blanchette, 2020). Even prior to the pandemic, the meat chain stood out as one of the economic sectors that most generated occupational illnesses and work accidents, both in Brazil and the rest of the world.

In the United States, the huge impact generated on the American public by the book *The Jungle* (1906), by socialist writer Upton Sinclair (2005), describing the degrading working and sanitary conditions of Chicago meat packers, was decisive for the enactment of the first major act on food safety regulation in the country. This was the case of the Meat Inspection Act, followed by the Pure Food and Drug Act, both sanctioned by Theodore Roosevelt in 1906. Through indignation concerning sanitary irregularities, capitalism entered an era of regulatory agencies and food safety legislation. This process was pioneer in the promotion of veterinary medicine and animal husbandry (and later, food engineering) as essential knowledge for the meat industry, organizing itself in international networks, resulting in what Stull (2017) described as “control of the food system in America” that was replicated around the world. However, this set of measures began to ensure the safety of the food produced in this industry, but not necessarily of its workers.

In a recent ethnography on the American pork processing industry, Alex Blanchette (2020) analyses how the kill lines of meat packing plants shape the human body through painful and repetitive work, especially that of Black people and Latino migrants. It is in this space that the pig body, which has already been converted into a carcass, is dismembered to be transformed into meat cuts and other products. Workers become specialized in dealing with certain parts of the pig carcass, which then shape the traumas that manifest themselves in human bodies. In other words, humans, pigs and capitalism merge on the kill lines, as human workers thus embody the commercial anatomy of pigs and industrial capitalism through the desirable repetitive movements of their production lines (Blanchette, 2020). Moreover, the author shows us how the medical departments that serve the plants in this industry leverage human work through pig animality, as part of the total profitability of this industry.

Medical exams that identify occupational trauma also classify human workers’ bodies into tendons and muscles. In the case he studied, this helped the company make decisions about skills, combining the strengths of human and pig physicalities in the kill and cutting lines. In his words: this process “marks a situation where decades of effort to wring more value from porcine bodies are now doubling back to remake how the human body is marshaled as an industrial site of ‘new money.’” (Blanchette, 2020: 181).

However, the capitalist experience of industrial farms is even broader. It is inserted in a logic beyond confinement and animal domination, creating the need to introject the desirable industrial animality into human and pig bodies. The way in which nature is “neoliberalized,” to use an expression by Wallace (2016), takes place in the desire to incorporate humanity into standardized pig worlds. Misaligned pigs and humans poorly positioned based on their abilities hinder the process of scaled production, which is why the standardization of animals begins with their genes.

The herds are genetically modified and exposed to the same controlled environmental conditions on the farms, with the same food compounds for their nutrition. Thus, they not only become components that fit perfectly to industrial lines, but also fit the preferences of those who consume their bodies converted into meat. It turns out that *standard pigs* are immunosuppressed creatures, and thus an economic risk to the

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<sup>10</sup> In fact, as noted by Schneider et al. (2020), the inflationary pressure on food prices resulting from COVID-19 did not stem from stoppages or a reduction in manufacturing activities, as rumored by the employer class. Rather it stemmed from the very success of Brazilian agribusiness during the period, because of both the increase in internal demand due to domestic confinement and the exchange rate devaluation, in the form of stimulating exports.



industry. Standardization exposes entire herds to potential mass contamination, requiring the administration of high doses of antibiotics so their already short life spans endure until slaughter and they do not succumb to disease beforehand. However, the pig's digestive system does not fully metabolize this complex of drugs and supplements, causing part of these chemicals to be eliminated in their feces and urine.

The meat processing chain is also constituted by digestive ecologies (Blanchette, 2020), landscapes emerging from giant ponds of waste that yield environmental and public health problems. As the author describes, the strong sun causes the liquid part of this manure to evaporate, carrying with it the residual chemical particles that not only affect the human and animal population, but also the soil and plants through rain. These residues lodge directly in their bodies passing through the porous borders of the skin. The dry part of the manure in the ponds turns into dust that scatters on the wind and, through breathing, settles in the lungs of the workers and neighbors of those who are “on the outside” of these corporations (Blanchette, 2019, 2020; Segata et al., 2021).

In Brazil, where the first meat processing plants date back to the beginning of the twentieth century, the organization of work has always been characterized by “the drudgery, intense pace, low temperatures, humidity, inadequate posture, risk of accidents, exposure to biological agents, among others, accumulating numerous risk factors to human health” (Brasil, 2020e). In 2013, data gathered by the NGO Repórter Brasil based on official statistics showed that, compared with other economic segments, meat processing plants generated twice as many head injuries and three times as many injuries to the shoulders and arms of workers (Repórter Brasil, 2013). The meat chain represents the highest prevalence of repetitive strain injuries and work-related musculoskeletal disorders registered in the *Anuário Estatístico da Previdência Social* [Social Security Statistical Yearbook], not counting respiratory conditions aggravated by intermittent exposure to cold and mutilations resulting from the continuous interaction with sharp objects (Brasil, 2017).

It is evident, therefore, that far from being a novelty, COVID-19 intensifies and reiterates a precarious situation that has been prevalent in the sector for several decades on a global scale. Living in environmentally degraded productive landscapes and historically marked by experiences of bodily suffering and systemic illness (Wallace, 2020; Schloesser, 2013), when faced with the novel coronavirus, the experience of meat industry workers in southern Brazil exposes its *syndemic* components; as defined by Singer and Rylko-Bauer (2021: 8) “marrying the concept of ‘synergy’ with ‘epidemic’, a syndemics approach recognizes that diseases in a population occur neither independent of social and ecological conditions, nor in isolation from other diseases.”

Likewise, the reactions of the employer class to the demands for safety at work during the pandemic explain the context of structural violence (Farmer, 2004) in which workers in the meat processing sector are immersed. It is highlighted through processes that lead certain populations to disproportionate degrees of porous contact with potentially contaminating substances and traumatic occupations. Social injustices, environmental degradation and other systemic conditions of illness that form the “silent processes that intersect and embody capitalism and the Anthropocene and their racial, class, and multispecies hierarchies” (Segata et al., 2021: 106).

As we discuss below, a series of political and normative maneuvers that took place throughout 2020 and in the first months of 2021 indicate the adoption by the industry of an approach akin to the shock doctrine of disaster capitalism described by Noemi Klein (2008), that is, taking advantage of situations of great calamity and public commotion to carry out unpopular neoliberal reforms (Chamayou, 2018).

## Trojan horses in the cold room

On March 22, 2020, the Presidency of the Republic published *Medida Provisória* (MP) [Provisional Measure] no. 927, which provided for labor measures to confront the state of public calamity resulting from the novel coronavirus (Brasil, 2020f). Following the rite of Brazilian legislation, the act went to the lower house of Congress for consideration by the representatives, who can include amendments to the original text prior to its transformation into law.<sup>11</sup> Over the following months, several amendments were added by representatives, including a draft proposal by Santa Catarina representative Celso Maldaner, which provided for an amendment to Article 253 of the *Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho* (CLT) [Consolidation of Labor Laws], in force since 1943, which thus rules:

For employees who work inside cold rooms and for those who move goods from a hot or normal environment to a cold one and vice versa, after 1 (one) hour and 40 (forty) minutes of continuous work, a period will be ensured of 20 (twenty) minutes rest, calculating this interval as effective work.

*Sole paragraph* - For the purposes of this article, artificially cold is considered to be whichever is lower, in the first, second and third climatic zones of the official map of the Ministry of Labor, Industry and Commerce, 15°C (fifteen degrees), 12°C (twelve degrees) in the fourth zone, and 10°C (ten degrees) in the fifth, sixth and seventh zones (Brasil, 2020g).

The amendment proposed by the deputy maintained the main section of the article, but modified its paragraphs in order to specify what is understood as a cold room. The proposal used the following wording:

§1 For the purposes of the present article, a cold room is considered to be only an environment with an artificial temperature below 4°C (four degrees), intended for the storage of products;

§2 For the right to breaks provided for in the caput of this article, for the worker who moves goods between a normal or hot environment to an artificially cold environment or vice versa, the following requirements must be met simultaneously:

- a. When moving from one environment to another, the temperature must configure variation greater than 10°C (ten degrees);
- b. One of the environments must necessarily be artificially cold, considering an artificially cold environment to be whichever is lower, in the first, second and third climate zones of the official map of the Ministry of Labor, Industry and Commerce, 15°C (fifteen degrees), 12°C (twelve degrees) in the fourth zone, and 10°C (ten degrees) in the fifth, sixth and seventh zones (Brasil, 2020h).

As soon as they became aware of the amendment, the *Ministério Público do Trabalho* [Public Prosecutor's Office for Labor Affairs] and the unions realized that this was an insertion in the text of MP 927/2020 from an older bill, authored by Pernambuco representative Silvio Costa, that was presented in 2011 using identical wording, PL 2363/2011 (Brasil, 2011). At the time, the congressman justified the proposal to change Art. 253 of the CLT based on the argument that it was necessary to align its requirements “with the technical knowledge that currently exists, notably on cold tolerance parameters.” Likewise, the justification of the bill argued that the text in force at the time allowed for a very elastic interpretation of what could be considered a “cold room” by the labor courts, causing “legal uncertainty” for companies.

<sup>11</sup> In Brazilian constitutional law, a *Medida Provisória* [Provisional Measure] is an act of the Executive Power with the force of a law, enacted, in principle, without the participation of the legislative power. The legislature is called to discuss and approve it later. Provisional measures can only be enacted in situations of proven urgency or relevance.

In 2013, the publication of *Norma Regulamentadora* [Regulatory Norm] no. 36 of the Ministry of Labor and Employment clarified a series of understandings on the criteria for the inspection of health and safety conditions at work in meat processing plants. A process that at the time momentarily annulled the political conditions for processing bill PL 2363/2011. The advent of the pandemic, however, opened a *window of opportunity* for the meat processing sector to refer to it again, through emergency changes in the CLT promoted by MP 927/2020. In reaction to this movement, the Public Prosecutor's Office for Labor Affairs published a harsh technical note, in which it warned that if the amendment prevailed, "95% of workers in meat processing plants throughout the country would have their fundamental right to health restricted," since:

In poultry, cattle and pig meat processing plants, among others, only the shipping and palletizing sectors have temperatures equal to or less than 4°C (...) and count on workers who move goods (...), sectors that employ less than 5% of the total employees in a meat processing plant (Brasil, 2020e).

In addition, the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office claimed that there was unconstitutionality in the inclusion of matter of foreign content in the original object of the provisional measure, which constituted a clear *Trojan horse* in the legislative proposal. Due to this and other manifestations to the contrary, by the judiciary and civil society, the author of the amendment ended up removing it from the text shortly thereafter. Even so, the attempt triggered a warning among unions that other attacks against the right to temperature-related breaks could be on the horizon from the employer class and their political allies. Thus, the context of the pandemic forced labor representations to act on two political flanks simultaneously: on the one hand, demanding the appropriate measures to contain the COVID-19 outbreaks in the meat plants, on the other, ensuring that previously consolidated rights were not suppressed by the shock strategy being conducted by the employer class.

Concerning the first flank, we have shown above that, since the first cases of COVID-19 were recorded among workers in meat processing plants, employers have sought to avoid stoppages or any reduction in the pace of their activities at any cost. In line with this, a series of sanitary protocols and good practice guides were proposed by employers themselves in an effort to promote "not only workers' health, but the sustainability of the entire chain" (ABPA, 2020: 1). Likewise, the publication of several regulations at the state level led the employer segment to demand some type of overarching regulation from the federal government in order to "unify understandings," "avoid overlaps" and "guarantee legal security" for the functioning of the sector. This demand resulted in the publication of *Portaria Conjunta* [Joint Ordinance] no. 19, of June 18, 2020, signed by the Ministers of Health, Labor, and Agriculture and Livestock (Brasil, 2020i). Analyzing the ordinance, the Prosecutor's Office for Labor Affairs claimed that there were a series of insufficiencies in the proposed measures, which were "less protective than state norms and even other federal norms of health authorities" (Brasil, 2020e: 36).

With regard to the second flank, at the end of 2020, the Ministry of Economy opened a public consultation for the revision of Regulatory Norm no. 36 (Brasil, 2013). Both the unions and the Prosecutor's Office for Labor Affairs consider this standard to be the most important advance in the prevention of accidents and illnesses in the sector, as a result of the efforts carried out by the state and civil society throughout the 1990s and 2000s to improve working conditions in the meat processing industry. Conversely, employers claim that it was necessary to fight "excessive bureaucracy" and "rationalize operating costs" resulting from the adaptation of productive infrastructure to the requirements of the established norm.<sup>12</sup> For them, it is necessary to *passar a bioada* at all costs. Aware of this movement to review and dismantle the legislation that protects them and in the midst of the worst health crisis in the last century, in August 2020, the unions launched the campaign

<sup>12</sup> See "Empresários tentam afrouxar norma..." [Businessmen try to weaken the norm...], 2021.

“A carne mais barata é a do trabalhador” [The cheapest meat is the worker’s flesh], with the objective of sensitizing the population regarding the situation inside meat processing plants.<sup>13</sup>

In March 2021, the revived bill PL 2363/2011, which amends the CLT article on temperature-related breaks, returned to the agenda of the lower house Congressional Committee on Labor, Administration and Public Service, triggering a new wave of reactions from the judiciary and the unions. According to the statement of the *Associação Nacional dos Procuradores do Trabalho* (ANPT) [National Association of Labor Attorneys], on March 26, 2021:

The organization of work in meat processing plants is characterized by an intense rhythm, low temperatures, humidity, inadequate postures, the risk of accidents and exposure to biological agents, among other factors and conditions that are equally painful and unhealthy, which is why the granting of recovery breaks must be the fundamental aim of protecting the physical and mental health of male and female workers.

Continuous work in a cold environment deteriorates muscle components and neural functioning, suggestive of the development of musculoskeletal disorders. Exposure to cold air, moreover, causes inflammatory changes in the airways, compromises respiratory/pulmonary function and precipitates asthma attacks in predisposed individuals.

At a time when Brazil became the global epicenter of the pandemic, the amendment of Art. 253 is flagrantly reckless and, if finalized, will significantly increase the already heightened risk of contamination by COVID-19 to which male and female workers in meat processing plants are exposed.

It should be noted that the modification, however strange to the original motivation and purposes of the respective edition, had already been attempted in the context of Provisional Measure no. 927, which Congress, with propriety, allowed to expire (ANPT, 2021).

In a public hearing held by the State Legislative Assembly of Santa Catarina on the eve of the appraisal of PL 2363/2011 by the lower house Commission on Work, on March 29, 2021, Labor Prosecutor Sandro Eduardo Sardá asserted that “Brazil was at risk of going down in history as the only country that, instead of expanding protection for workers in meat processing plants, is going to regress, even though it is at the peak and epicenter of the pandemic” (Santa Catarina, 2021). The ABPA (poultry and pork sector) representative, Marcelo Medina Osório, argued that worker health and safety were a priority for his association and that the Brazilian meat industry had international recognition and support. In the same vein, the organization’s labor consultant, Moacir Ceriguelli, claimed that the sector had provided an “exemplary response to the pandemic,” and that in many cities in the state, the meat processing plant was “the safest place in the city” (id.). Therefore, the sole objective of ABPA’s actions was “to update, simplify and harmonize the existing regulation” (id.).

For their part, union representatives reiterated the importance of Regulatory Norm 36/2013 and questioned the relevance of modifying and making the existing legislation more flexible at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had greatly affected meat processing workers. The union members also sought to clarify that the temperature-related breaks of 20 minutes for every 100 minutes worked were, in their view, non-negotiable, as they were “the most important element for ensuring the workers’ health” (id.). The president of the *Federação dos Trabalhadores da Indústria de Alimentação de Santa Catarina* [Santa Catarina Federation of Food Industry Workers], Celio Elias, declared that the unions would not like to go abroad to denounce that “Brazilian meat is seasoned with the worker’s suffering” (id.), and that the mere fact of discussing changes in the middle of a pandemic was “distressing.”

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<sup>13</sup> See “A carne mais barata do mercado...” [The cheapest meat on the market...], 2020.

The appraisal of PL 2363/2020 ended up being removed from the agenda of the session of the lower house Commission on Work the following day, by agreement among party leaders. However, the review process of Regulatory Norm 36/2013 continues within the scope of a Tripartite Commission established by the Ministry of the Economy, with completion expected in August 2021. The proposals submitted by the employer sector during the public consultation for the revision of the norm deal precisely with the temperature-related breaks determined by the CLT and regulated by the norm, since they amount to one hour of activity per worker during a daily work period, without altering their remuneration (Brasil, 2020j). Thus, if it is true that the novel coronavirus pandemic has sharply and dramatically exposed the contradictions that characterize the current moment of capitalism (Aumercier et al., 2020), exposing several layers of vulnerability beyond the crude biological reality of contamination (Segata, 2020), it would be no different for the issue of the pace of work in meat processing production and its environmental unhealthy conditions, which have long been the main focus of conflict between capital and labor in this segment of the economy.

### **The new capitalism became flesh: conclusions**

The trajectory of the formation and insertion of the Brazilian meat industry in the global chains of the world market is long and intricate. Its general outlines, however, they closely follow the necropolitical vectors of its business model, particularly in the manner of organizing and exploiting subaltern persons, dispossessing traditional communities, producing large-scale animal suffering and degrading the environment. Meat processing plants have been historical spaces for the materialization of structural violence and shared suffering between humans and animals in industrial society, where denunciation and criticism, recently intensified by interdisciplinary means (scientific, journalistic and ethnographic), still finds little resonance in public debate.

If meat processing plants operate on the logic of “intensive speciesism” (Florit et al., 2019), we feel that the perspective of “multispecies health” (Brown & Nading, 2019; Segata et al., 2021) can offer a comprehensive plan that focalizes the suffering of humans and non-humans linked to the meat industry. The notion of multispecies health defended here is critically placed in relation to the known policies based on the *Saúde Única* [Unified Health], that end up echoing extrinsic models to local sensitivities, which is already common practice in the sphere of global health, from which it is derived. Furthermore, this perspective allows us to overcome a historical analytical dichotomy and understand, on the same plane, the movement of environmental, animal and human predation. A multispecies suffering or, perhaps, a *multi-speciesism* that, combined with an incessant prospection of food markets and an unlimited increase in the production and consumption of food industry products, conforms to an intense pattern of the formation and acceleration of syndemics and environmental crises from spaces so conspicuous in our way of life, such as meat processing plants, industrial farms, and cattle ranches that expand in the wake of agribusiness.

It is clear that disaster capitalism and the shock doctrine that we allude to in this article did not invent human-animal suffering and its multiple risks in the meat industry, which is consubstantial to the very history of the animal protein agribusiness. However, the proposal to reduce the temperature-related break in meat processing plants – an integral part of the deregulatory shock waves conceived and applied by the Bolsonaro government during the COVID-19 pandemic – makes work in this sector more vulnerable than ever to occupational and biological risks, making it a locus *par excellence* for the production of its perverse effects (Vale et al., 2021). By *passando a boiada* through dismantling pacts and norms that signal the end of elements central to the environmental and labor milestones resulting from the 1988 Constitution, Brazilian-style necropolitics has crowned this process by defining as “essential” the activities and occupations where workers most suffer, fall ill and die from the COVID-19 pandemic. In pandemic Brazil, the spirit of the new disaster capitalism became flesh.

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# “Early stimulation” in the scenario of Congenital Zika Virus Syndrome: Challenges in three temporalities in the Metropolitan Recife Area, State of Pernambuco

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## Abstract

In 2015, the Zika virus epidemic was declared in Brazil. More than 4,000 children were infected and developed what is known as the Congenital Zika Virus Syndrome. Incurable and only palliated with drugs, for the syndrome, “early stimulation” was presented as the only therapeutic possibility. In 2020, a pandemic, Covid-19, arrives in the country, severely disrupting the lives and care of these children and their families in the Recife, State of Pernambuco region. In this article, three times pervaded by these two health emergencies will be described. At the beginning of the Zika epidemic (2016), rehabilitation therapies were being organized, known and demanded by families. In 2019, with the virus cooled down, vacancies for therapy began to dwindle and families were more discerning and critical about them. In the third period (2020), clinics are closed in the name of social isolation and rehabilitation presents new dilemmas for these families. Rehabilitation routines have allowed for an expansion of the public sphere and spaces for dialogue and questioning of the State and its policies aimed at children and both epidemics. Withdrawal from these routines has far wider consequences for the children, their family and the wider community.

**Keywords:** Early stimulation. Zika virus. Medical Anthropology. Recife. Brazil.

# “Estimulação precoce” no cenário da Síndrome Congênita do Vírus Zika: Desafios em três tempos na Grande Recife/PE

## Resumo

Em 2015, a epidemia do vírus Zika (ZIKV) foi decretada no Brasil. Mais de 4.000 crianças foram contaminadas e desenvolveram o que se convencionou de Síndrome Congênita do Vírus Zika. Incurável e apenas paliada com remédios, para a síndrome, a “estimulação precoce” foi apresentada como a única possibilidade terapêutica. Em 2020, chega ao país uma pandemia, o Covid-19, desorganizando severamente a vida e o cuidado dessas crianças e de suas famílias na região do Recife/PE. Neste artigo, serão descritos três tempos perpassados por essas duas emergências sanitárias. No início da epidemia do Zika (2016), as terapias de reabilitação estavam sendo organizadas, conhecidas e demandadas pelas famílias. Em 2019, com o vírus arrefecido, as vagas de terapia começaram a escassear e as famílias estavam mais criteriosas e críticas a seu respeito. No terceiro tempo (2020), as clínicas são fechadas em nome do isolamento social e a reabilitação apresenta novos dilemas para essas famílias. As rotinas de reabilitação têm permitido uma ampliação da esfera pública e dos espaços de interlocução e de interpelação do Estado e suas políticas voltadas para a infância e a epidemia do ZIKV. O retraimento dessas rotinas tem consequências muito mais amplas para a criança, sua família e comunidade de modo geral.

**Palavras-chave:** Estimulação precoce. Zika Vírus. Antropologia da saúde. Recife.

# “Early stimulation” in the scenario of Congenital Zika Virus Syndrome: Challenges in three temporalities in the Metropolitan Recife Area, State of Pernambuco

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## Introduction

In June of 2019, in the Metropolitan Recife Area (MRA)<sup>1</sup>, we visited the home of one of our research interlocutors. A small team of three anthropologists there to know where Maria Claudia, her husband, her teenage daughter and her youngest daughter lived. Bela, born in 2015, had received the diagnosis of Congenital Zika Virus Syndrome (CZVS, henceforth)<sup>2</sup>. We arrived at an apartment from the *Minha Casa Minha Vida*, a public housing program, located in a peripheral neighborhood also considered as quite dangerous. A two-bedroom dwelling, fully furnished and decorated in various shades of green, chromatic strategy to stimulate the child’s meager eyesight. In the center of the room, leaning against one of the walls, was a small, squared rubber tatami, where toys and instruments used in rehabilitation therapies rested. Above the tatami, hanging on the wall, were a flat-screen TV and a shelf with trinkets and picture frames. On the shelf, one of the ornaments that caught our attention was a small doll, made out of air-dry clay, sitting in a wheelchair. Looking closer, we saw that it was Bela, Maria Claudia’s little daughter, easily identified by her curly black hair, pink glasses and the “farda”, as was called the uniform of the clinic where she attended therapy since she was a baby. Noticing our interest, Maria Claudia quickly explained that it wasn’t just any ornament, but the one she had used on her daughter’s three-year birthday cake earlier that year. And she already had plans for the following year: on the next cake, the adornment would represent Bela smiling and affixed to her parapodium, an orthopedic equipment that encourages the standing posture and an upright position<sup>3</sup>.

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1 We prefer to use this term, MRA, instead of simply Recife because we also circulated in Olinda, Paulista, Jaboatão dos Guararapes and São Lourenço da Mata, which form a large and continuous urban area of 12 municipalities.

2 At the time, Soraya Fleischer was accompanied by researchers Ana Claudia Knihs and Raquel Lustosa. This article was written with Júlia Garcia. We are all part of the same research team, share our empirical materials, and generally write as co-authors. We take this opportunity to thank the whole team, interlocutors, funding institutions and the two anonymous reviewers who helped improve this article. We also are indebted to David Fleischer, who reviewed the translation from Portuguese to English.

3 We have met women like Maria Claudia since 2016, when this research project began. Until 2019, we returned to the MRA seven times, once every semester, to visit and continue conversations with the same dozen women (and two other dozens we met more sporadically). We accepted invitations to accompany them in consultations, exams, public hearings, pharmacies, meetings at NGOs and, above all, daily therapy. We also went to their homes, neighborhoods, churches, and parties. We produced notes, field diaries, recordings and photographs. With the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic and unable to return to the MRA, we chose to keep in touch with these women via WhatsApp, a digital messaging tool very well-known and intensely used in Brazil. In addition, as a result of social distancing and in order to keep their support network amidst the pandemic, they increased the use of social media networks, online events as Instagram and YouTube lives. Watching these events, open to the general public, was also a way of understanding the new routines of these mothers and children, as well as keeping closely to our interlocutors, even if separated by a geographical distance.

Less than a year after this visit to Recife, a new epidemic began to circulate in the media. The new virus soon arrived in Brazil and on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Covid-19 pandemic, suggesting strict measures such as the closure of commercial activities, schools, basic services and borders; new hygiene protocols; and social distancing and isolation. Although Brazil did not adhere to all effective recommendations in managing and controlling the virus (REUTERS, 2020), therapies, consultations and rehabilitation procedures for children as Bela were abruptly interrupted, interfering in the life and development of countless other families and children with CZVS.

The most common medical specialties that treat these children are: Neurology, Pediatrics and Endocrinology. Consultations must happen, at the most, every three months. Exams had been very intense in the beginning, but, over time, they were carried out only when new symptoms appeared. State pharmacy and the Instituto Nacional do Seguro Social (Social Security System) counter were approached respectively until medications and the Benefício de Prestação Continuada (Cash Benefit to Disabled People) had been guaranteed, often through court decision<sup>4</sup>. All these spaces were visited sporadically by mothers and “micro children”<sup>5</sup>, unlike the other space where they were at on a daily basis – rehabilitation therapy.

Given the syndromic condition of the CZVS<sup>6</sup>, incurable through surgeries or transplants and only palliated with drugs, the “early stimulation”, “based on physical, visual, hearing and speech stimulation” (Souza, 2017: 26; Brasil, 2015), was presented as the only possibility to be systematically offered to these children through such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, visual stimulation, music therapy, hydrotherapy, hippotherapy, etc. “Early stimulation” was designed as an intensive rehabilitation therapy to be undertaken during the first three years of age. Along this period, as we often heard in Recife, there is a “window in the brain”, with greater opening for learning and training. This specific capacity at the beginning of life is called, by Physiotherapy studies, “neural plasticity” (Oliveira et al., 2019). “Plasticity”, “stimulation”, “precocity” were the main categories mobilized by the State officials and rehabilitation professionals, mainstream biomedicine and public policies.

To take advantage of this “neural window”, families should be available and committed to take their children to rehabilitation services on a daily basis. The expectation was that “early stimulation” could offer “development” to the child and gradual independence from external care. Walking, eating, and, above all, talking by themselves were desired activities, even if at a different pace and style. The “conquest” of each development stage has been called by health professionals as a “victory” (Duarte et al., 2019: 252), although these “advances”, another widely used term, are not as linear or definitive as the mothers reminded us. Children such as Bela, who at the time were over three years old, the age limit for “early stimulation”, had not yet developed as expected by biomedicine, requiring continuous treatment and therapy in different clinics and hospitals around the city. As described by Williamson (2018: 689), for children with CZVS, not only advances escape an imagined linearity, but the development time of these boys and girls can be experienced and permeated by uncertainties, by a series of “stops and [re]starts”.

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4 Benefício de Prestação Continuada, as known as BPC, “is a social assistance benefit consisting in an unconditional and monthly transfer of a minimum wage to people with low-income and/or disability and elders with more than 65 years” (Santos, 2011: 1).

5 “Micro” became a synthetic version of “microcephaly”, a political identity widely used to identify children, their families and all sorts of services and spaces allocated for them (Fleischer, 2020b).

6 Among children with the CSZV, there are “changes in structure, body functions and deficits in skills, 52% have changes in visual function, such as difficulties in visual fixation and tracking, visual exploration of the environment and the hand; 12% in tactile function, with skin hypersensitivity; 40% of infants have congenital and muscle function malformations; 72% have changes in muscle tone, predominantly hypertonia in the upper and lower limbs, especially in the hands; 28% have an exacerbation of primitive motor reflexes such as moro reflex, RTCA; 68% had difficulties in the manual function, such as searching and reaching the midline, and also difficulties in performing postural changes; 92% had delays in the motor development milestones for the age” (Cruz et al., 2017: 3). Although referring to the context of Maceió, a city in the State of Alagoas, this study offers a general picture of the type, predominance and degree of deficiencies from this syndrome.

In general, therapies helped children to socialize, live together and overcome their disabilities, but they also supported mothers and families by expanding possibilities of imagining the future. In daily encounters within the institutions, these women learned about the syndrome and the medical, justice and education services available around the city. They also met other mothers, organized themselves politically, found clients for their crafts or snacks, navigated through other neighborhoods and social classes. Altogether, these women and their children went through an intense process of citizenship (Quadros et al., 2019). In other words, based on their daughter or son's disability, they learned about and demanded rights, space, and technologies. They expanded their idea of the public sphere and of the spaces suited for dialogue and for questioning of the State and its policies for children and the ZIKV epidemic.

First, we will present how the rehab services were organized for the micro children and, in a second moment, we will discuss how their mothers understood these services before and during the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. This general framework will allow us to reflect on further dilemmas. From the beginning, the mothers, as immediate caregivers, accepted "early stimulation" as the main therapeutic proposal for their sons and daughters and, since then, they have been attending, on a daily basis, tatamis, swimming pools, exercise rooms around the MRA. But since the children were over three years old, and with the interruption of activities due to the Covid-19 pandemic, they did not know what would be offered to them, they did not know if they would manage to continue the stimuli on their own and they were fearful for the future health and development of their children. On that one visit, Maria Claudia showed us the exercise mat, the therapy gadgets, the wheelchair and even imagined the mini parapodium on top of Bela's next birthday cake. But, given the closing of services in early 2020, this mother was no longer so sure if the stimulation strategies would continue beyond the living room of her house. Therefore, we chose to dialogue especially with the recent production of rehabilitation sciences, in order to know how they have understood the broader context of the Zika epidemic, and the more specific therapeutic care offered to these children.

In the next sections, three temporalities will be described. At the beginning of the Zika virus epidemic (ZIKV), when we first went to the MRA, between 2016 and 2018, rehabilitation therapies were being organized by medical authorities, and demanded by the families. Toward the end of our field research, in 2019, ZIKV had not stopped infecting fetuses, but no longer was characterized as an epidemic. At that moment, therapy slots began to dwindle, and families grew more critical, prioritizing quality over quantity of sessions per week. In the third temporality, starting in 2020, another virus arrives, Covid-19, also on a pandemic scale. Clinics were closed in the name of social isolation and rehabilitation presented new dilemmas to the care of children with CZVS. If, in the beginning of ZIKV, the official biomedical orientation was to focus on "early stimulation" through rehabilitation, more recently, and also because of Covid-19, this orientation was losing centrality in policies aimed at these children. In this relationship with the State, care moved from the public to the private sphere, from the clinic to the home, increasingly overloading these mothers. This article intends to contribute to the interface between State, public sphere, disability and motherhood.

### **Supply and demand of rehabilitation services – at the beginning of the Zika Virus epidemic (2016-2018)**

Since the first year of the Zika virus epidemic (Diniz, 2016), we noticed a myriad of different rehabilitation services being offered in the MRA. As public facilities, managed by the municipality, there are the Specialized Rehabilitation Centers (SRC), "an outpatient care point specialized in rehabilitation, which performs diagnosis, treatment, concession, adaptation and maintenance of assistive technology"<sup>7</sup>. Managed by the State of

7 <http://saude.gov.br/saude-de-a-z/saude-da-pessoa-com-deficiencia>

Pernambuco or the Federal government, there are larger hospitals that dedicate a space and part of the staff to a rehabilitation ward. In the private sector, there were foundations with mixed resources (public-private), charitable entities, colleges and universities, societies of medical professionals (Vasconcelos et al., 2017), small neighborhood clinics and renovated rooms within non-governmental organizations. All these services were offered free of charge, but those, located in affluent neighborhoods, awarded vacancies or “scholarships” to low-income patients. A mother told us that her son went to “a clinic for the rich, where everyone is nice, and I was the only one who didn’t pay”. In all these spaces, there were specialized professionals, often assisted by students, interns, or residents. The only exception were the NGOs, that offered transportation and a meal and, therefore, were only able to attract physiotherapy or speech therapy graduate students or interns. Small or big, private or public, professional or not, all these places formed a local version of the SUS (Sistema Único de Saúde/ Brazilian Unified Health System) rehabilitation network.

All the children we know were in (or had been in) therapy. There was a clear hierarchy among therapies, professionals and spaces, a classification fueled by the experience of all these mothers. At each field visit, a new rehabilitative technology was sought after by the mothers. Orthotics, parapodium, orthopedic surgeries, specific therapeutic methods were examples with increasing costs. But we never met a child who had worn, for example, a Therasuit<sup>8</sup> and paid the annual R\$120,000 for its maintenance. Mothers seemed to crave a constant technological update, expecting that different stimuli through the “window in the brain” would benefit the child (Fleischer, 2020a). They tried public or family *crowdfunding* and, when these initiatives failed, they tried to sue the health insurance companies and the municipal health department to get specific therapies only available in private clinics.

The more prestigious the service, the longer the waiting line. Therefore, vacancies were conditioned to attendance (Silva, Y. et al., 2019: 450). Right at the front desk, usually sat an attendance list to be signed by the mother when arriving that day. With more than two unexcused absences, the vacancy was lost. Illness of the child or of the mother, hospitalizations due to surgery or complications of the syndrome were among the few accepted absences excuses, that always had to be documented on paper and hold signatures and stamps from the respective medical authorities. Formal justification for non-attendance generated a lot of tension among mothers (Fleischer and Carneiro, 2018). On the other hand, absences created a turnover of slots, especially in less prestigious clinics. So, there would always be some therapy available, even if it wasn’t the most desired one. Families often accepted untrained therapists, outdated equipment or even distant clinics just to offer some kind of therapy to their child and, at the same time, demonstrate their interest and commitment to “early stimulation” while waiting for a place at a more renowned or convenient clinic. Perhaps this is why we never knew of judicialization of rehabilitative therapy. Meanwhile, daycare, transportation, medication, and surgery, also seen by our interlocutors as complementary to the development of their sons and daughters, were often taken to court.

Thus, these conditions generated, on the one hand, an ethical issue, since missing a session was not taking advantage of the service, while other people were waiting for the opportunity. On the other hand, it was also a moral issue. Not going to rehab was understood, by the group of managers, therapists and mothers, as depriving that child of therapy. As rehabilitation was the most valued technology to face the CZVS, slower child development could therefore indicate maternal irresponsibility. Mothers, however, resented this surveillance coming from all sides, “I am the one who lives my life”, as one of our interlocutors put it. Tension involving therapy, attendance and motherhood revealed a broader facet – an entire arrangement necessary to arrive and remain in the services.

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<sup>8</sup> Therasuit is an intensive care method, not provided by SUS, and aimed at people with neuromuscular disorders. Therasuit is supposed to aid postural alignment, sense of balance and position and is presented as a garment with dynamic orthoses interconnected by elastics that work to stimulate and reproduce the role of the muscles that need to be activated.



## To arrive, to stay and to return

Rehabilitation usually took place once, twice or three times a week and in sessions of 20 to 40 minutes at most. The main purpose was repetition and routinization, not necessarily equal to the duration or intensity of the therapy. Exposing the child to stimulation several times was a way of getting him or her used to the exercise, to the manipulation of his or her body, and also to the presence of therapists and other children. But frequency required mothers to leave their home and move around town several times a week. This urban circulation requires fine coordination between time, space, technologies and different actors, as many scholars have noted (Fleischer, 2017; Scott, 2020; Williamson, 2018).

The MRA is known for its narrow and uneven streets, subject to flooding during the rainy season, lengthy traffic jams and an outdated and unreliable transportation system (Lustosa and Fleischer, 2019). At the beginning of the Zika epidemic, these families used buses, where they faced discrimination against their sons and daughters and the unwillingness of drivers and other passengers to accept free passes, baby carriages, wheelchairs, extra escorts etc. Then, as a second alternative, came vans and ambulances offered by the municipality, but with little punctuality. Mother and child risked arriving late, missing the session and, in a chain reaction, missing the next activities of the day. The vans did not allow these mothers to take their other children along, even if they had no one else to care of them at home. Mothers found out about their mobility rights, as free passes within the city, *Tratamento Fora de Domicílio* (Out-of-Home Care)<sup>9</sup> between municipalities, donation of wheelchairs, mandatory car seats in taxis, etc. Rapidness, reliability, safety and air conditioning were increasingly prioritized by the families and, as a result, family cars and also app cars were sought after over time. The city, transportation systems and drivers can definitely affect therapy attendance.

It is worth adding that, on the part of therapists and health services, challenges of urban circulation were associated with the supposed poverty of micro families, in an understanding that punctuality and attendance were due solely to individual responsibility and are not influenced by urban management, for example. A study in the Pernambuco hinterland reported: “The main difficulties raised by professionals are the socioeconomic issues of families who face difficulties in the cost of transportation and food for the children” (Souza, 2017: 24).

Still other aspects should be considered so mother and child could arrive at the sessions. All means of transportation required that the family routine begin at dawn, given the peripheral location of homes, as is also the case in other metropolitan areas affected by the epidemic (Silva, M. et al., 2019). Families living in other municipalities would travel hundreds of kilometers to arrive in Recife every day. They would wake up at 3, 4 or 5 in the morning to shower, prepare breakfast, pack a bag to spend the day, prepare the older children to go to school and also leave lunch ready for those who stayed at home.

Mornings are also difficult because it is hard to settle down the night before. Since birth, these children take medicine that helps them swallow, avoid irritability and seizures, and finally fall asleep (Knihs, 2020). We saw Keppra’s or Sabril’s<sup>10</sup> colorful syringes appear in the late afternoon, when mother and child had returned home. The medicine time was calculated so that the children could follow the family’s night rest, and also be awake for the daytime activity. Although it was necessary to calm the child during the night, these mothers did not want a “dead”, “still”, “soft” child at physiotherapy the next day. They had been striving to find a balance between “agitated”, considered as an excessive condition, and “active”, considered as the ideal condition of protagonism during therapy. Also, medications were essential to treat spasms, the main cause for infantile suffering and also for unlearning what was being taught day after day in therapy.

<sup>9</sup> The “Out of Home Care” is the legal tool which aims to make treatments possible, through transportation or the cost of tickets and daily rates, for the citizens who bear highly, non-treatable diseases or conditions but do not count with the necessary service in their original cities.

<sup>10</sup> Keppra (levetiracetam) and Sabril (vigabatrin) are drugs used in the treatment of epilepsy and resistant seizures.

Although tranquilizers and antispasmodics were given in the late afternoon or early evening, some were slow in effect, especially when the child had already developed some type of drug saturation. Many kids had consumed the same brand and dose for years, and their moms reported how hard it was to schedule an appointment with the neurologist or pediatrician to, among other things, update these prescriptions. So, faced with inefficient medicines, many of these children and families could only fall asleep at dawn and had a few hours of sleep until they had to get up and start organizing for the day again. So, mornings were tough. Added to this, many mothers claimed the routine between one therapy and another, between different clinics and hospitals, was exhausting. Children, sleepy and tired, became stressed out and had a hard time absorbing whatever was taught in the sessions.

Besides sorting out medication, food had to be planned. The night before, these women, in order to reduce costs during their urban wanderings, prepared lunch boxes for themselves and for their children. Food should be offered before therapy so the child would have energy, but in a certain amount so as not cause discomfort or sleepiness. Or be offered later, especially after hydrotherapy, when the appetite had been awakened. Food was a sensitive issue in the case of these children who, from an early age, had many eating challenges (Lima and Fleischer, 2020). And, as so many studies in Brazil have shown, child weight has been treated proportionately to maternity quality (Nascimento and Lima, 2018). These mothers used the facilities of the clinics, but also the interior of vans, buses and cars to offer the meals. Delays in therapy and in transportation impacted this entire sleep-medicine-food routine, with deleterious consequences, such as hunger, irritability, seizures and suffering for children and caregivers.

In order to be able to commit and to attend rehab sessions, these mothers depended on a backup structure. The BPC and the free bus passes guaranteed them some income and transportation; unpaid medication relieved the household budget; orthotics and wheelchairs were made available or donated; a percentage of the *Minha Casa Minha Vida* apartments had been reserved for these micro families. An equation seemed to be progressively in progress: citizenship enabled therapies, which generated child development, which positively moralized motherhood and encouraged the production of hope for this family (Fleischer, 2020a).

Thus, several temporalities needed to be synchronized: the biological clock, the alarm clock, the clock on the wrist of drivers and on the clinic walls, the clock ticking of public policy. The organization of family routine, sleep, medication, food, rehab sessions and urban transportation was not an uncomplicated task. Each of these elements, as we just showed, involved a set of other scenarios and actors. Arriving, staying and returning to therapy sessions, day after day, was laborious and did not depend solely on the personal effort of these micro mothers and their children.

## Therapy formats

Therapy took place as a routine<sup>11</sup>. In general, it began with the reception for those who were arriving, each woman took her child out of the wheelchair or baby carriage, unattached her/his orthotics from arms and/or feet and placed the child between her legs on the mat. Mothers, children and therapists could sit in a circle, play a game, sing a song or simply let the conversation happen more freely. Then came stretching the muscles and limbs, followed by one or two specific exercises. And, finally, the closing occurred, when everyone gathered again in a circle and evaluated the session, planning the next meeting, week or stage, anticipating holidays and festivities. In this group format, all children went through these three moments.

<sup>11</sup> Rehabilitation science scholars have noted that, although recommended as the main therapy for children with CZVS, the way to actually perform this “early stimulation” has not been described in publications in the area (Rodrigues et al., 2017). For an exception, see a detailed presentation of these activities by a MRA team (Borba et al., 2019: 544-546).

Occasionally, a therapist would perform a different activity on a single child. Perhaps a specific reinforcement was needed for a skill to be developed, perhaps it was an experimental technology to be demonstrated by the therapist and learned by all the caretakers. The mothers continued the exercises on their children, but paid attention to the new activity.

There was also the artisanal making of instruments to be used at the clinic and/or at home. Accessible and low-cost materials were used. One example was the roll, made with 15cm of foam and another 15cm of velcro, planned to be a lighter and cooler alternative to the official thermoplastic hand orthosis. The goal was to keep the child's little palms open, preventing them from closing over time in a claw position. Another example were the blue jeans stuffed with an acrylic filling and commonly used to lean the children on to relax. Or even the rattles made of plastic yogurt containers filled with grains of sugar, rice or beans, for different degrees of sound stimulation.

Services were organized in various ways. We knew places where mothers left the child with the therapist and remained in the waiting area. Inside, there was one therapist working with each child and several children were attended to simultaneously. This format was common in hydrotherapy. On the one hand, this format would reduce the chance of the mother getting to know about the exercises and rehabilitative challenges faced by her child thus, with less possibility of learning about the syndrome and reproducing this work at home. But, on the other hand, they would get a few minutes of rest, either in solitude and silence, or in a lively chat with other micro colleagues. Some told us that, especially in the beginning, the children had a hard time in the company of new people and, if they stayed inside the room with their sons and daughters, it would be a distraction and would make it difficult for the child to adapt to the therapist. When we stayed with the mothers outside, we heard their impressions, more or less critical, about therapists and clinics they attended on other days of the week. When we chose to stay inside the rooms, we knew the therapists' opinions about the child's progress, as well as the comparison among them.

We also visited clinics where mothers performed on their children's bodies what was instructed by the therapist. This arrangement could happen collectively, with several pairs of mothers and children around the room (music therapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy), or individually, in a smaller and cozier room, with one pair only being guided by the therapist (speech and hearing therapy or visual stimulation). Each movement had its purpose explained and corrected by the professional and replicated by the mother. Because they need to sit on the floor and accompany the child, mothers planned ahead to wear comfortable clothes. This format, on the one hand, allowed women to learn in a hands-on approach about the therapeutic movements and goals and, in our view, it raised them to another level of autonomy and protagonism with the syndrome. On the other hand, some mothers thought that their child was receiving a lower quality therapy, as it was not carried out directly by the health professional. It was interpreted, at the same time, as an apprenticeship to be applied at home, and as an outsourced and unpaid job done by the mothers, a service offered wholesale and with amateurism. They thought it was important for therapists to touch and feel the child's body so that they could also identify the specific resistances and difficulties to be developed. Our interlocutors valued, above all, individualized and customized therapies for each child.

In other places, patients were stimulated directly by the professional, but the mothers could stay nearby, also sitting on the mat or in chairs close to the walls of the room. Therapy, therefore, was observed from a distance and could be discussed by the mother and/or the therapist. We noted, however, that even though it was not mandatory, some mothers followed the therapy closely because they did not fully trust the clinic, the equipment or the therapist, especially if they were new interns, residents or too young in age. For example, we were told of a physiotherapist who broke a child's arm while forcing too much a maneuver; of one who accidentally pulled the tube from the child's belly, not noticing that it was trapped in the chair where she was sitting; another who put a bandage on the child's face that caused allergies and skin rashes.

In all of these therapeutic formats, the child's crying was closely considered. In private clinics, especially, where therapists took over the exercises, we saw them interrupt their work and return the sobbing child to the mother. They wanted to avoid that the child relate therapy and therapist to suffering and pain, creating resistance or trauma. Mothers were uncomfortable with this protocol because they knew that tears could indicate sleepiness, side effects of a new medication, typical irritability of the syndrome, etc. When the child was promptly dismissed, they felt it was a waste of time and effort to go all the way to the clinic and the service not happen or be interrupted. In other clinics, usually public ones, the child's body was manipulated, even if he/she was crying. For these therapists, tears indicated some discomfort, but was not a sufficient reason to interrupt the work. Mothers and therapists tolerated a little drowsiness in the child, even as a way to avoid crying and irritation. But on the other hand, too much torpor could prevent the therapy from being carried out in an active way, with learning and retention taking place on the part of the child. The mother, at times, was touched by her son's crying or sleepiness, but she was also learning about the different meanings of these manifestations. They knew that crying could be of pain, signaling an iatrogenic intervention by the professional; or it could be used by the mother to rush appointments that were running too late or too long. In these cases, the child would be helping the mother coordinate the service. Tears and tiresome would not always be a problem, but were considered, more and more, as a way of communication.

In all these scenarios, there was a lot of conversation. The topic could be spontaneously brought up by the mother, the therapist or even the child, based on something they had recently experienced; related to CZVS or not; or to the clinical scene or not. Regardless of the inspiration, the topic ended up being widely discussed by everyone, with words, laughs, emotions. Sometimes, a confidence, and other women listened carefully and offered support; sometimes, it was a comment with self-irony and generated general laughter and joy. We heard complaints about late drivers, unresponsive authorities, abusive husbands, harassing loan sharks. We witnessed anguish with the child's condition, the limitations imposed by his/her disability, the struggle of glimpsing into his/her future. We also saw plans being imagined together for a birthday party, a baby shower or a Christmas party there at the clinic. The therapy environment was used in many ways.

And among the more outgoing mothers or those who had been attending the service for a longer time, there was an active approach to the therapy. The mother could, for example, count aloud the number of repetitions of the exercise or monitor the time devoted to each step of the routine, with the clear intention of making the session more focused, dynamic and efficient. Another one could correct a colleague, cheer up a gloomy one, think of strategies to bring back whoever was missing and risking losing the slot. Rarely, though, a mother would openly question the therapist. This might happen in a humorous way. But, in general, it was outside the room or already inside transportation that we were told about any problems with that session. Even free conversation could be criticized, if it distracted the therapist, slowing down the pace of the exercises, consuming the short duration of therapy.

In addition to the exercises and rehabilitative techniques, we learned from these women that good therapy was followed by affection. The therapist should address the child by the name, ask about his/her day and week, imitate, in a kind of a ventriloquism, what they supposed the child might be wanting, thinking, or talking about. Above all, kissing, hugging and scenting the child, with close physical proximity, were all attitudes highly valued by family members. Whatever was going on at the moment was used to address the child. Researchers who experienced rehabilitation during Carnival in Recife, for example, reinforced this point:

It is up to this professional to use elements of everyday life as therapeutic resources, to reframe stories and experiences in the rehabilitation process. (...) The availability of families to participate in the activity and bring their children in costumes, as is valued by the people of Pernambuco, made possible the belonging and engagement of children in real life. This, for us, reinforced one of the competences of the occupational therapist, which is to promote the social and cultural insertion of their patients and family (Silva, Y. et al., 2019: 449-451).

All this could demonstrate that the therapist was not lazy, impatient, fussy, or repulsive of that child, but that she considered him/her as a whole person, with a story and a personality, with specific limitations and capabilities. Mothers valued a personalized treatment that respected the “way of being” and the “time” of the child.

### **Supply and demand for rehabilitation services – at the end of the Zika Virus epidemic (2019)**

In our fourth and last year of in-person research (2019), we noticed two new phenomena: the closing of vacancies in the clinics and the lack of interest by the families. The general retraction in vacancies was noticed and criticized by caretakers (Fleischer and Carneiro, 2018). To be included, some services required the child to have advanced skills. These clinics considered that physical disability was easier to be treated than intellectual disability, which was the case of children with microcephaly. Some professionals claimed that children recently born with disabilities, not just with the CZVS, also needed to be tended to. Thus, each clinic created its own priority: residents of a specific municipality; children born in a certain hospital; justifications for absences delivered only on paper; unavailability of graduate students to take on internships and residencies in university outpatient clinics; reports proving the direct relationship between ZIKV and CZVS etc. Or, simply, clinics started giving out what they called “therapeutic discharge” which, in our view, was nothing more than a euphemistic expedient for closing specific vacancies to the CZVS. It seems that the syndrome lost its centrality in the rehabilitation care network, in stark contrast to the first years of the Zika epidemic (Matos et al., 2019). The only novelty was the opening of some therapy slots in NGOs. Offering this service was now a strategy to have mothers come to activities and help amplify the work of these organizations.

We also noticed, from 2019 onwards, a lack of interest on the part of caregivers to attend therapies. Stimulation therapies during the day; medicine to fall asleep at night. Urban circulation stressed out the children; at home, they found a little quiet and intimacy. Mothers perceived this oscillation and, at times, prioritized the rest of the whole family. So, they would not attend the morning sessions of rehabilitation even if the absence would risk losing the vacancy. Everyone commented on tiresome, on managing so many aspects to offer therapy to the children (Lustosa, 2020). They resented having to sacrifice the whole family on behalf of only one of its members.

It was mainly in rehabilitation clinics and NGOs that mothers also had access to diapers, medicines and powdered milk. With the decrease of the epidemic, donations also disappeared, and these spaces lost their attractiveness. Mothers had to look for other sources of income, many women returned to the paid labor market, occupying the time they previously dedicated to therapy.

After so many years, many husbands were still not used to the intense schedule outside the home and continued to accuse their wives of adultery, vagrancy, leisure. But husbands were not willing to replace their wives in therapy either. We remember very few fathers at rehab clinics. Many men were unable to accompany their sons and daughters in therapy because they were at work or, at least, looking for ways to earn some income. Besides, they were not interested in the routine of waking up so early, moving around the city and attending sessions, but, at the same time, they demanded the re-domestication of these women. At the time of birth, many fathers had left the CZVS scene. If they had stayed, some of them directed distrust, accusations and domestic violence to their partners. And, in recent years, we learned of many divorces and remarriages. Women had to face violence and separation from previous spouses, and also, when in a new union, had to consider the care of another baby that eventually arrived. Caretaking was a lonely load to carry.

We also realized that, in addition to the situations experienced within the family and around the city, these mothers had been criticizing not only the quantity, but the quality of rehab services: that sessions were too short or quick, that professionals were not caring or that there was a dizzying turnover in the staff. Some interlocutors

noticed that the children's gain in mobility, dexterity and autonomy were minimal in some treatments. Focusing eyes, controlling drool, keeping the head up, raising hands, swallowing food, interacting with others illustrate some of the goals set for these children. When achieved, it made sense to continue assiduously in therapy. When not, discouragement could take place, motivate absences and even withdrawal. When the child, for some reason, did not learn or did unlearn something that had already been extensively worked on, mothers suffered and became fragile. But none of this devalued stimulation as a therapeutic practice. Some women began to demand more from therapists, report to the hospital director or ombudsman, and denounce problems to the media. Others chose to dedicate themselves to repeating exercises at home. Many cherished autonomy and expertise not only to do what Mattingly et al. (2011) called "homework" (the therapeutic tasks that were taught by health professionals and replicated by caregivers at home), but also to analyze which procedures produced more or less results in terms of child development. Little by little, they stopped demanding a huge range of therapies to select a smaller set that they thought was more appropriate and efficient.

One of our interlocutors felt that therapy was aimed more at mothers than at children, as it was in this space that they were convinced of the importance of rehabilitation technology and learned how to stimulate their children. For these mothers, stimulation took a secondary role, and the meetings became a pedagogical and emotional moment for them. At home, stimulation could be performed calmly, with more time and attention, directed from mother to child. According to Maria Claudia, for example, "At the clinic, it is just the beginning, but at home we have to reinforce it, we have to continue, we can't expect everything from the therapist". Similar opinions were heard from health professionals who also saw time in the clinic as insufficient and valued the stimulation performed by mothers at home. Therefore, there was a common understanding that attending therapy was important, but, once the technique was learned, independence at home was encouraged.

In fact, many studies show that replication of therapy at home is a central part of the concept of "early stimulation". Borba and colleagues represent this idea, "the family is the main source of support for child development, and this takes place through stimulation and participatory activities" (2019: 541). In a study at São Lourenço da Mata, also located in the MRA, "with regard to stimulation and games, all caregivers reported performing them in their daily routine, recognizing their importance in the child's development" (Duarte et al., 2019: 253). These interviewees even "cited the role of the physiotherapist in this process, because, in addition to this stimulation being carried out at the clinics, the professionals guided and taught games for the caregivers to perform in their homes" (*ibid*). In Maceió, in the State of Alagoas, the same was found, since "88% of mothers follow the instructions of the physiotherapist to be done at home" (Barbosa et al., 2017: 194). More than anything, therapeutic success was directly linked to the performance of the families: "It is noteworthy that the possible evolution in treatment happens when the family engages in the process, as they spend more time with the child at home than in therapies, which have very restricted time" (Silva, Y. et al., 2019: 451). Anthropologist Cheryl Mattingly suggests that the moralization of motherhood also involves "homework", the rehabilitation that is carried out and continued at home. Women were observed not only on the official mats:

A good mother, according to the moral norms governing appropriate clinic behavior, is certainly not one who sits on the sidelines. The structure of rehabilitation depends upon the delivery of massive amounts of "chronic homework" to patients and family caregivers who are expected to carry out home programs under the guidance of health experts (Mattingly, Grøn, and Meinert, 2011). When clients (including family members) do not do their parts, they are labeled noncompliant (2014: 71).

After all, "since parents and children are given a great deal of the responsibility for making clinical progress, all parties are potentially culpable. Lack of progress encourages suspicion" (Mattingly, 2010: 94-95). If families were critical of the rehabilitation professionals, these, on the same grounds, evaluated the therapeutic replication family members carried out at home. Suspicion was mutual.

## Supply and demand for rehabilitation services – at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic (2020)

With the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, the CZVS's capacity to mobilize public solidarity was notoriously diminished (Williamson, 2020). The staff became insufficient to meet the demands of people with disabilities, since, according to our interlocutors, many professionals were dismissed from their positions or relocated to help the growing number of people infected by Covid-19. Therapies were still vital services for these children, but were not considered essential by the Brazilian State, thus, discontinuing the rehabilitation process for many boys and girls. Routine medical follow-up appointments, as well as the renovation of prescriptions for controlled pharmaceuticals were interrupted by mobility restrictions imposed by the pandemic and little was said about the impact of the interruption of necessary services for people with disabilities during this period (Maboloc, 2020). Many mothers started to demand the inclusion of their children as a risk group, since these children have respiratory comorbidities and needed priority care. These women began to see their children lose what had been learned, restarting frequent spasmodic crises, as in the beginning of the Zika virus epidemic, back in 2015 and 2016. They also saw a shortage of medicines and donations, so generous and frequent in the first years of the previous epidemic.

CZVS children who were entering school also had to interrupt their activities. And their mothers, who had just recently started finding some time to dedicate themselves to other activities (such as their other children, study and work), had to postpone their plans to offer stimulation to their children at home and often without the help of a health professional. Some women told us that therapeutic telecare was infrequent, occurring at most twice a month, and that the physical distancing imposed by Covid-19 between patient and therapist hindered any effect on the child's development. Some institutions, to mitigate the effects of the lack of services, offered "stimulation kits", with toys and equipment to facilitate activities to be carried out by the family at home. Although these women had, over the years, gained autonomy to choose and learn some maneuvers and exercises, not all of them could be performed without the help of a professional or of a specific equipment. This is the case, for example, with respiratory physiotherapy. Without adequate help, again children began to have more respiratory problems and, consequently, were more exposed to bronchoaspiration, pneumonia and, above all, the new coronavirus. We heard from some women that even though they did their best to perform all the procedures at home, their children seemed to be returning to "ground zero", as other studies also indicate (Williamson, 2018). Seizures, crying, choking, irritability and loss of abilities, so common at the beginning of the diagnosis of CZVS, were reported by many of these women, now faced by Covid-19.

On the one hand, from the perspective of many mothers, doing some therapy at home saved time and effort previously dedicated to getting around the city, spending hours in buses, city vans or app cars. Some children acquired new skills in these pandemic times, such as drinking liquids from a glass and holding objects. Other mothers observed that simply playing and socializing with siblings could also have an effect on the child similar to what he or she had previously found at the clinics. Cruz et al. (2019), for example, had already noticed, in a pre-pandemic moment, that the activity that most involved fathers in caring for their children was playing and going for a walk, activities recognized by them as central to a child's development. Mothers tried to involve the extended family and the neighborhood in the child's stimulation, something that had already been recommended by therapists for a long time (Cruz et al., 2019).

Staying indoors, sleep routine could be replanned, the child could be less stressed out with traffic and moving among so many institutional environments, and he or she could be more open to learning. In addition, their mothers began to save on transportation and babysitting for the older children who needed to stay at home. They would have the chance to be with these children who had felt left out by the attention focused on their disabled sibling. Finally, not leaving the house would also meet the expectations that their husbands and sometimes their Christian churches had of a married woman.

However, if before the arrival of Covid-19 it was already clear to these women that children still needed therapy, with the general interruption of these services, its importance became even more evident. While the therapy routine did not stabilize again, they improvised. Maria Claudia had to manage on her own when Covid-19 hit. She placed the leg orthotics – which had become small due to Bela’s growth – on her arm, in an attempt to avoid the atrophy of the child’s limbs. The daughter was not only without therapy, but without consultations, exams and measurements necessary to acquire new equipment suitable for her size.

In mid-2020, some rehabilitation centers started operating again on an emergency basis, with a very reduced offering of activities and time schedules. If before the pandemic, they happened twice or three times a week, they were now offered once every fifteen days and received fewer children at a time. Not even all modalities were offered. But many mothers confessed facing a “Sofia’s choice” between one virus and the other, let’s say, between staying at home, protecting themselves from Covid-19, but facing the effects of Zika; or leaving the house, investing in the stimulation of children, but facing the effects of the coronavirus. They claimed, for example, to be afraid of crowded public transportation, risking contamination and infecting themselves, their children and bringing the new coronavirus to those who stayed home.

Before Covid-19 arrived, in that year of 2019, we noticed that, given the frustration with therapies and the difficulty of reaching them, there seemed to be a greater tendency to abandon than to plead for more vacancies or better services. But now, with the challenges presented by the new epidemic that had arrived in Recife, these women seemed to be even more involved in reflecting on rehabilitation than in criticizing it.

### **Final considerations: the crossing of epidemiological times**

Discussing rehabilitation and CZVS is, necessarily, discussing children and their efforts, but it is also discussing mothers and how the world of female work is permeated by constraints of gender, race, generation, education and urbanity. A study showed what we have found in the MRA, when considering therapeutic exercises at home, “unanimously, they [mothers] are also the ones who perform these actions at home and not other family members” (Barbosa et al., 2017: 194). Other colleagues from the Rehabilitation Sciences have also noticed that “the limitations covered in the care process” (Souza, 2017: 29) are many and of various orders. But the solution these authors found to carry out the ideal stimulation is tricky: they are not pressuring for more public policies but are assuming that this work is naturally complemented at home (*ibid*). They seemed to expect mothers to simply do the work the State should be doing. As Mattingly sums it up well, “homework is the need to provide care or to carry out health programs at home” (2010: 26). This solution, in 2020, is more than misleading, it becomes morally perplexing in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, especially because the reference to rehabilitation, taught and corrected by health professionals, were not available, as before, when weekly visits took place in clinics and hospitals. Mothers had to count on general guidelines, such as audio or video messages eventually sent by their children’s therapists, with the memory they kept from the past sessions, with eventual help from other mothers. But the children, in the meantime, grew up, presented new developmental challenges, outdated the knowledge accumulated until then.

Maria Claudia went further and, by the end of 2019, had already clearly realized that not only were the vacancies diminishing, but they had already been initially designed to have an expiration date, long before the new pandemic. In the closing of vacancies, she noticed what was behind the great campaign for “early stimulation” designed at the beginning of the ZIKV epidemic. It had been a therapeutic proposal directed only at the child’s first three years of life. And she proposed, critical and ironic at the same time, “How is my daughter after the third year? No stimulation? So, we just remove the word ‘early’ and leave only ‘stimulation’.



No problem”. It was a criticism directed at the “brain window” protocol, at the discourse that the biomedical State had decided to adopt for the CZVS. Now, in 2020, she could add another question, “How should my daughter be after a new epidemic?”.

It is not fortuitous, therefore, that we started this article describing the rehabilitation services and now we end it bringing tensions from two distinct but intertwined phenomena: the redomestication and re-internalization of these women as well as children and their disabilities. But there are different tensions in 2019 and 2020. First, there will not be a decentralization of rehabilitation services, as some scholars in the area had optimistically expected (Souza, 2017: 30) because, in fact, there is no investment in the creation of new services in the smaller cities, for example, but just a closure of those in the capital area of Recife, where services are concentrated in the state of Pernambuco. This picture insinuated itself in 2019 and seems to have intensified in 2020. We do not see the expansion of services for the CZVS, but a simple and perverse minimization of the welfare state. Thus, including and valuing home rehabilitation is also a way of circumventing or compensating for the progressive closing of places for these micro children in clinics and outpatient clinics.

Second, as exhausting as their street routines were, these women were gaining a public world beyond their neighborhoods, with several positive consequences. Giving up on these therapy vacancies would contribute to a convenient neo-domestication in the sense that staying at home might mean succumbing to the complex set of forces these women had initially faced so intensely on behalf of their children, such as transportation, bureaucracy, justice system, husbands, the Church, and the State. And, in addition to women, staying at home would contribute to a reprivatization and subsequent invisibility of the disability of children with the CZVS, as tends to be the most common scenario pointed out by the comparative literature from the Disability Studies (Grinker, 2010).

One research shows the failure of medical professionals to communicate details and referrals of the diagnosis of CZVS (Oliveira et al., 2019) and, in the same sense, our study shows that many doubts were solved by rehabilitation therapists, characters that families encountered daily. We agree: “The health professionals most cited as support in the care [of these] children were physical therapists and speech therapists” (Duarte et al., 2019: 253). Some studies indicate that accessing the rehab network was easier and faster than consulting with medical specialists, as Santos Bosaipo showed in the region of the city of São Luís, State of Maranhão (2018: 25). Accessing this network of services was essential, including having the help of professionals other than the health sector, such as the social workers, shown by Alencar and colleagues in another city in the region, Teresina in the State of Piauí (2019). This professional was even part of the “interdisciplinary team” of a rehabilitation program. Proximity, intimacy and trust were important to create bonds with these professionals in a much more stable and continuous way than with medical doctors. Doubts, clarifications and insights were widely shared during the therapies, as the therapists were more available than their medical colleagues or state bureaucrats.

It was during urban circulation and while waiting or undertaking therapies that many mothers heard about free passes, BPC, the judicialization of the Keppra medicine, the housing quotas, etc. An intense and daily circulation of information took place. In addition, many items were sold and bought (cosmetics, clothes, crafts, homemade orthotics, etc.), pleasant and relaxed conversations took place while waiting for the session to start or having a snack in the vicinity of the clinic, sympathies and friendships were deepened. Attending the same therapeutic service every week and for so many years meant meeting and getting to know the same group of women and children. This atmosphere was fundamental for mutual support and political organization. Two main organizations that support this micro community, according to their founding narratives, started in the waiting rooms of rehab clinics (Scott et al., 2017).

Going to therapy, on a day when the child does not seem to indicate any improvement, can be important to find a shoulder and a heart in other mothers, in therapists or sometimes in people who come along the way, a neighbor, a taxi driver, the canteen lady who sold coffee. A word, a closer look, or even a piece of cake made by a therapy partner can infuse some affection and clear a stunned mind. We noticed how many of these women, until the birth of their children, were not very used to circulating outside their neighborhoods. As much as they talked about being tired of the weekly routine of transportation and clinics, going to other institutions and neighborhoods and meeting with so many different people could also mean expanding their own world. It could be a way of learning, walking, networking, and airing out. A mother told us, “Now I understand my rights, now I know how to speak, I leave the house, I go here and there, I even stayed at a hotel for the first time, thanks to a raffle I won at a clinic. I never imagined I would stay in a hotel as a guest”.

It was also in the rehabilitation services, as well as in medical offices and outpatient clinics, that research on ZIKV and CZVS took place. The researchers went there, with their consent forms and their coolers to collect material. And it was there that journalists found sources to witness and record the epidemic. Interviews, books, photographs, and documentaries were produced in rehab rooms, State offices and waiting spaces of hospitals around the city. These research subjects and media sources, on the other hand, were offered food baskets, spa and massage coupons, gifts, trips and leisure. Thus, these women found in these spaces much more than therapeutic sessions, but learning opportunities, sociability, science and politicization.

“Early stimulation” was the main technology aimed at micro children, but, as one interlocutor reminded us, “mothers also need to be stimulated”<sup>12</sup>. This technology, therefore, surpassed its initial goals, from the child to the whole family, from one syndrome to a whole lot of citizenship. Spending so much time on clinic mats, they experienced this intense literacy about the child’s condition, about the rights of a person with a disability. During this interaction, the therapists had a chance to know that child more closely, notice his or her progress and communicate all this to the mothers. These were ingredients to instill some hope, to build some future for the child, for that family. Hope was one of the great incentives that made these women return day after day to the mats and to the pools (Fleischer, 2020a).

Therefore, therapies aided these women to situate themselves in the ZIKV epidemic, to make sense of a motherhood in the scenario of disability, to discern the types of professionals and colleagues around them. During the Covid-19 pandemic, this sociability lost its face-to-face character and moved, with adaptations and limitations, to the virtual space of text and audio messages, *emojis* and videos, phone calls, lives and online events. Many mothers already had the therapists’ WhatsApp contact and communicated with them whenever they deemed necessary. The relationship was also prolonged remotely, with exchanges of photographs, when doubts, compliments and advances were noticed by the mothers and sent to the therapists. Certainly, these health professionals were very useful during the social isolation of 2020, but they had to divide their time among all the families who wrote or called them. Attention became more fragmented, synthetic and infrequent.

We realized that many of the services that, as early as 2019, were closing their doors to micro children had the understanding that they had fulfilled the goal of offering therapy during the first three years of their lives, as advocated by the policy of “early stimulation”. They argued that they had to treat other children who had been born more recently, with other syndromes even. Talking to a team of physical therapists back then, we asked them how they imagined the micro children would be in a few years. One of the professionals explained that it would all depend on the stimulation carried out at home and on the network of services that that family could guarantee around the city. At no point did she mention the State’s role in organizing this network. For her, the family should be held responsible for the child’s development alone, by reproducing on the rug at home what had been learned on the official mat, or by continuing to pressure for the creation of new vacancies.

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<sup>12</sup> What kind of “stimulus” do mothers want or need? What does the idea of “stimulus” consist of, more broadly in the context of the CZVS, anyway? As well suggested by a reviewer of this article, the point deserves further elaboration and remains as a suggestion for future studies.

As the central argument of this article, in the relationship among maternity, care, clinic and the State, the common understanding was that the main role should be played out by the families. These mothers would have to seek the opportunities offered to people with disabilities in general. They were losing more and more the priority that the adjective “micro” had managed to mobilize in the beginning (Matos et al., 2019). If “early stimulation” was configured as the main therapeutic solution for these children and, therefore, marked the beginning of the Zika epidemic so intensely, interestingly, now that the two epidemics met and intensified each other, the withdrawal of the “early stimulation” illustrates the most generalized withdrawal of public policies for this micro community.

In this article, we try to move forward from our last discussion on therapies, when the beginning of the shrinkage of slots enunciated itself (Fleischer and Carneiro, 2018). The closing of rehabilitation continued, with new arguments, new justifications. 2019 was an unplanned harbinger for 2020 because the pandemic has only intensified that pullback, causing some doors and spaces to close temporarily and then definitively. Here, we present some of the aspects, over the years, of opening, maintaining and withdrawing therapeutic efforts for children with CZVS. These aspects do not run loose, but are articulated, creating new difficulties at each fold. The decisions taken by mothers are directly influenced by urbanity, biomedicine, State infrastructure, in addition to gender relations, kinship, parenting and conjugality. This maternity is and continues to be taking place within a very difficult sociocultural, economic, political and epidemiological context.

Finally, we are seized by two consternations. On the one hand, we think about the consequences of the long-term deceleration of therapies on children’s development (Gaverio and Lourenção, 2020). Will the destigmatization of disability within the family and the presence of these children back at school eventually help offer inclusion and stimulation? On the other hand, will these women lose a space for coexistence, learning and citizenship that perhaps they had not yet experienced in their life trajectories? We fear the increase in loneliness, overload and its consequences on the self-esteem, self-confidence and mental health of mothers and other caregivers. The two consternations also have broader implications, since the presence of mothers and children with microcephaly in the public space is a way of maintaining disability politicized and directly questioning the State and its representatives. And the arrival of a new virus, by limiting the construction of this public space, only reinforces the immense and varied values this space holds for these mothers, their children, their families and communities.

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# Pour d'autres politiques de la vie: Expériences de personnes âgées pendant la pandémie de Covid-19

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## Résumé

Dans cet article, nous analyserons les expériences de personnes âgées face à la pandémie de Covid-19, afin de comprendre comment les sens attribués à cet événement multiple et inégal fournissent des éléments pour réfléchir à « d'autres politiques de la vie ». Cette réflexion se fonde sur le matériel ethnographique né de la recherche anthropologique collective au sujet des impacts de la pandémie de Covid-19 sur les personnes âgées. Concrètement, dans l'article, nous analysons les récits de trois personnes âgées, deux femmes et un homme, qui permettent de problématiser les discours concernant la « minorité des personnes âgées », de même que d'inscrire ces sujets comme « groupe à risque ». En outre, ces récits révèlent un isolement social incitateur de multiples agencements et de la construction/renforcement de réseaux d'interdépendance et d'aide. Si la pandémie a été associée à la tristesse, la solitude, le deuil et la perte de temps de vie, le matériel ethnographique permet de rendre visible d'autres sens, tels que la réflexivité, la revendication, la résignation/attente et les apprentissages.

**Mots-clés:** covid-19, personnes âgées ; politiques de la vie; pandémie.

# Por outras políticas da vida: Experiências de pessoas idosas na pandemia de Covid-19

## Resumo

No presente artigo, são analisadas as experiências de idosas e idosos em relação à pandemia da Covid-19, a fim de compreender como os sentidos atribuídos a este evento múltiplo e desigual fornecem elementos para pensarmos em “outras políticas da vida”. Esta reflexão tem como base o material etnográfico advindo de pesquisa antropológica coletiva acerca dos impactos da pandemia da Covid-19 sobre pessoas idosas. Concretamente, no artigo, são analisadas as narrativas de duas idosas e um idoso, as quais permitem problematizar os discursos acerca da “minoridade dos idosos” como também a inscrição desses sujeitos como “grupo de risco”. Além disso, tais narrativas são reveladoras do isolamento social como incitador de agenciamentos múltiplos e da construção/fortalecimento de redes de interdependência e ajuda. Se a pandemia tem sido associada à tristeza, solidão, luto e à perda de tempo de vida, o material etnográfico permite visibilizar outros sentidos, tais como reflexividade, reinvenção, resignação/espera e aprendizados.

**Palavras-chave:** covid-19 ; idosos ; políticas da vida ; pandemia.



# Pour d'autres politiques de la vie: Expériences de personnes âgées pendant la pandémie de Covid-19

Fernanda Cruz Rifiotis

## Introduction

Dans cet article, j'analyse les expériences de personnes âgées par rapport à la pandémie de Covid-19, afin de comprendre comment les sens attribués à cet événement multiple et inégal fournissent des éléments pour réfléchir à « d'autres politiques de la vie » (Fassin, 2006, 2018, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). Cette réflexion se fonde sur le matériel ethnographique provenant de la recherche anthropologique menée depuis juillet 2020, autour des impacts de la pandémie de Covid-19 sur les personnes considérées « légalement âgées », c'est-à-dire ayant plus de 60 ans dans l'état du Rio Grande do Sul et dans celui de Santa Catarina<sup>1</sup>. En fonction du contexte pandémique et des mesures de prévention dans le combat contre le coronavirus, la recherche a été menée à partir d'entretiens semi-directifs réalisés au moyen de contacts téléphoniques et d'appels audio ou vidéo via WhatsApp. Compte tenu du suivi longitudinal de personnes considérées âgées, les entretiens ont été organisés en deux séries, une première réalisée par l'équipe en 2020, auprès d'environ 50 femmes et hommes âgés, sélectionnés à partir d'un réseau de contacts préalablement établi<sup>2</sup> et une seconde, en 2021, motivée par le début de la vaccination. Au cours de cette seconde étape, on a contacté les personnes âgées qui avaient participé à la première phase, afin d'approfondir les questions posées auparavant ainsi que pour les entendre à propos de leurs expériences au bout d'un an de pandémie. Dès le premier contact téléphonique, on a présenté aux interlocuteurs et interlocutrices les objectifs et les méthodes de la recherche, ceux-ci furent dûment enregistrés avec les termes du consentement éthique. Tous les entretiens ont été enregistrés et ultérieurement transcrits, ils étaient, de plus, accompagnés de notes ethnographiques sur un carnet de terrain.

A des fins analytiques, pour cet article, j'ai sélectionné les expériences de trois personnes âgées, deux femmes<sup>3</sup> (Fermina, 83 ans et Anna, 73 ans) et un homme (Bernard, 73 ans), qui ont participé à la première série d'entretiens, ceux-ci ont permis de problématiser les discours concernant la « minorité des personnes âgées » ainsi que le fait que ces sujets soient inscrits comme « groupe à risque ». En outre, de tels récits sont révélateurs

1 Ce travail résulte du projet « La Covid-19 au Brésil: analyse et réponse aux impacts sociaux de la pandémie chez les professionnels de la santé et la population en situation d'isolement » (Convênio Ref: 0464/20 FINEP/UFRGS), coordonné par le professeur Jean Segata (UFRGS). La recherche est développée par la Rede Covid-19 Humanidades MCTI et elle intègre l'ensemble des actions de la Rede Vírus MCTI financées par le ministère de la Science, de la Technologie et des Innovations pour faire face à la pandémie. La recherche auprès de personnes âgées est développée avec une plus grande équipe de chercheuses et de chercheurs, que je remercie pour leur travail et leur collaboration: Patrice Schuch et Ceres Vítora (coordinatrices), Caroline Sarmento, Cauê Machado, Gabriela Fucks, Lauren Rodrigues, Luisa Barreto, Luiza Kramer, Mariana Picolotto, Monalisa Dias de Siqueira, Pamela Ribeiro, Roberta Ballejo et Taciane Jeske. Pour plus d'informations sur le réseau et le projet, consulter: <https://www.ufrgs.br/redecovid19humanidades/index.php/br> Consulté le 26 mai 2021.

2 J'aimerais remercier toutes celles et ceux qui ont aidé à la construction d'un réseau de contacts à Florianópolis: le Centre d'études du troisième âge de l'Université fédérale de Santa Catarina (NETI/UFSC) – en particulier la coordinatrice Maria Fernanda Baeta –, la coordination du Programme Floripa Feliz Idade du Secrétariat municipal d'assistance sociale de la mairie de Florianópolis – en particulier Roselene Antunes –, pour avoir accueilli et contribué à la réalisation de cette recherche. Je remercie également Maria Cecília Godtsfriedt pour son effort et son engagement dans l'insertion et l'élargissement de ce réseau.

3 Pour des questions éthiques, les noms des interlocuteurs et des interlocutrices ont été modifiés. Fermina, Bernard et Anna sont les noms de personnages de romans dans lesquels on retrouve un contexte d'épidémie: *L'Amour aux temps du choléra* (de Gabriel García Márquez), *La Peste* (de Albert Camus) et *Une année de miracles* (de Geraldine Brooks).

d'un « isolement social »<sup>4</sup> incitateur de multiples agencements et de la construction/renforcement de réseaux d'interdépendance et d'entraide. Si la pandémie a été associée à la tristesse, la solitude, le deuil et la perte de temps de vie, le matériel ethnographique permet de rendre visible d'autres sens, tels que la réflexivité, la réinvention, la résignation/attente et les apprentissages, assumés par les sujets. Compte tenu que la pandémie est justement « [...] un type abstrait dont la réalisation doit être comprise à partir d'exercices descriptifs du sensible au lieu de l'exaltation d'indicateurs et de mesures internationales d'évaluation », il devient important « de remplir » ces données avec des biographies et des expériences individuelles et collectives » (Segata, Schuch, Víctora, Damo, 2021: 8-9).

Ces cas permettent également de penser au coronavirus, au-delà d'une perspective « centrée sur le virus », et, par conséquent, comme une expérience de plus dans la vie de ces sujets, tout en rappelant, comme le suggère Fassin (2007), que la vie en soi s'inscrit dans une histoire collective. Comme le rappelle Deisy Ventura (2009), en reprenant le roman *La Peste*, d'Albert Camus (1947), dans le roman comme dans la vie, il s'agit moins de parler de la peste en soi, le virus dans ce cas-là, que de montrer comment les personnes lui font face. Il s'agit de faire venir au premier plan de l'analyse la « plasticité des personnes et des communautés » qui est révélée sous des formes « micro, méso et macro » de résistance (Biehl, 2021).

Et pour qu'une telle initiative soit possible, il est fondamental de mettre en avant le rôle et la place de l'anthropologie elle-même, pendant et après la pandémie, dans la production de « connaissance utile » à partir de son effort pour comprendre, via l'ethnographie, les efforts quotidiens invisibles (Das, 2020). C'est en ce sens que le présent article, en valorisant de tels efforts, cherche à problématiser/mettre en tension/donner vie à la réalité des chiffres et des statistiques (incapables de capter des variations dans le comportement humain) et qu'il attribue une intelligibilité possible à ces événements qui ont fait l'objet de controverses et de paradoxes. Pour cette initiative, j'assume la perspective proposée par Segata, Schuch, Víctora et Damo (2021) d'une anthropologie responsive, responsable non seulement de répondre aux questions qui nous sont posées, mais qui a surtout la responsabilité de proposer de nouveaux débats. De cette façon, plutôt que de définir le rôle de l'anthropologie, pendant et après la pandémie, il nous intéresse de penser aux « fenêtres » que celle-ci ouvre sur le monde, c'est-à-dire aux possibilités de voir sous d'autres formes les réalités du monde (Fassin, 2020c).

## **Politiques de biolégitimité: articulation entre majorité chronologique et risque**

Depuis le début de la pandémie, on a beaucoup commenté dans les articles scientifiques, ainsi que dans les médias et les réseaux sociaux, que la pandémie du coronavirus a produit une « crise sans précédent ». Cependant, des auteurs tels que Fassin (2020a) et Caduf (2020) ont montré dans leurs travaux qu'il est nécessaire d'inverser une telle phrase, de façon à penser que ce qui a rendu cette pandémie sans précédent, ce n'est pas le virus en soi, mais la réponse qu'on y a apportée. Cette réponse a signifié, dans plusieurs pays, la pratique du « confinement généralisé de la population », guidée par la devise « sauver des vies à tout prix ». L'idéologie de la solidarité nationale pandémique, comme l'a caractérisée Caduf (2020), en plaçant tout le monde en confinement et en traitant tout le monde de la même manière, a obscurci la réalité selon laquelle le confinement signifie des choses différentes pour des personnes différentes et que tous ne sont pas exposés de la même manière ni vulnérables de la même manière.

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4 Compte tenu des différences techniques entre les expressions « isolement social » et « distanciation sociale », toutes deux faisant l'objet de disputes et de controverses au Brésil, il est bon de justifier que dans cet article, j'utiliserai la première du fait que les interlocuteurs de la recherche l'ont mentionnée pendant les entretiens en 2020. Pour plus de détails, consulter: [https://www.ufrgs.br/telessaunders/posts\\_coronavirus/qual-a-diferenca-de-distanciamento-social-isolamento-e-quarentena/](https://www.ufrgs.br/telessaunders/posts_coronavirus/qual-a-diferenca-de-distanciamento-social-isolamento-e-quarentena/) Consulté le 31 mai 2021.

Au Brésil, comme l'observent Schuch, Víctora et Siqueira (2020a ; 2020b), l'emphase des politiques de gestion de la pandémie réside fondamentalement dans des actions de protection de l'économie et de l'encouragement moral à l'isolement, bien que cette pratique ne crée pas un consensus, surtout en ce qui concerne les actions gouvernementales. Au-delà des spécificités locales de cette « réponse » à la pandémie, il est possible de penser que le point commun repose sur l'affirmation de la valeur de la vie, voire sur la reconnaissance de la vie comme valeur suprême (Fassin, 2020a). La vie que les gouvernements reconnaissent à travers leurs décisions, et pas seulement le confinement, c'est la vie physique, la vie en tant que fait biologique menacé par la maladie, à savoir le simple fait de vivre. Les politiques de confinement ne cherchent pas à sauver autre chose que la vie comme fait biologique menacé par la maladie. Si l'on suit cette perspective, depuis le début de la pandémie, il est possible d'observer que les politiques publiques de santé se sont caractérisées par une « expression la plus aboutie de la biolégitimité » (Fassin, 2020a: 6), c'est-à-dire par une légitimité de la vie biologique.

En ce qui concerne la population de personnes âgées, une série d'actions gouvernementales et leurs développements respectifs, ont été orientés/balisés par la biolégitimité. La première de ces actions est liée à l'association entre « l'âge chronologique élevé et le risque » (Schuch, Víctora, Siqueira, 2020a). S'il est vrai que les pays européens avaient augmenté l'âge définissant qu'une personne est considérée âgée – de 65 à 75 ans et plus –, avec l'avancé de la pandémie, la marque des 60 ans a été replacée comme « l'âge limite pour le vieillissement » (Dourado, 2020b). On a déjà beaucoup discuté en anthropologie des problèmes que pose la catégorisation des sujets en fonction de critères d'âge. Les études sur le vieillissement ont attiré l'attention sur la distinction entre la définition de la vieillesse en fonction de changements organiques et celle proposée par la définition personnelle, à savoir le moment spécifique où chaque individu constate qu'il est devenu vieux (Dourado, 2020b). En nous basant sur cette distinction, il est possible d'avoir des pistes sur ce qu'a signifié la reprise du jalon des 60 ans comme l'âge de risque en raison du coronavirus: c'est « un pas en arrière sur le chemin cherchant à signifier de façon plus positive le vieillissement » (Dourado, 2020b). Premièrement, parce qu'une telle « uniformisation par âge » est « arbitraire »: « Des individus qui intègrent les groupes les plus divers construisent leur propre perception de la vieillesse, au-delà des définitions fournies par des organismes nationaux et internationaux et des institutions d'états ». Deuxièmement, parce que de façon très rapide, d'un jour à l'autre, avoir 60 ans ou plus devient « risqué » (Dourado, 2020a:155).

Un second point de cette biolégitimité, objet de beaucoup de controverses, concerne la conversion de femmes et d'hommes âgés du monde entier en « groupe à risque préférentiel » (Dourado, 2020a ; Henning, 2020). Les innombrables informations sur la pandémie ont provoqué des réflexions sur les visions que nous construisons sur la vieillesse. Le nombre élevé de personnes âgées décédées, dès le début de la pandémie, surtout avec la dissémination du virus en Chine puis en Europe (en particulier les images venues d'Italie), explique pourquoi ces sujets ont été considérés, principalement par des organismes internationaux, comme les plus vulnérables et les plus susceptibles d'être contaminés. Les regards du monde entier se sont tournés vers ceux et celles qui, du fait de la pandémie, sont devenus plus que jamais un objet de préoccupation et de tutelle. Rapidement, les personnes âgées sont devenues « extraordinairement vulnérables » (Henning, 2020), et même celles et ceux qui étaient considérés actifs, indépendants (physiquement, mentalement et économiquement) ont alors été considérés comme « groupe à risque », « qui exige de la part des sociétés et des États, attentions et soins » (Henning, 2020 ; Dourado, 2020b: 2).

La conversion des personnes âgées en groupe à risque et, par conséquent, une emphase sur leur vulnérabilité et leur susceptibilité de contracter le virus (et la plus grande probabilité que celui-ci évolue vers des problèmes respiratoires plus graves, voire le décès) a, d'une part, fait augmenter la préoccupation envers ces sujets, pour qu'ils restent à la maison, qu'ils évitent les contacts avec leurs enfants et leurs petits-enfants (qui pourraient être asymptomatiques et potentiellement transmetteurs du virus) et, d'autre part, cela a amplifié une sorte de « patrouille morale » vis-à-vis de ces sujets et le renfort d'une condition de tutelle et d'actions de vigilance.

En ce point, il est important de souligner que cette « politique de contrainte morale pour forcer l'isolement de ce groupe » n'a pas été accompagnée de l'assistance nécessaire (Schuch, Víctora, Siqueira, 2020a). La réponse à la pandémie, dans certains cas, a produit une augmentation substantielle du nombre de personnes, y compris les personnes âgées bien sûr, qui vivent maintenant avec des maladies non traitées, et l'aggravation de comorbidités dues au fait de rester chez soi sans les activités habituelles, voire les attentions des parents (Caduf, 2020). Autrement dit, on n'a pas mis en place les conditions et les politiques (outre les mesures de protection de l'économie) pour que ces personnes âgées puissent rester chez elles. En fonction de l'isolement, au fil de notre recherche, nous avons couramment entendu des récits de personnes âgées sur le début ou l'aggravation de leur état de dépression, d'anxiété, de panique et d'insomnie en conséquence de la peur généralisée et de la solitude générées par l'isolement social.

Il est important d'attirer l'attention sur les controverses<sup>5</sup> créées au sujet de la vaccination. Au Brésil, comme dans la plupart des pays, le facteur « risque » a été la principale balise pour la décision de vacciner en priorité les personnes âgées et les professionnels de la santé qui agissaient en première ligne dans le combat contre la Covid-19. Voici la première controverse posée par la catégorie « groupe à risque »: si les personnes âgées doivent rester à la maison, alors pourquoi doivent-elles être prioritaires au moment de la vaccination ? Pourquoi ne pas vacciner les plus jeunes, comme dans le cas de l'Indonésie<sup>6</sup>, si ce sont eux qui ont besoin de sortir dans la rue travailler ? Face à une réserve limitée de doses de vaccin, ce qui a rendu impossible la vaccination de toute la population de personnes âgées dans un premier temps, on a établi un nouveau clivage. La vaccination allait commencer par les personnes âgées qui étaient dans les maisons de repos et qui avaient plus de 80 ans. Elles sont toutes des personnes âgées, mais certaines plus que d'autres, voilà la seconde controverse. La question de l'âge normative est prise à contrepied par la propre règle créée et qui considère que les personnes de 60 ans ou plus sont des personnes âgées et, donc, font partie du groupe à risque. La vieillesse n'est pas une catégorie homogène et l'idée de groupe à risque révèle toute sa complexité et, à la limite, son caractère arbitraire.

Les implications de l'emploi de la notion de « groupe à risque », contrairement à ce que le sens commun pourrait supposer, finirent par mobiliser une « profusion de conceptions, de discours et de pratiques discordantes sur la vieillesse », comme l'ont bien montré Schuch, Víctora et Siqueira (2020a). Des mêmes humoristiques sur les personnes âgées ont circulé et se sont disséminés en grande quantité, même dans les groupes de WhatsApp qui sont exclusivement constitués de personnes âgées, en opposition à un ensemble de discours plus positifs sur la vieillesse (que l'on retrouve dans des notions telles que le troisième âge, le meilleur âge et la vieillesse active) qui ont surgi ces dernières décennies (Schuch, Víctora, Siqueira 2020a ; Dourado, 2020a): « un tel flux d'images, dans la plupart des cas, réactualise l'idée de personnes vieilles sans autonomie, subjuguées, dont la capacité d'agentivité, de rationalité et de bon sens sont remises en question (Dourado, 2020a).

## **De la biolégitimité aux politiques de la vie**

La pandémie, comme l'ont observé Segata, Schuch, Víctora et Damo (2021), est un événement multiple et inégal, c'est pour cela qu'il faut prendre en compte une série de distinctions qui finissent par mettre en tension un ensemble de « soi-disant » homogénéités telles que celles qui sont associées aux conceptions de risque et de vulnérabilité. Il est important de rappeler que des notions comme la vulnérabilité, le risque et l'essentiel (par exemple des services considérés essentiels) sont non seulement relatives, donc localement situées,

5 La thématique des controverses dans le contexte pandémique mériterait une réflexion qui transcende les objectifs et l'espace de cet article. Parmi les travaux récents sur les controverses autour des vaccins, il est possible de citer l'approche inspiratrice de Rosana Castro (2021a; 2021b).

6 Voir, par exemple: <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-55866061> Consulté le 29 mai 2021. Et aussi: <https://brasil.un.org/pt-br/104119-oms-pede-prioridade-para-trabalhadores-em-saude-e-populacoes-em-risco-na-vacinacao-contr> Consulté le 29 mai 2021.

et contingentes, mais, de plus, elles répondent à des intérêts divers. Par ailleurs, elles mettent en évidence des performances gouvernementales qui se traduisent par des discours de « protection de la population nationale » et de solidarité, qui sont distribués de manière inégale (Fassin, 2020c). « Les stratégies épidémiologiques pour contenir le virus ne tiennent pas compte des conditions de vie matérielle, de la façon dont se structurent l'inégalité ou les relations au quotidien » (Fernandes, 2020). Outre les questions médicales, il est nécessaire de considérer le caractère social de la pandémie, ce qui signifie tenir compte également des effets psychologiques, économiques et humanitaires à long terme (Pezeril, 2020). Cette reconnaissance nous permet de penser au-delà du virus, c'est-à-dire de considérer sérieusement les conséquences sociales, politiques et économiques.

L'idée commune selon laquelle le coronavirus affecte tout le monde de la même manière est compréhensible, jusqu'à un certain point, comme le rappelle Fassin (2020b), dans le but de susciter l'adhésion de la société aux mesures de prévention nécessaires (distanciation physique, port du masque et usage du gel hydroalcoolique, etc.). Cependant, elle est profondément fautive et même une « illusion dangereuse », car elle « mène à la cécité et à l'inertie, là où la lucidité et l'action devraient prévaloir. L'invoquer peut donc sembler de bonne tactique, mais c'est une mauvaise stratégie » (Fassin, 2020b). La vie prend soin d'elle-même et se maintient différemment, rappelait déjà Butler (2009), avant même la pandémie. Cela veut dire que certaines vies sont hautement protégées, alors que d'autres vies ne jouissent pas d'un soutien si immédiat et ne se qualifieront pas en tant que vies qui valent la peine. Plus récemment, dans ce contexte pandémique, l'auteure a attiré notre attention sur le fait que le virus en soi ne fait pas de discrimination. Nous pourrions dire qu'il nous traite de manière égalitaire, que nous nous retrouvons tous face au risque de tomber malade, de perdre quelqu'un de proche et de vivre dans un monde marqué par une menace imminente. Étant donné la façon dont il se déplace et attaque, le virus démontre que la communauté humaine est également précaire. Ce sera l'inégalité sociale et économique qui garantira la discrimination du virus. Le virus en soi ne fait pas de discrimination, mais nous, les humains, il est évident que nous en faisons (Butler, 2020). Voilà que la pandémie fait émerger une « conscience de la vulnérabilité », en ce sens où elle nous rappelle que nous sommes vraiment tous vulnérables, « même si ce n'est pas de la même manière, ou avec la même intensité, y compris face aux risques pour la santé » (Blanc, Laugier, Molinier, 2020, p.2).

Cette « conscience de la vulnérabilité » nous incite à assumer le défi proposé par Biehl (2021) de « décoloniser la pandémie », dans le sens d'aller au-delà des modèles mondiaux qui privilégient des solutions uniformes (pour des problèmes qui sont multiples, dont l'origine réside dans des causes différentes et diverses ou bien, à la limite, qu'il ne s'agisse pas des mêmes problèmes et que cela explique l'échec de la recherche de consensus, au lieu de mettre en évidence les paradoxes et les controverses) qui ont peu à voir avec la variété des réalités locales. L'effet de décoloniser la pandémie permet de mettre en évidence d'autres formes émergentes de politique (ne se fondant pas exclusivement sur la biolégitimité et la recherche d'une réponse unique à des problèmes qui sont pluriels), de soins (qui met à mal une espèce de « consensus » qui a pris de l'importance au cours de la pandémie, désignant les personnes âgées comme groupe à risque) et d'agencements (qui vont outre la simple survie) qui peuvent devenir, comme le suggère Biehl (2021), « des mécanismes efficaces pour affronter la pandémie » (Segata, Schuch, Vïctora et Damo, 2021, p.20).

Le panorama décrit ci-dessus fournit des pistes qui renforcent l'idée qu'il n'a jamais été si important d'insister sur le fait que d'autres politiques de la vie sont possibles. La pandémie et la réponse à celle-ci, comme le rappelle Caduf (2020), requiert que nous puissions reimaginer des vies, reconstruire des conditions d'existence et trouver de meilleurs chemins pour faire de la politique. De la sorte, à partir de l'analyse des expériences de trois personnes âgées, j'ai l'intention de proposer un déplacement important face au panorama actuel, d'une biolégitimité (légitimité de la vie biologique) qui, comme j'ai essayé de le montrer, a caractérisé les réponses à la pandémie, vers des politiques de la vie, au sens assumé par Fassin (2006, 2018, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). À la différence d'autres expressions de la vie, la vie biologique est politiquement et moralement

neutre et c'est pour cela que ce déplacement semble non seulement nécessaire mais urgent. Il permet de récupérer une autre forme de concevoir la vie, plus riche, plus dense, spécifique aux êtres humains, caractérisée par le fait qu'elle est constituée d'évènements que l'on a la possibilité de conter de nouveau. « À l'inverse, elles mettent à l'épreuve la vie comme expérience biographique dans toutes ses dimensions, l'obligeant à se réinventer, contrainte et amputée » (Fassin, 2020a: 6). En résumé, il y a une réconciliation à faire: la vie est à la fois un fait biologique et une expérience biographique.

Avant de revenir plus spécifiquement sur les politiques de la vie et ce qui explique pourquoi elles inspirent les réflexions de notre article, il faut éclaircir la différence entre celles-ci et un des concepts de Michel Foucault qui a le plus suscité l'attention: celui de la biopolitique<sup>7</sup>. En proposant ce concept, Foucault a ouvert un « formidable chantier » qui a inspiré beaucoup de travaux en anthropologie. Après avoir ouvert ce chemin inspirateur, il se serait tourné, dans son « troisième moment intellectuel », comme le reprend Fassin (2006, 2018), vers d'autres questions et il a produit d'autres concepts également importants et féconds tels que ceux de la « gouvernementalité » et de la « subjectivation », le temps lui manqua alors pour traiter le « cœur même » de la biopolitique, c'est-à-dire la vie même. Par conséquent, la biopolitique, comme le dit le titre d'un article de Fassin publié en 2006, n'est pas une politique de la vie. La biopolitique, selon la relecture que fait Fassin des œuvres de Foucault sur ce thème, ne correspond pas à ce que l'étymologie du mot suggère.

Lorsqu'il parle de politiques de la vie plutôt que de biopolitique, Fassin (2018, 2020a, 2020b, 2006) propose de rendre toute sa profondeur à la relation entre la politique et la vie, c'est-à-dire de prendre au sérieux le fait qu'il s'agit de politique et pas de gouvernementalité, de vie et pas de population et, d'autre part, de penser cette relation du point de vue de la manière dont les politiques traitent les vies humaines, afin de réintroduire l'expérience ordinaire et sa dimension sociale. En résumé, la biopolitique concerne la forme de gouvernement des êtres humains alors que les politiques de la vie privilégient la substance. Celle-là traite des techniques et des logiques de la gestion des populations alors que celles-ci s'attachent à la différenciation dans le traitement des vies et à leur signification en ce qui concerne leur inégalité de valeur. Les politiques de la vie examinent donc l'évaluation relative des vies et elles critiquent les inégalités d'où celles-ci proviennent. Il y a, de la sorte, selon Fassin (2018), un déplacement du singulier vers le pluriel, de la vie en général aux vies en particulier. Il s'agit également d'un mouvement du normatif à l'empirique, de la valeur en termes idéaux à la valeur dans les faits.

Que valent les vies dans des contextes ou des milieux différents ? Que fait la politique des vies humaines et comment les traite-t-elle ? Voici quelques questions posées par Fassin. Y répondre signifie révéler la tension profonde qui existe entre les éthiques et les politiques de la vie, entre l'affirmation de la valeur de la vie comme bien suprême (biolégitimité) et l'inégalité de la valeur des vies dans le monde réel. Considérer la vie d'après la perspective de l'inégalité propose ainsi une nouvelle intelligibilité du monde social, mais aussi de nouvelles potentialités d'intervenir. C'est ici que le thème de l'inégalité permet de relier les dimensions biologiques et biographiques, matérielles et sociales de la vie, à savoir les approches naturaliste et humaniste. Fassin (2018) ne propose pas une anthropologie de la vie, dont le projet lui semble impossible, mais une composition anthropologique formée par trois éléments dont la réunion/ensemble fait apparaître, tel un puzzle reconstitué, une image: l'inégalité de la valeur des vies.

7 Le « pouvoir sur la vie », biopouvoir, s'est développé à partir du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle à travers l'articulation de deux formes principales: la première (anatomopolitique du corps humain) centrée sur le corps en tant que machine, par conséquent sur le dressage de celui-ci afin d'extraire et d'augmenter au maximum ses potentialités et aptitudes au moyen de procédés de pouvoir qui caractérisent les disciplines. La seconde (biopolitique de la population) qui s'est formée un peu plus tard, centrée sur le corps-espèce, implique toute une série d'interventions et de contrôles régulateurs. La biopolitique se constitue exactement comme une « technologie de prévoyance » et, en tant que telle, elle cherche à contrôler et éventuellement à modifier, à travers la production de savoirs spécialisés et de statistiques, la probabilité de ces événements et, si possible, de contrôler leurs effets (Foucault, 2002).

En m'inspirant de cette proposition de Fassin, je prends les politiques de la vie comme clé analytique qui permet de conférer une intelligibilité à cet « évènement multiple et inégal », sous la forme vécue par les hommes et les femmes âgées. Cette clé permet de récupérer la dimension biographique de ces vies et, par conséquent, elle fournit des éléments pour trouver de possibles brèches et opportunités de déviation dans ce « contexte croisé d'exceptionnalité et de normalité » (Pelbart, 2020).

### **Bernard: «Je suis une personne âgée qui ne s'est pas arrêtée»**

Bernard est une personne âgée de 73 ans, au sourire facile et de très bonne humeur. Dans le quartier où il habite à Florianópolis, depuis qu'il a pris sa retraite à 65 ans, il est plus connu sous le nom de « vovô Bernard » [papi Bernard]. Outre ses cinq enfants et ses dix petits-enfants de sang, Bernard a, d'après ses calculs, 32 petits-enfants « adoptifs du quartier ». Ces petits-enfants agitent la maison où il vit seul depuis qu'il s'est séparé de sa femme, il y a 22 ans. Pendant de nombreuses années il a travaillé comme commerçant, ce qui lui a permis de voyager presque partout au Brésil. Après avoir tenu son commerce, il a travaillé puis a pris sa retraite en tant que graphiste, dans l'imprimerie officielle de Santa Catarina. Une fois à la retraite, il relate qu'il a commencé à se sentir vraiment oisif, car il était habitué à travailler, il avait commencé à l'âge de 14 ans. Comme, selon lui, il a toujours eu « une très bonne santé », il a décidé qu'il finirait par « se faire du mal » s'il passait tout son temps à la maison.

L'envie d'aider les autres a motivé son engagement en tant que coordinateur du groupe de personnes âgées du conseil communautaire du quartier. L'expérience lui a tant apporté que, peu après, il est entré dans le conseil de santé et il est devenu leader et soutien de la Pastorale des enfants. Il participe à tant d'activités qu'il est difficile de « coincer » Bernard chez lui, sa vie se résume depuis qu'il a eu 65 ans, « à vraiment aider dans ce qui est à ma portée, hein ? ». Avec les limites de ma santé, les limites de ma capacité intellectuelle. Mais j'essaie de me consacrer réellement à la communauté, il y a plusieurs projets » explique-t-il avec fierté.

Tous les jours, il se réveille de bonne heure et s'allonge l'après-midi pour pouvoir répondre aux demandes de la communauté qui ont beaucoup augmenté, surtout en fonction de la pandémie. Cette augmentation des demandes, j'ai pu la constater pendant notre conversation via appel vidéo sur WhatsApp. Pendant qu'il m'explique le travail qu'il réalise dans le quartier, notre conversation est interrompue par une personne âgée qui arrive en poussant une brouette dans la cour de la maison de Bernard: « Bonjour Antônio ! Ça va ? Antônio, je reçois cette jeune femme, mais si vous voulez, je passe là-bas plus tard. Vous vous en sortez avec la nourriture ? Ça va mal ? Ok. Alors, je vais passer. D'accord, parce que j'ai quelque chose ici, alors je vous en apporte. Ça marche ? Je m'en occupe ». Et à ce sujet, il est bon de mentionner que pendant ma conversation avec Bernard, je lui ai demandé si, étant quelqu'un qui « aime aider les autres », il pouvait lui aussi compter sur certaines personnes qui pourraient l'aider dans ce contexte de pandémie. Il me répond que ses amis lui ont reproché qu'un jour, pendant la pandémie, alors qu'il se sentait mal, il n'avait voulu déranger personne. « Je pense que c'est mon tempérament, va savoir, je ne veux pas déranger les gens ». Mais malgré cela, une dame de la pastorale passe chez Bernard tous les jours pour savoir s'il va bien: « Ah, mais si vous avez besoin de quoi que ce soit, ne faites pas comme l'autre fois ! » Ou encore, il y a les « petits-enfants de la communauté » et les voisins sur qui il sait qu'il peut compter, quand il a besoin d'un « petit coup de main ». « Si d'ici peu j'en ai besoin et si je sens que c'est nécessaire, pas de doute, je vais demander et au moins je sais qu'on s'occupera de moi ».

La pandémie n'a pas vraiment changé la routine de Bernard, car à aucun moment il ne s'est isolé: « Parmi les personnes âgées, d'ici, dans mon quartier en tout cas, je suis peut-être la seule personne âgée qui n'a pas fait d'isolement social comme il faut, hein ? Mon isolement s'est passé dans la rue », argumente-t-il en souriant. « Attention, avec le masque... j'aime m'amuser à dire que ma voiture ne sent plus l'éthanol, elle pue l'éthanol », Il plaisante avant de rajouter: « à chaque entrée et sortie, c'est un bain d'éthanol, mais de toute façon

je n'ai pas arrêté. Mais la pandémie a changé la vie de la communauté: « les urgences ont changé » évalue-t-il. Avant la Covid-19, Bernard pouvait faire son travail communautaire « tranquillement », en prenant son temps. « Je ne sais pas si j'arrive à te faire comprendre que ce qui a changé dans ma vie personnelle... c'est juste ça, ce sentiment d'urgence pour réaliser les choses ». Avant les choses étaient plus calmes pour lui et avec la pandémie « tout s'est accéléré », comme il l'explique lui-même: « Pas aujourd'hui, aujourd'hui c'est différent. La personne a des problèmes, on doit courir, le médicament en main, lui apporter, il est en isolement, j'apporte le médicament là-bas, pour que la personne continue sa vie normale, mais je ne peux pas remettre à demain, hein ? » Outre les visites et l'accompagnement de personnes âgées, comme Antônio, d'autres urgences et nécessités ont fait irruption dans le flux quotidien du soin. Avec l'isolement social, Bernard a commencé à recevoir aussi d'autres types « d'urgence » qu'il n'était pas habitué à voir dans le quartier:

Les personnes ont perdu leur emploi du jour au lendemain, les personnes ont perdu leur condition normale de vie, de visiter leurs parents, d'avoir une qualité de vie. Soudainement, tout cela s'est interrompu et c'est comme ça qu'ont commencé à apparaître des urgences, aussi bien dans le domaine de la santé que dans le domaine social, de l'alimentation. C'est le fils qui frappe sa mère, le petit-fils qui agresse sa grand-mère, tu vois ? Alors on m'appelle pour m'occuper de chose pour lesquelles on ne m'appelait pas avant.

Les expériences de Bernard nous confrontent à des paradoxes apparus avec la pandémie, surtout en ce qui concerne l'idée de « groupe à risque », selon laquelle les personnes âgées ont besoin de soins, de tutelles et sont donc plus vulnérables. Bien qu'il soit considéré, par son âge, comme « groupe à risque », Bernard est une personne âgée qui n'a pas arrêté pendant la pandémie. Pour lui, la question du risque n'est pas déterminée par l'âge, mais bien par la « qualité de vie » et par la « qualité de santé » des personnes. « Il peut avoir 30 ans, mais le gars boit, se drogue. Il est un groupe à risque même s'il n'en a pas l'âge, son corps est maltraité, il est abimé. Je ne suis pas, pour moi en tout cas, je ne suis pas groupe à risque, hein ? Je peux faire partie du groupe à risque, mais je ne suis pas groupe à risque ».

Bernard reconnaît l'importance d'être considéré comme « groupe à risque », mais selon lui, ce n'est pas tout, la personne âgée a aussi besoin de faire sa part, pas uniquement en prenant soin de soi, mais elle doit aussi « faire quelque chose », « s'accrocher » et avoir « la volonté de vivre » et « d'être heureux »:

C'est une réponse qui est très personnelle, je crois sincèrement que les personnes âgées, en particulier, doivent plus prendre soin d'elles que les plus jeunes. La capacité de récupération d'un corps jeune est beaucoup plus grande que la capacité de récupération et de réponse positive d'une personne plus âgée. La réponse que donne l'organisme, d'après moi, à une invasion qu'elle soit bactérienne ou virale, est différente. Aujourd'hui, j'ai d'autres réponses, j'ai davantage de difficultés, hein ? [...] Mais il ne faut pas non plus rester allongé, passer son temps sur le lit ne résout rien, fais quelque chose, tu vas voir que ça fait la différence (rires).

Parmi les projets que Bernard a menés depuis le début de la pandémie, il y a la fabrication et la distribution de masques. En tant que conseiller de santé, Bernard a vu qu'il jouait un rôle important dans la prise de conscience et pour encourager l'usage du masque dans la communauté. « Alors je me suis joint à quelques femmes, qui avaient une machine à coudre chez elles, et par le biais d'un atelier, j'ai commencé à obtenir du tissu. C'est grâce à ça que les femmes ont produit des masques et j'ai commencé à les distribuer dans notre groupe dans un premier temps, j'allais de maison en maison remettre les masques pour que la famille l'utilise ». Selon Bernard, le projet, bien que modeste, a fonctionné car il restait au « portail à parler avec les gens ». En apportant le masque aux personnes, Bernard avait aussi l'opportunité de sensibiliser la personne âgée à la nécessité de se laver les mains et d'encourager le reste de la famille à avoir une « hygiénisation différente par rapport à avant ». « Alors je suis passé par tout ça pendant que j'donnais les masques », explique Bernard.



Cependant, ces mêmes soins qu'il s'efforce d'enseigner/transmettre aux personnes âgées de la communauté font l'objet de stratégies et de flexibilisation durant ses routines de soins pour lui-même. Si, au début de la pandémie, il se considérait « plus pointilleux », « nettoyant tout », quand nous nous sommes parlé en novembre 2020, il reconnaissait déjà qu'il s'était « relaxé » et, à la différence de ce qu'il conseille quand il visite les personnes âgées, il a développé quelques « petites astuces » pour déjouer une éventuelle contamination de ce virus qui, selon ses mots, « a plus l'air d'une bactérie »:

J'arrive du supermarché, au lieu de toucher chaque brique de lait et de passer la main dessus, je regarde bien au moment d'acheter, je regarde bien celle qui est le plus au fond. Bon, au moins comme ça au fond il n'y en a qu'un qui l'a touchée, parce qu'il a pris le carton et il les a enlevées du carton et les a mises là. Donc je ne prends pas celles de devant, parce que celles de devant le gars a ouvert un pack, il en prend une « non, je ne vais pas prendre celle-là » et il la laisse là, hein ? Alors la possibilité de contamination est dans celles de devant, dans les produits qui sont derrière, il y a moins de chances, parce qu'en principe un seul, deux au maximum, ont touché ce produit. Alors, quand j'ai commencé à me rendre compte qu'il existe des trucs qu'on peut utiliser [...]. Au moment d'acheter, j'ai déjà résolu une partie du problème qu'est la possibilité de contamination, je limite déjà ça. Et là, quand j'arrive à la maison, là je redonne juste un petit coup.

Ce changement de posture de Bernard, au sujet des soins à prendre pour éviter la contamination, ces « petites astuces », c'est le résultat des « expériences qu'il a accumulées au long de la pandémie ». Et justement, le fait d'être plus âgé contribue à cette somme d'expériences qui lui permettent de faire certains choix en toute tranquillité face à des situations de « bifurcation ».

### **Anna: «Je me suis remise à jour dans la vie»**

Anna est une personne âgée de 73 ans qui a travaillé toute sa vie comme aide-soignante, plus particulièrement comme visiteuse de santé. Jusqu'à l'âge de 50 ans, âge de sa retraite, elle sortait visiter les communautés, elle apportait des vaccins et une orientation à la population. Outre cette profession, elle intervenait également comme institutrice en maternelle. Selon elle, sa vie a été « très bénie », car elle a toujours pu aider beaucoup de personnes, travaillant dans le secteur des maladies contagieuses, la pneumologie, avec des patients qui avaient la tuberculose. Ensuite, avec le Sida, elle était chargée de faire le test tuberculinique aux personnes qui avaient le VIH pour vérifier si elles avaient été en contact avec la tuberculose. Même quand l'âge de la retraite est arrivé, elle ne s'est jamais arrêtée: elle intervenait comme bénévole dans une ONG dans une favela de Florianópolis qui accompagnait des enfants en dehors de l'horaire scolaire, elle s'est engagée dans le groupe d'accueil de l'église catholique et elle a découvert sa passion pour l'artisanat. Elle a trois enfants, huit petits-enfants et elle vit avec son compagnon à l'une des plages de Florianópolis. S'il était possible de dire qui est Anna en quelques mots, elle est perspicace: « j'aime la vie, j'adore vivre, je suis super heureuse ».

Anna fait partie de plusieurs groupes de personnes âgées et, depuis quatre ans, elle est la coordinatrice engagée et très active d'un de ces groupes: « je fais un travail là-bas, toute modestie mise à part, merveilleux... que tout le monde aime. Alors c'est comme ça, je fais de tout, j'aide les personnes ». Il s'agit d'un groupe de convivialité qui existe depuis 26 ans, constitué de 65 femmes et de quatre hommes, toutes et tous de plus de 60 ans. En lien avec le Programme Feliz Idade [l'âge heureux], du secrétariat d'assistance sociale de la mairie de Florianópolis, le groupe réunit des personnes de différentes classes sociales qui, avant la pandémie, se réunissaient pour faire des activités, des voyages et des promenades et fabriquer des produits artisanaux.

Du fait de la pandémie, le groupe a maintenu ses activités exclusivement via WhatsApp. Dans l'application, le groupe a été créé en juillet 2017 et il est composé de 35 participants, dont 34 femmes et seulement un homme. Bien qu'il compte cinq administratrices, Anna est la plus active: elle lance des défis (elle poste des jeux et des

activités pour la mémoire), elle encourage les participantes à poster des photos et des vidéos de l'artisanat produit pendant la pandémie, elle poste l'évangile quotidiennement et des messages religieux liés à l'église catholique, elle stimule les réflexions, repasse les messages envoyés par la coordinatrice du programme Feliz Idade de la mairie, etc. Elle est aussi intervenue comme leader d'opinion à propos des messages concernant le coronavirus, à propos de soins, de prévention et, plus récemment, sur la vaccination.

Et maintenant, durant la pandémie, le jour où on a ouvert le groupe, c'était le 12 mars, et depuis on a plus arrêté, mais qu'est-ce que j'ai fait ? J'interagis avec elles en ligne. Je mettais beaucoup de messages optimistes pour elles, pour qu'elles ne deviennent pas dépressives, chez elles, alors je mettais les bals, les endroits où on est allés se promener. Ensuite j'ai commencé à interagir d'une autre façon: la fête des mères approchait, alors j'ai commencé à travailler avec elles en ligne en leur demandant: mettez des photos de vous et de vos enfants, alors là elles les mettaient heureuses comme tout. Alors je faisais une vidéo pour elle, elles adoraient. Alors j'ai commencé à interagir comme si j'étais la coordinatrice du programme Feliz Idade: Les filles, mettez ce que vous êtes en train de faire, allez !

La pandémie, au lieu de la démobiliser, a fait surgir une « autre Anna »: « Je me suis remise à jour dans la vie », résume-t-elle en souriant. Sa passion pour l'artisanat s'est renforcée pendant cette période d'isolement. « C'est quelque chose qui ne m'a pas laissé tomber dans la dépression, parce que sinon je crois que je serais déprimée, dans la maison tout le temps, pour quelqu'un qui n'était pas habituée, c'est compliqué, hein ? ». Avant la pandémie, c'était difficile de trouver Anna chez elle ; d'après les mots de son compagnon déjà habitué au rythme de son épouse: « elle est toujours dans la rue ». Et sa réponse au fait de ne jamais être à la maison est toujours prête, sur le bout de la langue: « Tu sais, tant que j'aurai des jambes, laisse-moi sortir, laisse-moi marcher, parce qu'un beau jour je vais tomber malade et je ne pourrai plus sortir et je dois profiter de ce que j'ai en moi ». Avec l'arrivée de la covid-19, elle dit qu'elle s'est retrouvée comme un « petit oiseau dans une cage », mais un « petit oiseau heureux ». Pendant cette période, elle a compté elle aussi sur le soutien de ses amies, plus jeunes qu'elle, et de ses voisins qui lui apportaient, d'une part, des choses à manger et, d'autre part, leur soutien: « Un voisin m'apportait mon pain, ils achetaient mon fromage, j'ai reçu beaucoup de soutien de mes amies, tu sais, elles ont été merveilleuses... Jusqu'aujourd'hui, elles passent tous les jours en fin d'après-midi: des amours ! Tu as besoin de quelque chose ? Elles sont toujours là pour moi ».

Quant aux projets que la pandémie l'a empêchée de réaliser, elle pondère que « chaque chose en son temps » et ce temps a représenté pour elle « une croissance ». Comme elle a travaillé de nombreuses années avec les maladies infecto-contagieuses, elle connaît bien le danger que la Covid-19 représente pour la population. Dès le début de la pandémie, elle a reçu cette nouvelle avec beaucoup de préoccupation et de peur. La peur d'une possible contamination, la peur de devoir rester longtemps « enfermée à la maison »: « Je pensais, mon dieu, je pourrais être à la plage, mes enfants me visiteraient ici, parce que j'habite dans un endroit très beau, un grand terrain, et là, je me suis isolée de tout, je ne voyais plus personne ». Toutefois, elle a trouvé dans l'artisanat la source de sa « remise à jour » et de sa réalisation personnelle. Si auparavant elle ne savait « presque rien » faire, aujourd'hui elle fait tout type de tâches: « je déjeune et aussitôt je viens et je prends mes affaires. En créant, en remodelant, vois ce qui va sortir d'ici, de ma broderie, les couleurs que je vais utiliser ». Et avec l'artisanat, vint aussi l'apprentissage pour utiliser les technologies. « Je ne suis vraiment pas bonne en technologie. Maintenant je le suis devenue, non ? Avant c'était toujours la nourriture de tous les jours, maintenant, j'en sais un peu plus. [...] J'ai un ordinateur et mon ordinateur est tombé en panne, alors ma fille m'a donné un ordinateur de bureau, joli, alors j'y vais et j'ouvre YouTube, aujourd'hui je veux faire un petit travail sur CD, je veux faire un petit boîtier à lunettes... Voilà, c'est ce que je suis en train de faire de ma vie ».

Cet usage des technologies a donc aidé pour la production d'artisanat, par ailleurs, elle a aussi découvert d'autres possibilités d'interaction (voir des *lives* d'artistes et produire elle-même ses *lives*), qui lui donnent de l'inspiration pour proposer de nouvelles activités dans le groupe dont elle est la coordinatrice.

En plus d'inspirer les personnes âgées du groupe à s'approprier des technologies pour apprendre de nouvelles choses, elle cherche aussi à les motiver pour continuer à produire leurs travaux pendant l'isolement.

Alors elles ont commencé à participer aux activités que je mettais là-bas, je vibraïis parce que j'ai vu qu'elles étaient intéressées par ça, donc tout ce que je poste, c'est pour elles. La première chose que je poste, c'est ce que l'église m'envoie, l'évangile. Je dis bonjour, on va faire une belle journée, on va continuer de prendre soin de soi, toujours un message comme ça pour elles, hein ? Ne désespérez pas, tout ça va vite passer.

Tout en étant isolée depuis sept mois, sans sortir du tout, elle dit qu'elle a affronté cette période avec « résignation » et en même temps elle a trouvé l'inspiration pour se « redécouvrir ». Et sur le fait d'être considérée « groupe à risque », Anna dit qu'elle est d'accord et que c'est pour cela qu'elle et les autres personnes âgées se « protègent vraiment ». Pourtant, bien qu'elle ait reconnu cela, elle évalue par ailleurs que « cette maladie » met toute la population dans une situation de risque, sans distinction d'âge.

Même si pour les vieux comme ça, dans mon cas, les personnes plus âgées, qui sinon, l'immunité diminue avec le temps, on voit qu'on fatigue plus, tout est plus difficile, mais on observe que des jeunes s'en vont, que des vieux s'en vont, maintenant le président des États-Unis, lui et sa femme, ils sont déjà dans le même bateau, pas vrai ? Quand tu crois que c'est fini, ce n'est pas fini.

Sa longue expérience de vaccinatrice fait d'Anna une promotrice de la vaccination contre la Covid-19. Dans le groupe de WhatsApp, ses messages sont fréquents dans le but d'orienter et d'informer les personnes âgées quant aux dates de vaccination – selon la tranche d'âge – l'importance de recevoir la seconde dose dans le délai indiqué et, surtout, de souligner l'importance du vaccin pour contenir la pandémie. « Toute ma vie j'ai travaillé avec les vaccins, alors il faut donner l'exemple ». À l'époque où je travaillais « je vaccinaiis tout le monde » contre la diphtérie, le tétanos, la coqueluche, l'hépatite. Anna a travaillé dans le combat contre plusieurs maladies, elle a connu beaucoup d'expériences, mais aucune maladie ne lui a fait aussi peur que celle causée par le coronavirus. Selon elle, ce virus est très agressif et les possibilités de contamination provoquent une grande panique:

On est passé par tout ça et aujourd'hui il y a une pandémie où simplement en se serrant la main on se contamine. [...] Si j'ai travaillé avec tant de maladies infecto-contagieuses, la lèpre, tout, et ce truc-là arrive comme un désespéré pour, hein, nous enfermer dans nos maisons, provoquer de la panique. [...] je crois qu'il est venu de manière plus agressive. Parce que comme ça, je travaillais en pneumologie et en physiologie, les personnes tuberculeuses arrivaient près de moi, alors la salive, le bacille heurtait à coup sûr mon visage et je n'ai pas eu la tuberculose. Toutes ces maladies, je n'ai pas apporté de maladie à mes enfants et aujourd'hui, tu ne peux pas même pas approcher les personnes. C'est parce que c'est un virus vraiment bien agressif, hein ? [...] je n'utilisais pas de masque, rien, je me lavais plus ou moins les mains et je l'ai eu, en vitesse. Je n'utilisais rien, c'était avec les moyens du bord. [...] Et maintenant ça, tu restes là, impuissante, sans savoir quoi faire, en plus de toutes les précautions à prendre, hein ?

Outre l'artisanat et la participation et coordination de groupe de personnes âgées, pendant la pandémie, Anna a aussi commencé un travail de recherche sur les « pandémies qui ont déjà eu lieu dans le monde ». Ce travail qui, selon elle, n'est pas encore terminé, a pour but, d'une part, de lui fournir un panorama historique pour penser la Covid-19 et, de l'autre, de lui permettre de comparer son expérience de pandémie avec celle vécue par des générations antérieures à la sienne. « J'ai pris un cahier et j'ai tout copié, l'année où ça a eu lieu, le type de maladie, combien de personnes atteintes, combien sont mortes, combien ont survécu et alors j'ai catalogué tout cela. Maintenant je veux faire de la recherche, ma grand-mère, par quelles pandémies ma grand-mère, qui est décédée, est-elle passée. Mes parents, tu comprends ? Pour que j'arrive ensuite à une conclusion ». Anna est encore en train de tirer ses conclusions, mais elle arrive déjà à percevoir, par exemple,

que la technologie de notre époque fait ou devrait faire la différence par rapport aux pandémies antérieures: « Pas celle-ci, elle a déjà la technologie avancée, alors beaucoup de morts auraient pu être évitées et ne l'ont pas été, malgré toute cette technologie ».

### **Fermina: «je suis une personne comme ça, très attachée... à la wifi»**

En août 2019, à la suite d'un AVC, Fermina, 83 ans, a renoncé à la vie qu'elle menait dans sa maison à Pelotas, dans l'état du Rio Grande do Sul, pour aller vivre dans une résidence pour personnes âgées à Florianópolis. Elle s'est « dévêtue de tout » ce qu'elle possédait. Elle n'a emporté que peu de choses et depuis elle endosse entièrement la phrase du poète Mário Quintana: « j'habite en moi-même ». « La chambre est petite, mais c'est plutôt bien parce que comme ça j'ai moins d'espace pour perdre mes affaires ». Fermina a trois enfants et sept petits-enfants, elle a travaillé pendant 30 ans comme enseignante de langue portugaise. Elle a été élevée par son père qui disait qu'elle serait enseignante et c'est pour cela, explique-t-elle, qu'elle a beaucoup valorisé l'intellect: « Je n'en suis pas moins une personne extrêmement sensible et très affective, mais la chose intellectuelle m'attire. Ce n'est pas que je ne valorise pas le reste, mais cela m'a été passé par mon père, je suis une personne très liée aux choses intellectuelles ».

Elle n'avait jamais planifié de sortir de Pelotas, la ville qui est, dit-elle, sa « terre » ; même lorsqu'elle voyageait ailleurs, c'est toujours là qu'elle revenait. Avant son AVC, qui fut déterminant pour sa décision d'abandonner la vie dans sa ville, elle avait quelques problèmes de santé, une bronchite, un problème osseux et une « double déficience importante » des yeux et de l'ouïe, mais rien qui ne « la perturbe ». Même si elle n'a pas eu de séquelles, elle évalua à l'époque qu'elle n'aurait pas les moyens pour continuer de payer ses employées de maison et aides-soignantes dont elle aurait besoin pour assurer sa routine de soins et que cela finirait par « l'incommoder énormément ». La décision de déménager vers une résidence pour personnes âgées, dont sa belle-fille est propriétaire, a été motivée également par son désir d'une « vieillesse tranquille », « sans avoir à se préoccuper de rien ». Ses amies et sa fille étaient contre, elles disaient « qu'elle était folle » et elles demandaient ce qu'elle prétendait faire si cela ne lui plaisait pas: « Je rentre. [...] Je viens dans un centre de gériatrie d'ici », se rappelle-t-elle.

Fermina dit avoir fait un « pacte avec Jésus » selon lequel, s'il décidait qu'elle avait besoin d'un fauteuil roulant, elle « accepterait sans problème » ; en revanche, qu'il « lui laisse toute sa tête ». « Je voudrais avoir toute ma tête toujours. Et voilà qu'il tient sa promesse ! Mais je n'ai pas encore eu besoin du fauteuil roulant ». Elle se considère privilégiée d'être encore « lucide » même à 83 ans, après tout, ils ne sont pas nombreux au foyer de personnes âgées à avoir cette même condition. « Ici, les personnes qui sont en fauteuil roulant, mais qui ont encore toute leur tête, qui raisonnent logiquement, sont une minorité. Perdre sa lucidité c'est tout perdre » argumente-t-elle. Contrairement à ce qu'on pourrait imaginer, « la journée est courte » pour toutes les activités auxquelles Fermina participe. Selon ses mots, elle est très agitée, bavarde et elle aime la convivialité: « j'adore les personnes, hein ! Je suis psychologue aussi ». Elle écrit des poésies, elle suit un cours de sonnets, participe aux réunions de son groupe de Rotary et du groupe de *trovas* et aussi, avant que la pandémie ne commence, elle s'était inscrite à un cours du NETI/UFSC<sup>8</sup> de contes: « J'allais commencer le 12 ou le 14. La bombe a explosé et alors je me suis dit: ça ne va pas être possible, je vais en rester là. Et c'est là que je me trouve ». Beaucoup d'activités dans lesquelles elle est engagée et qui continuent malgré la pandémie sont en ligne. Fermina dit qu'elle est « très attachée à la wifi » et qu'elle est « totalement connectée »: « La technologie c'est mon affaire, je tâche de tout apprendre. Et autre chose, je vis avec ça [tablette] à la main ». La nuit, elle joue sur internet avec sa sœur et son beau-frère qui habitent à Miami, un jeu appelé rummikubb, selon elle, « très intéressant »:

<sup>8</sup> Centre d'études du troisième âge – Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina.

« Tu ne le connais pas ? » me demande-t-elle sur un ton d'évidence et en m'expliquant tous les détails de son fonctionnement.

Dès le début de notre conversation, elle s'empresse de me dire qu'elle se sent très bien, même du point de vue de la santé, à l'exception de la Covid-19 qu'elle avait contractée quelques mois auparavant, mais elle avait déjà « pleinement récupéré ». À la résidence de personnes âgées où elle vit, elle n'a pas été la seule: huit personnes âgées de 90 à 96 ans ont eu la Covid-19. Tous, selon elle, ont guéri. Jusque-là, Fermina avait toujours cru que le « virus » n'arriverait pas jusqu'à la résidence et elle le disait à tout le monde: « cet endroit est beau, il est loin de tout, des arbres partout autour de nous ». Et même s'il arrivait, selon elle, ils étaient tous très préparés pour « quoi qu'il advienne »:

Alors, qu'est-ce que je disais ? On ne s'en est pas du tout sorti. Les visites, faut les programmer et personne n'entre. Nous les recevons sur la terrasse, nous sommes protégés et les personnes restent du côté extérieur, dans le jardin. Mes petits-enfants, quand ils viennent, car j'ai une famille ici, j'ai un fils, une belle-fille et quatre petits-enfants. Eux aussi restent du côté extérieur et ils ne peuvent pas s'approcher, ils ne pouvaient vraiment pas, hein ?

Quand les nouvelles de l'apparition d'un nouveau virus en Chine ont commencé à circuler, Fermina n'aurait jamais pu imaginer combien la pandémie allait affecter le Brésil. Avec les rumeurs, elle s'est immédiatement souvenue qu'elle avait grandi en entendant sa mère parler de la grippe espagnole. À cette époque-là, Fermina se rappelle que sa mère parlait avec tant d'emphase de la grippe qu'on n'imaginait pas qu'elle avait à peine 12 ans à l'époque. « Mais ça a dû être atroce, parce qu'elle disait que les *car-ro-ções* [grands chariots] (en séparant et en insistant sur chaque syllabe) passaient, ils ramassaient les corps et les jetaient à l'intérieur ». Mais Fermina révèle qu'il ne lui serait jamais passé par la tête qu'elle puisse vivre une expérience semblable à celle de sa mère, car aujourd'hui, contrairement à cette époque-là, on a davantage de moyens et de technologie.

Depuis que la pandémie s'est installée dans le pays, elle estime que la « covid est devenue une cause ». Les personnes ont été si « effrayées », reflète-t-elle, qu'elles ont négligé leurs traitements en cours. C'est justement parce que la Covid-19 est devenue une « cause » que beaucoup de morts, résultant d'autres causes liées ou non à la Covid-19, ont été comptabilisées comme des morts dues au coronavirus. « Qu'en penses-tu ? Pourquoi personne ne meurt plus de cancer ? Et une femme qui criait, « mais il est cardiaque », « il a fait un infarctus » ! Non. Covid ».

Le gouvernement a établi, d'une manière générale, un état de panique ! Tout le monde en train de mourir de peur, et les gens au lieu de se traiter, fuyaient le traitement. Je suis quelqu'un qui, je me sens victime de cette situation, parce que je dépends des autres. Maintenant on m'a pris un rendez-vous, mais j'ai eu un cancer des deux seins et j'ai senti la douleur. Je demandais et je demandais qu'ils prennent rendez-vous mais, bien sûr, plutôt que d'avoir la covid, pour l'amour de dieu, on ne va pas sortir. C'est ainsi que des milliers de personnes sont en train de mourir parce qu'elles ne vont pas chercher leur traitement. Je ne parle pas de la covid, mais d'autres choses.

Le virus qui ne semblait pas pouvoir arriver jusqu'où habite Fermina, s'est infiltré dans la résidence par le biais d'une des soignantes (qui était asymptomatique) dès le début de la pandémie. Par une malheureuse coïncidence, cette soignante a accompagné Fermina faire sa toilette un jour avant de tomber malade. Aujourd'hui, en revoyant comment tout est arrivé en mars 2020, Fermina est convaincue qu'à la résidence, « ils ont caché tout ce qu'ils ont pu » pour ne pas la préoccuper. « C'est plus tard que j'ai commencé à rassembler les pièces du puzzle. Quand je suis sortie de table la veille, je suis passée à côté d'un homme, de 94 ans, il était rouge comme une écrevisse. 'Et lui, il n'est pas comme ça... il doit avoir de la fièvre'. Quand j'ai commencé à me douter, j'ai demandé: 'et José ?' 'Ah non, ce n'était rien. C'est une pneumonie'. 'Ah, alors ça va'. » Mais ce n'était pas une pneumonie, insiste Fermina. À partir de ce jour-là, elle aussi a commencé à avoir des symptômes

comme une toux sèche, une douleur horrible dans le corps, une douleur dans la cage thoracique et des maux de tête. Mais comme mode de « défense inconscient », à chaque nouveau symptôme, elle attribuait (et elle essayait de se convaincre et d'y croire) une cause autre que celle de la Covid-19.

Mais voilà, au bout d'un certain moment, en fonction de tous les protocoles que l'on a commencé à adopter dans la résidence, Fermina est devenue de plus en plus méfiante: « On continue de nier, hein ? » Ils ont fait le test et huit personnes âgées avaient contracté le virus:

[...] quand ils ont fait le test, j'étais pratiquement sûre. Le médecin de la résidence est venu ici et il a dit: « non, on va commencer avec de l'azithromycine et du zinc ». Alors moi... je me suis mise sur mes gardes. J'ai pu parler à mon fils: « et l'hydroxychloroquine ? » mais mon fils est de l'autre bord, on ne pouvait pas donner, même au médecin, le remède de Bolsonaro.

De cette période où elle a été malade, pendant environ 20 jours, Fermina se rappelle très peu de choses. Peut-être qu'elle a « bloqué » tout ce qui s'est passé, mais s'il y a une chose dont elle paraissait sûre, c'est qu'elle n'a pas eu peur, elle n'a pas pensé qu'elle allait mourir. « Mais mon fils a dit: « Maman, tu es guérie parce que tu aimes beaucoup vivre ». « Et c'est bien vrai. J'aime vivre. Alors... c'est facile, on... met la maladie de côté et on avance, hein ? Tant que c'est possible. Le moment va arriver où ce ne sera plus le cas. Moi, je dis que quand je m'en irai, ce sera comme ça, j'ai une attaque et paf ! C'est fini ! », explique-t-elle en souriant, puis elle complète: « C'est parce que je demande à Dieu, ne me laisse pas souffrir, hein ?

L'expérience de Fermina et des autres femmes et hommes âgés qui ont eu la Covid-19 à la résidence met en tension certains paramètres qui orientent la notion de risque pendant la pandémie. Fermina dit qu'il y a « des choses très étranges » dans ce virus, à commencer par le fait que la personne âgée, de 83 ans, qui s'assoie à côté d'elle tous les jours aux heures de repas, n'a pas été contaminée ; ensuite, il y a aussi le fait que toutes les personnes âgées contaminées là-bas ont contracté le virus et développé une forme « légère » de la maladie, malgré leur âge avancé. « Comment peut-on comprendre un truc pareil ? Et autre chose, des personnes de 16, 20, 30 ans... ah, ça tue n'importe qui: Eh oui. Cependant, ici, personne n'avait moins de 70 ans. La plus jeune de nous tous avait 75 ans. Le traitement s'est fait ici. Celle qui a été hospitalisée, c'est à cause de son cœur ». Pour elle, la notion de risque passe par d'autres questions, qui vont outre son âge biologique. « Autour de la maladie », elle insiste bien sur ce point, « il y a beaucoup de politique » et « beaucoup d'intérêts en jeu »:

[Le risque] n'est pas le même pour tout le monde, en effet, parce que ce n'est pas tout le monde qui se prépare, ce n'est pas tout le monde qui fait de la prévention. De plus, de vous à moi, ici, notre alimentation est à base de lait, de fruits, de légumes, une alimentation extrêmement saine. En revanche, va dans la favela de Rio, ou d'ici à Florianópolis, qui mange des fruits au petit déjeuner ? Ces personnes, je n'ai aucune preuve, mais elles ont probablement été très touchées. Mais ces personnes qui souffrent de malnutrition, hein ? Anémiques, ce sont elles, réellement, le groupe à risque, ce sont les misérables. Cependant, des vieux comme nous ici, bien accompagnés, avec une prévention incroyable, qui ne sommes pas exposés, la seule qui l'a eu, ce fut de deux employées, si elles ne l'avaient pas contracté, on allait en ressortir sans rien. Et autre chose, tu vois quel groupe à risque, ah oui ?! Je suis groupe à risque, 83 ans, guérie, Dieu merci. Mais il y a des gens plus âgés encore, de 95, 96 ans, guéris !

Quand nous parlons des effets « psychologiques » de l'isolement social, tels que la dépression et l'augmentation de l'anxiété, Fermina observe que dans une résidence de personnes âgées il n'y a pas beaucoup de différence entre avant et pendant l'isolement social en fonction de la pandémie. « Voilà ce qui arrive: pour nous ici, la vie est toujours comme ça ». Les activités et leurs horaires respectifs sont déjà préétablis: l'heure de manger, de dormir, de se doucher, etc. Cette routine, même avant la pandémie, ne changeait que pour les dates spéciales ou en fonction des visites de la famille. Alors, Fermina savait déjà « occuper » sa vie d'autres

façons: « Ah, j'ai beaucoup de prix, j'ai gagné beaucoup de trophées dans la vie. J'ai des livres publiés, j'ai trois livres électroniques, il y a le poème libre, les sonnets, les *trovas* ». Et malgré la pandémie, elle a ses projets, l'un d'eux est la commémoration de son anniversaire de 85 ans, auprès de son frère à Brasília:

Ah, mes 85 ans, j'ai tout organisé. Mon frère va avoir d'ici peu, le 2, 79 ans. Alors, je lui ai dit: « tu sais, on va s'organiser comme ça, j'ai eu 80 ans, j'ai fait une fête énorme, j'ai invité plein de monde. Maintenant, pour mes 85 ans, toi tu fais la fête. On fait la fête à Brasília. Il me regardait sans bouger, « mais quel enthousiasme ! » « Eh oui. Et ce n'est pas une bonne idée ?! [...] Alors j'ai déjà prévenu les gens, je vais fêter ça à Brasília. Ah, mais est-ce que je serai encore là ? Et pourquoi pas ?! » [...] cependant, si on n'arrête pas d'y penser, « bah, je vais mourir ! » Je sens qu'on m'a volé une année, je le sens. C'est bien réel, c'est du concret, c'est une donnée de la réalité. Mais là, « ah, être au désespoir », non. Je vais la récupérer, hein ?

### **Les sens de la pandémie: entre agencements et réseaux d'interdépendance**

Le choix de ces trois cas a été motivé par un ensemble de questions qui permettent non seulement de réfléchir et d'analyser les expériences de personnes âgées pendant la pandémie, mais surtout parce qu'elles fournissent des éléments pour penser à d'autres politiques de la vie, qui n'aient pas la biolégitimité comme principale balise. La première et la plus générale de ces politiques est liée à l'idée selon laquelle, bien que la pandémie soit un évènement vécu à l'échelle mondiale, comme l'ont déjà signalé Segata, Schuch, Victora et Damo (2021), cela ne justifie pas que l'on insiste sur son apparente homogénéité. Compte tenu de cette constatation, il est nécessaire de considérer les différentes façons dont les personnes âgées expérimentent cet évènement, en particulier les sens que ces sujets attribuent à la pandémie. Si, d'une part, on parle tant de ce contexte pandémique comme étant associé à la tristesse, la solitude, le deuil et la perte/vol d'un temps de vie, le matériel ethnographique permet de visibiliser d'autres sens tels que la réflexivité, la réinvention, l'adaptation, la résignation et l'apprentissage. Autrement dit, ces sens révèlent une productivité du contexte pandémique qui émerge du besoin de faire face à une autre temporalité (différente de celle à laquelle les personnes âgées étaient habituées) et, par conséquent, à d'autres façons de se positionner face à la vie. Si cet évènement critique est expérimenté de façons différentes et inégales, comme je prétends le montrer à partir des trois cas sélectionnés, c'est parce qu'il y a justement différents modes de compréhension et d'expérimentation de la vieillesse, outre les marqueurs d'âge et biomédicaux, à prendre en compte. Impossible de parler de « vieillesse au singulier », rappelle Goldemberg (2020), étant donné que cette condition est construite de façon relationnelle et qu'elle dépend d'une série de critères financiers, éducationnels, etc. Sur un plan plus général et qui précède la pandémie, la recherche permet de réaffirmer l'hétérogénéité de la catégorie personne âgée. En ce sens, le fait que l'analyse soit centrée sur des personnes âgées de plus de 60 ans, donc sur « des vieux plus vieux », pourrait être problématisé dans d'autres études, comme l'a déjà proposé Alda Brito da Motta (2010). Soulignons également que les différences entre les expériences de Fermina, Bernard et Anna, en termes de classe, de genre, de formation et de conditions de vie (on rappelle qu'Anna vit dans une institution de long séjour pour personnes âgées - ILPI) produisent des spécificités et des nuances dans l'articulation entre le soin, les relations d'interdépendance et le vieillissement.

Un premier point pour penser d'autres politiques de la vie résiderait dans la « pratique d'aider les autres », qui alimente tout un réseau d'interdépendance et de circulation d'informations sur la pandémie. Aussi bien Bernard qu'Anna, malgré le fait qu'ils se trouvent dans une condition sociale différente de celle de beaucoup de membres des groupes qu'ils coordonnent, assument une position/place (qui oscille entre « interne » et « externe » à la communauté) qui leur permet de mesurer les difficultés, les demandes et les désirs d'autres personnes âgées. Anna assume sa place de médiatrice auprès des organes publics, surtout avec la mairie,

et elle apprend les façons d'interagir, de motiver d'autres personnes âgées, en s'inspirant de la performance de la coordinatrice du programme Feliz Idade. En faisant cela, d'un côté elle perçoit l'efficacité de cette performance, de l'autre, elle fait parvenir aux femmes âgées du groupe des informations « officielles » qui, sans sa médiation, ne parviendraient peut-être pas à la communauté. Quant à Bernard, bien qu'il dise que la pandémie n'a en rien affecté sa vie, surtout en termes de routines et d'activités qu'il accomplit, il est assez sensible pour s'apercevoir que les urgences ont changé, alors le temps de ces aides n'est plus le même et, par conséquent, il se met à répondre à d'autres types de demandes. Autrement dit, il n'arrête pas, pour que justement la vie des autres puisse continuer. Pour que d'autres personnes de la communauté puissent faire leur isolement, il sort de chez lui tous les jours et il apprend des « trucs » qui lui permettent de continuer d'alimenter ce réseau d'interdépendance. De même qu'Anna, Bernard coordonne aussi un groupe de personnes âgées lié au programme Feliz Idade de la mairie, cependant, bien que le groupe qu'il coordonne fonctionne via WhatsApp, il ne respecte pas l'isolement et il ne se présente pas comme un « porte-parole » des actions de la mairie. Dans son cas, le réseau tissé, bien qu'apparemment centré sur sa personne, est configuré de manière plus diffuse, car il fait intervenir lui-même d'autres personnes de la communauté pour rendre compte des demandes et des projets qu'il a idéalisés.

Ce que ces deux expériences d'aide mettent en évidence, c'est le fait que « la grammaire du *care*<sup>9</sup> s'est remarquablement imposée » pendant la pandémie: « nous sommes tous dépendants des autres, que ce soit pour des besoins vitaux, à la vie à la mort, ou pour des besoins plus ordinaires » (Blanc, Laugier, Molinier, 2020: 2). Bernard, qui a aidé tout le monde, sait bien qu'il peut compter sur ses voisins, sur les parents des « petits-enfants » de la communauté et sur les enfants eux-mêmes qui animent la maison où il vit seul. Anna peut également, au cours de la pandémie, compter sur ses voisins et ses amies les plus jeunes qui peuvent sortir de chez elles. Et ces réseaux d'interdépendance qui sont tissés peu à peu, dont ces personnes âgées sont d'importants agents, mais pas les seuls, sont alimentés par des dynamiques très particulières de circulation de dons. À partir d'un dialogue avec Bessin (2016), il serait possible de penser que le paradigme du don qui anime ces réseaux est sous-jacent aux implications du soin et, par conséquent, la réciprocité de tels dons peut être différée comme cela arrive dans les relations intergénérationnelles. Autrement dit, ces aides, cette façon de prendre soin et de s'occuper de l'autre ne sont pas exemptes des trois obligations (donner, recevoir, rendre), mais la réciprocité pourra n'apparaître que bien plus tard. Une autre question méritant d'être mise en lumière dans de tels réseaux est certainement le rôle joué par les femmes. Le projet des masques dirigé par Bernard ne serait pas possible sans l'aide des femmes âgées de la communauté qui ont accepté de faire tout le travail de couture. Sans oublier qu'aussi bien dans le groupe de personnes âgées coordonné par Anna que dans celui de Bernard, il y a une majorité de femmes, ce sont elles qui occupent ces espaces qui sont également des espaces politiques et qui permettent de concrétiser une série d'actions d'aide à la communauté, même pendant la pandémie. Finalement, comme le rappellent Blanc, Laugier et Molinier (2020: 2):

La pandémie agit comme un dispositif de visibilité pour des pratiques généralement discrètes et elle promeut la conscientisation de l'importance du *care*, du travail des femmes et des autres « petites mains » de la vie quotidienne constamment enfermées entre les murs de la vie domestique. C'est ce que l'on nomme le travail du *care* qui assure la continuité de la vie sociale.

9 Dans ce travail, on emploie le *care* dans sa version politique, comme le suggère Joan Tronto et il désigne un type spécifique d'activité « that includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we may live in it as well as possible ». Le *care* nous parle de « meeting needs » et est par conséquent toujours relationnel (Tronto, 2015). Le contexte pandémique renforce et rend encore plus évident ce qui avait été dit par Tronto, à savoir que nous sommes tous bénéficiaires du *care*. « L'idée de vulnérabilité et d'hétéronomie prend alors un autre sens: si tous sont vulnérables à un moment ou à un autre de leur vie, l'autonomie est relative parce qu'elle a comme contrepartie la dépendance par rapport aux travailleurs et surtout travailleuses qui rendent cette autonomie possible ». (Hirata, Molinier, 2012: 9).



Et dans le cas de Fermina, il est aussi important de remarquer que sa décision d'aller vivre dans une résidence de personnes âgées pour avoir une « vieille tranquille » et « sans avoir à se préoccuper de rien », passe aussi par la reconnaissance que, là-bas, elle pourra recevoir les attentions d'autres femmes, plus jeunes, ce qui lui permet d'avoir la garantie de son autonomie et la continuité de ses activités. Ces réseaux d'interdépendance renforcent l'idée selon laquelle « l'autonomie des uns est possible grâce au travail des autres » (Blanc, Laugier, Molinier, 2020: 2). Au début de l'isolement, Fermina a même dit à une de ses accompagnatrices, pensant aux risques de contamination dans les transports en commun: « le mieux, ce serait que vous habitiez ici », alors la jeune femme lui a répondu: « mais ce n'est pas possible. Nous avons une famille ». « Ce n'est pas possible... alors elles viennent en Uber, les unes passent prendre les autres, tu vois ? ».

Les cas sélectionnés permettent aussi de mettre en tension des discours humoristiques et stigmatisants qui ont circulé pendant la pandémie, surtout une série de memes sur les réseaux sociaux qui essayaient de disséminer l'idée selon laquelle les personnes âgées sont sous tutelle, qu'elles n'ont pas d'autonomie, sont infantilisées, irresponsables, disséminatrices de *fake news*, etc. Comme l'observe Henning (2020), pendant la pandémie, c'est comme si l'on avait installé une « arène permissive » dans laquelle les personnes âgées sont présentées comme le problème social (dans la mesure où ils nécessitent des politiques publiques), des vilains ou « une offrande sacrificielle à l'économie ». À ces discours, viennent s'ajouter ceux que le gouvernement lui-même a mis en circulation, ils banalisent l'idée selon laquelle les personnes âgées sont un fardeau social et que les vieilles vies seraient dispensables pour la société. À l'opposé de ces discours, les récits d'Anna, Bernard et Fermina permettent de problématiser le « défi éthique de la minorité », qui a été renforcé durant la pandémie, c'est-à-dire qu'ils mettent en tension la conception de personnes âgées considérées comme un objet de l'assistance (plus vulnérables, qui ont besoin d'être accompagnés et sont des personnes à charge, des victimes, etc.) plutôt que comme des sujets (Rifiotis, 2007). L'action de Bernard et Anna permet que les politiques publiques de santé (surtout en termes de prévention et de combat contre le coronavirus) soient accessibles à d'autres personnes et, à la rigueur, les expériences que leur temps de vie leur a permis d'accumuler leur permettent de voir là où ces politiques n'arrivent pas, ou bien là où elles sont inopérantes. Des efforts au quotidien, très souvent invisibles (basés sur la convivialité et l'écoute des expériences vécues par d'autres personnes âgées), leur permettent de « créer » des possibilités de vie, dans les brèches et les vides laissés par de telles politiques, qui sont des biopolitiques et non des politiques de la vie. Et ce qu'ils font, ils ne le font pas seuls. À travers les réseaux d'interdépendance qui, contrariant les attentes d'un sens commun, se sont maintenus actifs surtout en fonction de l'usage de technologies et, par conséquent, de la mobilisation d'autres personnes âgées pour développer et mettre en œuvre des projets outre ceux considérés « officiels ».

Compte tenu que les politiques de la vie, comme le signale Fassin (2018), ne sont pas simplement une affaire d'état, car elles impliquent toute la société, dans les pratiques et les discours de Bernard et Anna, nous avons des pistes sur la façon dont ces politiques peuvent être fabriquées quotidiennement, sous des formes qui peuvent être micro, méso ou macro de résistance (Biehl, 2020). Il est important d'observer comment les expériences et les connaissances pratiques accumulées par ces personnes âgées peuvent contribuer à la gestion et à la mise en œuvre de ces politiques. Anna, du fait de sa longue expérience en tant que vaccinatrice, fournit un exemple de l'importance de la vaccination pour combattre la pandémie aux autres personnes âgées du groupe. Fermina et elle ont accumulé des connaissances à partir des expériences familiales de générations antérieures (mères et grands-mères) à propos d'autres pandémies. Et toutes deux se rendent bien compte que la technologie aurait pu faire la différence en ce qui concerne le nombre de morts. Ce sont les expériences que Bernard a accumulées qui lui ont permis de faire des choix face aux bifurcations dans sa biographie/parcours de vie et de continuer à aider les autres personnes âgées, même dans cette autre temporalité « d'urgences » imposée par la pandémie. C'est-à-dire que l'on observe que de telles expériences sont balisées par une compréhension

du vieillissement non pas comme une « phase de pertes et d'altération de la rationalité », mais comme une « somme d'expériences » et de connaissances.

Les récits de Luiz, Anna et Fermina permettent aussi de mettre en tension la conception de risque qui a balisé les politiques de lutte contre la Covid-19. La perception que ces trois personnes âgées ont de leur appartenance au « groupe à risque » ne passe pas exclusivement par des critères propres à une biolégitimité. Si, d'une part, elles et lui reconnaissent que leur corps, en termes physiologiques, n'a plus le même type de réponse à l'invasion de virus et de bactéries, ils attirent l'attention aussi sur des facteurs sociaux, économiques et politiques qui constituent le « risque ». Ces personnes âgées accordent de l'importance aux façons dont les personnes mènent leur vie et, principalement, elles insistent sur le poids des différences sociales, celles-ci empêchent toutes et tous d'avoir accès à l'alimentation de qualité et à des conditions concrètes de se préparer et de se protéger contre une pandémie. Autrement dit, la misère et la pauvreté produisent du risque. Anna et Bernard relativisent le critère de l'âge en observant que le risque existe de fait, mais c'est le cas aussi pour tous les âges. Le risque, par conséquent, s'impose non seulement à la vie au sens biologique, mais aussi à la jonction de celle-ci et de sa dimension biographique. Comme l'observe Fermina, huit personnes âgées de la résidence et elle-même ont contracté le virus (avant d'être vaccinés) sans, pour autant, qu'aucun cas n'évolue vers une forme grave ou qu'ils aient besoin d'être hospitalisés. Toutes et tous ont guéri, alors qu'ils avaient 83, 95 et 96 ans. C'est aussi une question de soins et de ceux qui peuvent recevoir ces soins, comme le remarque Fermina: « Les vieux comme nous ici, on s'en occupe bien, avec une prévention incroyable ». Une partie des personnes âgées dont on ne s'occupe pas dans ce contexte pandémique doivent, en plus, prendre soin de leurs petits-enfants, pour que la vie de la famille ne sente pas davantage les effets économiques de la pandémie. Quand Bernard dit « je peux faire partie du groupe à risque, mais je ne suis pas groupe à risque », il ne révèle pas une contradiction discursive mais plutôt une forme flexible de faire face/concevoir le normatif. C'est-à-dire que la façon dont il s'inscrit dans ce qu'on appelle « groupe à risque », de même que Fermina et Anna, est relationnelle et contingente. De plus, le simple fait de s'inscrire comme « groupe à risque » ne suffit pour être en bonne santé, il faut aussi créer des conditions pour l'émergence de l'agentivité et échapper à une condition d'assisté/sous tutelle, d'une « minorité des personnes âgées » (Rifiotis, 2007).

Dans le sillage de ces questions, le matériel ethnographique permet aussi de penser l'isolement social non en tant qu'espace de désagencement de ces personnes âgées, mais comme initiateur d'agencements multiples et de formes différentes de participation et d'engagement politique. Pour penser cette question, j'établie un parallèle entre l'expérience de la possession chez Rabelo (2008) et l'expérience de l'isolement social en fonction de la pandémie, car dans ces deux expériences (toutes proportions gardées) les sujets impliqués sont pensés moins par leur activité que par une certaine passivité ou perte temporaire de l'agentivité – une condition de désagencement. Cependant, cette apparente passivité et cette docilité sont révélatrices des manières à travers lesquelles ces sujets deviennent aussi agents. « Si nous définissons l'agentivité comme la capacité d'agir, on perçoit facilement que l'exercice de la docilité est une importante partie du processus à travers lequel sont étudiées les habiletés nécessaires à sa construction » (Rabelo, 2008: 96). Si on suit cette perspective, il devient plus productif de déconstruire la relation de causalité entre celui qui discipline (actif) et celui qui est discipliné (passif), et d'assumer la possibilité que l'agentivité ne peut s'affirmer que dans « l'articulation entre activité et passivité ». Cela veut dire que l'acceptation/incorporation d'un ensemble de règles (discipline et termes des routines et habitudes d'hygiène) et de limites (principalement en ce qui concerne la liberté de circulation) dans un premier moment, pourra être converti ultérieurement en stratégies d'agencement. Penser à la productivité de « l'isolement social » implique de reconnaître que ce qui est imposé, même indirectement – sous la forme des dynamiques temporelles et spatiales – possède une dimension de réflexivité et de reconnaissance de ces personnes âgées en tant que sujets. L'isolement, dans sa dimension de productivité, a créé des conditions

pour que Anna perfectionne son habileté avec l'artisanat et l'usage de technologies. Il ne s'agit plus de la « nourriture de tous les jours » souligne-t-elle, elle veut voir et produire des *lives*, elle cherche à dynamiser le groupe via WhatsApp et elle veut revenir sur son histoire dans le contexte de la pandémie. Fermina est encore « totalement connectée » et elle demande que Dieu ne lui retire jamais sa capacité de raisonnement pour qu'elle continue d'écrire ses *trovas*, ses poésies et de remporter des prix à 83 ans, tout en vivant dans une résidence de personnes âgées. Et elle fait des projets: même face à la « donnée de la réalité », que la pandémie lui a volé un an de sa vie, elle pense déjà à sa fête de 85 ans à Brasilia. C'est ce que Biehl a caractérisé comme la « plasticité des sujets », il ne s'agit pas d'une simple adaptation à des contextes d'exception, il s'agit de la possibilité de transformation à partir de ce qu'ils expérimentent: « je suis une autre Anna... je me suis remise à jour dans la vie ». Il est intéressant de penser également au potentiel d'agentivité contenu dans « l'attente » elle-même. L'attente, rappelle Joseph et Neiburg (2020) en citant Hage, propre à ces temps, n'est en rien passive, il s'agit d'un acte fondamental d'agentivité individuelle et collective. « Chaque chose en son temps », pondère Anna. Et ces temps « pourpres », comme Mbembe (2020) les a nommés, peuvent aussi être des temps de « croissance », comme préfère le penser cette femme âgée.

Au long de cet article, j'ai essayé de montrer, à partir de l'analyse des expériences de Bernard, Anna et Fermina, le besoin que nous problématisions les politiques de combat contre la Covid-19, fondées sur des réponses centrées sur une biolégitimité, et que nous pensions à la possibilité « d'autres politiques de la vie ». Des politiques qui prennent en compte l'inégalité et l'impossibilité de ne considérer la vie que sous sa forme neutre et biologique. C'est dans la dimension politique et biographique de la vie que nous pourrions trouver des éléments pour mieux comprendre les politiques appliquées en ce moment face à la pandémie de Covid-19, mais aussi pour chercher, pour l'avenir, de nouvelles réponses à d'autres pandémies (Pezeril, 2020). Nous ne pouvons courir le risque, en restant si « confinés dans le présentisme », d'arrêter d'imaginer comment le contrecarrer. Il est nécessaire d'apprendre, avec ces expériences et tant d'autres face à la pandémie, à profiter des brèches (lignes de fuite) que l'on entrevoit, sans permettre qu'à partir de ce « contexte croisé », « d'exceptionnalité et de normalité », que les opportunités de détournement nous échappent des mains (Pelbart, 2020).

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# Precariousness and inequalities amidst daily uncertainty: life and hope during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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## **Abstract**

This article examines two themes that intersect in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. I consider how the production of precariousness and the overlapping inequalities are inscribed in everyday life and I reflect on narratives of hope as a way to sustain life in the present. Relationships between precariousness and hope are traced, from an ethnographic point of view, from the ways in which life is portrayed by social actors in critical reflections on everyday life. The analysis of the articulation between the extraordinariness of the pandemic and the ordinary course of life is conducted through an integrated view of innumerable social inequalities. Hope is understood as a way to manage uncertainty in a daily life marked by the continuous production of precariousness.

**Key words:** Inequalities; Hope; Uncertainty; Pandemic; Precariousness; Life.

# Precariedade e desigualdades em um cotidiano incerto: vida e esperança em tempos de pandemia de Covid-19

## **Resumo**

Esse artigo trata de dois temas que se imbricam em um contexto de pandemia de Covid-19. Por um lado, me proponho a pensar como a produção da precariedade e a sobreposição de desigualdades se inscrevem na vida cotidiana. Por outro lado, realizo uma reflexão sobre as narrativas de esperança como forma de sustentação da vida no presente. As relações entre precariedade e esperança são traçadas, de um ponto de vista etnográfico, a partir das formas pelas quais a vida é elaborada pelos atores sociais em reflexões críticas sobre o cotidiano. A análise da articulação entre a extraordinariedade da pandemia e o curso ordinário da vida é feita por meio de uma visão integrada a respeito das inúmeras desigualdades sociais. A esperança é entendida como forma de manejar a incerteza em um cotidiano marcado pela produção contínua da precariedade.

**Palavras-chave:** Desigualdades; Esperança; Incerteza; Pandemia; Precariedade; Vida.

# Precariousness and inequalities amidst daily uncertainty: life and hope during the Covid-19 Pandemic

*Daniela Petti*

## **Introduction**

“Life was a mixture of time from before-now-after-and-even later. Life was a mixture of everyone and everything. Those who passed, those who were and those who came to be” (Evaristo, 2014: 131).

“There are certainly reasons to be pessimistic, however, it is much more important to open ones eye at night, to move tirelessly, to look for fireflies once again” (Didi-Huberman 2011: 49).

This text addresses two themes that are related in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. On one hand, I propose to consider how the production of precariousness and the overlapping of inequalities are inscribed in daily life (inequities that involve work/income, health, infrastructure, food security, and gender). On the other hand, I reflect on the continuous production of hope (for a possible future life) as a strategy to sustain life in the present. Narratives and materialities intersect to the degree to which the dimension of the imaginary (imagined life) is understood to constitute efforts that make life possible in the present. If the context of the Covid-19 pandemic reveals Brazil’s historically sedimented social inequalities, the forms of hoping for a better future also take on a new shape because of the moment of crisis. This reflection is constructed from an ethnographic perspective and not in abstract terms, and is based on the daily life of Arlinda, who has been a research interlocutor for two and a half years.

It is not new to say that the Covid-19 pandemic aggravated social inequalities throughout the world. In Brazil, the interaction between “the extraordinary consequences of Covid” and the “old and structural inequalities” make even more evident the “fractured democracy” that marks the history of the country (Pimenta, 2020: 1). By framing daily life, the pandemic event causes to emerge with greater intensity both the precarious dimension of life - marked by risky working conditions, negligence and state violence, and food insecurity - and permanent efforts taken by people to manage uncertainty, which even if it is constitutive of daily life (Das and Han, 2016), is aggravated and unequally distributed in circumstances of crisis. The articulation between the health crisis and social factors led many researchers to think of Covid-19 as a “sindemia”. The term “sindemia” was originally created by Merrill Singer to think of relations between HIV/AIDS, the use of injectable drugs and violence in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s (Bambra et al., 2020: 2). The objective of the concept is to call attention to the fact that risks related to health issues are exacerbated in unfavored communities, perpetuating the noxious social factors.

Some populations are especially affected by the unequal distribution of risk. In the case of women, the pandemic had special impact on networks of affection, work and care in which they are involved (Pimenta et al., 2020). Historically responsible for most of the tasks of care for the home, the environment and people, and inserted in the most precarious work positions, women feel overburdened and more exposed to the virus during the pandemic. This is aggravated when they are the head of the family. In the case of those known as “informal workers” the consequences of the pandemic are substantial, as demonstrated by authors concerned with the relations between policies to restrict mobility and the socioeconomic impacts on this group



(Al Dahdah et al., 2020; Guérin et al., 2020). Informal workers are one of the social groups hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, precisely because their forms of earning a living are directly related to modes of circulation and different ways of using the streets. They also have a high risk of contamination, due to their working conditions and the absence of guaranteed rights. According to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2020), 41% of Brazilian workers are informal. At the beginning of the pandemic coronavirus, the International Labor Organization (ILO) warned that informal Brazilian workers would be strongly impacted by the restrictive measures that were implemented in Brazil and throughout the world.

In this text I examine Arlinda's daily life, she is the head of her family, and earns her living selling various goods on the street, and lives in a *condomínio popular* (Conceição, 2016) [a condominium for low-income residents] built under the federal government's *Minha Casa Minha Vida* program [My Home My Life] in the *Zona Oeste* [western zone] of Rio de Janeiro. For two years I have been accompanying her ways of maintaining her home and earning a living (Araújo Silva, 2017) and in recent months, I noted some changes and continuities that affected her daily life during the pandemic. In addition to helping me to reflect on how the production of precariousness and the overlapping of inequalities is inscribed in the life of informal women workers, Arlinda's daily life also allows exploring the narratives of hope that can allow life to continue its course at a time of crisis. In recent years, many authors have been considering hope as an object of anthropological reflection (Crapanzano, 2005, 2006; Han and Antrosio, 2020; Lempert, 2018; Lear, 2006; Miyazaki, 2004; Visacovsky, 2019). Hope, although it looks towards the future, guides and forges the practices of social actors in the present. What is the role of the future in the present? This question is raised by Bryant and Knight in the book *The Anthropology of the Future*, in which they affirm that "the limit of knowledge defined by the future shapes perception of the familiarity of everyday life" (2019: 19).

Examining forms of hope and projections for the future can help understand how people maintain their lives in the present. According to Appadurai (2013: 5), to investigate how people engage with the temporal layers that constitute life, especially the future, can reveal something about their concepts of well-being and a "good life". The ideas about "good life" that inhabit Arlinda's imaginary and practices, guide her perceptions, actions, and characterizations about the present. Since I first met her, I felt the need to think of the issue of hope, due to the recurrence of this category in our conversations. I noted, however, during the study I conducted in the first year of the pandemic, that this type of narrative multiplied in such a way that it became inevitable to conduct a more detailed reflection about the issue. According to Lear (2006), it is amid radical uncertainty that arises what he calls "radical hope", that which allows survival when there is no indication of a possibility for a happy future. To articulate inequalities and precariousness to the theme of the narratives of hope is an ethical-political choice, which understands that suffering is only one of the dimensions that shapes the life of the urban poor<sup>1</sup>. Alongside it is hope for a better life, among many other dimensions.

To complete this introduction, it should be emphasized that I registered Arlinda's daily life during the pandemic from March 2020 until March 2021. Between September 2020 and February 2021, the registration was mostly done with questionnaires<sup>2</sup>. The questionnaire, the main research tool, is divided into five modules: family demographics, labor/income, health conditions, social contacts, and information about Covid-19. The questionnaire was issued by telephone every 15 days, and a total of 10 questionnaires were responded to. They included questions about the movement of people between homes; daily spending and expenses at home; other financial activities such as loans and donations; the forms of help; relations between neighbors, friends and relatives; the health conditions of family members; questions about access to public health facilities

1 For a counterpoint to the perspective of scarcity and suffering of the oppressed based on a focus on hope see Lempert, 2018.

2 This text is the fruit of my participation in the study "Social factors that influence the adherence to the quarantine and distancing in the prevention of Covid-19", coordinated at an international level by professors Veena Das and Clara Han of Johns Hopkins University in the United States and in Brazil by Camila Pierobon (CEBRAP), Taniele Rui (UNICAMP) and Paula Lacerda (UERJ).

and materials; as well as questions about the social interactions and conditions of adhesion or not to the quarantine, and access to information about Covid-19. The same questionnaire was issued for one year, to learn in a longitudinal manner about the changes and continuities in daily life under the circumstances of the pandemic. The duration of the questions and responses varied from one to two hours, given that the questions were quite open, so that they could stimulate a dense conversation with the interlocutors. During the period that the questionnaires were not used, registrations were made in a field diary based on informal conversations on WhatsApp that I had with Arlinda since we met and became friends. The articulation between the application of the questionnaires and the WhatsApp conversations, which were made possible by the intimacy and trust constructed with Arlinda in the previous field research in person, was essential to the investigation, to the degree that the complementarity of the narratives produced in the distinct circumstances of interlocution made the data more plural.

This article is organized around the ways that Arlinda elaborates life in its narratives and practices. In the first section I discuss Arlinda's relation with the state through her search for the so-called "social benefits" (and their absences). In the second section I reflect on help from family and neighborhood networks that allowed life to continue. In the third, I consider the theme of health to discuss her chronic corporal conditions and her criticism of the precarious access to public healthcare. Finally, before the final considerations, I discuss the polysemes of hope and their role in supporting life in the present. The passages and expressions shaped by her own categories are in italics.

### **"Living without benefits"**

When I met Arlinda in December 2018 her main source of income was from street sales of candies, sweets, cookies, drinks, and other small goods (cigarettes, lighters, matches, scissors). Five years ago she mounted a stand, composed of two tables and two beach umbrellas, on the main street of the condominium where she lives, and serves the neighborhood each day. At times, Arlinda also sells *empadões* and *empadinhas* [hot, savory pastries] that she makes at home, she resells pyjamas for women to earn a commission, and takes advantage of large events, like carnival, to sell drinks on the beach. During the year of 2019, I accompanied her street sales for many afternoons<sup>3</sup>. She usually began close to lunchtime *to catch the children going to school and those who are returning*, and she finishes close to 8pm *to get the people who only go into the street when the sun goes down*.

In March 2020, with the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic and social isolation in Brazil, Arlinda stopped going out to sell in the street because she was in so-called risk groups. She has high blood pressure, a heart murmur and asthmatic bronchitis, and since March was quite afraid to go out of her house. When she does go out, she takes careful precautions, such as the use of more than one mask when conducting essential activities, the use of alcohol gel even at home and she prohibited her two adolescent boys who live with her to leave the house. In addition to the fear of becoming infected and the precautions, the fact that she did not have money to buy goods to sell was also a decisive factor in her staying home. In May 2020 she asked for my help to organize an "online collection" (*vaquinha online*) to raise money, buy goods and return to work. I agreed to help, but only R\$200,00 was raised, which was not enough for her purposes. At this time, the electrical, gas and condominium maintenance bills had not been paid for two months.

That is when she began to receive the emergency assistance (an income-transfer program created by the federal government to ameliorate the impacts of social isolation on the incomes of poor families). Although she received assistance payments of R\$1.200,00, because she lived in a single-parent household and was a mother and head of the family, the money was not enough to go back to street sales. *The priority is food, and the prices*

<sup>3</sup> For a reflection on the experience of informal workers who live in the low-income housing of the Minha Casa Minha Vida, through the description of Arlinda's daily life, before the Covid-19 pandemic, see Petti 2020.

in the market are exorbitant, they are taking advantage of other people's needs. After paying the bills, I only buy goods if I can. The constant presence of her sons at home, due to the suspension of in-school classes, increased food costs, because staying at home, the mouth is always chewing, and impacted the load of domestic work. The work at home increased, because the bathroom gets dirtier, dirty dishes, not a lot of clothes, but the house gets dirty, because they [the sons] make a mess. Although she complained of the food package offered sporadically by the public school where her boys study, in October she mentioned the absence of this help. *This government doesn't solve anything and doesn't help anyone. They can't decide whether to open the school or not, and nothing happens*<sup>4</sup>.

Indignation towards the government usually permeates many of Arlinda's statements. This became more evident in August, when her emergency assistance payment was "blocked". In August, the federal government stopped emergency assistance payments to some 922 thousand Brazilians registered in the Bolsa Família [Family Grant] program (an income-transfer program from long before the pandemic) to "guarantee better application of public funds and reach the citizens who meet the eligibility criteria" (UOL, 2020)<sup>5</sup>. Although she is registered in the Family Grant program, Arlinda has not received the "benefit" since 2017, when her older daughter, who at the time lived in the same residence, began to work as an intern in the human resources department of a communications company. It was with her payment that she paid for business school. The rise in family income meant that the domestic unit no longer met the criteria required by the program to receive the "benefit". *So you can't even study, you have to be below a beggar to receive it. She paid with great effort, worked and paid for college, then they cut my family grant in the same month.*

Without understanding the reasons for the blockage of the emergency assistance, Arlinda faced enormous lines at one of the branches of the Caixa Econômica Federal (CEF)<sup>6</sup> in her neighborhood to receive explanations and guidance. The bank employee told her that the continuity of her assistance was in analysis and that she should wait. The next month, through the phone app from Caixa Tem<sup>7</sup> she got news that her assistance was blocked, due to "non-compliance with eligibility requirements". Indignant upon reading that "she did not meet the requirements" Arlinda returned to the CEF bank agency in a new attempt to understand what was happening. This time the employee told her to go to the Social Assistance Reference Center (CRAS) to see if there was a mistake in her data in the federal government register known as the *Cadastro Único (CadÚnico)* for "social benefits". In November, on one of her trips to CRAS, the social assistant told her that her daughter's income, who was now employed at the company where she did an internship during college, was considered part of the family income. But the daughter was married and living in another home for more than a year. *How do I have an income of R\$2.000,00? It doesn't exist* – she said in reference to her daughter's income. The social assistant revised her records but said that she did not have the power to reverse the blockage of assistance. She could approve Arlinda to receive the Family Grant once again. She asked her to come back to CRAS in February to verify the situation.

In March of this year (2021), after having returned to CRAS, she told me that, according to the social assistant, *all the documents are in order, but the payment was still not approved. Now I am waiting.* In January of this year, with help from a loan from a neighbor, Arlinda went back to work, this time selling *quentinhas* (warm meals) on the beach. In March, when the city government closed the beaches, prohibiting the presence of peddlers, due to the worsening pandemic, she told me by phone:

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4 Arlinda is referring to the intense public debate that began in mid 2020 in Rio de Janeiro about the declarations of the mayor, according to whom in-class education would resume in public schools. This generated enormous indignation from education professionals who organized a "strike for life" to prevent the return to in-class education in the middle of the pandemic. The doubt and hesitancy towards the return to in-school classes left many families confused.

5 <https://economia.uol.com.br/noticias/redacao/2020/09/12/auxilio-emergencial-bolsa-familia-pagamentos-cancelados-suspenso.htm>

6 A federal government controlled bank responsible for emergency assistance payments.

7 The smartphone app used by the federal government for registration, information, and bank transactions related to the emergency assistance and other "social services".

*I saw an interview on television with [city mayor] Eduardo Paes who said that he will give R\$500,00 to 13 thousand registered peddlers, but I am not registered. So what should the people who are not registered do? Die of hunger? Doesn't he have the awareness to know that most of the peddlers are not registered? I am speechless about this mayor. There are 13 thousand people registered. Look how many peddlers there are in Rio de Janeiro. I am sure that 70% of the peddlers are not registered!*

When I researched the city government decree that establishes a “benefit” for peddlers, I noticed that it also announced an increase in the food benefit in the form of a “food card” offered by public schools for families of registered children. Arlinda’s children, however, no longer have the right to the food card because they are registered in a state school, and the “benefit” is for students in municipal elementary or intermediary schools. During this conversation, she told me:

*Well, I have no card, I am living without any benefit. I don't know if I will get the new assistance, I still haven't received the family grant, I won't get this help from the city government for peddlers, until now there is no food package at school, my son went there today. I am at God's mercy.*

Among the “benefits” mentioned above, Arlinda mentions the *new assistance* of 2021, which at the time was still not being distributed. It was that week that the federal government announced a new emergency assistance for 2021, which was based on the registration made the previous year. Among the groups that did not have the right to a “benefit” are those who “had the emergency assistance canceled”. Because her data at CadÚnico was updated after the “benefit” was “blocked”, her assistance was “cancelled”, making it impossible for her to receive *the new assistance* in 2021<sup>8</sup>. According to the special report from the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), the emergency assistance generated a 54% increase in the “real income” of the “very low income” families (IPEA, 2020: 7). When I compared Arlinda’s income before and during the pandemic (considering only the first semester, a period in which she received assistance), I noticed an increase in family income, to the degree that the amount of assistance increased the amount that she was able to earn selling candies and sweets in the street. However, it was clear how much of the auxiliary assistance received in the first semester *was left in the supermarket*, due to *abusive prices*, and used to pay overdue bills. Arlinda often said that *the money does not stop at home, it says hello and goodbye right at the door*, which can be seen as a trait of the current economic crisis. The emergency assistance policy, when analyzed considering the daily life of informal workers, has proven to be insubstantial, demonstrating that other indicators, and not only “effective income” should be considered when evaluating a public policy. In addition to *leaving it in the market and paying the bills*, the assistance has also been used by many people to pay debts, as presented below.

### “Living from help”

Since the beginning of the pandemic, I noted that the word *help* appeared with greater frequency, both in informal conversations with Arlinda, and in our bi-weekly interviews. The *help* materialized in daily life in many ways. In the form of donations, loans of things or money, which in turn can come in the form of *fiado* [sales on credit] or *passar o cartão de crédito* [using someone else’s credit card], bill paying etc. As mentioned, I accompanied Arlinda’s daily life for some time and it became inevitable to make comparisons between before and during the pandemic. The various modalities of *help* were always part of relations with neighbors and family members in which she is engaged. I have noted, however, a qualitative change in relation to the finalities of the forms of *help*. While in 2019 Arlinda asked for *help* to invest in infrastructure and other work materials (such as a stove, pans, a cart to sell food), to make repairs at home (like the refrigerator and micro-wave),

<sup>8</sup> There was a sharp reduction in the value of the emergency assistance in 2021. For those who live alone, the payment is R\$150,00. Families with more than one person where a woman is not the leading earner get payments of R\$250,00. Finally, the families led by women receive R\$375,00. Source: <https://economia.uol.com.br/noticias/redacao/2021/03/18/bolsonaro-auxilio-emergencial-2021.htm>.

or even to buy furniture or appliances, during the pandemic she has *needed help* to buy food, pay bills and have medical exams. The *help* has been, each day, more focused on maintaining the so-called basic needs of life. The issue that I would like to emphasize is that much of this *help* is in the form of loans, which increased the level of family debt. In the text *Surviving debt, survival debt in times of lockdown*, Guérin et al debate the growth of debt related to the social reproduction of life in rural India during the pandemic. As much as they present data from a context very different from that which I discuss in this article, some similarities can be found concerning social factors that lead families to contract this “survival debt”:

Low and irregular real incomes are one such factor, given the persistence of informal and vulnerable employment (ILO 2018). Expenses are meanwhile increasing. Self-consumption, long a pillar of food security for rural families, has declined sharply over the last decades. Access to basic services such as water, electricity, housing and healthcare are becoming increasingly commodified (Guérin et al., 2020: 3).

Although this section also addresses debts and loans, I chose to use the term *help* because this is how Arlinda refers to these relations. The terms *give and borrow* are often shifted, in her statements, from the abstract meanings that are commonly attributed to them. At times, money received that does not need to be paid back, as when her daughter transfers money to Arlinda, is framed by the verb *loan* (*my daughter loaned me R\$100,00*). This can be related to feelings such as shame or to other elements that permeate family relations, to the degree that debts and donations are social relations, which can be based on solidarity, and on asymmetries and hierarchies (Ibid: 4). In any case, donations and loans, even when they are shifted from their abstract meanings, are usually classified by Arlinda as forms of *help*, even more so during the pandemic, when she felt *needy (necessitada)*. To visualize the network of *help* that has sustained Arlinda’s daily life during the pandemic, I constructed the chart below, which registers flows of money and items, as well as people, who participate in these various forms of loans and donations.

**Chart 1:** Arlinda’s help network

Month/year	Person/institution	Form of help	Purpose
Sept/20	Aunt	R\$ 100,00 loan	Supermarket
Sept/20	Milu (neighbor)	Bought laundry detergent, bread and paid bus fare to church	Supermarket and transportation
Sept/20	Daughter	Loaned me the Food Card she earns at work	Supermarket
Sept/20	Public school	Gave me a food package	Food
Sept/20	Maria (neighbor)	Used her credit card for me (R\$ 300,00)	Supermarket
Sept/20	Milu (neighbor)	Loaned me a nebulizer	Health
Oct/20	Maria (neighbor)	Used her credit card for me	Supermarket
Oct/20	Researcher	Money you gave me (R\$ 550,00)	Supermarket and paying bills
Oct/20	Researcher	Money you gave me (R\$ 550,00)	Supermarket and paying bills
Nov/20	Daughter	R\$ 100,00 loan	Paying debts
Nov/20	Daughter	Loaned me the Food Card she earns at work	Supermarket
Nov/20	Daughter	Gave me R\$ 100,00	Paying debts
Nov/20	Researcher	Money you gave me (R\$ 300,00)	Paying debts and bills
Nov/20	Public school	Gave me a food package	Food
Dec/20	Daughter	Paid my electrical and gas bills	Paying bills
Dec/20	Daughter	Paid an installment for the cart [equipment for work] to the neighbor	Purchase work equipment
Dec/20	Aunt	R\$ 100,00 loan to pay for the cart	Purchase work equipment

Jan/21	daughter	<i>Paid my electrical and gas bills (R\$ 200,00)</i>	Paying bills
Feb/21	Gaúcho (neighbor considered a cousin)	<i>Bought the meat so I could begin to sell hot meals (R\$ 300,00)</i>	Return to work
Feb/21	Maria (neighbor)	<i>Used her credit card for me (R\$ 522,00)</i>	Purchasing pans and other materials to sell hot meals
Mar/21	Andrea (neighbor)	<i>Purchased the food containers on loan (R\$ 50,00)</i>	Sale of hot meals

I have participated in Arlinda’s *help* network for some time. This relationship began when we were neighbors at the time that I lived in the condominium to conduct field research for my master’s degree. With the exception of the researcher, who is no longer a neighbor, her family members and neighbors participate in her network of *help*. They are certainly ties of a distinct nature that, in turn, generate different forms of *help*, in the terms of exchange and the returns expected. While her daughter does not expect to be paid back, Maria (a neighbor) counts on being paid back so she can pay her credit card bill, whose due dates always scare Arlinda. The neighborly relations, by representing much more than a simple geographic proximity, produce forms of “interpersonal participation” (Pina-Cabral and Godói, 2014), and are anchored in the fact that the families share needs (Márquez 2014: 55). Maria is one of the main characters in this *help* network. In November, she lost her job, an event that directly affected Arlinda’s home.

*Maria lost her job, the old man who she cared for died, she was dismissed and there is nothing else...she said that the credit card is her daughter’s, since she is no longer working, the daughter took her card. She always helped me, if I need, she goes to the market, pays the bills, she trusts me.*

*Trust* is a central value in the economic exchanges and transactions, even those that can appear to be impersonal, such as banking transactions. As Hart affirms: “the idea that transactions involving money are essentially amoral comes from their objective form, but until recently, even in societies using impersonal money, the bulk of economic life was carried out by people who knew each other and could discriminate between individuals on that basis” (Hart, 2007: 13). In the case of Arlinda’s *help* network, *trust* is what allows Maria to continue to *help* Arlinda to maintain life. A non-payment of a loan, on the other hand, can break the *trust* of a relationship and generate *shame*. In February of this year (2021) Arlinda told me that she was not able to pay for the containers for the *hot meals* that she *pegou no fiado* [bought on credit] from one of her neighbors. This caused Arlinda enormous *shame* and she avoided passing by her neighbor’s house, because she gave her a bad look. In addition to the moral values involved in the field of possibilities of maintaining life, it was clear how the life of people who participate in a *help* network intersect to the point that material transformations that occur in one home produce strong impacts in other homes<sup>9</sup>. *Help* is a component of economic transactions and can be used as currency in daily life.

This *help* network, which is permeated by moral and monetary values, needs and obligations, is forged by ties of kinship and neighborhood, and is usually triggered at times when *fear and desperation* (which have been nearly constant recently) affect Arlinda. The fear of having the electricity cut approaches each time Arlinda sees from the window the *men from Light* [the electric company], cutting other people’s electricity<sup>10</sup>.

9 The concept that best expresses what I am affirming about the interlinking of homes and lives is that of the “configuration of homes” as used by Marcelin (1999) and Motta (2014). To understand that homes are never isolated from what happens in the street and in other homes helps to deconstruct the public-private dichotomy, a moral foundation of capitalism (Hart, 2007).

10 At the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic the National Electrical Energy Agency (ANEEL) determined that cutoffs of electrical supply be suspended for three months for low-income families in debt. The period of the measure was not sufficient, given that many families continued to have difficulty paying the electrical bill even after the first three months of the pandemic. In March 2021, ANEEL re-issued the measure, to extend it until June 20, 2021.

Despair approached on Christmas Eve when her refrigerator had only rice and beans. Anguish arose in October and November when she was not able to pay the fees related to individual micro-company (MEI)<sup>11</sup>, which makes more difficult her guarantee of a future retirement pension. She felt *shame* for not having paid the debt for the food containers that she *bought on credit*. These are all corporal affects that shape the *difficult situation* in which she lives and that had her turn to her *help* network. Another frequent sensation in her life is the *fear of having a heart attack*, since she has not had the financial means to pay for the exams recommended by the doctor of the family clinic in her neighborhood (the public health clinic).

### “Life isn’t worth anything”

*I am here with my leg very swollen, I live swollen, I cannot step on the ground, I am not a doctor, but I think its thrombosis. I saw that thrombosis goes to the lung and causes a pulmonary embolism, I saw a cardiologist talking on television. I go there [to the clinic] but I am sure that they have no doctors, but I go there. Tomorrow Milu [a neighbor] will go there with me. There are days I can't step on the floor. It's very sad, a poor person doesn't care for themselves not because she doesn't want to, but because she can't. A rich person coughs and goes to the hospital, a poor person only goes when she has pneumonia or worse, the poor person knows there is no care. I go there, but I know there is no care. I have a neighbor who is 78 years old, her husband needs an expensive exam, she tried to do it, but couldn't, they told her to go to SISREG [Health Regulation National System], a person could die waiting, the person dies, because they couldn't do the exam, that's how the country is. I know that I will go there for nothing, I will even have to drag my leg. And you know what's worse? They send a nurse and a student to see you, my neighbor got a prescription from a nurse to get medicine from the pharmacy, because there was none at the clinic, but the prescription was made by the nurse, and the pharmacist did not want to give her the medicine, because a doctor has to write the prescription. Then they have a nurse attend to us. Sincerely, I am afraid to die when I go there, because who knows, they give me one of those injections that causes a problem....this clinic is falling apart.*

The long quote transcribed above is only a portion of the narratives of health and illness that Arlinda produced during the study. In the book *Affliction: health, disease and poverty* (2015), when speaking of the narrative of disease (a gender constructed by medical anthropology that is based on the patients' experience of their infirmities), Veena Das sought to understand disease not as a dramatic and disruptive instance in life, but as part of the scenes of daily life, to the degree to which they are associated with family relations, small domestic decisions, and family expenses and income. During the pandemic, narratives about health and disease can say much about the articulation between the ordinary aspects of life and the extraordinary event of Covid-19, which transformed the forms of care and the opportunities for access to public health infrastructure. To enter this narrative genre can help understand what I called in the introduction the overlapping of inequalities, demonstrating that to speak of health and disease implies reflections on a series of issues, which go beyond symptoms, diagnoses and cures (used as biomedical terms).

Arlinda lives with three chronic diseases: high-blood pressure, a heart murmur and asthmatic bronchitis. In early 2020, she said that the *blood pressure medicine* began to make her feel bad. *I became short of breath, I felt my throat, I felt my chest tighten*. Disturbed and concerned, she tried to go to the public family clinic in the neighborhood to change the medication, but was not able to, since all the appointments were suspended due to the pandemic. Only people suspected of having Covid-19 were attended. In addition to Arlinda, other residents of her low-income condominium where she lived said that the doctors barely got close to the patients,

<sup>11</sup> Four years ago Arlinda began to pay the fee for the micro-entrepreneur company [MEI] in the amount of R\$56,00, after the manager of her condominium advised her to stop paying the National Social Security Institute plan each month (INSS) and form a micro-company, which was cheaper and had a guarantee if she got sick.

and shouted at the door to go home. Since her body continued to show signs that it was not healthy, she decided to stop taking the medicine.

In the ten weeks that I issued the questionnaire from this study to Arlinda, in only two did she not report a “worsening of symptoms” related to her chronic corporal conditions. In all the other weeks, *swelling and pain* in the legs were recurrent, in addition to times when she felt a *lack of air*.

In September, she was finally able to be attended at the family clinic, given that the consultations began to return to normal in the second semester of the year, which may indicate that this was a period between the so-called waves of Covid-19. Although she later complained considerably about the service, due to the long wait, Arlinda was able to see the doctor after many months. During her consultation, the doctor suggested that the *swelling and pain* in her legs could be related to her *heart murmur* and emphasized the importance of the medication for hypertension and the need for weekly monitoring of her blood pressure. The doctor could not, however, prescribe just any medication, nor substitute the previous medication for her blood pressure, or for Arlinda’s heart problems, without seeing some exams. The doctor gave Arlinda a series of requests for medical exams, including an electrocardiogram, an echocardiogram and a series of hormonal exams that required a blood test. The big problem is that most of these exams had to be done in private laboratories, because they are not offered by the public healthcare system.

That week, noting Arlinda’s concern with her health and with the expenses she would have from the exams, I called some labs to see the costs. Arlinda also went to a laboratory in her neighborhood to see the prices. The cost of all the exams was about R\$450,00, which scared Arlinda. She did not have money and she could not ask her neighbor who had *used her credit card* to help Arlinda, since she had not paid the previous debts. She wound up not doing the exams. *What’s worse there is no use going back to the clinic, because the doctor said that she could not give me medicine without seeing these exams.*

In October and November she spoke of *tingling in her arm and piercing sharp pains in her chest*. This combined with a strong *fear of a heart attack*. In October she fainted while she was working in the street giving out flyers for candidates during the election period. She was *helped* by people walking in the street and went to the clinic, where she discovered that her blood pressure had reached 23 by 18. The doctor reinforced the need to do the exams, and told her to go to the clinic three times a week to measure her pressure to monitor its variations, since it is precisely oscillations in pressure that lead to events like a heart attack. A few weeks later, when I asked if she was going to the clinic to check her blood pressure, she told me: *of course not, that clinic is torture, I get hungry there, I arrive at 8 in the morning and I am only attended at noon, that is when they have a doctor and they don’t have a nurse attending. I have to have this device [to measure blood pressure] at home*. In many of our interviews, I could note countless criticisms made by Arlinda towards the public family clinic in her neighborhood. She and other residents usually avoided the space, and only go in great need. In addition to the lack of doctors, many complain that *they solve everything by giving out dipirona*. I even heard, that the pharmacy at the clinic was so undersupplied in that period, that at times they did not even have dipyrone<sup>12</sup>. There are many families in the condominium who avoid the clinic and turn to self-medication, home remedies, private institutions, health plans and even politicians related to local powers, like the militia, to obtain appointments and opportunities to have surgery or medical exams.

In December, based on an agreement with one of her neighbors, Arlinda began efforts to buy a cart to return to selling food in the street. She first gave R\$300,00 to her neighbor, from whom she only got the cart after paying the remaining R\$400,00. The deadline agreed to for the payment of this amount was set for the end of January. The efforts to go back to selling in the street made the possibility of doing the exams even more remote.

12 Although she stopped taking the blood pressure medicine because she felt so bad, I noted that the absence of medication in the pharmacy at the clinic in early 2020 was another factor that influenced Arlinda to take this decision. The absence of doctors and medicine and the delays and lack of quality service are related to the advance in the crisis in public healthcare in Rio de Janeiro which has been increasingly aggravated since 2015. See Freire, 2019.



Her *priority* became the *cart*, and not health. While she sought the money to pay off the neighbor, Arlinda began to sell *quentinhas* [hot food] on the beach. She went to the beach nearly every day at 10 in the morning, after cooking and wrapping the *quentinhas* in the four hours before leaving. On the beach she walked in the sand hawking the food for many hours until she returned home about 4 pm. *The swelling* and the *pain* in her legs still bothered her a lot, *but I think it's better than staying home and earning nothing, that's why I try not to care about my leg*. To handle the pain, she often takes *Dorflex*, a muscle relaxant available without prescription that allows her to maintain her routine. According to Veena Das, the temporalities of the narratives and the practices of healthcare and disease in families with low monetary income are intimately linked to the precariousness of work and to the irregular flows of money in domestic units (2017: 322).

At the intersection between the temporalities of work, the monetary flows and the therapeutic practices of the local practitioners specific modes of dealing with the infirmity are created that emphasize immediacy and the short term more than adequate diagnosis and care (Das, 2017: 323).

Self-medication and the priority given to the *cart* in detriment to the realization of the exams point to the intersection between work, monetary flows and small decisions about health and disease. Considering the health of informal workers implies adopting a global perspective about inequalities. Precarious access to healthcare and inequities of work and income intersect with other forms of inequality, such as nutritional and food conditions. The absence of meat, fruit, vegetables, and greens is evident when comparing the food conditions of Arlinda's family before and during the pandemic. When I proposed this comparison during an interview she said:

[Our eating habits] *certainly changed a lot, I was selling my things, I worked, I bought what I wanted to eat. There is this difference. I stopped buying meat, vegetables, greens, fruits. I love fruits. And vegetables are good for you, they help the blood pressure, cholesterol, everything. You eat more pasta, and less fruits and vegetables, it only gets worse. When there is chicken, I eat chicken, when there isn't, we eat sausage, if not, rice and beans.*

According to the Brazilian Network of Research in Food Sovereignty and Security, hunger, a structural problem in Brazil, was aggravated in the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, reaching the level of 19.1 million people. The same study reported that 117 million people in Brazil live in a situation of food insecurity<sup>13</sup>. The relations between income and access to food are close and direct. The reductions and later cutoffs of the emergency assistance payments impact the opportunities of low income families to access a complete diet. Women heads of families are the group most affected by hunger and food insecurity, because they have low income and are those most responsible for care networks. This often makes inviable opportunities to work in the street, for women with children or people with disabilities. If work and income determine the nutritional conditions of Brazilian families, the situation of food insecurity is linked with the healthcare conditions of the most vulnerable populations.

The narratives about health and disease constitute a form of knowledge about daily life (Hydén, 1997: 52). It is necessary to pay attention to them, to the degree that they articulate events related to disease (pain, crises, etc.) to other events that concern the social conditions of life (healthcare crisis, suspension of care, lack of doctors and medicine) (Ibid: 53). The narratives about health and disease contextualize the individual trajectories in broader frameworks. They are also forms of expressing suffering (Kleiman, 1988). Not suffering understood in an individual dimension, but suffering that emerges from the social conditions in which life is inscribed. To speak with Arlinda about her healthcare and her chronic corporal conditions reveals important aspects, not only about symptoms and diagnoses, but also about the economy of her home, the "institutional

<sup>13</sup> Source: <https://www.redebrasilatual.com.br/cidadania/2021/04/pessoas-com-fome-19-milhoes-inseguranca-alimentar-dispara-no-brasil/>

negligence” (Das 2015) to which the urban poor are submitted and in the final instance, about how life is (de)valued. The politics of valuing and devaluing life (Fassin, 2006; Butler, 2018) are carefully developed by Arlinda through her daily experience

*I was shocked when I saw people dying [from Covid]. The man inside his car for a week waiting for an open [bed], of course he died, when he got the opening, he had died. That is, life has no value. I can't get this virus, if I do I'm destroyed. They dismantled the field hospitals, now they are racing to mount them again. Why did they take them down if the disease didn't go away? And now what will they do? Will more die than at the beginning? [referring to the increase in the number of deaths in early 2021].*

If her experiences and formulations express fears and anguish, they also speak of *hope* and conviction about the value that life can have.

### Polysemes of hope

Is it possible to live a good life in a bad life? Inspired by Adorno, Butler (2018) presents this question in the book *Corpos em aliança e a política das ruas: notas para uma teoria performativa de assembleia* (Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly). This question is related, in turn, with another question also present in the book: how can someone lead a life if not all the aspects that conform to life can be conducted by the particular subjects? (Butler, 2018: 216). Observing efforts people make to live a *better life*, a *decent life* or a *good life*, in addition to allow reporting about the moralities involved in daily life, can also reveal what people understand life to be. For Butler, the concepts about what is life are directly related to what she calls the “social configuration of life”. If one of the objectives of this text is to explore the intersection between how Arlinda conducts her life and the “social configuration of life”, which addresses the countless forms of inequalities mentioned, I believe that to analyze how it elaborates the *hope* for a *better life*, or of a *change of life*, can contribute to the understanding of how people incessantly seek to make life at least “viable”, in Butler’s terms, in conditions of exacerbated precariousness. As will be seen, the *hope* nurtured by Arlinda upon leaving a *difficult situation* in which she lives is always accompanied by a critical elaboration about the policies that devalue life.

It is interesting to think of the forms of *hope*, understood as a modality of engagement with the world and production of knowledge (Miyazaki, 2004), embedded in the forms of orientation towards the future, expressed by Arlinda in our conversations and interviews. Images of the future, which sustain life in the present, compose the space-time of the imaginary (Crapanzano, 2005: 354), which “engrave the real on the reality”, which in turn stimulates production of the imaginary (Ibid: 365)<sup>14</sup>. Imaginative horizons are not only limited to psychological capacities or aesthetic conventions, but are also defined by socio-economic, political, and cultural arrangements (Ibid: 369). In this sense, objects of *hope* vary according to historic time (Burke, 2012). There is no way to separate the precarious conditions of *hope*, given that, often, and this became evident in Arlinda’s case, *fear* and *anguish*, exacerbated during the pandemic, are the affects that produce the need for *hope*. In most cases, *hope* towards the future appears in the conversations along with narratives of *survival*, marked by *desperation* and by the difficulty in having an expectation of changing the *difficult situation*.

The term *survival* appeared at times during the study. Often, at the beginning of the conversations when I would ask Arlinda “how are you?”, her response was; *I am surviving*. Once, when we spoke about romantic relationships and affective life, when telling me that she had no interest in finding a boyfriend, she said: *it's because my priority is to survive and finish caring for my sons*. The term *survive* does not appear in Arlinda’s statements as a way of life marked by scarcity and lacking creative engagement with the world, as is commonly

<sup>14</sup> Crapanzano makes a criticism of an empiricism that ignores the dimension of the imaginary, understood as a constitutive part of all experience, perception and thinking (2005: 367).

thought about this category. To the contrary, *survival* here expresses the indestructibility of experience, which is composed and recomposed in narratives that speak about her own precariousness (Didi-Huberman, 2011)<sup>15</sup>. For Derrida, the word *survive*, as a supplement of life and death (Facina, Silva and Lopes, 2019), relates to a form of vision. The *sobrevida* [Portuguese word that refers to the time between a diagnosis with a lethal disease and death] also means to say a form of *sobre-ver* [seeing above], to see beyond the visible (Derrida, 1979: 137). And it is precisely through the imaginary that one can see-beyond, while experience is expressed in the persistence of the images of the future, despite and through its precariousness. Arlinda usually sees beyond life lived in the present in various ways. In most cases, her faith in God functions as a basis for *hope* in a future that is different than what is lived in the present. Although God is present in most of her formulations about the future, I note that the forms of *hope* navigate in a gradient that varies – in my terms – from an abstract pole (more dependent on faith in God) to another that is more concrete (related to work, to monetary flows and the improvement of living conditions). In a conversation in early 2021, I indicated that I was pessimistic about the direction of the current health crisis, saying that “I think that this year [2021] will be like last year. I am pessimistic”. To which she responded:

*No! We must think that God will change the direction of history. I have hope that things will get better. After having this vaccine, the good sales will return, because now the large companies are afraid to hire people. You walk in the streets, they're all empty, the shops are empty, empty streets, why is that. They don't want to hire. But I have hope that God will change things. It's not by the hand of man, it's by the hand of God.*

The meanings of *hope* are accompanied by critical analyses that Arlinda makes about the government, social isolation, and delays in the vaccination process, and in relation to her own daily life and the possibilities for change in the *difficult situation*. Once, when we spoke about the *cart* in which she was investing for her work, she said:

*When I have a cart I will put on four masks, a visor and I will go to work. I wanted to stay home, but I can't. The problem is that I can't stay at home anymore, my situation is so precarious. There's no way, it's very bad to need things now because nothing is coming in. Everyone is like that here [in the condominium] the people are dying from heart problems, but not from Covid. It's because no one sees a way out, there is no employment, they die on line at the hospital, their son asks for things, they can't give them. I have to go back to work. When I get the cart, I will have to have the money to buy the material, but I will. God will bless us. If you kill hope, the world is over. God will bless, I am sure, when I put my hand on my cart I will gain strength. Then I will be ready, now I have to, I have to get to work. I think of this all day. I have a lot of hope, many ideas, I know everything that I am going to sell. I don't have money, but I have ideas. I wanted to begin today!*

If in the first way that *hope* is presented her projection for the future is based on the expectation that *God will change the course of history*, in the second *hope* materializes in the monetary gains that the *cart* could provide, so that she no longer *needs things*. In any case, in both senses of *hope* uncertainty is presented as a key element that permeates life. *Hope*, as a social and cognitive resource that makes contingency understandable, allows people to manage uncertainty (Visacovsky, 2019: 8). As Silva and Alencar affirm, *hope* is a semio-linguistic resource that allows people to oppose violence through the construction of a perspective of *survival* (2018: 368). In the words of Bloch, coined through his Aristotelian concept of matter as that which involves both that which exists and that which is possible, *hope* is the denial of indigence and privation (2005: 28). For Arlinda, to keep *hope* alive means to sustain life itself.

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<sup>15</sup> When discussing Benjamin's idea of the exhaustion of experience in contemporary life, Didi-Huberman affirms that even when reduced to survival and the furtiveness of simple flashes of light in the night, experience is indestructible (2011: 78).

If one inhabits life through language (Das, 2007), the attention given to categories that produce the contours of a possible life become fundamental. *Hope*, as affect<sup>16</sup> and category of experience, is responsible for the projection of images of the future that allow Arlinda to continue to inhabit the world. The relations between *world* and *hope*, indicated by the phrase *if you kill hope, the world is over* (*se matar a esperança, o mundo acaba*), indicates the essential role that it has in maintaining the shapes of the particular world of subjects, in the terms of Veena Das (2007)<sup>17</sup>. The possibility of losing a world – “worldlessness”, in the terms of Pina-Cabral (2018) – are related to the “failure of the public world”. This occurs when the expectations of the subjects in relation to the conduct of their lives no longer corresponds to what is presented in public life. The alienation of a world, or the difference between the world of experience and the public world, are based on a strong sense of uncertainty (Ibid: 78). The absence of a correspondence between world and experience, and in turn, a sense of uncertainty, can become aggravated in times of crisis, as in the case in the research of Pina-Cabral in the context of austerity policies in Europe. In the case examined here it is in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is exactly when the “world fails” in this author’s terms, that *hope* appears as an affect that can allow life to continue its course. The *hope* of living a good life is directly related to unemployment, the vaccine, the healthcare crisis, that is to the politics of valuing and devaluing life. Based on faith in God, or on work opportunities, *hope* is found in the possibility that life has some value.

## Final Considerations

Through an accelerated induction of the precariousness of life (Butler, 2018), neoliberalism affects the ability of people to have *hope* (Miyazaki, 2004). The unequal distribution of *hope* is a constitutive part of the politics of valuing and devaluing life that makes the maintenance of daily life a great effort for many populations. Indetermination, a condition of possibility for the work of *hope* (Miyazaki, 2004: 27) is aggravated when the extraordinary events of crisis come to inhabit life. How do people manage the uncertainty of daily life (Visacovsky, 2019)? How are strategies developed, resources triggered and practices of *survival* developed when the sanitary crisis shapes life? What do people do to dream when they must respond to the urgent needs of the present? The description of Arlinda’s daily life in the pandemic sought to be guided by these questions.

The investigation of and waiting for “social benefits”, the *help* network, the small decisions about health and disease, as well as the criticism of the policy of devaluing life and the forms of *hope* are ways to handle uncertainty. If the inequalities of work and income, infrastructure and healthcare are sharper during the pandemic, making life even worse, the investigation of the forms of accessing the state, the work of collaboration, the critical development of forms of steering and producing a “bad life”, as well as the continuous effort to keep alive *hope* of a more decent future, are part of an ethical-political work that aims to *change* life. Life, which is not given or homogenous, is elaborated in various ways by narratives and practices, to the degree to which Arlinda is engaged with the world and produces knowledge about daily life.

Care for oneself, however, does not only depend on how an individual conducts one’s life. It is subject to the mechanisms for unequal valuing of life, to the degree to which people are exposed to the other (and to being governed by the other) and are vulnerable to socioeconomic and political arrangements. *To live without benefits* implies living life anchored in a network of *help*. The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the world were not homogeneous, given that markers of differences such as gender and social class produce bodies marked by precariousness (Pierobon, 2018). In addition to being responsible for her own body,

<sup>16</sup> I work here with the definition of affect formulated by Spinoza (2007), according to which an affect is an affection felt in the body that at any time can be strengthened or reduced by ideas that carry these affections. In Spinoza mind and body are not separate.

<sup>17</sup> Upon studying experiences of violence with Indian women, Das asks: how does one inhabit a world? How does one lose a world? The idea is to understand how the memory of violence, upon penetrating daily life, is capable of annihilating the particular worlds of subjects. How do I make a world my own? With this question, Vas calls attention to how, through daily experience, subjects elaborate and inhabit life.

as a woman, mother, head of family, Arlinda is responsible for the bodies of her sons and for managing the home. Maintaining a home, with all the challenges and concerns that this involves, was even more difficult during the pandemic. In addition to depending on “benefits” that she can obtain from the state, maintaining the home is an effort that goes beyond and affects other homes (Araújo Silva, 2017; Marcelin, 1999; Motta, 2014). It was also seen that the narratives of health and illness directly involve the work of keeping a home, from the time when the unequal access to healthcare causes new expenses to be considered in the daily handling of money.

Keeping *hope* alive, which is arduous work that is redirected in times of crisis, allows life to follow its course. The *fear*, *anguish* and tensions related to precarious life are affects that require a constant anticipation of the future and permanent attention to the forms of handling uncertainty. If conducting daily life is inserted in the “social configuration of life”, then the *hope* that life comes to be worth something is subjacent to the expectation of changing the *difficult situation*.

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# “Hunger doesn’t wait”: the struggle of women in the peripheries of São Paulo during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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## **Abstract**

This article examines solidarity networks that have been organized during the Covid-19 pandemic in the peripheries of the city of São Paulo to respond to the overlapping of economic and sanitary crises, which particularly affect families in precarious living conditions. The objective is to argue that these articulations reveal a context marked by the state’s abandonment of its responsibilities to guarantee social rights, and by resistances and struggles that articulate race, gender, class and territory, which have grown in the past decade in the peripheries. Finally, it emphasizes the fundamental role of women who construct these networks through their daily experiences providing care. Care is not understood here as being restricted to the domestic dimension, but as a *gendered* practice that produces relations and struggles.

**Keywords:** Peripheries, Covid-19 Pandemic, Social movements, Care, Social Markers of Difference.



# “A fome não espera: a luta de mulheres nas periferias de São Paulo durante a Pandemia Covid-19

## Resumo

Este artigo examina redes de solidariedade que tem sido organizadas durante a Pandemia Covid-19 nas periferias da cidade de São Paulo para responder às sobreposição de crises, econômica e sanitária, que afeta, particularmente, famílias em condições precárias de vida. O objetivo é argumentar que estas articulações revelam um contexto marcado pelo abandono do Estado de suas responsabilidades para garantir direitos sociais, e pelas resistências e lutas que articulam raça, gênero, classe e território, que tem crescido na última década nas periferias. Por fim, enfatiza o fundamental papel das mulheres que produzem essas redes a partir de suas experiências cotidianas marcadas pelo cuidado. Cuidado não é entendido aqui como restrito à dimensão doméstica, mas sim como prática *generificada* que produz relações e lutas.

**Palavras-chave:** Periferias, Pandemia Covid-19, Movimentos sociais, Cuidado, Marcadores sociais da Diferença.

# “Hunger doesn’t wait”: the struggle of women in the peripheries of São Paulo during the Covid-19 Pandemic<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

I’m sorry, I just heard your audio message. We are delivering the food package. It’s very sad to hear, you can’t imagine, there’s so much suffering! We are doing very little, we have to do more for these people, they are being decimated! Today I saw three families come for the food package, you know? Hunger doesn’t wait! We make deliveries and the families appreciate it...there are people from Embu, from I don’t know where, Taboão, looking for the food basket... They cry when they get it! We’re coming, ok?” (Railda, social educator<sup>2</sup>)

Since the Covid-19 pandemic hit São Paulo followed by the confusing and contradictory government measures to contain it, virtual conversations like this have become common among people who live in the peripheries of the city, mainly those with some community engagement. Avalanches of messages with requests for help, especially for money, and expressions of collective concerns and proposals to deal with the living conditions that have become even more precarious, have been flooding various WhatsApp groups that link networks of activists in these territories. The devastating potential of the disease in regions with scarce urban infrastructure and social policies was already known and feared, (homes with many residents, interruptions in water supply, insufficient healthcare services, lack of personal hygiene and cleaning products, etc.). For this reason, some of these places were able, from the beginning of the pandemic and through extreme efforts, to prepare in advance and collectively try to control it, as was the case of the neighborhood of Paraisópolis, which received considerable attention in the media<sup>3</sup> at the beginning of the crisis. However, even before contamination, other effects of the pandemic were felt. Overnight, a large number of people lost their jobs or were not able to work. To have nothing to eat, a ghost that haunts the memory of families who lived in the peripheries of the city during the difficult 1980s and 1990s, returned as a severe and generalized reality. In this situation, in which poverty, racism and state violence intersect, residents of the peripheries have organized since the first months of the pandemic to face the hunger in a context in which the state has taken an increasingly reduced role for something that it never completely accepted as its responsibility, which is the guarantee of basic social rights to a portion of the population. This responsibility is increasingly delegated to families and other non-state spheres. My intention in this article is to conduct a preliminary reflection on how these mobilizations reveal forms of resistance that have been reconfigured in the peripheries of the city of São Paulo in the past decade and that articulate in their struggles agendas related to race, gender, class and territory in which women assume a fundamental role.

<sup>1</sup> This study was conducted with support from the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior – Brasil (CAPES) – Código de Financiamento 001

<sup>2</sup> Maria Railda Silva is founder of Amparar [Support] – the Association of Friends and Families of Inmates and she choose to have her real name used here. She affirmed that this is a political choice to give up her privacy to give visibility to her actions and her institution. The other women who appear in the text have had their names changed to maintain their privacy.

<sup>3</sup> About community organization to face the pandemic in the favela of Paraisópolis, see [https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2020/09/28/eps/1601301353\\_524719.html](https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2020/09/28/eps/1601301353_524719.html) (accessed on 10.10.2020)

This text is linked to my doctoral research, still in progress, which investigates the effects of the return of state violence in the daily lives of families who live in the poorest territories of the city. Here, I reflect on how the pandemic has overlapped this violence and intensified the economic crisis that was triggered a few years ago in the country. In my work, I have sought to demonstrate how women are affected specifically by state violence. While men, mainly young and black men, are the direct targets of most cases of police violence, incarceration and homicides, women suffer the loss and assume the task of care which expands in these contexts. It is women who support the emotional and financial burdens generated by death and prison (Pierobon, 2018; Birman, Pierobon, 2021). It is women who organize themselves in help networks, assuming the tasks of care abandoned by the state (Brown, 2019; Han, 2012). With the pandemic, care became too exposed to be disregarded.

Railda and other women who I present in this text are residents of peripheral regions of São Paulo, the wealthiest and most populated city in the country. Even before the healthcare crisis, they already acted in, or were relatively close to, groups and networks organized around struggles such as confronting mass incarceration and genocide of the poor, black and peripheral population; or to peripheral feminist groups; or collectives with other agendas that interlink race, class, sexuality, gender and territory. These struggles have intensified the debate about race relations in the peripheries, particularly articulating gender and sexuality, seeking to produce an “us” (Moutinho, 2014) through a “collective internalized morality of the individual that recognizes the other as similar” (Lima, 2019: 7). Some studies have demonstrated the increase in the number of collectives involved with these agendas in the peripheries of the city, mainly in the past decade (D’Andrea, 2013; Moutinho, Alves, Carmo, 2016; Carmo, 2016; Klein, Carmo, Tavares, 2020; Alegria, Bulgarelli, Pinheiro-Machado, 2020). The voices that I raise in this article are those of some women, among so many others that I know from these networks, who undertake essential actions to support families in situations of vulnerability during the pandemic, assuming greater responsibilities and spending more time to care for people, thus redirecting their energies, which had been dedicated to community activism, to respond to urgent needs: for foods, cooking gas, medicine, cleaning and personal hygiene products, money for rent, etc.

This text was constructed through my participation in these networks, and is derived not only from my research, but also from my engagement as an activist for some ten years in collectives in the southern zone of São Paulo. I use virtual conversations that I had with some of these women, messages from WhatsApp groups in which I participate and online interviews that I conducted<sup>4</sup>.

I emphasize that this article was written amid chaos and uncertainty: are we experiencing the second or third wave of contaminations? Will we have vaccines for the entire population in 2021? How many variants of the virus are circulating in the country? How long will the economic crisis last? Should we leave home or not? Without answers, each day we lament the haunting increase in deaths. Increasing rates of contamination and fatal victims had become normalized<sup>5</sup> and a decline in the rates was no longer commemorated since we never know if a new wave will hit. At the time of my last review of this article, Brazil had exceeded 580 thousand deaths<sup>6</sup>.

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4 All of the statements and messages from WhatsApp presented here were authorized by the senders.

5 The first months of 2021 had rates of contamination nearly two times higher than the peak of the pandemic in July 2020. April 2021 was the most lethal month of the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil until now.

<https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/equilibriosaude/2021/04/abril-foi-o-mes-mais-letal-da-pandemia-de-covid-no-brasil-com-mais-de-82-mil-mortes.shtml> (accessed 9 May 2021).

6 This was the data from 31.08.2021. It is important to emphasize that on this date there was a sharp drop in mortality with a daily average of 670 deaths <https://g1.globo.com/bemestar/coronavirus/noticia/2021/08/30/brasil-tem-media-movel-de-671-vitimas-diaras-de-covid-total-se-aproxima-de-580-mil-ghml>. It is important to highlight the advance of the vaccine which until this date has reached 60% of the population with at least one dose <https://especiais.g1.globo.com/bemestar/vacina/2021/mapa-brasil-vacina-covid/>. (Accessed on 31 August 2021).

It is unlikely that anyone in the country did not lose at least one acquaintance. And over the bodies of Covid-19 victims, men have engaged in political disputes over vaccines, ministerial positions, and elections. Four ministers of health rotated through office in the year of the greatest healthcare crisis in the history of Brazil. Irresponsible declarations from the president continue to resonate in our already tired ears: “A little flu”, “We’ll all die one day”, “There are still idiots who stay home”, “I’m not a gravedigger”, “A country of pansies”. On the other hand, the population has returned to the streets, if there was a day during the pandemic that in fact it was not out in the streets, whether because of confusion about the ambiguous guidance about social isolation, or because they find themselves squeezed between death by Covid or death by hunger. Unfortunately, we are still very far from the end of this affliction.

The pandemic highlighted the contemporary faces of reproduction of inequality and amplified its effects. In daily life it is possible to observe this process incarnated in bodies, relations and in forms of agency and resistance. More than reaching any conclusion, I intend here to give visibility to the chaos, wounds, and possibilities. I do this by dialoging with some reflections produced in an urgent and anguished rhythm by researchers who risk reflecting on these tragic times. I also reflect along with women who are responsible for their homes, who confront the penitentiary system to care for jailed relatives, who process their mourning in daily life, who cry and have fun in the hope of better days and who weave infinite networks of solidarity and struggle.

### **The unequal administration of precariousness of life in the pandemic**

“When a poor person returns from a trip they bring cheese, whiskey and a memento. The rich bring the coronavirus”. This was one of the *memes* that circulated on social networks soon after the first case of Covid-19 was confirmed in Brazil. The virus reached the country through a 61-year-old white man, a resident of a wealthy neighborhood at the center of São Paulo who had returned from a trip to Italy, which at the time was the epicenter of the disease. He was attended at the Hospital Israelita Albert Einstein, a private institution known as a “rich hospital” by those unlikely to have access to it, precisely because it is one of the most expensive and exclusive in the city<sup>7</sup>. The mocking and vengeful tone of the joke were an early indication of how the pandemic will be experienced and processed here, exposing and deepening structures of suffering, injustice and inequality (Segata, 2020). We quickly find that the idea that was broadly promoted that the virus does not know social frontiers is not quite true.

In early March 2020, our perception of the pandemic was still quite diffuse. The cinematographic images presented in newspapers - babies in isolation bubbles accompanied by healthcare professionals with apparel that appeared like that used in nuclear accidents, or bodies of people who died in their homes in Italy due to the collapse of the healthcare system - seemed to be a science fiction film, provoking perplexity and indifference while Brazil was enjoying Carnival. Nevertheless, it did not take long for the health crisis to reach Brazil. Here, it also seemed, and continues to appear, like fiction, but with a dystopic and gloomy script. There has been widespread denial of the gravity of the disease and a denial of science<sup>8</sup>; stories of corruption in the purchase of vaccines<sup>9</sup> and in the administration of public funds for fighting the disease<sup>10</sup> are abundant in the media,

7 <https://noticias.r7.com/saude/primeiro-caso-confirmado-de-covid-19-no-brasil-completa-seis-meses-26082020> (accessed on 9 February 2021).

8 For more information about denialism in Brazil, see <https://www.unicamp.br/unicamp/noticias/2021/04/14/negacionismo-na-pandemia-virulencia-da-ignorancia>; <https://www.redebrasilatual.com.br/saude-e-ciencia/2021/05/negacionismo-omissao-covid-19-leta-brasil-oms/> (31.08.2021).

9 Newspaper articles about vaccine related corruption <https://g1.globo.com/politica/cpi-da-covid/noticia/2021/06/30/vacina-davati-entenda.ghtml> (accessed 31.08.2021); <https://listoe.com.br/novas-denuncias-de-corrupcao-na-compra-de-vacinas-atingem-o-brasil/> (accessed 31.08.2021).

10 Charges of corruption in various Brazilian cities and states <https://www.brasilefato.com.br/2021/06/03/pf-acusa-desvio-de-r-28-mi-de-verbas-para-o-combate-a-pandemia-no-am-e-prende-seis>; <https://g1.globo.com/rj/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/2020/09/29/esquemas-de-corrupcao-desviaram-quase-r-18-bilhao-da-saude-do-rj-desde-2007-valor-supera-gastos-com-a-pandemia.ghtml> (accessed 31.08.2021).

particularly since the installation of a Congressional Investigative Commission, the CPI Covid-19<sup>11</sup>; illegal parties causing agglomerations of thousands of people;<sup>12</sup> and other absurdities of these unimaginable times overlap in the public debate causing indignation and disorientation.

In the city of São Paulo, the first measures of social isolation were adopted by the state government on 17 March 2020 – when the first death was registered in the state – and schools and cultural spaces were closed. The municipal government followed the recommendation, adopting a quarantine the following week, on 24 March, when the state government determined the closing of commerce.

The weeks that followed saw sharp changes in routines. Controversial, and experienced differently in different regions of the city, the social isolation never reached the target rate of 70%. The highest point it reached, according to daily monitoring by the media, was 59%<sup>13</sup>. The daily average in the months of April and May 2020 did not reach 50%. “There is no isolation here”, or “there is no pandemic in the periphery”, are statements that I heard more than once when speaking with people who live in peripheral neighborhoods of the city. Simone, a social worker in a government facility in Capão Redondo told me: “But the thing is that people are being required to keep active. And so its nearly like ‘give yourself up to God!’ For believers, they accept and go out. The buses here, the mayor reduced the fleet. But he did not tell the bosses: ‘Hey boss, reduce your staff!’”, referring to workers who had to continue to circulate through the city.

In December 2020, along the route that I took on an Uber to the home of my mother who also lives in the periphery of the metropolitan region of São Paulo, I spoke with the driver, Marcos. He was a black man, about 30, who lived in the neighborhood of Sapopemba, in the periphery of the eastern zone of the city. We passed in front of a large restaurant close to the highway known as the Marginal Pinheiros, in the Morumbi region, when he commented that at the beginning of the pandemic he had worked there. The inauguration had taken place a bit before social isolation began. He said that the restaurant had more than one hundred employees, with a large flow of takeout orders. He said that right after he was hired, he became ill with a strong cough and fever: “I could barely stand up”. But he did not tell anyone he was sick, for fear of being fired, because his job was still not assured. Marcos said he did not take a Covid-19 test and was very scared that the symptoms would get worse or that he would contaminate other people, but said that his fear of losing his job was much worse. Months later, he was fired along with other people, because the restaurant could not keep the whole staff. Marcos now drives for Uber with a car he rents from his neighbor.

The conversation with Marcos demonstrates how the dilemmas of the pandemic have been faced and supported. In the case of the company where he worked, there was no policy to face the disease, not even a protocol for cases of illness among staff. Without support or guidance, from either governments or companies, the decision to either go to work and risk illness or stay at home and risk hunger posed an individual responsibility whose consequences fall on family members, networks and communities.

11 A Parliamentary Investigative Commission was installed in the Federal Senate in April 2021 to investigate omissions and irregularities of the federal government in actions to confront the pandemic.

12 About clandestine parties during the Covid-19 pandemic: <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/nacional/quase-mil-eventos-clandestinos-sao-fechados-em-sao-paulo-em-meio-a-covid-19/>; <https://veja.abril.com.br/brasil/o-submundo-das-festas-clandestinas-que-se-espalham-pelo-pais-na-pandemia/> (accessed 31.08.2021).

13 For more information about social isolation in the city: <https://g1.globo.com/sp/sao-paulo/noticia/2020/04/13/taxa-de-isolamento-social-durante-quarentena-de-coronavirus-sobe-para-59percent-em-sp-no-domingo-indice-continua-abaixo-dos-70percent.ghtml>; <https://g1.globo.com/sp/sao-paulo/noticia/2020/12/14/cidade-de-sp-registra-pior-taxa-de-isolamento-social-em-um-sabado-desde-o-inicio-da-pandemia.ghtml>; <https://noticias.r7.com/sao-paulo/isolamento-social-na-cidade-de-sp-e-de-48-abaixo-da-meta-do-governo-16062020>; <https://g1.globo.com/sp/sao-paulo/noticia/2021/01/22/com-nova-piora-de-indices-de-saude-governo-de-sp-deve-colocar-estado-na-fase-vermelha-da-quarentena-aos-finais-de-semana.ghtml> (accessed 9 February 2021).

## Peripheries: the invisibility of those who provide care

São Paulo is the wealthiest and most populated city in Brazil. Its more than 12 million inhabitants are distributed unequally through its territory. While the central regions, with robust urban infrastructure and services, are inhabited by wealthy families from the privileged and mostly white social classes, the peripheral regions have insufficient public services in terms of quantity and quality, and mostly black residents (Caldeira, 2000; Kowarick, Marques, 2011; Baeninger, 2011). Although there are “peripheral” neighborhoods in the center of the city (Cracolândia<sup>14</sup>, a few favelas, *cortiços*, etc) and there are a few neighborhoods typical of “centers” in the peripheries (wealthy gated communities), the logic of real estate speculation continues to operate through peripheralization, increasingly valuing regions close to the center and compelling the movement of poor families to the margins of the city.

Since the first weeks of the pandemic, people who live in these more privileged neighborhoods and centers of the city have been able to work from the much-commented home offices, in homes that are a bit larger and with smaller numbers of people, compared to those in the periphery. On the margins, the possibility for social isolation and home work is not the same. Not only because many workers are in essential services and must continue to circulate through the city, but also because in many of these residences the housing conditions are insufficient to guarantee the social distancing indicated by specialists. Images of crowded public transportation have been frequently presented in the media and social networks, denouncing the conditions to which these people are submitted<sup>15</sup>. A lack of water supply and difficulties buying personal hygiene and cleaning products are also frequent complaints.

The peripheries of the city are certainly diverse, and not everyone who lives in them have the same conditions. In recent decades, many studies about the periphery have emphasized the heterogeneity of these territories (Marques, 2010; Magnani, 2012) both in terms of economic conditions, and in the multiplicity of networks, types of circulation, political, religious and cultural engagements. This emphasis is important so that stereotypes about these regions as places of scarcity, violence and political passivity are avoided. I also try to not reiterate the center-periphery dichotomy that depicts opposite poles, in which the center, mirrored in the “backwards” periphery, appears as a dynamic, modern place of citizenship, that is, the “Cidade” [City] (Galicho, 2021) *versus* its distant and violent periphery. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that inequality in São Paulo continues to be reproduced in territorial terms and that the peripheries continue to be places that are less seen in terms of access to rights and more submitted to state violence (Telles, 2013; Feltran, 2011). Thus, it is not a question of reinforcing stigmas that homogenize, essentialize and polarize territories of the city, but to note how the city continues to be reproduced through the logic of peripheralization.

Peripheries are territories, as many studies have shown, which still have very little of the government investments needed to guarantee basic social rights (Feltran, 2011; Carmo, 2016; Fernandes, 2019). The state is present through control and violence, provoking high rates of homicides and prisons, mainly of young black men (Feltran, 2011; Telles, 2013; Farias, 2014). It is not that violence and scarcity are essential characteristics of these regions, a stigma that winds up also falling on the residents. To use the terms of Judith Butler, the precarious conditions are politically induced causing some populations to suffer because of insufficient social and economic networks, and remain “exposed in a differentiated way to the violations, violence and death” (Butler, 2015: 46). These populations, according to Butler, are more vulnerable to disease, poverty, hunger, dislocations and violence with no protection.

<sup>14</sup> Area in the central region of the city of São Paulo occupied mainly by crack users and target of repressive actions by the municipal administration.

<sup>15</sup> Some articles: <https://noticias.r7.com/sao-paulo/fotos/com-mascara-sem-distanciamento-cenas-do-transporte-em-sao-paulo-07062020#!/foto/1>; <https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2020/08/18/covid-mata-mais-entre-trabalhadores-que-dependem-do-transporte-coletivo>; <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/nacional/2021/02/07/sem-home-office-periferia-se-expoe-mais-ao-coronavirus-no-transporte-publico> (accessed 9 February 2021).

Another fundamental aspect to be emphasized, which became even clearer during the pandemic, is the territorial division of the work of care. It is residents of the peripheries who provide care services to central regions. In the seminar *Tramas do Cuidado em Tempos de Pandemia* [Trauma of Care in Times of Pandemic]<sup>16</sup> Nadya Araújo Guimarães called this the territorialization of the work of care. Workers in services that were considered essential during social isolation live in the peripheries, such as nurses, nursing aides, supermarket tellers, ride-sharing app drivers, care providers, etc. In his study *Segregação Racial em São Paulo: Residências, Redes Pessoais e Trajetórias Urbanas de Negros e Brancos no Século XXI* [Racial Segregation in São Paulo: Residences, Personal Networks and Urban Trajectories of Blacks and Whites in the 21st century], Danilo França demonstrates how Whites and Blacks are distributed in the metropolitan region of the city, through social classes. He demonstrates how middle- and lower-class workers, whether they are skilled or not, mainly Blacks, inhabit peripheral regions. That is, while upper- and middle-class whites are concentrated in wealthy and central regions that are racially segregated, in the peripheries there is a greater residential contiguity between whites and blacks of lower and middle classes (França, 2017). Thus, nurses, nursing aides, social workers, cleaning women, care providers, drivers, and other occupations essential for “the city” to continue to function during the pandemic, are supplied by the peripheries, revealing a relation of dependence that is continually hidden.

While in the first weeks of the health crisis deaths and contaminations by Covid-19 were concentrated in the territories whose residents could pay for the poorly remunerated labor of care, it did not take long for the situation to shift to the regions of those who provide the care. According to a study reported on by the national business magazine *Exame*, conducted by a professor at the School of Public Health at USP Francisco Chiaravalloti-Neto, beginning in April 2020, the second month of the pandemic in Brazil, the risk of dying by Covid-19 became 50% higher in the peripheral neighborhoods than in the central regions. The article indicated that<sup>17</sup> the districts of Parelheiros and Capão Redondo were those most affected. In early August 2020, the online newspaper *G1* also reported data from the São Paulo municipal government that indicate that the highest rates of death were in the periphery<sup>18</sup>. Accompanying the advance of the pandemic in the city of São Paulo and the following vaccination campaign that began in January 2021, the LabCidade, Laboratório de Espaço Público e Direito à Cidade [The Laboratory for Public Space and the Right to the City], produced some maps that demonstrate the territorial distribution of deaths by Covid-19<sup>19</sup>. The rates obey the same standards as other indexes of social vulnerability, in which the central regions always appear to have better conditions than peripheral neighborhoods. The map shows that the concentration of deaths intensified as it advanced to the margins.

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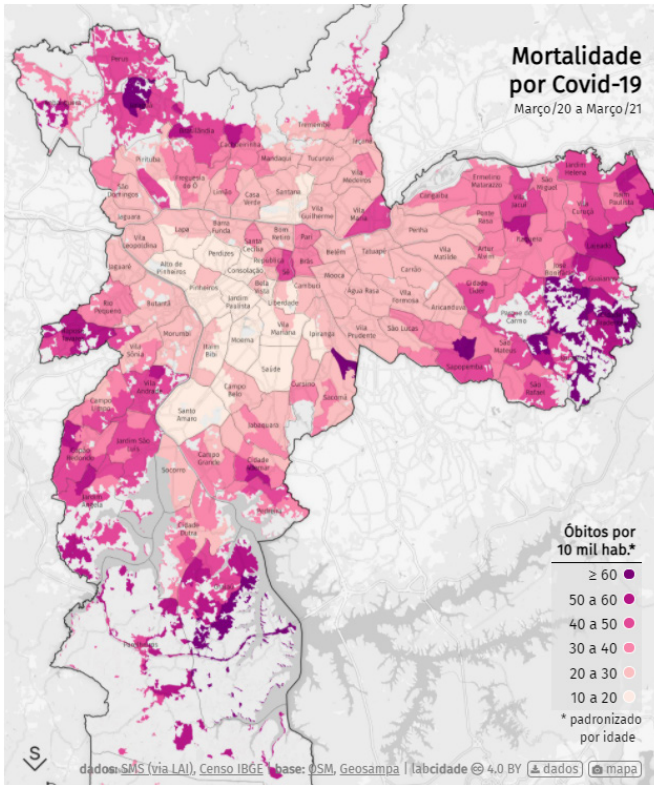
16 See the online seminar <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3g5HPwMbEE&t=75355>

17 <https://exame.com/brasil/risco-de-morrer-por-covid-19-em-sao-paulo-e-50-maior-na-periferia/> (accessed 9 February 2021).

18 <https://g1.globo.com/sp/sao-paulo/noticia/2020/08/04/periferias-de-sao-paulo-seguem-na-lideranca-do-ranking-de-bairros-com-mais-mortes-por-covid-19.ghtml> (accessed 9 February 2021).

19 Map produced by LabCidade published in the article, *Prioridade na vacinação negligencia a geografia da Covid-19 em São Paulo* <https://www.labcidade.fau.usp.br/prioridade-na-vacinacao-negligencia-a-geografia-da-covid-19-em-sao-paulo/> (accessed 24 August 2021).

MAP MORTALITY BY COVID-19 IN THE CITY OF SÃO PAULO – MARCH 2020 TO MARCH 2021



Government actions in these regions, or the intentional lack of these actions, intensify the precarious conditions in the peripheries. The emphasis on the family as being responsible for confronting the pandemic, whether in prevention or care for the ill, or to face the economic crisis, has placed thousands of families in dramatic conditions in which deaths, disease, and hunger overlap. As various articles in the major media have depicted, food insecurity is once again a social problem in the country<sup>20</sup>.

In the city of São Paulo, unemployment rates rose and the lack of income especially affects informal workers<sup>21</sup>. The first emergency assistance payments<sup>22</sup> only began to be sent in early June 2020. The last payment was deposited in January 2021. A new assistance program was approved and began to be paid in April 2021, but at an even lower value and to fewer people<sup>23</sup>. In the first months of the pandemic, before assistance payments were issued, families who lost their income had no support from the state. Just like those who would have no more income in coming months. It is the residents of the peripheries of the city, and those in the rest of the country, who are most affected by the health and economic crisis. Black men are the leading victims of Covid-19<sup>24</sup>. And it is the women who must care for the ill, the families and the support networks to meet the avalanche of demands generated by the overlapping crises.

20 About the end of emergency assistance and hunger in the media: <https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2021-01-23/o-brasil-que-reduziu-a-pobreza-em-plena-pandemia-ve-a-fome-rondar-quem-deixou-de-receber-o-auxilio.html>; <https://economia.uol.com.br/columnas/carla-araujo/2020/11/16/fome-betinho-cidania-fim-auxilio-emergencial-natal-sem-fome.htm>; <https://www.nexojornal.com.br/expresso/2020/12/29/O-que-vem-ap%C3%B3s-o-fim-do-aux%C3%ADlio-emergencial-aos-brasileiros> (accessed on 9 February 2021).

21 <https://www.brasildéfato.com.br/2020/11/03/prefeitura-de-sp-faz-pouco-contradeseemprego-apesar-de-taxas-acima-da-media-nacional> (accessed 9 February 2021).

22 Emergency assistance was instituted in Brazil by law nº 13.982/2020, which called for monthly payments of 600 reais to informal and low income workers, the self-employed and those who pay into the national social security system to mitigate the economic effects of the pandemic.

23 The payments were at first R\$600,00 but dropped to a range from R\$150,00 to R\$375,00 in 4 payments. One third of the people who received the assistance in the past year did not in 2021. <https://economia.uol.com.br/noticias/redacao/2021/05/25/auxilio-segunda-parcela.htm#:~:text=Aux%C3%ADlio%20com%20valor%20menor%20e,a%20um%20benef%C3%ADcio%20por%20fam%C3%ADlia>.

24 For more information about mortality by race and gender in the city of São Paulo see <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/saude/noticia/2020-08/mortalidade-por-covid-19-e-maior-entre-populacao-negra-em-sao-paulo> (accessed 31 August 2021).



## “What will I do with 300 food packages a month?”: the state that lets people die

I have had difficulties sleeping. And I know this is a reflection of what will happen when I get here. I think about getting here, about taking care of everything, without answers for anything, what could be worse? To have no answer. I think this is frustrating. And then I feel weak, right? I never know what will happen when the bell rings. I never know.... To hear [people's] needs and not have a response to give. No objective responses, efficient responses... Because I depend specifically on the state, the government, the municipality. And this government has not had a real concern with social assistance. (Simone, social assistant)

During the 1990s and decade of 2000, there was a proliferation of government institutions and services in the peripheries of the city (Feltran, 2011; Carmo, 2016). Institutions related to social movements, NGOs and public services formed a complex network at the margins of the state, supported by a human rights discourse, but they also reproduced state bureaucracy through their role in controlling and normalizing poor and black populations of the peripheries. However, if on one hand the state, at its margins, is made concrete in daily life, not as a monolithic block, but through its practices and effects (Vianna, Lowenkron, 2017), it is also at these margins that the gaps open for the production of agencyings and resistances (Carmo, 2016).

Simone, 40, has lived in Capão Redondo since she was born. She is self-declared black and participates in anti-racist collectives of black women in the region. Since 2016 she has been an administrator of the Social Assistance to the Family Service (SASF) in Capão Redondo, one of the main services “na ponta”<sup>25</sup> of national policy for social assistance administered by the municipal government. That is, it is a service implemented in the neighborhood and that has direct contact with families in situations of vulnerability. According to the guidelines established by the national social assistance policy, the focus of the SASF actions “is on the conviviality and strengthening of family and community ties, to provide families access to the social assistance network, to develop potential, participation and ability to attain autonomy. It also works as an identifier of requests for access to benefits and income transfer programs” (São Paulo 2012).

However, what is written on paper is very pretty, but the reality is quite different”, as the professionals at the front of these services repeatedly affirm. They speak of the poor conditions of these services, considering the complex and dramatic demands caused by precarious living conditions (Carmo, 2016). This situation has worsened with the defunding and abandonment of public social assistance services in recent years with the closing of many public facilities, as I have observed in my field work. This has combined with the interruption of the projects of NGOs due to the lack of financing. This weakening of an already fragile network to guarantee social rights in the peripheries has placed even more pressure on living conditions during the pandemic causing the needs that intensify with the overlapping of the crises to fall on families and networks of friendship and neighborhoods.

In October 2020 I conducted an online interview with Simone, who is part of the network of activists that I am following. She told me that from April to October 2020 the only provisions received by the SASF for that time of contingency was 2 thousand basic food packages. That is, just over 300 packages per month: “Each month I attend to one thousand families who are in a situation of vulnerability because of the pandemic, what can I do with 300 packages per month?” The situation forced Simone and her team to determine to whom to donate. In addition, she also reported that there was no planning for how to receive and deliver these food packages: “I never know when they will arrive, and I do not know if in the next month we will receive them again. When families ask, I say that they must wait”.

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<sup>25</sup> It is common to refer to the services and professionals who work directly with the execution of policies as those who are “nas pontas”, literally “at the point”, or at the frontline.

Simone is under contract to an NGO, because SASF is administered under an agreement between the city government and the institution. Nearly all the services that compose the social assistance network in the municipality have this configuration. She believes that her current economic situation is stable. Even with the pandemic, the greater suffering has been the anguish of not being able to respond to the demands of residents who come to her. She has made contacts with other local solidarity networks to “respond to” the needs of the families who seek out the service, but she says it is not enough. As she said in the statement quoted above, she has not been able to sleep because of the situation that has afflicted people in the neighborhood where she lives, works and engages in political activity.

Local groups and networks not linked to social policies (such as the Campaign in Solidarity of Inmates Families, promoted by Amparar [Support]<sup>26</sup>; the Network for the Support of Women and Families of the southern zone, organized by feminist collectives and women in the region<sup>27</sup>) began to work together to meet these demands from their neighborhoods. These mobilizations are supported not only by their experience that “seeking out the state gets nowhere”, but also from their experience that it is the state that kills.

Dona Amélia, who participates in one of the networks examined here, is retired and contributes to the family income along with her daughter Patrícia, who is a domestic worker. With the quarantine, Patrícia, who has signed working papers, had her salary cut in half. With three children at home all day due to the suspension of classes, family spending on food increased substantially. The situation was aggravated because the price of foods also rose exorbitantly<sup>28</sup>. Moreover, Dona Amélia had costs for a grandson who is in jail. Each month she and Patrícia save money to send him a supply package known as the “jumbo”<sup>29</sup> in prison, which was already a burden for the family. This burden has increased with the increased price of food and the fact that they cannot take him the jumbo themselves<sup>30</sup>. Due to security measures imposed at the prisons, she must place the package in the mail, which is even more costly. The family has been able to feed itself with help from the networks composed by feminist groups in the region that donate basic food packages and money to purchase gas.

Iara is associated to a network of family members of inmates and got out of prison just before the pandemic. She lives in the far east of the city with her two adolescent boys who are unemployed. As a former inmate, she had great difficulty finding work. Through contacts from a friend, she found work as a domestic worker in the house of a state prosecutor. She had been working there for 3 months, and her life was gaining a certain stability when she “became trusting and told her boss that she had been in jail”. The prosecutor fired her immediately and she was unemployed in the first month of social isolation. Iara also turned to the network of families of inmates to be able to pay her rent.

The cases of Dona Amélia and Iara demonstrate, as do those of other families, that even without having suffered cases of disease, that they were affected by the pandemic. Unemployment, financial difficulties, and overburdening from the work of care are setbacks that are confronted by those who did not have an easy life before the crisis. Neither Dona Amélia nor Iara had access to emergency assistance, the first because she was retired, while Iara does not know why she was not approved. They also did not have any support from public

<sup>26</sup> <https://abacashi.com/p/amparar>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.vakinha.com.br/vaquinha/rede-de-apoio-as-mulheres-e-familias-da-zona-show>

<sup>28</sup> Articles about increased food prices published during the pandemic: <https://brasil.elpais.com/economia/2020-09-10/inflacao-da-cesta-basica-corroio-bolso-dos-mais-pobres-e-deixa-bolsonaro-em-alerta.html> <https://g1.globo.com/jornal-nacional/noticia/2020/10/20/aumento-dos-precos-dos-alimentos-tem-impactado-no-bolso-dos-brasileiros.ghtml> <https://economia.uol.com.br/colunas/jose-paulo-kupfer/2020/09/08/preco-alto-de-alimentos-afeta-mais-pobres-mas-nao-e-inflacao-antes-fosse.htm> (accessed on 09 February 2021).

<sup>29</sup> “Jumbo” is the name given to a package of basic products, such as food and personal hygiene products, sent monthly to jailed people by their families. For more information <https://ponte.org/em-sp-familias-so-poderao-entregar-comida-e-itens-de-higiene-a-presos-pelos-correios/> (accessed 9 February 2021).

<sup>30</sup> Determination by the Secretariat of Penitentiary Administration (SAP) to guarantee “the safety of employees, inmates and their families” during the pandemic.

social assistance services in their neighborhoods, precisely because of their reduced scope of action. If it was not for the support of community networks, the situation of both women would be much worse.

But it is not only the insufficiency of these policies that leads families, particularly women, who are residents of these territories, to seek alternative forms of “help” instead of claiming their rights. In the daily activities of these state services, stigmas, judgements, humiliations, and criminalizations tend to be reproduced that revive hierarchies and control. Accompanying daycare centers in a favela of Rio de Janeiro, Camila Fernandes analyzed accusations about sexuality that are embedded in discourses, acts and practices within these institutions (Fernandes, 2019). Fernandes demonstrates how the attribution of an “improper and irresponsible” sexuality to black, poor women living in favelas is used to justify the inadequate public policies (which are never sufficient for women who “make too many children”), and is also said to be at the root of social problems.

Accompanying the policies of social assistance in the southern zone of São Paulo, in my master’s research, I also observed the presence of a stigmatizing discourse about these families, mainly about women (particularly mothers and grandmothers), which underlies daily practices of professionals who blame the women for their children’s use of drugs or for their involvement in practices considered criminal. The effect of the stigmatization was very concrete in the life of these families, often representing a punishment, like the removal of some benefit or the choice of one family over another for access to a program or even, in extreme cases, the loss of custody of children (Carmo, 2016).

Fear and mistrust of public services and of state agents by the population that is the target of these policies is common in the statements of many residents and also of professionals who implement the policies. Simone, speaking as a social assistant, told me: “The bigger dispute is often with the state itself which criminalizes the mother and requests removal of custody of children. And when you go to see, you find the mother did nothing wrong, she is just poor. So, there is a criminalization of poverty by the state”. Thus, the social assistance network found in peripheral regions, not only is a network to guarantee rights that are being abandoned, but is also constituted at the *margins* of a state that violates, normalizes, and stigmatizes poor, black and peripheral people (Das, Poole, 2008; Feltran, 2011; Carmo, 2016). It is a state that kills and lets people die. (Foucault, 1999).

### **“Help” at the margin of the city, beyond a humanitarian logic**

As I told you, I never cared about this kind of thing. I never wanted to get close to this type of social action. And it was because of a person who asked me for food at a stoplight that I became aware and then I sought to do something and was able to. But I began to see peoples’ needs. Because it’s no use. OK, I can go there and get help to make lunch and distribute it to people. Great, the person is fed that day. But do they only need to eat that day? No. You know, people need income. People have no work, they don’t have work, you know? (Aline, manicurist)

Requests for “help” like food, gas, medicine, personal hygiene and cleaning products and money to pay bills or to buy medicine became common on WhatsApp groups in which I participate that were formed by activists related to agendas like: feminism in the periphery; the struggle against genocide of black, poor and peripheral people; or against mass incarceration. At the beginning they were requests of the members for themselves or for people they knew: “can anyone help Ana pay her rent? She is a survival of the system and was fired, she risks being evicted with two adolescent children”; “the family of an inmate has a baby daughter who underwent surgery, can someone help to buy milk?”; “Angela has no cooking gas, who can help?”. But as the weeks dragged on, these requests grew, and it was increasingly difficult for the groups to absorb all of them. This is because the people in the groups had economic needs. They had to expand the networks, look for more resources, more help.

“We aren’t doing enough, we must do more for these people, these people are being wiped out!” This was the anguish that drove Railda to expand the possibilities of help for families of women inmates. Or of Aline, Simone, Miriam, Gabriela, Elaine, and many other women who take on the non-paying work of capturing funds, distributing food packages, visiting families in situation of vulnerability, the work of home office, for some, and the work of care expanded for all. And they also assumed the risk of contamination by the disease because of the circulation that this type of activity requires.

Aline is 40, she is self-declared *parda* [brown] and lives in Parque Arariba, a district of Campo Limpo, in the periphery of the southern zone of the city, with her husband, a 17-year-old son, a daughter who is 6, and a mother who is 71 who suffers from Alzheimer’s disease. Since Aline is responsible for caring for the house, and her daughter and mother, she has not worked outside the home for a few years. Recently, she has taken odd jobs in the neighborhood as a manicurist, but nothing steady due to the demands at home. Her husband, Gilberto, works as an Uber driver and contributes most of the family income. He has long worked in community issues in the region and is involved with various human rights networks and institutions in the city. I met Aline through him, because Gilberto was my colleague at an NGO in the region and we now participate in some of the same collectives. Both he and Aline are now my friends and as soon as I saw him promoting the actions on social networks during the pandemic I wanted to speak with her to know about the experience.

Aline had never been involved before with “these social actions”, as she told me. However, this situation changed at the beginning of the pandemic, when she engaged vigorously in the distribution of meals to people living in the street who were close to her home. It all began at the beginning of the social isolation when she went to visit her sister, in a nearby neighborhood. Aline was approached by a person living in the street who asked her for something to eat. She even offered him money, but the man refused it. He said that the stores in the region were all closed due to the social isolation and that he had not eaten in 3 days, because institutions and restaurants that made food donations had stopped their activities, leaving he and other people in the street nearby without support.

Aline said:

That was gnawing at me inside and I was imagining: ‘boy, we go three or four hours without eating and we feel hungry, imagine three days without eating!’ So I spoke with Gilberto about this and he said: “Ah, I don’t think it’s good because people just don’t eat one day, they eat every day. Are you ready to assume this commitment? You will have to stop your life!” And I said: “I am, I’m ready”. And I posted something on Facebook, saying what happened and if someone could help, I don’t know, somehow with rice, beans, or with a cooked meal. And I had a big response that I did not expect. And I had a lot, a lot of help.

Aline had support from two other neighbors and with many donations from merchants and residents of the region. She also had support from other networks of activists in the city through contacts from her husband, who works on cases of violence (related to gender, arrests, deaths, and police violence) and with other types of assistance (food vouchers, 50 payments of R\$100 that they received from an NGO in the center of the city, the provision of guidance about issuing documents, etc.). For six months, every evening, after they finished their work in their own homes, the three women prepared 100 meals and distributed them at various points of the neighborhood, where people were living in the street.

The actions of these women also expanded to the distribution of food packages and clothes for families in the neighborhood. The donations arrived at Aline’s home and were passed on to those who requested. Many people went to her to make donations, and others to ask for food packages and other types of help. Aline became one of the connections in these solidarity networks that were formed in the peripheries of the city at the beginning of the pandemic.

At first, it would be possible to define Aline's initiative and that of her neighbors exclusively as charity, which is characterized as an isolated action that does not question the abandonment by the state of its responsibility to guarantee social rights. Charity is often anchored in religious principles of benevolence and may construct asymmetric relations between those who donate and those who receive. It should be emphasized that much of the major media has repeatedly presented the theme of food insecurity and promoted and supported the solidarity campaigns to collect food throughout Brazil.

Clara Han, referring to recent criticisms of humanitarian assistance programs, observes that the emphasis on compassion towards social suffering and inequality involves political values and specific forms of intervention that maintain social inequalities and hierarchies (Han, 2012). Didier Fassin, analyzing immigration policies in France, called attention to how these policies have been supported by a morality that combines compassion and repression. At the same time that the repression of immigrants intensifies because they are seen as a threat to the nation, those who request political asylum have their requests accepted more frequently for so-called humanitarian reasons, based on a sense of compassion for the body that suffers, and not for the principal of refugee guaranteed by human rights. Thus, these undesirable immigrants are recognized for their their basic biological existence and not for their political existence. Fassin also affirmed: "to commiserate with the asylum seeker or with the undesired immigrant brings less benefits to these figures than to ourselves, given that we show how human we really are" (Fassin, 2014: 20).

Families that now face risk of hunger and that are targets of these solidarity campaigns are also those whose children are targets of state violence, are occupying prisons or are homicide victims. They are the undesirable racialized, poor families who live in the peripheries. Reports on Brazil's leading television news programs have presented stories that seek to cause commotion, presenting large campaigns to collect provisions. With the exception of the mention of emergency assistance offered by the federal government in the pandemic, little is said about holding the state responsible for food security, which is not referred to as a right.<sup>31</sup> The response has been campaigns to collect and distribute foods by NGOs and community networks throughout the country.

But what happens when the agents of this humanitarian assistance are not "us" but "them"? Or if not them but "us"? I affirm that although the actions of women and networks that I present here do involve compassion and humanitarianism, this morality, in and of itself, is not sufficient to explain them. Many members of the solidarity networks, such as Aline, also need the food packages they collect. Between the targets of the actions and those who conduct them, there is an identification in terms of life experiences that are marked by scarcity, because both have lived, or are living or run the risk of living, in similar precarious situations.

Aline lives in a "typical" neighborhood of the periphery of the city of São Paulo. Brick houses stacked on top of each other dominate the landscape, interspersed by small squares, public schools, bars, churches and shops. Aline's family also lives in one of these multi-storied houses. She is on the first of three floors. Her father built them and gave one floor to each of his three daughters. So, they do not need to pay rent. The Parque Arariba neighborhood where Aline lives is in the district of Campo Limpo, whose per capita income is R\$1.747,00 per month and the homicide rates of youth from 15-29, is one of the highest in the city at 49,91 deaths per 100 thousand residents<sup>32</sup>.

31 See the news program on TV Globo on 04.04.2021 about solidarity campaigns <https://globoplay.globo.com/v/9409545/programa/>. Some examples in the on-line press: <https://economia.uol.com.br/videos/index.htm?id=redes-de-solidariedade-ajudam-familias-na-quarentena-0402CD9A346CE0B96326>, <https://g1.globo.com/fantastico/noticia/2020/12/27/rede-de-solidariedade-transforma-paraisopolis-em-meio-a-pandemia.ghtml> <https://g1.globo.com/jornal-nacional/noticia/2020/07/16/pandemia-cria-rede-de-solidariedade-para-ajudar-populacao-mais-carente.ghtml> (accessed 9 February 2021).

32 Data synthesized by Rede Nossa São Paulo, a civil society organization whose mission is to "mobilize various segments of society to, in partnership with public and private institutions, construct and be committed to an agenda and a set of goals, articulate and promote actions, aimed at a city of São Paulo that is just, democratic and sustainable". (<https://www.nossasaopaulo.org.br/quemsomos/#rnsp>) (accessed 09 February 2021).

Despite the heterogeneity that marks the peripheral territorialities, as discussed, the intensification of the precariousness experienced during the pandemic generates needs. And because of the lack of a network of public services to respond to them, the responses spread through relations of daily life. The community organizing by these women express this. That is, in a context of reduced social programs, the needs of families in precarious living conditions wind up falling on networks that interlink families, friendships, neighbors (Marques, 2010) and activism. Thus, the families who live in the peripheries, even those who are in more stable economic conditions, are convoked to engage in networks of help and reciprocity. To offer help to people living in the streets, in the case of Aline, is to expand this practice. During the pandemic the number of families that need this help increased drastically, revealing these already existing forms of support, but also revealing the state's inability to guarantee basic social rights, emphasizing the politically induced precarious condition to which residents of the periphery are submitted. Finally, it has emphasized how women have taken the lead in assuming these fronts of struggle strongly marked by care.

Nadya Araújo Guimarães and Priscila Pereira Faria Vieira note the appearance of help networks in contexts in which poverty and limited state support are combined. These authors frame the actions of solidarity within the neighborhood as “help” that can be characterized as one form, among others, of the work of care found in societies marked by inequality (Guimarães, Vieira, 2020). This form of care, which differs from professional work or from obligations due to the status of women in families, is located in a specific circuit and takes on other meanings. This help is not understood as work that should be remunerated, or as an obligation, by the people involved in the relationship. Thus, the authors affirm, “they are sustained by (and reproduced through) social relations based on group or community reciprocity” (Guimarães, Vieira, 2020: 10).

Although the authors are referring more specifically to tasks of care for children, the elderly, and the ill, I would like to suggest an expansion to the understanding of care. Isn't it possible to understand the tasks undertaken by these networks of solidarity to be framed within the scope of care and to go beyond the limits of domestic life? These forms of help include cooking for people living in the streets, visiting families in the neighborhood who need support, helping neighbors and friends with imprisoned sons and husbands, collecting donations and distributing food packages, that is, the entire effort to “respond to” needs for social well-being – which should be absorbed by the state in a context of guaranteed rights – presented by families who are found in extremely precarious conditions.

Joan Tronto argues that care is “an activity of the species itself that includes everything that we can do to maintain, continue and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it in the best way possible. This world includes our bodies, ourselves and our environment, and everything in which we seek to intervene in a complex and self-sustainable form. (Tronto, 2007: 285). I thus affirm that many of the actions assumed by solidarity networks that emerged in the city of São Paulo are guided precisely by the logic of care. It is not by chance that they are largely mobilized by women.

According to the tradition dedicated to research about care, it is understood here to involve complex webs of relations that take place in daily life involving concern and accepting responsibility for others, which goes beyond the private environment of family life and questions the notion of autonomous individuals who relate to each other rationally. Care here, as Han affirms, is understood as a problem of daily life more than a category with defined limits (Han, 2012). And in the pandemic care has revealed the unavoidable interdependence among subjects (Tronto, 1997).

Thus, if inequality and crises are shared among all people who live in the peripheries, women are affected and react more distinctly. During the pandemic, many scholars wrote about this. Denise Pimenta, based on her thesis about the Ebola epidemic in Sierra Leon, found that the Covid-19 pandemic does not differ from other healthcare crises in the sense that it overburdens women with the task of care. She calls attention to how care, in the case of Sierra Leon, became dangerous, because while it promoted cure, it also killed

the caregivers. Women, by caring for family and neighbors, were more often contaminated, for this reason the highest death rates were among women. Reflecting on the Brazilian case, Pimenta affirms that the pandemic has the face of a woman, a black woman, not only because black women went to the front lines to confront the disease through multiple forms of the work of care, but because it is also black women who are in more vulnerable conditions, and therefore risk contamination (Pimenta, 2020).

Alessandra Tavares has contributed to this debate by considering how women who live in peripheries, mainly black women, have lived through these times seeking to “respond to” the demands of home offices, domestic chores, accompanying the schooling of children who have online lessons, illness, deaths and militancy (Tavares, Carmo, 2020). Nathalie Blanc, Sandra Laugier and Pascale Molinier argue that the visibility that care work gained during the pandemic did little to change the lack of recognition of women’s voices in the public space to face it (Blanc, Laugier, Molinier, 2020). Natália Lago and Natália Padovani write about the reorganization of networks of solidarity that women with imprisoned family members have undertaken to respond to the emergency demands of the pandemic (Lago, 2020; Padovani, 2020).

These texts, while addressing distinct aspects of the experiences of women in the pandemic, converge by expressing the excessive burdens of the work of care and its devaluation, as well as the forms of agencying and resistance that are deeply aligned to experiences that articulate gender, race and social class. Reflecting on them with the women with whom I have worked, I argue that even if they are tired, they have engaged in struggles that blur limits of what is understood by public and domestic, filling in the gaps between family and state, producing relations, subjectivities and moralities through a policy of care. In the act of distributing foods, visiting neighbors in situations of violence who have economic needs, and suffer illness, actions of care that blur artificial frontiers of what is public and private are not only reproducing a humanitarian morality, but weaving relations upon which recognition of race, gender, class and place are produced. This recognition is fundamental to strengthening struggles.

### **Food and struggle at the margins of the city**

Railda is one of the founders of Amparar [support], the Association of the Friends and Family Members of Imprisoned People, which for more than 15 years has supported family members of people in the prison system and those leaving it. The group mediates relations with the courts, denouncing violations of rights in prisons, strengthening articulations of families, composing the struggle against mass incarceration in Brazil, and many other actions. Amparar was created by and is composed of families of jailed people, mainly women, and by people who were in prison, “survivors of the system”. The institution’s work is not limited to a specific neighborhood, but it is located in the far east of the city, in the Conjunto Habitacional José Bonifácio housing project, in the district of Itaquera. Its activities function through a broad network of family members and “survivors” that extends throughout the São Paulo metropolitan region. It is important to emphasize, they are residents of the peripheries. In addition, Amparar is in contact with other human rights networks that work in Brazil and abroad. With the pandemic, the actions of the association changed radically due to an avalanche of old and new needs.

Visits to prisons were suspended, leaving families without news of their relatives amid multiplying rumors of contaminations by Covid-19. The *jumbos* families send to inmates had to go through the post office, which increased their expenses. The public defender’s office was closed, so people had no access to information about their cases and did not know to whom to turn in cases of human rights violations (Lago, 2020; Godoi, Campello, Malart, 2020). Many women lost their jobs during the social isolation making it even more difficult to send the provisions needed to the inmates. These demands, were all steered to Amparar, and now even more so. Railda’s WhatsApp doesn’t stop.

In the first months of isolation, Amparar mobilized its networks, which include people throughout the city. Many people tried to respond to each request: the daughter of an inmate had undergone surgery and needed a specific and expensive kind of milk; one “survivor” who had just lost her job faced eviction and needed help with the rent; there were requests for cooking gas, *jumbos*, food packages, and medicine. The list was long and varied. The WhatsApp messages circulated until a solution was found: raffles, campaigns, public notices, and donations were the sources for funds that needed to be gathered and steered towards the most urgent needs. There were many messages, and hours online.

Railda, 54, is a black woman. She has lived in the east zone of the city since childhood and has four children, one of whom has had a few passages through the prison system since adolescence. Railda participates in movements against the prison system since the early 2000s, when she organized with other mothers of youth who were held in the youth detention facility Fundação Casa. Since then, her daily life is occupied by movements through the city to meetings to articulate with social movements, institutions and legal agencies, visits to prisons or trips throughout Brazil or abroad. However, with the pandemic, this agenda of public activities was exchanged for a deep immersion in virtual conversations and in the exhaustive work of receiving and delivering food packages. This is not to mention the infinite number of live broadcasts to which she was invited to discuss the prison system during the pandemic.

During the first six months of the pandemic, Amparar distributed nearly 2 thousand food packages and offered financial help totaling more than R\$30.000 reais – money that was raised by campaigns and raffles – for families who came from all regions of the city looking for help. Railda repeatedly sympathizes with the efforts of family members in search of food: “This morning I had a family member who came from Taboão to the José Bonifácio housing projects to get a food basket. Can you believe it? The situation is very difficult”. Taboão da Serra is a city located 45 km to the west of the city of São Paulo. It is an hour and a half on public transportation. This case is not an exception. It highlights the enormous movements that many people must take to obtain food, and demonstrates the absence of local programs in their neighborhoods. The exhaustion and astonishment are devastating, but at no time did Railda consider abandoning this work, even with recommendations from all sides that she should not expose herself to the risk of contracting the disease: “If I stay home, I’ll go crazy”.<sup>33</sup>

The news about the food distribution was promoted “mouth-to-mouth”. “Each time that we would take a basket to someone’s home, another neighbor came over to get information about the delivery point. There is always someone who needs it”, Sandra told me. She participates in a collective in Capão Redondo. Thus, to respond to these daily needs, the networks and groups organize to collect more resources and expand distribution. These resources, it must be highlighted, come from individual donations, NGOs, merchants or companies and online campaigns. There is little talk of

turning to government services and funds, except for the emergency assistance payments. These groups are suspicious of government action, as mentioned, whether because of the type of response offered, or because it is unlikely there will be a response to the needs. “It’s no use to send a request to CRAS, they don’t do anything”, Railda told me.

On the other side of the city, in the periphery of the southern zone, another group of women have also mobilized intensely to conduct similar actions: collect and distribute food, personal hygiene and cleaning products; find money for rent, electrical and water bills, and medicine; help women facing domestic violence; support families with jailed members or those assassinated by the police during the pandemic; find psychological support for women residents of the region; and other forms of help. The group Periferia Segue Sangrando [I would prefer to keep bleeding] was created in 2016 from the “need to think about our experiences

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33 For a more complete examination of the actions of Amparar during the Pandemia, see Lago, 2020



as peripheral women, to place ourselves in a united movement and break the silence that is so devastating” as its members wrote in a text published in a journal produced by an NGO in the region in 2016<sup>34</sup>.

The collective is composed of a group of women from 30 to 50 years old, mostly black, residents of the contiguous districts of Jardim São Luís, Jardim Angela and Capão Redondo. Nearly all of the members have had higher education and work in jobs related to NGOs, social policy, the arts or research. The collective has been conducting sporadic actions whose objective was, above all, to bring women from the region together to share experiences that articulate gender, class, race, sexuality and territory. With the pandemic, these women reorganized to conduct these actions to respond to the needs of families in the region. There were intense exchanges on the WhatsApp group where the cases were shared: a group of women immigrants with their families was undergoing situations of food insecurity in Jardim São Luiz; an 84-year-old woman had a grandson in jail and was alone and needed help to care for herself and to deal with the state prison bureaucracy; another resident was suffering from domestic violence and needed shelter. In a context of a state of law, these needs would theoretically be absorbed by social policies capable of guaranteeing rights, but with the advance of neoliberal policies and the rise of state violence, they are aimed at families and local networks.

In the pandemic, this flow of requests to the collective increased, whether from female friends, neighbors, more distant relatives or from unknown women who learned about the possibility to receive help. Thus, the women of the Periphery Continues to Bleed group began to accumulate home office work. The work of care at home intensified, mainly because children did not have school, while efforts were made daily to collect and administer funds, receive and distribute food, accompany cases of violence and other activities.

Once again it is important to observe these actions through the political meanings that the subjects attribute to them. In the past ten years there has been a multiplication of social mobilizations in the peripheries of the city through these collectives. These groups are composed mostly of youth, and many works with cultural manifestations and on agendas related to gender, race, sexuality and class as they are articulated to territory as do such Amparar and the Periphery Continues to Bleed collective. The issues addressed include peripheral feminism, genocide of black and peripheral people, “dis-incarceration”, and others that reveal the precarious living conditions in the peripheries, and the state is held responsible as the main agent of violations. These collectives have contributed to the production of new identities that shape a racialized “us” and that challenge the idea of a miscegenetic periphery derived from a “Brazilianness” linked to miscegenation (Moutinho, 2004).

Thus, in addition to being producers of a new racial grammar in the periphery and of new identities, these collectives begin to produce a discourse that frames the state not as a guarantor of rights, but as an enemy, a genocidal agent of extermination of poor, black and peripheral people. “Us for us” [“Nós por nós”] became a recurring expression in these movements, expressing the need to articulate those who share a common experience of race, class and territory and who are the targets of violent state actions. These groups raise new political discourses and new subjects emerged through the consolidation of democracy since the 1990s, with the promise that the state of law would guarantee greater social justice and decrease inequality. Instead of denouncing the absence of the peripheral state, these new subjects denounce its presence, which kills people and lets them die despite democratic advances in the Constitution of 1988.

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34 Revista Sujeitos Frutos e Percursos publicado pelo CDHEP, Centro de Direitos Humanos e Educação Popular - [http://cdhep.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Sujeitos-Frutos-Percursos\\_2013-2016.pdf](http://cdhep.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Sujeitos-Frutos-Percursos_2013-2016.pdf)

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The actions taken by the networks in which Aline, Railda and the women of the Periphery Continues to Bleed collective participate should be analyzed considering this entire context. The actions are not limited to a humanitarian logic promoted by a discourse that holds families exclusively responsible for access to social rights, and in the case of the pandemic for the effects of the economic crisis and propagation of the disease. It is necessary to analyze these actions considering the actions of social collectives and movements that have constituted an “us” marked by an experience of gender, race, sexuality and social class specific to a territory marked by violent state action (Moutinho, Alves, Carmo, 2016; Klein, Carmo, Tavares, 2020). In this process, the women assume a fundamental role, producing mutual support networks that are anchored by a perspective of care. These networks are vectors replete with political meaning, given that they are motivated by and reproduce another form of relation with the other, one of implication, recognition and care (Butler, 2015; Tronto, 1997).

When I began writing this article, I had a question in mind about the burden that participation in these solidarity networks meant for these women who also face: the needs of children with online classes; home office; domestic tasks in homes that were much more lived in; care for the elderly, children and ill; mourning; pain; and loss. I imagined that the women would be very tired. Obviously, they are tired, but for all of them, the domestic work was the most draining factor and “drove them crazy”. “I can’t stay home anymore”; “I’m going crazy here at home with my 6-year-old daughter and my mother, and I can’t stand staying home anymore”, were expressions that I heard from nearly everyone I spoke to.

Tronto affirms that the act of care emphasizes concrete connections with other people and evokes much of the daily life of women, revealing a fundamental aspect of life, that, in another manner, could appear to be irrelevant. In this sense, to expand the understanding about what it means to care for other people “reveals the need to restructure broader political and social institutions, if caring for others constitutes a more central part of the lives for everyone in society everyday” (Tronto, 1997: 200). That is, Tronto adds, to think of the social world in terms of caring of others differs radically from our current way of conceiving care as a pursuit of self-interest.

I emphasize here that the people who live in the peripheries of the city submitted to state violence, and consequently to the intensification of precarious conditions, are not passively subject to it, as Veena Das and Deborah Poole (2008) have recognized. It is in the cracks of these margins of the state, that subjects produce resistances and struggles. These solidarity actions are clearly not enough to mitigate the effects of social inequality that were amplified by the pandemic. These women obviously are extremely overburdened and tired because once again they have assumed the work of care and social well-being, which under the country’s constitution is understood to be a task of the state. Through this exhaustive work these women give meaning to their lives, they produce relations that sustain networks of solidarity and of struggles that (re)construct worlds (Das, 2011) where our precariousness and interdependence are recognized and valued.

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# Managing risk and sexuality in the Covid-19 context

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## Abstract

This text presents initial questions from the SEXVID national survey on sexual practices and risk management in the Covid-19 context. The category of risk management, taken from studies about management and health in relation to HIV/AIDS and practices of assemblage, with reference to studies of materialities, articulates heterogeneous elements involved in managing offline sexual encounters in the context of the pandemic. We focus on two questions: how does this management take place, especially in a political environment lacking public policies on prevention and risk, and what are the practical materialities that constitute this articulated assemblage of elements that justify or not the risk of contamination. We use scenes constructed from semi-structured interviews in the initial phase of the study to contextualize the central question and learn about the impact of the pandemic on the sexual experiences of part of the population.

**Keywords:** Covid-19; sexuality; management; risk; pandemic.

# Risco, sexualidade e gestão no contexto da Covid-19

## Resumo

Neste texto, apresentamos questões iniciais da pesquisa nacional SEXVID sobre práticas sexuais e gestão de risco no contexto da Covid-19. A categoria da gestão de risco, retomada a partir dos estudos sobre gestão e saúde no âmbito dos estudos do HIV/AIDS e das práticas de montagem, com referência aos estudos das materialidades, articula elementos heterogêneos no gerenciamento de encontros sexuais *offline* no contexto da pandemia. Nos interessam duas questões: como se dá essa gestão, sobretudo em um ambiente político de falta de políticas públicas sobre prevenção e risco, e quais as materialidades e práticas que constituem essa montagem articulada de elementos que justificam ou não o risco de contaminação. Para tal, partimos de cenas construídas a partir das entrevistas semiestruturadas na fase inicial da pesquisa, com o intuito de contextualizar a questão central de conhecer o impacto da pandemia nas experiências sexuais de parte da população.

**Palavras-chave:** COVID-19; sexualidade; gestão; risco; pandemia.

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## **Pursuing sexual practices in pandemic times**

Lia is a cisgender, black, heterosexual woman in her 50s. She is a professor at a higher education institution in the state of Rio de Janeiro. In menopause, “The pandemic came precisely when I’m not having my periods, and I have no uterus or fallopian tubes. I’m living alone, free. The pandemic screwed me in this regard”. During the quarantine, Lia had two dates with a guy she had known since school: he is now a doctor, working on the front line. At first they exchanged many messages and nude photos until they decided to have sex. “The risk was worth it. But now I wouldn’t have sex with anyone,” she concludes. She says it took her a while to have an orgasm: “Worries, right? Even your orgasm is influenced by the pandemic”.

Luciana, is a white, bisexual, cisgender woman, a journalist, almost 30, who lives in Minas Gerais. She spent two months during which she met almost no one. She was getting horny. So she had sex with a friend who lives with another friend. She heard they were taking the quarantine “more or less seriously”. She also had a date with a guy on Tinder: in a public place. At the end, they kissed, risk taken. The second date was at her house; dinner, sex. The guy had a car, which is an important criterion for her. “If he came by *Uber*, I wouldn’t have agreed”. Things didn’t work out with another “really handsome” guy she had a crush on. I’d been out with him several times. He insisted, she was horny, but he was an app driver. Red flags.

As a busy *Uber* driver João does not have problems in the pandemic. “Ah, sex is great”. João is a heterosexual, cisgender, white, man in his thirties. Newly separated, with a young son, and living in Minas Gerais, he had various sexual partners. In the pandemic, not much changed, sometimes a date does not work out – so he tries another. He laughs and earns knowing laughter at the mechanic’s shop where he was giving the interview. His car needed work.

Lê is a white, non-binary, university student who is almost 30. At the beginning of the pandemic, she was constantly sexting, only with women. With one of them, things began to get more intense. It was the best online sex she ever had. The other woman does not live in the same city, and Lê does not live alone. They<sup>1</sup> spoke with their housemates: “Is she being careful?” A couple of two women who had decided to move in together during the pandemic help friends who need a place to meet by offering the apartment of one of them in a city in Rio Grande do Sul state. The situation is controlled. Lê’s girlfriend arrives from the airport first and picks up the already disinfected key at the entrance. The apartment is also disinfected, and containers with hand sanitizer are scattered everywhere. She settles in and showers. Lê arrives wearing a mask that she soon removes. They go to bed. Pandemic? “I don’t even remember it”. Then comes guilt, criticism, strained friendships. The other woman goes to Lê’s home. They always have hand sanitizer beside the bed. They know it is not much use now, but there’s no harm in washing their hands and arms while with her from time to time.

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<sup>1</sup> In this article the pronouns they and there are used to refer to Lê.



Maurício is a cisgender man, gay, *pardo*<sup>2</sup>, university professor who was working remotely. He lives alone in the Amazon region. He partook in *ayahuasca* rounds to consider his sex life. For three years he had only been having sex with those with whom he had emotional affective involvement. During the pandemic he saw sperm in his urine – masturbation. He finds *Tinder* doesn't work so he activated former contacts on Facebook and Instagram. He was neurotic, getting sick. He was working hard, had submitted almost forty academic articles, but had no sex. So, after April he met with four guys without much planning. Where he lives, life is going on normally. He turns off the TV, zaps through the *Facebook* news, tries to forget the images of the mass graves. “We're already going crazy, let's go”. He only leaves the house to buy food, always wearing a mask. But at his mother's, whom he visits, there is no distancing – but there is chloroquine, which she and the rest of the family, except Maurício, are taking. He had always been active in sex, but during the pandemic he has allowed himself to be passive. New experiences. “Since we're not normal, let's get laid”. But not with strangers. If there are condoms, it's OK. He would wait seven days to make sure he had no symptoms until a next partner. He used multivitamins and ethnomedicine. The shaman brings teachings about life, sex, and the disease, but it's important to keep informed of the WHO bulletins he points out.

On Brazil's popular TV news magazine show *Fantástico* in May 2020, Dr. Drauzio Varella explained why mortality rates due to Covid-19 among obese people are higher. In August there was a report on the site *Catraca Livre* with the headline “Obesity can harm the effectiveness of the Covid-19 vaccine.” Maria paid attention. She is a bisexual, cisgender *parda* journalist about 35, living in southern Brazil. She weighs 125 kg and is only 1.70 m tall. She takes time every morning to read the headlines on her *Facebook* and watches TV. The pandemic is raging. She turns on her phone and opens *Tinder*. She decides to deactivate it. Scientists say sex for her could be fatal.

The scenes that open this article took place in very different geographical and political contexts. They involve people crossed by varying social markers, such as gender, race, social class, regionality, generation and religion. They don't even share an online environment, the same networks, proximity, or use the same technologies for relationships or affective-sexual encounters. But they were all living in Brazil when the Covid-19 pandemic struck (Corona Virus Disease 19).

Covid-19 is caused by the Sars-CoV-2 virus and is characterized by rapid transmission among people through droplets and aerosols spread through coughing, sneezing, or speech. It can also be transmitted through contact with surfaces contaminated by the virus if individuals place their hands on their mouth or nose (Singhal, 2020). It was thus named in February 2020 by the World Health Organization, which declared it a pandemic in March of the same year (Rothan & Byrareddy, 2020). Currently, 223 million cases of Covid-19 have been confirmed worldwide, 4.6 million of which resulted in deaths.<sup>3</sup> Data from the general panel of the new coronavirus in Brazil<sup>4</sup> show that as of September 12, 2021, there had been 20,989,164 confirmed cases and 586,558 registered deaths.

The scenes described come from informal reports and semi-structured interviews carried out between September and October 2020, which are part of the pre-field of the research that was called SEXVID.<sup>5</sup> The study has been carried out at the national level by five public Brazilian universities,<sup>6</sup> and its general objective is to investigate sexual practices and risk management in times of Covid-19 in Brazil.<sup>7</sup> Thus, we are interested

2 Brazilian category for biracial/person of colour.

3 Available at: <<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>>. Accessed on September 12, 2021.

4 Available at: <<https://covid.saude.gov.br>>. Accessed on September 12, 2021.

5 For details visit the website <https://www.pesquisasexvid.com/>. All the authors of this article are part of the research team.

6 Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), National University of Brasília (UNB) and Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE).

7 The research “SEXVID - Sexualidades e Gestão de Risco no Contexto da Pandemia de COVID-19 [SEXVID - Sexualities and Risk Management in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic]” was approved on July 28, 2020, by the Research Ethics Committee (CEP) of the Institute of Psychology of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (CAAE: 35055720.6.0000.5334).

in understanding how the pandemic changes the experiences of sexual practices of different groups and populations living in Brazil, identifying what they consider risk and what elements make up the management of this risk based on its framing caused by the pandemic effects. Thus, in SEXVID, we intend to analyze the heterogeneous assemblages the subjects produced, to establish risk hierarchies and risk management practices in the exercise of their sexuality since March 11, 2020, the date of the first declaration that public activities would be suspended in Brazil, in the Federal District,<sup>8</sup> and when physical distancing measures began to be promoted as the main strategies to prevent Sars-CoV-2 infection.

At the time that these narratives were produced, the curve of cases and deaths due to Covid-19 was stabilizing in the country, and physical distancing measures were being relaxed in different states. It is also worth mentioning that the municipal elections, held in November 2020 in Brazil, guided institutional policies towards the pandemic – albeit by making data about its effects invisible. Moreover, the pandemic in Brazil fell within a very peculiar political scenario that encompassed disputes over scientific and counter-scientific narratives, a lack of national coordination of sanitary measures, and a central government that has not invested in preventive political actions. The National Congress established a Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry (CPI) to investigate whether the government had committed crimes of responsibility during the pandemic.<sup>9</sup> This context is fundamental to understanding the assemblages that refer to sexual practices in times of Covid-19, which link various materialities and practices, including the management of information and the establishment of hierarchies of risks and preventive conduct.

The methodology of the SEXVID project foresees three phases: 1) pre-field, which included semi-structured interviews, informal reports, and collection of informative materials on sex and Covid-19 produced by governments and non-governmental organizations or by the media; 2) digital application of closed questionnaires, and 3) in-depth interviews. All stages exclusively involve participants over 18 years of age. This text addresses the results of the first phase, especially what emerged from the various informal reports collected, as well as semi-structured interviews with seven single people who engaged in face-to-face (offline) sexual encounters during the pandemic, in a context of sanitary recommendations for physical distancing, the use of masks, and constant hand hygiene. In the group interviewed, we sought to contemplate diversity in relation to sexual orientation, gender, race, generation, and regionality.

The interviews began with a broad initial question: “How have your sexual encounters been since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic?” Next, we addressed what the person considered a risk at that time, how they had been managing the risk with the virus (considering partners, locations, preventive practices and substances, harm reduction practices, for example), and how they obtained information (where did they turn to for information and the media they considered more reliable). Each interview was preceded by a brief survey of self-referenced sociodemographic data (age, education, profession, race/color, income, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion).

The objective of the first phase of the investigation was to provide elements to be pursued in the following steps. We are now completing the application of the digital questionnaire through a form available on the research website. Based on the questionnaire results, in the third phase we will conduct another 30 semi-structured in-depth interviews with participants of the second phase to deepen the analysis of sexual experiences in the pandemic.

We emphasize that to minimize the risk that researchers or participants become infected with Sars-CoV-2, the entire study has been carried out exclusively online. The use of research resources in and through new information and communication technologies (ICTs) is not new and has been widely used in the field of study

<sup>8</sup> <https://g1.globo.com/bemestar/coronavirus/noticia/2020/04/06/coronavirus-veja-a-cronologia-da-doenca-no-brasil.ghtml>

<sup>9</sup> For more information about the CPI, see <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2021/05/grupo-majoritario-da-cpi-da-covid-ja-ve-provas-de-crimes-de-bolsonaro-na-gestao-da-pandemia.shtml>

of sexualities (Flach & Deslandes, 2017; Silva, 2010; Miskolci, 2013; Queiroz, 2018). These experiences in previous research certainly provide greater comfort in the use of the technical resources mentioned in the pandemic context. Nevertheless, it is necessary to recognize the limits that this form of research presents. In the first stage, when the material was collected through interviews on digital platforms and video calling apps, the first limitation is the interviewees' access to the ICTs, either to equipment and apps or to how to operate them.

This article will pay special attention to risk management as a form of assembly among heterogeneous elements. The notion of assembly refers to the concept of "coordination" proposed by Annemarie Mol (2002), which makes explicit the practical efforts to group heterogeneous and at times contradictory elements that perform reality. Such coordinations are always contextual arrangements that mobilize a series of practices to produce a certain situated stability.

Thus, from the scenes constructed in the interviews and conversations, and with the notion of assembly as a reference, we present two relevant questions for the SEXVID research in which our analyses are inscribed: the idea of risk management, which comes from HIV/AIDS studies, and the proliferation of articulatory practices between heterogeneous elements such as semiotic-material practices that seek to relate contextual and perceptual, political-social, and subjective aspects involved in conducting the coordination of desires, practices, and sexual encounters.

## **Sexual policies and (de)governmentality**

The issue of sexual practices and risk management in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic is an element of the concern to think about sexualities considering, as mentioned, Brazil's ultraconservative political situation and the setbacks in public policies and government positions on these topics. Federal government leaders have promoted an anti-science message and expressed deep mistrust of consensual positions taken by medical specialists towards the pandemic (Rutjens, Sutton, & Van der Lee, 2018). The president widely mocked social distancing and then vaccinations. Nevertheless, on April 2, 2020 the Ministry of Women, the Family and Human Rights (MMFDH) released a booklet with recommendations for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transvestites, transsexuals, and transgender people in times of Covid-19, which advocated online work, including for sex workers. The first version of the booklet was replaced on the same day, after extensive media exposure.<sup>10,11</sup> The revised version eliminated<sup>12</sup> explicit mention of sex workers - and therefore did not mention the offer of virtual sex services - or bath and sauna as common meeting places, and bath and sauna have not appeared in any other type of government information. However, after the booklet was revised, the message remained the same: do not break the quarantine to socialize, perform transsexualizing surgery, or have sex, whether for work or not. "Take the opportunity to read, study, and discover new talents!" is one of the recommendations on the list.

Although the Ministry of Women, the Family and Human Rights published this booklet that reduced the entire preventive policy with a reference to sexuality to that specific statement and population, reports from people from various groups about non-compliance with physical distancing for sexual meetings increasingly appeared in our personal networks and the media. We were impressed by the richness of details in narratives that described what was happening, revealing that the "non-compliance" involved much more complex elements than could be imagined, including the establishment of parameters prior, simultaneous, or subsequent to this type of decision. Forms of acting in relation to risk also took specific contours in the face of a little-known

<sup>10</sup> As indicated by the errata published by the Ministry, in which the "final version of the material" is presented: <https://www.gov.br/mdh/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/2020-2/abril/errata-2013-versao-preliminar-de-cartilha-lgbt-divulgada>

<sup>11</sup> The unofficial version can be accessed at: [https://static.poder360.com.br/2020/04/Cartilha\\_LGBT\\_coronavirus-pdf](https://static.poder360.com.br/2020/04/Cartilha_LGBT_coronavirus-pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.gov.br/mdh/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/2020-2/abril/Corona\\_banner\\_LGBT.pdf](https://www.gov.br/mdh/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/2020-2/abril/Corona_banner_LGBT.pdf)

virus that behaved peculiarly, especially about its transmission efficiency and how it travels between humans and non-humans, living with them and making Covid-19 extremely contagious.

Describing and interpreting the articulation of elements of different dimensions and origins in the assembly of social and sexual practices has not been an easy task in the current context of Covid-19, although we already had important clues inherited from studies on risk management in the context of HIV/AIDS (De Luiz, 2011). Among other elements, the history of AIDS and of other pandemics shows that even a global epidemic or pandemic presupposes local arrangements, i.e., it requires approaching specific contexts in which the impacts are not homogeneous (Segata, 2020). Among the approximations that can be established between the current pandemic and that of HIV/AIDS, some seem particularly relevant and go back to the path observed in the latter, such as the return of prejudices about risk and contagion (which are made explicit in references to elements such as “healthy” appearance, familiarity/proximity, risk groups) and the importance of keeping track of the changes in the profile of the Covid-19 pandemic, its increasing pauperization, interiorization, and marginalization of contagion and deaths.

In an article published on the website of the National Campaign for the Right to Education, Junqueira and Prado (2020) also draw some parallels between what they called “ethical-political management” of the Covid-19 pandemic and of HIV/AIDS. They understand ethical-political management as something that is done in a kind of game of scales, which involves articulations among very different elements, such as biomedical knowledge and practices and people’s daily lives, economic, political, and legal aspects, and others. In the article, Junqueira and Prado also address the notion of “risk group,” its connotation in the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and how it shifted, until landing on how Covid-19 is understood in Brazil. They show how, in the case of Covid-19, the idea of a risk group is also controversial and was not accompanied by the perspective that the virus, when in transmission, modifies its parameters of action in societies with different social, political-economic, and technological configurations (Junqueira & Prado, 2020).

We can also consider the different temporalities between the HIV/AIDS and Covid-19 pandemic. They are temporally distinct because they inhabit different political-social contexts and because there is a specific time of the virus or the history of the disease for each of them. These different contexts imply technologies, things, material articulations, engagements, and co-productions between science and the social world (Jasanoff, 2004) that enact realities (Mol, 2002). In this sense, there would be no separate and static reality of the virus and the pandemic, which is only represented by the subjects. There are multiple realities being acted upon, whose emergence depends on the practices and material arrangements that constitute them (Mol, 1999, 2002).

The characteristics of HIV transmission, a virus that spreads through bodily fluids, especially blood and sperm, and the need to create preventive strategies, have called on the sciences to better understand people’s experiences, leading to a broad set of studies on sexual practices and protection against Sexually Transmitted Infections (Vance, 1995; Paiva, 2008). At this point, it is essential to recognize that, in the case of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, although in a political context that was also deeply disputed, we had important repercussions in the field of sexuality, sexual practices, and public debate on sexual policies (Parker, 2020).

Indeed, current scientific evidence does not allow classifying Covid-19 as a sexually transmitted infection. Still, the possibility of transmission in sexual situations triggers ways of dealing with the misfortune of being infected that was identified in the context of HIV prevention practices, which were different from those prescribed by public health officials (De Luiz, 2013; Silva, 2010; Grace et al., 2014; Barreto, 2018, Rios et al., 2019). Affective attachment, knowledge about a sexual partner and their habits, at times linked to the absence of apparent symptoms, were recurrent elements in the *modus operandi* for the realization of sexual encounters, in the context of HIV prevention and in the context of Covid-19, as shown by the scenes narrated at the beginning of the text.

The people interviewed in the first phase of the research were single and/or separated and did not live with anyone they would have sex with. We purposely sought reports from people who would supposedly need to expose themselves more to Sars-CoV-2 to establish an offline sexual encounter, to perceive how they were dealing with risk and sexual desire. In other words, we wanted to investigate the arrangements made to balance those elements, considering the changes, adaptations, and the activation of new practices, objects, technologies, or the configuration of other uses for elements already known or previously inserted in sexual practices.

When we carried out the fieldwork for this first phase, vaccines were still a distant reality.<sup>13</sup> Although some respondents, such as João, seemed not to be too concerned about the pandemic and did not mention strategies to circumvent coexistence with the virus, most of the interviewees made use of some device aimed at prevention. Not only the “most concrete technologies” available were mentioned, such as hand sanitizers and masks, but also other strategies, which appeared at times to be combined (concomitantly or not), and at times not necessarily related.

Online sex appeared in most reports as an important way to experience sexual pleasures. This dimension was important in sexual behavior before the pandemic and has been the subject of several studies (Silva, 2010; Miskolci, 2013; Zago, 2013; Queiroz, 2018). However, preliminary evidence points out that online participation in porn sites and partner search apps, sexting (sex by texting) and online sex chats increased in the Covid-19 context (Silva, Silva Jr., & Couto, 2020),<sup>14</sup> and, according to other analyses, changed over the months, in parallel with the early relaxation of physical distancing measures (Carvalho et al., 2020; Natividade et al., 2020).

Even in the pandemic periods in which we conducted the interviews, few people remained only in the offline dimension of the experience all of the time. Nevertheless, going from the “virtual to the real”, although in a non-pandemic context, does not appear to be a simple process, and may involve several fears, such as being “put out of the closet” by men with homosexual practices; being raped; or even a fear that the sexual interest would not appear in the offline meeting and create embarrassment, as already described in the literature (Zago, 2013; Miskolci, 2013; Flach & Deslandes, 2017). In the pandemic context, other doubts, fears and cares emerge and are articulated with it, such as the risk that an asymptomatic Sars-CoV-2 carrier may pose (Rios, 2021).

To minimize the danger of Sars-CoV-2 infection, Lia, Luciana, and Maurício, for example, sought sexual affairs in their networks of friends and/or former sexual partners and investigated the evidence of adherence to the main protection measures more widely disseminated for the prevention of Covid-19 with those who would be part of their networks of access and trust. These indications, however, are not free of ambiguities and require the management of uncertainties. Lia, for example, was having sex with a doctor, which is supposedly a professional category well-prepared to prevent the virus; but paradoxically is also one of the most vulnerable groups, especially those doctors who were confronting the pandemic on the front lines before there was a vaccine.

For Luciana and other respondents, online networks and apps also served as places to flirt and search for sexual partners. At times they thought they would stay in the online dimension. However, the desire soon gave way to the investigations mentioned about compliance with preventive measures. In this way, informal checks on behavior on a suitor’s social networks made it possible to “go from the virtual to the real”. In Luciana’s case, in addition to compliance with the quarantine, her sexual partner’s means of transportation to her home was also considered important. Maria, in turn, frightened by being considered more vulnerable to Covid-19, was a little more strict, and deactivated the app for sexual encounters so she would not be tempted to go offline.

<sup>13</sup> For the starting date of vaccinations in Brazil, see <https://www.istoedinheiro.com.br/brasil-aplica-a-primeira-vacina-contr-a-covid-19-apos-aprovacao-da-anvisa/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://veja.abril.com.br/cultura/apos-coronavirus-busca-por-sites-pornos-e-camgirls-crece-no-brasil/>

It is noteworthy that the issue of sexuality in the context of Covid-19 was never an explicit subject of massive and constant government campaigns, apart from the revised booklet mentioned. In a context in which the federal government (CEPEDISA, 2021) questioned the use of masks and physical distancing for protection, religiosity, religious orthodoxy, and other elements of a moral and political dispute over scientific knowledge (Rutjens, Sutton, & Van der Lee, 2018), which had already influenced confrontation of the AIDS epidemic in the current government (Paiva, Antunes, and Sanchez, 2020), were unlikely to allow the issue of sexuality to prosper. During the pandemic the Ministry of Women, the Family and Human Rights even presented the program “I chose to wait”, proposing sexual abstinence policies for young people as an additional weapon in its moral crusade on sexuality.<sup>15</sup>

The response of the Brazilian government and society to AIDS in the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s and 2010s (Parker, 2020), when biomedical knowledge guided information on modes of prevention, in a certain way also influenced the deregulation of medical standards in what is currently known by researchers as seroadaptive practices (Rios et al., 2019). Some modalities with some degree of preventive efficacy (Meng et al., 2015), such as seropositioning<sup>16</sup> and sero-choice (where unprotected sex occurs among people of the same HIV serology), were allowed to be prescribed by health professionals in a manual edited by the Ministry of Health for the implementation of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis within the perspective of Combined Prevention (Brasil, 2017).

In the current context, people are participating in a more significant public dispute about trust and skepticism regarding scientific knowledge, where there is less consensus about what is valid in the choice of prevention strategies between medical, political and common knowledge of practices. Although political ideologies have not been identified as the only and most important factors in counter-scientific skepticism, because religious and subjective dimensions combine with them (Rutjens, Sutton & Van der Lee, 2018), in the current context, political guidelines have been an important element in the adherence to preventive health practices, as indicated in a study by Ramos and collaborators (2020).

In this context of public disputes and silencing by government in relation to sexuality, it is even more relevant to resume the discussion of risk management practices, especially in their articulation with state policies, and to analyze how they operate with scientific and counter-scientific information on health care, prevention, and treatment of diseases in the pandemic context.

## **Materialities, sexual practices and insistent microorganisms**

The fact that there is no way to eliminate the risks of Covid-19 in daily life and that an important characteristic of the virus is its high transmissibility and potential lethality, provokes a new way of delineating coexistence with the virus, which was not foreseen in the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

In an article that addresses the pandemic and meat consumption by examining the connections between humans, animals, and pathogens, Segata, Muccillo and Beck (2020) use the notion of entanglement suggested by anthropologist Alex Nading (2013) to refer to the coexistence between these entities that build relationships with each other, given that health and disease shape some of these possible associations. Based on this we can consider that pleasure and risk also constitute possible articulations between humans and the coronavirus. For this reason it is fundamental to understand the different interlinkings of practices, as composing the subjects, viruses, and the world where they cohabit. However, in critical situations such as a pandemic, it is difficult to situate risks and vulnerabilities without incurring a reverse positioning: focusing the narrative on the virus

15 See <https://www.nexojournal.com.br/expresso/2021/06/15/O-apoio-da-prefeitura-de-SP-%C3%A0-abstin%C3%Aancia-sexual-de-adolescentes>. Acessado em 13 de setembro de 2021.

16 Seropositioning is based on the chances of HIV infection in unprotected insertive anal sex and in unprotected receptive anal sex, and the choices of sexual positions in unprotected sex are measured by the serological condition of the partners (Meng et al., 2015).

so that the biological discourse of the medical sciences that highlights an abstract risk gains too much space in the discussion and we overlook an analysis about the concrete situations. Thus, we could ask ourselves, for example, to what risk does the notion of “risk groups” specifically refer to as an encompassing category. Between the risk of infection, the risk of developing the disease in an asymptomatic way, or the risk of developing it acutely and fatally, some differences are not always contemplated in overly broad and not localized definitions as is this one. We argue that by only considering the pandemic as something that occurs on a global scale, without paying attention to the fact that it is performed from situated materialities, contributes precisely to forging a naturalization and homogenization of the action of the virus, disarticulating its political action.

In the stories narrated at the beginning of this text, we realize that no one conducts management based on oneself. There is a management of materialities, an act that organizes bodies, considers knowledge in hierarchies, and involves power relations. The fieldwork carried out in the SEXVID research phase on which this article focuses indicates that people share an understanding that there is always risk involved when they decide to find partners for offline sexual practices and that there is no way to eliminate it, even if they can rationalize it, fear it, and/or simply not consider it in specific and contingent situations and actions. In this sense, the way risk management is performed will focus on sexual practices and the relationship established with the virus: it can come along with sex – in the delayed orgasm, in the alcohol next to the bed – but it can also be left out – “as if it did not exist” or as something that stays in the app driver’s car, but that can be avoided or eliminated when dealing with the car itself.

The arrangements highlight the ways in which people organize more or less reliable partners, where not being in remote work and being someone known seem decisive, as well as being someone with whom they have had sex before the pandemic or who lives in a neighborhood where the graphs show that the infection and death rates are lower. The practices that elect hygienic care also stand out, even if they are not consensually recognized as preventive practices for Covid-19, such as bathing before touching the body of the other, washing specific parts of the body, or other types of care, such as drinking teas indicated by spiritualist groups or using alcohol prepared with specific herbs in the environment. We also see multiple arrangements of continuities and changes in sexual modalities and in what acts in the modulations between risk and pleasure. For example, people who had collective and group sex or related to multiple partners, and now began to have fixed contacts, even if not exclusive ones; people who returned to previous partnerships because they consider it safer; changes in patterns of activeness or passivity in sex; assessments of their own risk, such as having asthma, being considered or considering themselves obese, strong, or fragile; living with other people; having had previous experiences with other invisible elements, such as bacteria, viruses, etc.; or, even, their personal trajectory with other risks, which are often related ambiguously to the coronavirus.

It is noteworthy that when speaking about their sexual experience in times of pandemic, some people to whom we talked did not focus their narratives on the virus. They spoke, for example, about how physical distancing was making them very “horny”, but when they described the meetings, they often did not mention the virus or the pandemic. They began to talk about sex, and also about fears, ranging from those that may have pre-existed the pandemic – such as the fear of relating to someone who could not be trusted or did not offer security – to those that the health scenario sometimes helped to articulate or resize – such as the vulnerabilities attributed to a fat body or the persistent stigma about homosexual relationships.

It is worth mentioning that the established arrangements also take on several dimensions. Care, in this sense, can articulate multiple components: the body itself; the body of other(s) as a potential body that poses a risk of transmission; the environment to be used; masks, alcohol, baths; Sars-Cov-2; and an infinite network of possible diseases, vulnerabilities and invisible organisms, such as HIV itself; and practices that organize these and other elements in different ways, which may be more or less recurrent, more or less planned. Such arrangements also involve very heterogeneous sources of knowledge about health, care, and Covid-19

(information from the WHO website, knowledge of municipal and or state announcements about the pandemic, and even information and knowledge produced by religious or ethnic groups about medical practices alternative to biomedical knowledge).

The risk management about which we have insisted in our analyses travels in this discontinuous network of practices and materialities and is not previous to but performed by them. Some elements appeared to be fundamental in the research: we are talking about a pandemic, i.e., a disease caused by a virus that travels the world and connects people, animals, and pathogens; we are talking about a virus that, in addition to traveling around the world, does so in particular ways – it has a materially distinct structure, articulates a series of instabilities and uncertainties, and disseminates rapidly through simple behaviors, such as coughing, sneezing, talking, touching contaminated surfaces, and bringing the hand to the mouth or nose; and we are finally talking about practices. The involve sexual practices, but they do not occur separated from a world of things and other practices, which a pandemic and a virus now inhabit, and traveling in discontinuous and diffuse ways reached Brazil, which along with the United States of America became one of the countries with the most catastrophic responses to the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>17</sup>

In this context, we are interested in the assemblages practiced in sexual experiences in different populations and groups, understanding with whom or with what the experience takes place. Thus, we understand that neither the pandemic, the coronavirus, nor sexual experiences take place alone and, in this sense, one of the challenges is not only to examine people's representations or meanings they express about the virus or representations about their practices in relation to it, but to invest in how this experience takes place, is revised and reversed with this new entity in an articulation among elements that may be more or less known.

The challenge we propose would be to think less “about” the virus and more “with” the virus: sex “with the virus” and not necessarily “against the virus” or “despite the virus” – following, in this sense, what it does or causes to do and what particularities sexual activities assume in these dynamics of a world shared with other agents, in which the coronavirus lives, along with other entities. When Lia says that the pandemic screwed up the sexual freedom she achieved with menopause because her concerns affected her orgasm; when, between one movement of the body and another, in sex, Lê reaches out for hand sanitizer; when Maurício articulates in his practices teas from shamanic practices, the rationalization of the risk, systematic spacing of encounters, and WHO reports; when João continues to “hook-up”; or when another interviewee resumes a relationship and a fixed partnership with an ex-boyfriend, the question raised is: what worlds are people building “together with” and not “in spite of the virus”? Or even, what do these coexistences tell us about sexualities and morals and, more particularly, about practices, subjects, and species that must “die or live together,” to use the expression used by Segata, Muccillo, and Beck (2020, p. 367).

As we have already discussed, the practices that interest us are also not separated from the history of another pandemic, with equally important repercussions in the field of sexuality: HIV/AIDS.<sup>18</sup> Thus, pandemics and sexual practices are not a new object. Inspired by Amade M'Charek (2014), we can begin with the idea that this object has a history, in which a series of elements are articulated. These include norms about sexuality and the use of the sexed body; hierarchies of risk and security; differentially distributed oppressions and inequalities, crossed by social markers of difference, such as gender, sexuality, race, and social class; relations with knowledge, with political powers and medical technologies; and other elements that are at times made invisible may return fiercely but never the same, but as another development, multiplying this object and its interfaces.

17 For this comparison, see Eduardo Siqueira's interview at the link <<http://www.escs.edu.br/revistaccs/index.php/comunicacaoemcienciasdaude/announcement/view/27>>.

18 Regarding the issue of AIDS being considered a pandemic by the WHO, see [https://www.who.int/global\\_health\\_histories/seminars/presentation08.pdf?ua=1&fbclid=IwARoZln5nc2Z5QDDiGr4eKYpevey2CQHnWEKDooGVNFoGaNwrrBPOigD6Ts](https://www.who.int/global_health_histories/seminars/presentation08.pdf?ua=1&fbclid=IwARoZln5nc2Z5QDDiGr4eKYpevey2CQHnWEKDooGVNFoGaNwrrBPOigD6Ts)



## Risk management in times of Covid-19 in Brazil

The notion of risk management was born as an articulation of a specific calculation of probabilities and the function of government with a populational arithmetic. It was based on strategies ranging from forms of government intervention to forms of self-regulation and accountability of subjects (De Luiz, 2011). Through techniques for government intervention on the population, the notion of risk management articulated a relationship with the idea of risk in collective and public health, i.e., no longer management of life but management of risk (Castel, 1987; Spink, 2020). Risk management has become a mode of regulation and production that modern states, through scientific knowledge, especially that from the biomedical sciences, use as an argument to regulate and produce policies of care for the population (Castel, 1987). However, the principle of individual freedom, dear to the modern state, prevents this mode of control from being made explicit. Intricate devices are used for individuals to establish so-called “safe” practices. The question is how to operate the security device in which subjects act according to the call produced by the forms of government (Foucault, 1995).

“Risk”, “calculation”, and “safety” are key categories for the operation of this device, which deals with the education of subjects in relation to disputes over medical standards and government actions, urging them to avoid what is perceived as life-threatening (Rios et al., 2008). In the current Brazilian context, scientific information on “risks” and forms of “protection” is interpreted and offered to people so that they themselves “calculate” their exposure and transmission of the virus, so that government actions are one of the elements to be articulated in this risk management to be produced in the materialities of the experiences of the encounter with the other.

Although in the context of AIDS this perspective tended to consider the perception of risk and the expected response to it as a universal experience, ignoring social and subjective differences, in the current Brazilian context of Covid-19, it seems that this expectation suggests an inversion has taken place: it is expected that social and subjective differences act to allocate all perception and practice to the individualizing and moralizing universe of a neoliberal rationality (Brown, 2015; Cooper, 2017). Through this rationality, the notion of freedom is completely detached from any collective or responsible inflection, activating subjects to decide for themselves and for others, based on the production of governmental acts that suggest exposure to the virus as a measure to stabilize the pandemic without public coordination of a common interest for the care and preservation of lives.

The logic of risk management in the current scenario is given by the production of heterogeneous elements in a very peculiar way in relation to the Brazilian political context. Both the discourse and the practice of the federal government have insisted on increasing exposure (and not care) to expand transmissibility to attain a possible stability of the pandemic in the country, which influences the numerous assemblages that subjects make in their own administration, as we have seen in the narratives. Taken by the neoconservative context articulated with a neoliberal rationality (Cooper, 2017), which produces an important twist in the role of the state and public policies, we are interested in knowing how the elements are shaped in this possible non-exact accounting of the response to the pandemic, particularly regarding the sexual dimension. It is important to emphasize that this dimension has been strongly silenced in national public life when approached from the perspective of diversity and public policy.

We highlight that what is currently happening in Brazil, and not exclusively in the fight against Covid-19, but which spreads more broadly through different health policies (Paiva, Antunes and Sanchez, 2020), is an abandonment even of governmentality in the classic form of managing the population of modern states, in which science should be used to normatize laws (Foucault, 1995). Instead, a perspective emerges in which interpretations of the law based on shady *ad hoc* interests, should normatize science. A good example is the prescription of chloroquine as a “pre-treatment” for Covid-19, in which the federal government went as far as

expressing a desire to change the medical description that accompanies the drug to add information, without any scientific proof, that the drug would be effective in combating the disease.<sup>19</sup>

The controversies about how to protect oneself from Sars-CoV-2 involving the *Covid kit* (which included medications without proven evidence of effectiveness for Covid-19), physical distancing and the use of masks have been revised through disputes over credibility, legitimacy, and interpretation of scientific status. The Brazilian president even questioned the very status of Covid-19, calling it a simple “cold with no consequences”. This field of argumentative disputes makes it complex to operate with more orthodox models of risk management, which involve respect for the dignity of the human being, and individual and collective freedoms, and which replaces solidarity as an important value for coping with injuries and vulnerabilities.

In the current context, subjects are then entrusted with a quite complex management of many indecisions, since the coordinating elements of state policy produce counter-scientific arguments and promote total exposure to transmission. Or, what is worse, engendered in the biopolitical logic that the state can offer the best path for health, they are urged by its most important representative, the president of the republic, and by the entire government apparatus put into action (CEPEDISA, 2021; Ramos et al., 2020), to conduct risk management based on undecidability (Spink, 2020), configuring an unprecedented programmatic vulnerability in the confrontation of epidemics in the country, since, in addition to failures in health care, it induces people to an enormous exposure to a mutant virus and often in a deadly way. This situation calls on us to understand the composition of the materialities articulated in these assemblages between desire and politics, bodies and viruses, vulnerabilities and risks.

It is not new for the presence of viruses or microorganisms to be associated with undesirable humans. From this perspective, the discourse on the control of Sars-CoV-2 can also be considered as a discourse on the controlled management of humans: control over humans who cross borders, those who can or should stay at home and those who can or should go out, in short, humans in their most varied daily lives and practices (Segata, 2020; Segata, Muccillo & Beck, 2020). Segata, Muccillo, and Beck (2020) draw attention to the fact that the government of microscopic life is also a government of human lives, in our case, of sexual life as part of this government.

In this sense, there are many questions that the research work should respond to: which bodies can and which cannot break the physical distancing to have sexual encounters? What practices should these bodies establish? And for which of them does coexistence in the world cause life or death? Do either the revised booklet of the Ministry of Women, the Family and Human Rights or its first version, for example, inform about this? And what about the dissemination of research on the risk of Covid-19 for obese people or the indication of sexual practices with *glory holes*,<sup>20</sup> by the British Columbia Center for Disease Control in Canada,<sup>21</sup> as a way to have less risk of contracting Sars-CoV-2 in sexual practices and meetings? And wouldn't Maria's uninstalled *Tinder* and Maurício's understanding that “since we're not normal anyway, let's have sex” be articulating forms of assemblage of risks and possible coexistence with the virus? Thus, the sanitary control of the virus becomes a control of humans who carry or potentially carry it and who can thus disseminate it, which justifies tracking their practices.

Therefore, to think about sexual experience with the virus, and not the representations about the virus or sexuality, is to take seriously its daily presence, which comes to compose, among other circumstances, sexual life. The “compounds” formed among humans, viruses, and other things are also taken seriously, placing under analysis the policies and practices that are made with and not against or despite viruses.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/politica/2021/05/11/mudar-bula-da-chloroquina-por-decreto-nao-teria-cabimento-diz-barra-torres-a-cpi>

<sup>20</sup> Glory Holes are holes in the wall where you can fit your penis and have sex without any other contact. They are found in gay sex clubs around the world, including Brazil.

<sup>21</sup> Available in: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/covid-19-and-sex>

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