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“This is Iraq. People are afraid.”

Resistance and mobilization in the Maré favelas (Rio de Janeiro)

Otávio Raposo

Resumo

A violência entre os grupos criminosos que disputam a hegemonia do tráfico de drogas nas favelas e a intervenção das forças de segurança do Estado nesses territórios promovem um clima de opressão e medo que intensifica a segregação a que historicamente os seus moradores foram relegados. Na Maré, bairro do Rio de Janeiro formado por dezesseis favelas, atuam algumas das mais poderosas facções do tráfico e os confrontos armados e a ação truculenta da polícia são frequentes. É nesse contexto que moradores da Maré e organizações locais mobilizaram-se contra as contínuas violações dos direitos humanos, após um recrudescimento dos conflitos. A proposta deste artigo é debater a problemática da violência no Rio de Janeiro, apresentando algumas das lutas sociais que a população da Maré protagonizou nesse período. Relato também a minha entrada no bairro, expondo os cuidados que fui obrigado a ter para evitar surpresas desagradáveis que poderiam pôr em causa a pesquisa, bem como a minha integridade física.

Palavras-chave: violência, favela, segregação, cidadania, mobilização

Abstract

Violence among criminal groups in dispute over domination of drug trafficking in the *favelas* and intervention by the state security forces in those areas encourage a climate of fear and oppression that intensifies the segregation that historically afflicts their residents. In Maré, an area of Rio de Janeiro made up of sixteen *favelas*, some of the most powerful drug trafficking factions operate, and armed conflicts and aggressive behavior by the police are commonplace. This is the backdrop against which the residents of Maré and

local organizations have mobilized against the constant violations of their human rights, following an upsurge in the number of conflicts. This article intends to debate the issue of violence in Rio de Janeiro, presenting some of the social struggles that the population of Maré has fought in recent times.

Keywords: violence, favela, segregation, citizenship, mobilization

“This is Iraq. People are afraid.”

Resistance and mobilization in the Maré favelas (Rio de Janeiro)¹

Otávio Raposo

1. Violence and segregation in Brazil

Defined as a problem practically “from birth”, favelas are an integral part of the urbanization process in Brazil, specifically in its large cities. The first favelas² on record appeared at the end of the 19th century, against the backdrop of a serious housing crisis in the former federal capital, when the city grew exponentially³ with no housing policy geared toward the working classes. In spite of the lack of housing, large old houses that had been turned into collective housing, *cortiços*⁴, were demolished and the residents evicted, in the context of urban reform that intended to turn Rio de Janeiro into a modern, Europeanized metropolis. Known as the “knock-it-down” mayor, Pereira Passos followed, between 1902 and 1906, an authoritarian, cleansing policy that intended to make the city beautiful, at the same time destroying buildings considered unclean or dangerous (Valladares 2008). After the demolition of the *cortiços* there were only two types of housing available to the less privileged: living in the outskirts (which had the disadvantage of residents having to deal with transportation costs) or occupying land not dominated by real estate speculation interests, above all in the city’s hills. It

1 This article is the result of PhD research in Anthropology financed by the Foundation for Science and Technology (Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia – FCT) and carried out at the University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE-IUL) and the Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology (CIES-IUL) in Portugal.

2 Named the first favela in Rio de Janeiro, Favella hill (now Providência hill) was responsible for drawing attention to this new type of popular housing. As the target of cleansing campaigns, like the one in 1907 led by hygiene doctor Oswaldo Cruz, Favella hill began to be shown in the newspapers of the time as the new “evil” to be fought, the opposite of the urban lifestyle (Valladares 2008).

3 The population more than doubled (120%) in only 20 years in Rio de Janeiro, with 520,000 inhabitants in 1890, while the number of homes rose by 74% (Silva and Barbosa 2005:25).

4 Formed of groups of small houses (or rooms) in which many families shared common areas (kitchen, bathroom, yard), *cortiços* were the popular housing *par excellence* at the time.

is interesting that it was exactly those interventions, which sought to clean the city and import a modern, civilized lifestyle, that were responsible for the growth of favelas (Zaluar and Alvito 2006). While previously the elite and the workers lived relatively close to one another, new rules for organizing the urban landscape led to the start of a process of residential segregation. Aided by new means of transportation, the expansion of the city began to be planned according to the location of each social group, and its functionalities thought out in advance: business, industry or housing⁵. Nonetheless, favelas were established in Rio de Janeiro's urban make-up even in neighborhoods that were intended to be exclusively for wealthier classes, and attempts to stop the poorer population from living in higher-value areas failed.

As the favela became part of the urban landscape⁶, it became the target of a medical and hygiene-based discourse by sectors of Rio's elite (journalists, doctors, engineers), who described it as a place of poverty, deprivation and marginalization⁷. Those representations were based on the premise that favelas were areas condemned for "anomie"⁸, where disorder and uncivilized behavior reigned in a crisis of morality. Once transformed into the place of the "other" *par excellence* in the city, the favela became the subject of psychological theories and cultural essentialism that labeled the lifestyles and cultural practices associated with them as deviating from the norm⁹. Unlike

5 The streetcar lines made it possible for the Zona Sul and Tijuca to be occupied, preferably by Rio de Janeiro's elite and middle class during the first half of the 20th century, while the advent of the train made it possible to move some industry and working classes to the periphery of the city, while the center was for commerce, the financial sector and state institutions (CEASM 2003).

6 Intense urbanization in Brazil produced chaotic growth in its cities, causing an explosion of favelas and hugely expanding urban peripheries. Over the 20th century, millions of people migrated from the inland to cities in search of better living conditions, thereby inverting the rural/urban relationship. While in 1940 urban residents represented approximately 30% of the total number of people in the country, the percentage rose to 68% in 1980, according to IBGE censuses.

7 The first major campaign against favelas took place in 1920, a time when the phenomenon expanded to the city as a whole. The main driver behind the campaign was the doctor and journalist Augusto de Mattos Pimenta, who defined favelas as "aesthetic leprosy", a problem for public health that had to be fought against (Valladares 2008).

8 Use of the concept of anomie was fundamental for Robert Merton (1970) in producing one of the most influential works on the study of deviant behavior. According to the author, such behavior was not the result of a pathological personality acquired by the individual at birth. It was, rather, the influence of social and cultural structures in a state of anomie that would exert pressure on certain groups and segments of the population within them.

9 The historical socio-spatial segregation of Rio de Janeiro's favelas, together with the presence of numerous points for selling drugs inside them, deeply affected Rio residents' view of their role in the spread of urban violence. Misery, deviant behavior and promiscuity prevailed in favelas, a representation sustained by the poverty-violence-favela link, creating a caricatured interpretation of the areas: illegal occupations on hills, a lack

residents in wealthier areas, who had a civilized urban identity, favelas' inhabitants began to be shown as proto-citizens, souls who needed a "civilizing education" to prepare them for life in society (Burgos 2006:29). This perspective justified many social control and re-education actions undertaken by the state, whose high degree of authoritarianism and violence created, at times, organized resistance by the population.

Meanwhile, since the intensification of violence seen in major Brazilian cities (mostly Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo) in the 1980s, there was potential to blame favelas for the disorder in the city¹⁰. Blamed as responsible for the increase in criminal activity in the country, young people in underprivileged classes in the favelas and periphery of the city began to be treated as "potential bandits" (Machado da Silva 2008). In light of intensified crime, fear began to be part of daily life for millions of Brazilian families, mostly in the country's largest cities¹¹. Although the state and the media sometimes manipulated the feelings of insecurity for political and social control reasons, the fact is that violence indexes for Brazilian society have grown substantially in recent decades. The most tragic example of that phenomenon was the exponential rise in the number of murder victims in Brazil, which in 2010 was 49,932¹², a 259% increase compared with 1980, when 13,910 people were killed. The homicide rate per hundred thousand inhabitants shot from 11.7 to 26.2, an increase that led to more than a million murders in the last three decades¹³ (Waiselfisz 2011).

Urban violence became a new collectively-built social category in Brazilians' minds, a reaction to new forms of crime arising from the "globalization of crime" (Zaluar 1996:60), bringing international drugs and arms

of law and order, a place of degraded dwellings and a high concentration of the poor, the illiterate and criminals.

10 With the large-scale arrival of cocaine in Brazil in the 1980s (due to the globalization of drug trafficking), favelas were further established as the final destination of this illegal journey. The consequences were devastating for their residents, who began to be subjugated by armed groups who took advantage of the historical segregation of these areas to help their criminal activities (Zaluar 1996).

11 According to research by the IPEA (Applied Economics Research Institute) carried out in 2010, eight in every ten Brazilians are very afraid of being murdered, and only 10.2% of those interviewed said they were not afraid (Waiselfisz 2011).

12 In absolute terms, Brazil was the country with the highest murder rate in the world in 2009, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. For more information, see <http://www.unu.org.br/estudo-do-unodc-mostra-que-partes-das-americas-e-da-africa-registram-os-maiores-indices-de-homicidios/>

13 The lack of correspondence between the growth in total number of murders and the murder rate per hundred thousand people is due to the increase in the Brazilian population during that period. It rose from 119 to 190.7 million residents (Waiselfisz 2011).

trafficking networks to the surface. For Machado da Silva, urban violence became the new paradigm for formulating public crime-fighting policies, which de-politicized the debate on citizenship and blurred the focus on human rights, reducing security problems to “a simple matter of efficiency of the repression systems to guarantee social order” (2006:11-12). Urban violence, for this author, cannot be understood only as common violent crime, but as a practice imbued with force and articulation that is able to sustain itself for a certain amount of time, and whose representation:

“(…) indicates a range of practices legally and administratively defined as crimes, selected for the physical force present in all of them, which threatened basic conditions of the feeling of existential safety that used to be found in the routine of everyday life - physical integrity and guarantee of property. (...) attention focuses not on the legal status of the practices involved, but rather on the force involved in them, which is seen as responsible for the break in ‘normality’ in everyday routines” (Machado da Silva 2008: 36).

According to this researcher, drug traffickers are normally the main (but not the only) protagonists of urban violence, given the strong influence they have over the everyday life of those who live in neighborhoods (favelas and peripheries) where the illegal drug trade is carried out. Territory disputes for a monopoly on selling drugs in those underprivileged areas are often the cause of death or injury, and residents do not have any choice other than to accept (and support) the gangs’ operations. That “inescapable territorial contact” also makes them the victims of police aggression, since the police considers them accomplices of the outlaws who operate around them (idem:13).

At a time when public policies designed to combat poverty were still in their early stages – the State of Social Well-Being (Estado de Bem-Estar Social) would only be treated as a right for the Brazilian population with the introduction of the 1988 Constitution – and when repression by the state began to gather pace, it was the poor, black young people who lived in the favelas and urban periphery that were most affected by the increase in violence: as victims and perpetrators. A new ideological direction in the state’s responsibilities, in which the poor needed to be re-educated to live according to what were considered civilized standards, pushed the discussion on poverty as a threat to moral values and civilization to the background. Instead, even

more violent repression and confinement policies were pursued, within the framework of a new balance of power in which neoliberalism became the hegemony and the “Prison State” became the reference to follow¹⁴. The rise of this state model, for Loïc Wacquant (2008), aims to control and discipline the masses, punishing those who do not adhere to the social inequality that prevails. The criminalization of misery was joined by numerous repression and banishing mechanisms to neutralize and incapacitate the most vulnerable for any type of organized action that could endanger the brutal accumulation of goods and resources in the hands of the ruling bourgeoisie.

The stereotyped way in which the favelas’ inhabitants were represented criminalized them as a whole; a generalization that legitimized the police’s excesses in the eyes of a large proportion of society. The fight against crime became a plausible argument for repeated infringements of citizens’ rights, making authoritarian, violent practices seem natural in those areas. The structural violence exercised by the state followed the organization of a hierarchy of value of life that made a significant portion of the poorest population “killable¹⁵” (Fridman 2008:83). The clear violation of human rights carried out in the name of suppressing crime blocked attempts to build a fairer and more peaceful society, turning to discourse that dehumanized the urban marginalized people to hide and depoliticize the historical roots of social inequality in Brazil¹⁶. At the same time, the same state that disciplined, repressed and murdered the most vulnerable let those who really benefited from criminal acts go unpunished, specifically drug and arms traffickers.

To paraphrase Alba Zaluar (2006), the lucrative drug trafficking business did not do anything to reduce social inequality, nor did it allow for any kind

14 Brazil is in the 4th position of the list of countries with the highest prison populations in the world, with 548,000 inmates in 2012. In the last 15 years, the increase in the number of inmates in the country was 221.2% (170,600 inmates in 1997), 7.3 times higher than the world average. For more information, see: <http://www.cartacapital.com.br/sociedade/populacao-carceraria-brasileira-cresceu-7-vezes-mais-que-a-media-mundial-nos-ultimos-15-anos-5518.html>

15 It is no coincidence that the greatest incidents of violence in recent years in Brazil were led by the police forces - specifically in the Vigário Geral and Candelária slaughters, both committed in 1993 in Rio de Janeiro. In the first, 21 inhabitants of a favela were killed, while in the second eight young homeless people (six of whom were under 18) were killed while they slept in front of one of the main religious monuments in the city. At the Carandiru (São Paulo Detention Center) massacre, 111 inmates were murdered by the military police after a riot in October 1992.

16 In 2007 the ex-governor of Rio de Janeiro, Sérgio Cabral Filho, argued for the legalization of abortion as a way of reducing violence, considering that the high birth rates in favelas turned them into “factories for producing marginalized people”. Interview available at: <http://g1.globo.com/Noticias/Politica/o,,MUL155710-5601,00-CABRAL+DEFENDE+ABORTO+CONTRA+VIOLENCIA+NO+RIO+DE+JANEIRO.html>

of improvements in income among favela residents, painted as the people most responsible (and benefited) by the sale and spread of the million-dollar trade. The young people in favelas who appear on television with *Havaianas* sandals on their feet and a rifle in their hands continue to be given over to a lifetime of poverty, with the aggravating fact of not reaching the age of 20. Due to the barbarity of Brazilian violence, they die because they are executed by the police, by rival gangs or even by the groups of which they are a part. Therefore, it makes no sense for those same young people to be (almost) the only targets of police repression and control by the Brazilian justice system, when we know that those who benefit the most (and own) the million-dollar trade live in luxury developments in the nicest parts of cities in Brazil and abroad. In that sense, Michel Foucault's idea of "useful delinquency" is extremely relevant because it highlights the state's mechanisms of domination and punishment and its none-too-pure relationship with economic and political elites (1977:246).

2. Criticisms of the "broken city"

Maré consists of 16 favelas created at different times and in different political situations. It is located at the edge of Guanabara Bay¹⁷, and is bordered by three important roads: Avenida Brasil, Linha Vermelha and Linha Amarela. A few minutes by bus from the center of Rio de Janeiro, Maré has been considered a neighborhood by the city hall since 1994 (Silva 2009), and is the largest "complex"¹⁸ of favelas in the city, home to approximately 130,000 people¹⁹. Until the start of the 1980s, Maré brought together six favelas: Timbau hill, Baixa do Sapateiro (the first buildings date from the 1940s), Parque Maré, Parque Rubens Vaz, Parque União (1950s) and Nova Holanda (1960s) (Vieira, 2002). The implementation of the Rio Project, launched in 1979 by the National Housing Bank (*Banco Nacional de Habitação* - BNH), profoundly

17 The site of many housing experiments, Maré has multi-family and single-family housing units built by the state to housing created for spontaneous or planned occupancy; from the favela on the hill (with its jumble of maze-like streets) to "favela-ized" housing complexes on Cartesian street systems in flat areas.

18 This term, *complexo* ("complex") in Portuguese, is used to designate a set of favelas and is very common in police and media discourse. It has a decidedly stigmatizing connotation because it was originally used for prison complexes (Alvito 2001:54).

19 The Brazilian Institute of Statistical Geography (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia Estatística* - IBGE) estimated that 129,770 people lived in Maré in 2010. Nonetheless, the Maré census (2012), organized by Redes da Maré and other organizations in the neighborhood counted almost 140,000 residents.

changed the landscape of the neighborhood. The project not only gave Maré basic infrastructure (water, electricity, sewage, paving) but also removed its stilt houses. They were replaced by housing developments that created new locations: Vila do João, Vila do Pinheiro, Conjunto Pinheiro and Conjunto Esperança. With the creation of the 30th Administrative Region of Maré in 1988, new locations were added: Conjunto Marcílio Dias, Parque Roquete Pinto and Praia de Ramos. Later, the state built new housing developments to house families from areas that were considered at risk, and made use of the ample free space and excellent accessibility: Conjunto Bento Ribeiro Dantas (1992), Nova Maré (1996) and Novo Pinheiro (2000).

Maré is not only divided into different favelas, which have rather original occupation histories, but also into areas of influence by the different drug trafficking factions. One need only go into Maré to notice the presence of armed groups, always alert to the arrival of the police or the presence of enemy gangs “in their territory” and feel the atmosphere of conflict to which its inhabitants are subjected²⁰. But the conflicts cannot be attributed exclusively to criminal gangs, as the police is also an important actor in promoting violence and the feeling of insecurity that results from it. In the opinion of many residents, the police enters into onslaughts without any planning, triggering shootings that often kill residents who have nothing to do with trafficking. The Vice-Chair of one of Maré’s Residents’ Associations confided to me in an interview that the police was the main cause of the lack of security in the neighborhood:

The ones encouraging insecurity are the public power, because there are only problems here when the police invades, especially with the Caveirão²¹. That’s when you have a problem. You’re in the street and suddenly the Caveirão appears and shots are exchanged. That’s the thing. Every now and then there are problems between [trafficking] factions, but it’s rare, it’s occasional. But the Caveirão can come in at any

²⁰ This situation changed in March 2014, when Maré began to be occupied by the military police and by troops from the army and navy, with a view to installing Pacifying Police Units (Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora - UPP), a mode of community policing specifically directed toward favelas. Nonetheless, the influence of criminal factions over the different parts of Maré remains, although drug trafficking and the presence of armed young people are not as visible as before.

²¹ The “Caveirão” (literally “big skull”) is an armored vehicle used by the Special Operations Battalion of the Military Police (Batalhão de Operações Especiais - BOPE). It is used to aid police incursions to fight drug trafficking in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas. It was given its name by the favela population in reference to the BOPE symbol, which is formed of a skull passed through by a dagger and two golden guns.

time, and there could be gunfire, and there are times when it happens really often. (...) What does the *Caveirão* do in terms of providing safety? The *Caveirão* comes in, acts, fires, and that's when there's retaliation. The *Caveirão* doesn't carry out specific actions, there's no planning: "I'm going there to do this". They don't have that role, they don't have that planning. The *Caveirão* is just a form of repression.

[Interview, January 12, 2010]

This view was debated at the "First Free Conference on Public Security in Maré", organized by the NGO Redes ²² and 21 other local and supra-local institutions in June 2009. When arriving at Nova Holanda to take part in the conference, I saw several police officers armed with rifles and machine guns, most of whom were waiting in front of the Maré Arts Center (where the conference was taking place), where three military police vehicles were also parked. To my surprise, I saw the *Caveirão* further ahead (in the direction leading into the neighborhood). All of those people and equipment were there, in fact, to ensure the security of the event, more specifically the police officers invited to take part. However, this large security operation had the opposite effect: a few minutes after I arrived, there was intense gunfire between police forces and local traffickers, jeopardizing the safety of all the participants.

Around 200 people were at the conference, most of whom were residents of the neighborhood, along with several representatives from civil society institutions and researchers in the area of human rights. The conference focused on problems arising from police violence, and the presentations pointed to the importance of valuing life in public security policy. The message on one of the participant's t-shirt – "Cabral, enough extermination!" – is an example of the demands, referring to the Governor of the State of Rio de Janeiro, Sérgio Cabral Filho. His governance was marked by heavy investment in the Pacifying Police Units (UPP), presented as a new method of community policing directed toward the favelas, as a counterpoint to the occasional, violent operations in those areas²³. In fact, there was a reduction

22 Redes (Redes de Desenvolvimento da Maré - Maré Development Networks) is an important NGO in the neighborhood. Its activities and projects are directed towards the areas of education, culture, local development, social mobilization, etc. The success of the preparatory courses for universities and important secondary education schools organized by Redes is notable. The courses have been responsible for many young people in the neighborhood starting higher education (an average of 80 students per year). For more information, visit the Redes websites: <http://redesdamare.org.br/>.

23 According to the Government of the State of Rio de Janeiro, there are currently 38 UPPs in operation,

in the number of murders in favelas occupied by UPP, whose areas stopped seeing such an obvious presence of armed traffickers²⁴. But the UPPs were not the only public security policy under Sérgio Cabral's management. Before them, in the first years of his mandate, there was an increase in the number of deaths caused by the police in favelas, whose aggressive attitude was encouraged by his government, leading to harsh criticism in public opinion and from Brazilian and international human rights defense bodies²⁵ (Machado da Silva 2010).

The different discussion sessions were dominated by speeches and witness statements that revealed police brutality. They were not reports about strangers, but first-person narratives involving children, nieces and nephews, brothers and sisters or neighbors. Most of the participants had relatives (or people close to them) who had been murdered by the police or drug trafficking gangs. At the conference, it became clear that the violence in Maré was everyday, not exceptional, and crossed different aspects of residents' lives. I reproduce some of the statements made by those present:

- You can't treat violence one way in Leblon [a wealthy neighborhood] and another in Maré.

- What about the people who killed Matheus? And the people who killed Felipe?²⁶ Were the police officers arrested?

- Patrícia, who lives in Barra da Tijuca [a wealthy neighborhood], saw the police officers arrested. What about the police officers who killed Matheus? He was a black kid from a favela, so he doesn't count.

- The people in charge of public security should respect residents. We are really

covering 257 locations. For more information, see: <http://www.upprj.com/index.php//historico>

24 Although there has been a significant decrease in the number of murders in favelas where UPPs were installed, the problem of violence (by the police and criminals) has not been resolved. The areas continue to be treated by the police as exceptions, where the citizens' rights of residents are not respected. The most perverse face of this is police brutality. The case of Amarildo, who was tortured and murdered by police in the Rocinha favela in 2013, is an example of the mistakes in a policy that, by continuing to follow a rationale of repressive and authoritarian social control, does not take into account the rights of favela residents.

25 A declaration that shows the public security policy adopted in the first years of Sérgio Cabral's government was given by José Mariano Beltrame, Secretary for Security in the State of Rio de Janeiro. He justified the police super-operation in the Alemão favelas in 2007 that led to 19 deaths and 13 wounded as follows: "The remedy to bring peace often involves actions that bring blood". The declaration can be read here: <http://extra.globo.com/noticias/rio/para-policia-operacao-no-alemao-vai-enfraquecer-trafico-em-outras-favelas-680548.html#ixzz30y5gJP9l>

26 Matheus (8) and Felipe (17) were killed in 2008 and 2009 respectively during police operations. Witnesses and families of the victims accused the police of carrying out an execution.

discriminated against because we live in Maré.

- When I was studying at university I was embarrassed to say that I lived in Maré. I said that I lived in Bonsucesso [a neighboring area].

- People say that we're afraid to denounce police abuse, but when we go after [justice], we're threatened.

- Maré is just a neighborhood like any other. This isn't a prison, and we're free, not prisoners.

[Field Diary, June 28, 2009]

The phenomena of violence, stigma and urban segregation were debated at the conference and the Maré residents, who were the main protagonists, highlighted the self-organization and mobilization of some of the neighborhood to reject the dominant public security model. The reports of Maré residents at the conference cannot be disregarded in Rio de Janeiro's context of social and spatial segregation, where favelas are presented as areas "contaminated" by ecological and moral degradation, a "geography of chaos" that would spread delinquency throughout legitimate areas of the city (Ferrándiz 2002:6). These assumptions condition the way that violence is fought by the police forces and how it is experienced by the residents of Rio de Janeiro, which makes the name "broken city"²⁷ or the "asphalt-favela"²⁸ polarization very common in media discourse and common sense. Both names offer an uncomplicated interpretation of Rio's segregation, in which the possibility for combinations, ambiguity and cultural exchanges between individuals from different hierarchies in the city are almost non-existent. On the one hand, these two artificial terms ignore the deep transformations seen in many of Rio de Janeiro's favelas (urbanization, development of rich local commerce, emergence of a lower middle class), perpetuating an anachronistic, prejudiced idea. The existence of small and medium-sized traders in the favelas, and even individuals who become the owners of several pieces of real estate, many of whom used the verticalization²⁹ of their houses to make a good business, negates the theories that apply poverty to all favela residents.

27 The title of a book by Zuenir Ventura (1994) that tells of the author's experience in Vigário Geral, Rio de Janeiro, immediately following the massacre in which 21 people were killed by an extermination group formed of police officers in August 1993.

28 The "asphalt-favela" distinction is often used to distinguish between two extremes of Brazilian cities: the wealthy asphalt and the poor favela.

29 A term often used in the favela context to describe vertical extensions to buildings.

In Maré, situations of poverty exist side by side with a large supply of modern products and services (lawyers' offices, real estate agents, medical clinics, computer material shops, travel agencies, ice cream parlors), which calls into question the simplistic view that favelas are only for housing and that their residents are all miserable³⁰.

On the other hand, cultural exchange between social groups from different classes in Rio de Janeiro has always taken place, and the poor (whether they live in favelas or not) never stopped moving around the rich areas of the city. In fact, they were the ones who took up the jobs created by brisk business in Leblon, Ipanema and Copacabana. The main problem is not the lack of mobility for those who live in favelas and the peripheries, but the "cast" social position that they hold in the urban area. The poor always had problems breaking out of the "symbolic and material shackles" that keep them in a subordinate position. In rich areas of the city, they are accepted as doormen, maids, bakers, bricklayers or drivers. Roles that do not place them in a position of power. In any other setting, their presence is rejected and sometimes criminalized, especially in the case of young black people. However, in certain leisure and sporting situations (music and football are two examples), class and "race" barriers tend to be subverted and often it is the young black people from favelas who "run the show"³¹. As Alba Zaluar and Marcos Alvito explain, favela residents in Rio de Janeiro were always exceptional artistic and cultural creators for producing regional (and national) symbols. A party would be the motive for forms of "conflict and sociability that use togetherness, sharing food, mingling, and celebration as antidotes to the violence that is always present but contained or transcended by the party" (2006:20).

Although the metaphors cited strengthen a myth that does not take into account mingling and cultural exchanges between residents from different areas (and social backgrounds) of the city, its success in the city mind-set is due to the fact that it calls attention not only to social inequality and citizens'

30 Incorporating the economic diversity and plurality of social situations in each favela is fundamental in order to move away from the incorrect assumptions of absence, poverty and homogeneity that are constantly associated with favelas (Valladares 2008).

31 Hermano Vianna, in his research on the "invention" of samba (and its incorporation as national music), emphasized the large number of social groups involved - black people, gypsies, classical composers, rich and poor - in a cultural heterogeneity that does not try to minimize the decisive role of Afro-Brazilians. According to the author, the existence of "transcultural mediators" was highly important so that some members of the Brazilian elite and underprivileged groups would create connections with each other based on the musical genre (2004:122).

rights, but also to the presence of armed groups linked to drug trafficking inside the favelas. In light of this fact, residents are presented by much of the media and many political institutions as “outlaws’ accomplices” and as having “dubious morality”, characteristics that deny them full access to justice and that assign them the blame for the violence problems in the city (Leit 2008:117). This situation legitimizes the police’s violent behavior directed toward favela residents and reaches its peak when young black people are involved³²; they are criminalized in advance by large swathes of society and are victims of extermination policies by public security forces.

In Rio de Janeiro’s favelas, there is clear disrespect for residents’ human rights, since the constitutional guarantees that limit police action are disregarded. Gratuitous assaults, humiliating searches, unfair arrests and executions (using “suspect resistance” to justify the killings³³) have become commonplace. The feeling of personal indignity that arises as a result builds true “symbolic walls” that negatively affect access to social circles and cultural facilities in the city, as well as making it harder to gain opportunities in the labor market.

3. “You’re in the Vermelhão Area.” Maré’s Borders

I had been working in the field in Maré for little more than two months when I made a serious mistake that nearly stopped this research from going ahead. When approached by someone linked to drug trafficking, I ended up inadvertently breaking one of the neighborhood’s codes of conduct. My inability to deal with a territorial dispute between different trafficking factions raised suspicion about the reasons for my presence in Maré, but the situation was thankfully resolved with a quick “*desenrolo*³⁴” (straightening out). Had this not been the case, my subsequent visits to the neighborhood would have had

32 Reading the *Map of Violence 2012*, organized by Julio Waiselfisz (2011), I would like to highlight some fundamental elements about the violence index recorded in 2010. Firstly, the relationship between homicide and youth, since young people (in the 15-24 age group) were 156% more likely to be murdered than other age groups. Secondly, it is important to highlight that 91.4% of murder victims were male. Lastly, 139% more Afro-Brazilians were murdered than white Brazilians, so a black person is more than twice as likely to be murdered.

33 The term “suspect resistance” (“*auto de resistência*”) here refers to resistance to police authorities followed by death. Nonetheless, this terminology hides the fact that a large proportion of victims in those cases were summarily executed by the police (Misse 2011).

34 “*Desenrolo*” (literally “unfolding”) is the term used by favela residents to talk about a way of clearing up conflicts and misunderstandings with people linked to drug trafficking, to try to avoid problems with them, including physical punishment (Leite 2008:131).

to stop, because of mistrust that could even have led to physical punishment. My unfortunate story follows.

After a brief visit to the *quitinete* (a small house that normally consists of an all-in-one bedroom and living room) where I intended to live, I began to walk through Nova Holanda and Parque Rubens Vaz to familiarize myself with their roads and alleyways. That afternoon, I also intended to visit the Maré Solidarity Action and Study Centre (*Centro de Estudos e Ações Solidárias da Maré - CEASM*) and the Maré Museum, both of which operate on Timbau hill. The Timbau favela is located at the other end of the neighborhood, a half-hour walk from where I was. I was walking in that direction when I heard a bang caused by fireworks close by. Setting off fireworks in any trafficking-controlled favela is a warning about one of two possible situations: a police operation or an attempted invasion by rival gangs. Inside a pet supplies store, where I ran to protect myself from possible armed conflict, the shop assistant explained to me that an “*olheiro*³⁵” (lookout) had seen a police car nearby and recommended that I stay there for a while longer. Five minutes later, I decided to leave, since the flow of people on the streets seemed to have returned to normal. But after going a few steps from the shop, a limping man aged around 30 asked me where I was going. Although he was not armed, I could tell that he was (directly or indirectly) linked to drug trafficking because he came from one of the stalls set up for that purpose³⁶. Trying not to appear afraid, I replied that I was going in the direction of Nova Holanda and he answered to say that I was already there. Feeling awkward, I asked if it was “*tranquilo*³⁷” (cool) to keep going. He said yes, and then immediately afterwards asked me the same question. I replied:

I'm going to Timbau, do you know the best way to get there?

What are you going to do there? Don't you know that you're in the Vermelhão Area?

What are you going to do there?

I'm going to the CEASM to get to know their work and I'm going to visit the Maré

35 A member of the drug trafficking operation whose job is to warn (using fireworks or other means) the other members of the gang about police operations or attempted invasions by rival gangs.

36 In Maré, the drugs trade takes place in the open air, using small tables that are used to place bags filled with small portions of marijuana, cocaine, crack and, less often, ecstasy, *loló* (a psychotropic drug made using chloroform and ether) and hashish, ready to be sold.

37 This word is used by Rio favela residents to say that there are no armed conflicts. When the atmosphere is not “*tranquilo*”, it is time to be careful.

*Museum where there's an exhibition about the history of the neighborhood and...
You're crazy to say you're going there, man! Here it's Vermelhão and there it's Terceiro.
Where are you from?
I'm from Niterói [a town next to Rio de Janeiro].
You're crazy, saying you're going there! I'll take you there.
It's cool, I'll get there. It's better to go down Avenida Brasil, right? Is it "sujeira"
[dangerous] to go along Rua Principal to Baixa do Sapateiro?
[Field Diary, September 4, 2009]*

The man agreed with me and confirmed that going along Avenida Brasil was better, because it could be dangerous to go through the border areas. A young man approached us to disagree, saying that it was fine to go through the middle. I said goodbye to them quickly and said that I was going towards Avenida Brasil. Before I left, the limping man warned me:

*Never say you're going to Timbau or they'll take it the wrong way.
You're right, buddy. I messed up.
[Field Diary, September 4, 2009]*

I continued heading in the direction of Avenida Brasil, annoyed about my lack of awareness. After all, as a Rio native, I should have known to avoid mentioning rival territories and groups in favelas with drug trafficking, or I could be misunderstood and cause unpredictable consequences.

Physical attacks or even murders of people suspected of being police investigators or spies from rival gangs are not uncommon events around here, part of a context of bloody confrontations for a monopoly on drugs sales and state repression. This situation requires researchers to take special care when calculating their comings and goings in the field, trying to anticipate possibly unforeseen events. Being able to locate border areas between disputing gangs and realizing when there are police operations form valuable knowledge that reduces researchers' exposure to danger. "Knowing how to go in and how to get out" are essential methodological procedures in areas dominated by crime, as Alba Zaluar explains so well (2009:566). An understanding of the hierarchies and rivalries that make up the "tortuous" rules set by drug trafficking is also important, so as not to disturb or raise unnecessary suspicions from local traffickers.

When I began the fieldwork, there were three drug trafficking factions dominating different areas of Maré, as well as the presence of a militia (a paramilitary group composed of police officers, firefighters and soldiers who also

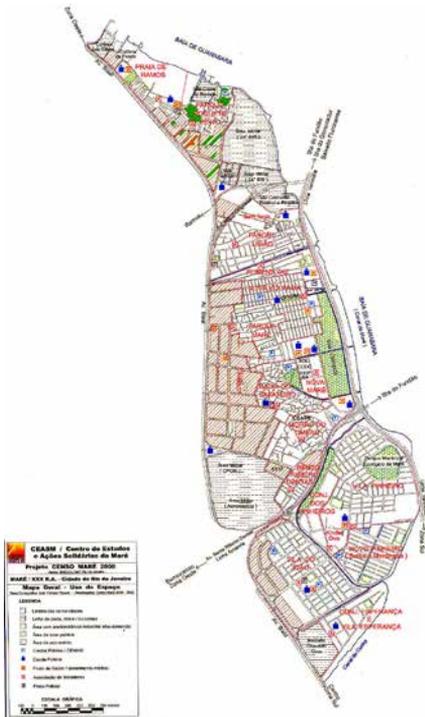


Figure 1: General map of Maré.
Source: CEASM

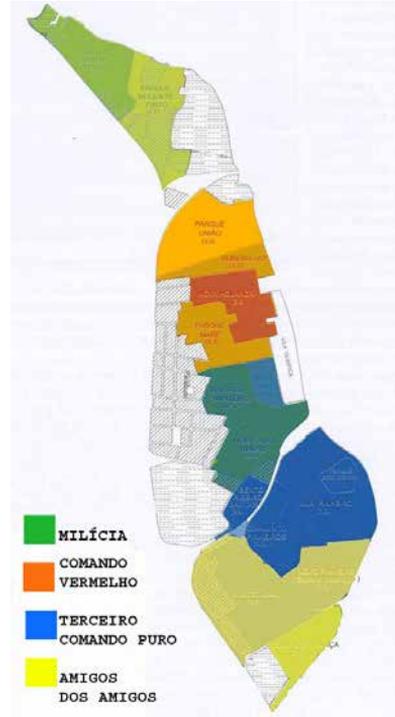


Figure 2: Distribution of armed groups in Maré in July 2009

exercise violent territorial control). To symbolically mark that control, numerous pieces of graffiti with abbreviations of the different factions can be seen on walls in the neighborhood: CV, *Comando Vermelho* (Red Command), TCP, *Terceiro Comando Puro* (Third Pure Command), and ADA, *Amigos dos Amigos* (Friends of Friends). The abbreviations are normally joined by the names of local traffickers.

Figure 1 shows the many areas of Maré with some of its most important landmarks. Next to it, in Figure 2, the distribution of armed groups in the neighborhood's favelas can be seen, as in July 2009³⁸.

The green areas are dominated by militias: Conjunto Marcílio Dias, Parque Roquete Pinto and Praia de Ramos. The favelas are controlled by the *Comando Vermelho* faction, in red: Parque União, Parque Rubens Vaz, Nova Holanda and Parque Maré. *Terceiro Comando Puro* controls the territory in blue, which includes Baixa do Sapateiro, Nova Maré, Timbau hill, Conjunto Bento Ribeiro Dantas, Vila do Pinheiro and Conjunto Pinheiro. The *Amigos*

38 Figure 2 was made by me using information collected during the research.

dos Amigos faction is shown in yellow, and its hold is over Novo Pinheiro (Salsa and Merengue), Vila do João and Conjunto Esperança.

The constant armed conflicts between traffickers and violent action by police greatly limit mobility and friendship networks for Maré residents, as in many of Rio de Janeiro's other favelas. One of the clearest ways that this happens is the difficulty in moving freely through the neighborhood. Territorial divisions imposed by the different trafficking gangs force most of the residents, especially young people, to avoid areas controlled by rival groups. They fear being mistaken for members of an enemy faction or police investigators, which would put their lives at risk. They internalize submission, even symbolic submission, that restricts their friendship networks. The influence that the gangs exert on young people pressures them to not engage with other people in the same neighborhood simply because they live in areas dominated by different, rival factions. In this process, a young person "from the other side" is known as "*alemão*" (German), which in local slang means an untrustworthy person, someone who does not deserve respect and is a transgressor. The consequence of that process intensifies the "experience of territorial confinement" felt by the residents (Machado da Silva 2008:13). Fear is strengthened and families who live on different sides of the (trafficking) borders avoid going to houses on the other side; routes across certain parts of the neighborhood are amended so as not to cross border areas; traditional leisure and meeting places start to be avoided, "suffocating" networks of sociability and neighborliness.

One particular feature of Maré that was strange to me (and put me on edge) was constantly seeing young people passing by with weapons, mostly rifles. Residents appeared to be used to it, which does not mean that they agreed with it. Among the people I talked to, showing weapons was one of the most criticized aspects, as well as the abuses of power perpetrated by members of the criminal networks. The leaders that managed to minimize those problems continued to be better respected by residents. Showing off weapons has symbolic value that goes beyond aspects linked to using them. It is a show of warlike power that aims to discourage invasions by enemy gangs³⁹. Furthermore, it is a way for a local gang to assert its power in the favela and subject residents to certain social regulation practices.

39 The work of X-9s (the "native" term for spies) to find out weaknesses in a rival group takes place constantly in Maré, according to Eliana Silva (2009:189).

Reporting or informing the police or rival groups about trafficking operations – the expression “*emic*” in favelas means snitching (“*xisnovar*”, literally “*exnining*”, from the term “X-9”) – is the worst transgression in the system enforced by criminal factions, punished by death in most cases. Robbery and rape inside the favela are also forbidden and are a direct affront to the leader of the local trafficking group; perpetrators are severely punished. It is not pure coincidence that robbery, rape and theft are rare in Maré. While the previous rules are very clear to residents, there are others that are much less explicit. Wearing a red shirt (the color of the Comando Vermelho) in Rio favelas controlled by ADA or TCP may be slightly dangerous, as well as using certain expressions linked to each gang. The code greeting for “it’s us” is “*é nós*” for CV, while the expression “*é a gente*” is used by TCP and ADA⁴⁰.

There are no explicit rules in Maré forbidding people from going into rival favelas, but it is strongly discouraged. Stories of arbitrary behavior and fatalities play a decisive role and help spread fear and certain myths, leading residents to monitor their own behavior. Although there may be some exaggeration in the stories, most young people in Maré with whom I had contact had experienced some episode of stress related to moving around the neighborhood. One of the most striking cases happened to Mineiro, a young black man of 27 from Nova Holanda, almost killed by traffickers from Vila do Pinheiro. He was crossing Maré by bus (one of the lines that runs inside the neighborhood) when he was interrogated by traffickers from Vila do Pinheiro who suddenly entered the vehicle. They asked where he lived and he said Nova Holanda and was then violently thrown off the bus. Mineiro tried to argue, telling them that he was coming back from work (he was wearing the company uniform), and that he was a worker who had nothing to do with trafficking.

After being slapped in the face several times, he heard the younger traffickers encouraging the others to kill him and accusing him of being an X-9 (spy). As he was nervous, Mineiro forgot to say that he had family in Vila do Pinheiro, which could have saved him from the impending tragedy. They

40 There were times when the rival groups to Comando Vermelho (VC) in Maré recommended that residents did not use red clothing. However, this was no longer the case when I carried out the fieldwork. According to one of my informants, the factions were unable to impose that rule because red was the dominant color of the most popular football team in Rio de Janeiro, Flamengo. I also did not see any hostility from traffickers to the color green (associated with TCP) in favelas dominated by CV. Unlike the colors, code greetings are a much more direct reference to each of the criminal factions, and using them in the wrong territory should be avoided.

continued in the direction of the sewer channel, because they did not want to leave his body in a public place. Luckily, he was recognized by a friend who used to do motorbike races with him in Maré, and he vouched for him, saying that he was a good person. The description of Mineiro's motorcycle was recognized by one of the traffickers, which saved him from a pointless death.

This episode illustrates the reasons that drive most of Maré's residents to avoid moving around territories dominated by rival gangs, especially young people, who are more exposed to the violent, arbitrary behavior of criminal groups⁴¹. As they are forced to take traffickers' pressure seriously, young people in Maré normally follow a set of procedures in order to reduce the unpredictability of the gangs' actions, whose rules vary from faction to faction, style of leader, the characteristics of the individual in question and the specific situation. The precarious stability in the regulation of behavior by the gangs leads some authors to consider the term "laws of trafficking" to be inappropriate (Leite 2008; Farias 2008). "Violent sociability" is the inherent force that regulates social relations perpetrated by drug trafficking factions, whose sense of otherness is practically non-existent, and physical force is the main reference in coordinating actions (Machado da Silva 2008:42).

Since my first visit to the neighborhood, the incident mentioned was the only time I was directly approached by someone from trafficking, in contrast to what I had expected. I had imagined that at several times throughout the fieldwork I would be forced to justify my presence in Maré. To avoid misunderstandings I took some special precautions. One of those was consent from the Favela Observatory⁴² (*Observatório de Favelas*) to say that I was a member of staff or researcher from the NGO if I was confronted about my comings and goings in the neighborhood, which was never necessary. I also avoided walking around without the company of young people from the neighborhood at night, when trafficking was more present. I hardly crossed borders between rival gangs, choosing instead to go around (outside Maré) via Avenida Brasil, while remaining constantly aware of possible incursions by the police or enemy gangs. I learned from the dancers in the neighborhood

41 Women, the elderly and people who carry out certain professional activities (teachers, postmen, pastors, NGO staff) have more freedom of movement, since the risk of their being accused of espionage is almost non-existent.

42 The Favela Observatory is an institution based in Nova Holanda directed towards research and developing public policies about favelas and other areas created by underprivileged groups. To see more details, visit the website: <http://www.observatoriodefavelas.org.br>

to distinguish between the sound of armed conflicts and merely testing or demonstrating weapons⁴³ and I developed different strategies for getting into and out of the neighborhood: I checked internet newspapers to find out if any police operations were underway, and I tried to detect possible changes in routine or flows of residents around Maré that indicated any danger, or I even asked passers-by or my informants if the “coast was clear”.

As I began to gain visibility and trust (the trafficking people saw me in the company of Maré’s breakdancers) I began to walk alone at night, and at the same time I explored new areas. I think that it was easier for me to go into and move around Maré because of three elements that weakened the control and censorship mechanisms used by the trafficking gangs. The first is related to Maré’s characteristics, since its size and the intense movement of people (residents or otherwise) makes it unfeasible for there to be personalized surveillance of passers-by. Unlike favelas where few NGOs work, the traffickers in Maré (and in Nova Holanda in particular, which was the focus of my field-work) were used to seeing people from other parts of the city: NGO workers, teachers, traders and customers who took advantage of the extensive supply of products and services at affordable prices⁴⁴. Secondly, my appearance, attitude, gestures and clothes showed that I did not live in Maré or any other favela. My middle-class social background was expressed in my body, specifically in my skin tone (lighter than most⁴⁵). At the same time, wearing better quality clothes showed a difference in class that ended up alleviating possible suspicions that I might belong to a rival gang. I believe that if I were black I would have had many more problems with traffickers and the police⁴⁶, since it would be easier for them to classify me into the stereotype: black/

43 The sound of weapons testing or training by traffickers is different from gunfire between rival groups or with the police, because different weapons and calibers are used: machine guns, pistols, shotguns and grenades.

44 According to some members of NGOs established in Maré, local traffickers are used to seeing people from outside moving around the neighborhood, which is not so common in other favelas dominated by criminal gangs. Even within Maré, there are differences in the way that trafficker violence and control are enforced, and it varies from gang to gang and leader to leader.

45 There is a large presence of migrants from north-eastern Brazil (mostly white, from north-eastern states) in Maré, especially in the Parque União favela. However, in Nova Holanda, where I concentrated the study, most of the population is from Rio de Janeiro and came from the favelas removed in the 1960s, and black people are noticeably over-represented.

46 As regards the police, I was only stopped once. I was quickly searched, they checked my documents and asked me some questions about what I was doing there. I answered that I lived in Niterói, that I was part of the Favela Observatory and that I was carrying out research for university about young people and hip hop in the neighborhood, and was quickly allowed to move on.

poor/favela resident = outlaw. Finally, my link to a group of recognized and easily identifiable young people – the colorful, loud costumes of the b-boys and b-girls (breakdancers) contrasted with the Maré residents’ traditional Bermuda shorts, flip-flops and t-shirt – helped me to become associated with “the hip hop crowd”, as it was known by trafficking people. They did not need to approach me, therefore, to find out who I was or what I was doing in the neighborhood. The answers could be found in my face, my clothes and those I was with⁴⁷.

4. “Another Maré is possible”. Organizing action for peace

I’ve never been to Baghdad, I’ve never been to Bosnia, I’ve never been to Afghanistan, but I imagine that it’s the same there. They really are acts of war: screaming, a grenade exploding, rifle shots, people shouting, saying that I-don’t-know-who has died, screaming that they’re going to kill the other one. In my street, near my house, a friend (neighbor) had his house shot at. It really feels like war, but it doesn’t turn into a war itself.

[Jorge, 34. Interview, November 26, 2009]

For around five months in 2009 there were intense conflicts in Maré between two drug trafficking factions, which led to the deaths of more than 40 people (many of whom were not involved in crime in any way), according to information from the neighborhood’s NGOs. They were difficult times, mostly for the residents of Vila do Pinheiro, Conjunto Pinheiro, Vila do João, Salsa e Merengue and Conjunto Esperança, trapped by armed confrontation between the ADA and TCP gangs, rivals in a territorial dispute. Although violence was not new to Maré, it intensified from the end of May 2009, when TCP traffickers increased their hold over Vila do Pinheiro and Conjunto Pinheiro. Practically overnight, these favelas woke up under a new yoke. Members of ADA, forced out of those areas after intense exchanges of fire, focused on the other territories that they controlled, in an attempt to secure what they still had and recover what they had lost⁴⁸. For many of the neighborhood’s residents, the police’s action in that incident was not neutral and

47 Later, I found out that local traffickers had asked some young people in the neighborhood questions about me.

48 At the time when I started the fieldwork (June 2009), these confrontations had already begun. The distribution of armed groups in Maré at the time can be seen in Figure 2.

did not confront both parties involved. They denounced the police for supporting one of the gangs (TCP). The police, aided by the *Caveirão*, altered the balance of power and triggered the terrible armed conflicts that followed⁴⁹. This would be the start of one of the bloodiest periods in Maré's history.

My entry into the neighborhood was marked by that climate of fear and tension. In the first few weeks of fieldwork, I did not dare to visit the locations being disputed, since they were scenes of intense gunfire and arbitrary behavior. I got news about the evolution of this “war” through Jorge, a geographer and researcher at the Favela Observatory and Vila do João resident. In fact, it was he who warned me about the inaccuracy of using the word “war” to describe the violent atmosphere at the time:

It isn't a war. The way I see it, war involves two enemies without any kind of dialog. If you have participation by police, if you have participation by public actors, if you have corruption then there is no war. What you really have are confrontations between armed groups for control over the territory. (...) Otherwise the guys will start thinking that this is a war, and civilian losses become acceptable: collateral damage. That's when you'll see the secretary [from the Secretariat of State for Security] saying, when confronted with the death of five residents: “No, but it's collateral damage, they're civilian losses, this is a war”. It ends up justifying the militarization of favelas. [Jorge, 34. Interview, November 26, 2009]

In fact, José Mariano Beltrame, Secretary for Public Security of the State of Rio de Janeiro said, in 2007, to justify the many deaths resulting from police operations in the favelas: “This is a war, and in a war people are wounded and killed⁵⁰”. Using the justification that some areas of the city were in civil war, the deaths of innocent people began to go unpunished, and police excesses understood as inevitable in the struggle against crime. At the same time, exterminating members of trafficking gangs, mostly young people and teenagers, is legitimized by an unprecedented criminalization of poverty. These ideas are consistent with the ideology, widely spread by the media and political authorities, that a “good outlaw is a dead outlaw”, a view tolerated by many segments of civil society⁵¹.

49 This version of events can be read in several newspapers and blogs. One example is this story: <http://extra.globo.com/casos-de-policia/caveirao-servico-do-traffic-na-mare-297199.html>

50 Interview available at: <http://veja.abril.com.br/311007/entrevista.shtml>

51 It is not uncommon for Members of Parliament and other Brazilian politicians to use this type of rhetoric,

After the invasion of Vila do Pinheiro and Conjunto Pinheiro, there was an impasse in the conflict between the two rival gangs, and violence rose in the other locations (still) under the control of ADA: Vila do João, Salsa e Merengue and Conjunto Esperança. For some months, the criminal groups disputed the hegemony in those areas, and armed confrontations stopped being exceptional and profoundly changed the residents' day-to-day life. Some local businesses had to close or change location; leisure and socializing in the neighborhood's streets began to be avoided; and abuse by traffickers increased significantly, along with the number of victims of "stray bullets"⁵². In an attempt to respond to the situation, residents, neighborhood organizations (NGOs, churches and other institutions) and members of human rights associations joined to organize a demonstration for peace.

The preparation meetings for the demonstration took place at the Vila do João Residents' Association and involved between 20 and 30 people, mostly residents from the neighborhood. The demonstration was called "Action for peace. Another Maré is Possible. To Value Life and Put an End to Violence" and was scheduled for September 20 (Saturday) 2009 at 8 a.m. It was organized by several representatives of the "association world" in Maré. At the first meeting I attended, discussion focused on drawing up the text for the leaflets that would be distributed throughout the neighborhood, and there was controversy over whether the murder of two young people by the police, months before the spread of the violence experienced at the time, should be mentioned or not. One of the participants did not agree with mentioning it, since it could link the demonstration to police violence. She argued that the priority was to denounce the confrontations between trafficking gangs, responsible for the death of approximately 20 people in June alone. Most of those present agreed with that view, and they began to discuss whether they should include the expression "conflict between traffickers" or not. The alternative was merely using the word "conflict" and leaving the rest of the message implicit. One of the young people present did not agree with removing the word "trafficker", until one resident said very naturally:

which is also part of the discourse of many sensationalist programs that exploit the phenomenon of urban violence in the hunt for bigger television audiences. According to research carried out in 2008 by the Special Secretariat for Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic, 43% of Brazilians agree (fully or partly) with the expression "a good outlaw is a dead outlaw". For more information, see: <http://zerohora.clicrbs.com.br/rs/noticia/2008/12/bandido-bom-e-bandido-morto-43-dos-brasileiros-concordam-com-a-expressao-2329250.html>

52 This term is used for shots from firearms of unknown origin.

We're scared! What residents are going to go to the demonstration if we talk about traffickers?! The residents will think: "Am I going to badmouth them? No way am I going to the demonstration".

[Field Diary, September 4, 2009]

This was a controversial topic, and several people wanted to take part, talking at the same time. One of the main neighborhood leaders, the director of an important local NGO, spoke and began to direct the discussion:

We are meeting here not because of this particular conflict, which has gone beyond all acceptable limits. We are meeting because we want to build a movement that can discuss another kind of public security here for Maré. We don't want police occupation, like the ones in the Alemão favelas that didn't bring any safety for the residents, only fear and abuse.

[Field Diary, September 4, 2009]

Everyone accepted that the text on the leaflet should not make any mention of trafficking, with the aim of ensuring that residents participated and were safe at the event. But there would be some mention of abusive, violent police intervention. Another important point at the meeting was related to a sensitive subject: how would they mediate the event between police and local trafficking gangs? With the first institution, it was simpler, and it was decided that two representatives from the movement and an official letter would be sent to the Military Police Battalion that operated in Maré to inform them about the demonstration. The organizers feared that the police would come to the event, and it would cause gunfire and for the action to be shut down. The ill-fated actions of the police at the Conference on Public Security in Maré were also discussed, when the presence of the *Caveirão* triggered armed confrontation with local traffickers. The participants agreed that the trafficking gangs needed to be told about the event indirectly using leaflets that would be distributed, since many said that they did not recognize it as “representative of anything at all”. According to the program established, the demonstration would begin with a religious celebration at 8 a.m., followed by speeches by local representatives. The proposal for cultural groups to perform was welcomed, and the following collectives were chosen: the Vila Olímpica da Maré dance group, the Maré breakdance group, the carnival group “Se benze que dá” and APAFunk. To end the demonstration, it was suggested that a minute’s silence be held to honor those

OUTRA MARÉ É POSSÍVEL: PELA VALORIZAÇÃO DA VIDA E O FIM DA VIOLÊNCIA.

No domingo, **20 DE SETEMBRO**, haverá um ato organizado por moradores, associações, igrejas e organizações de dentro e de fora da Maré. Em um momento em que se tornou impossível conviver com os constantes conflitos, cabe a nós, os moradores da Maré, declarar nosso luto e clamar pela paz. Não aguentamos mais a violência e queremos exigir o fim dos confrontos armados que nos tiram a liberdade e a vida.

Realizar um ato público na Maré significa deixar claro que, nós moradores, não aceitamos que vidas sejam interrompidas, como em junho deste ano, quando dezenas de pessoas foram assassinadas na comunidade, sem contar os feridos. De lá para cá, o número de vítimas só aumenta. A imprensa não noticia. Os governantes ignoram. Quando fazem algo, apenas repetem a ação repressora que costumam utilizar nos espaços populares, gerando mais violência. Entendemos que as ações do Estado não podem ser as mesmas que vêm ocorrendo historicamente nas favelas. Sendo assim, queremos a partir desse ato criar um movimento que luta por outra segurança pública como direito dos moradores da Maré e de todos os espaços populares.

Se para muitos a vida por aqui vale pouco, para nós, moradores, ela é sagrada e deve ser valorizada, sempre. Em memória de todas as vítimas da violência, nos uniremos para defender a vida e pedir a paz nas 16 comunidades da Maré.

NÃO QUEREMOS NOSSAS ESCOLAS VAZIAS!

NÃO QUEREMOS NOSSAS CASAS INVADIDAS!

NÃO QUEREMOS NOSSA COMUNIDADE ÀS ESCURAS!

QUEREMOS NOSSAS CRIANÇAS BRINCANDO NAS RUAS E NAS ESCOLAS!

QUEREMOS A LIBERDADE DE PODER CHEGAR E SAIR DE CASA A QUALQUER HORA!

NÃO QUEREMOS NENHUM TIPO DE VIOLÊNCIA!

NÃO QUEREMOS MAIS CORPOS NO ASFALTO!

QUEREMOS A VIDA DO POVO DA MARÉ RESPEITADA ANTES DE TUDO!

Figure 3: Action for Peace leaflet

killed in the conflicts. Finally, all those present undertook to mobilize institutions and “Maré civil society”: Evangelical pastors, Catholic priests, workers from schools, crèches, health units, NGOs, Angolans⁵³, residents’ associations, young people from hip hop groups.

At the second meeting I attended, there were around 30 people, split into a group writing the text for the leaflet and another that discussed the logistical preparations for the action for peace. There were more representatives from institutions than at the previous meeting, among whom three Evangelical pastors and a Catholic priest, easily identifiable by the bibles on the table. The Catholic Church had already undertaken to support the demonstration (it would provide a vehicle to publicize the event) and the participants had highlighted that it was important for other churches to participate in the process. The small number of Evangelical church representatives worried some of those involved, who wanted to incorporate more religious persuasions in the mobilization process. Their concern was understandable, since churches were among the most active institutions in Maré, and were able to mobilize a wide range of residents. For that reason, it was decided that a letter would be written to invite Maré’s churches to join the demonstration. It was further decided where banners advertising the event would be displayed, the number of leaflets that would be printed and distributed, the vehicles that form the “sound car”, among other tasks. The two groups joined to read the latest version of the leaflet and some suggestions were incorporated. The demonstration leaflet can be seen in Figure 3.

The song *O Iraque é aqui* (“This is Iraq”), by Samba musician Jorge Aragão, was chosen to publicize Action for Peace. The lyrics of this song reveal the atmosphere that was experienced in Maré:

<i>O Iraque é aqui</i>	<i>This is Iraq</i>
<i>Tá pegando aqui dentro</i>	<i>It’s taking hold in here</i>
<i>O Iraque é aqui</i>	<i>This is Iraq</i>
<i>O povo tá com medo</i>	<i>The people are afraid</i>
<i>E há que se entender. Crer</i>	<i>And everyone must get along. Believe</i>
<i>Eh! Carandiru, Bangu</i>	<i>Hey! Carandiru, Bangu</i>
<i>O Iraque é aqui</i>	<i>This is Iraq</i>
<i>O gueto tá fervendo</i>	<i>The ghetto’s seething</i>

53 There is a large number of Angolan immigrants living in Maré, primarily in Vila do João.

<i>Pior que isso aqui</i>	<i>Worse than this here</i>
<i>Que a gente tá vivendo</i>	<i>That we are living</i>
<i>É saber que o poder</i>	<i>Is knowing that power</i>
<i>Pode poder</i>	<i>May, might</i>
<i>Trocar de mão</i>	<i>Change direction</i>
<i>Fingir que até ficou de mal</i>	<i>Pretend that it's against us</i>
<i>Sabe porquê?</i>	<i>Do you know why?</i>
<i>Aqui tudo é bom, aqui tudo é bom</i>	<i>Everything's good here, everything's good here</i>
<i>Aqui tudo é bom, aqui tudo é bom</i>	<i>Everything's good here, everything's good here</i>
<i>Aqui tudo é bom, aqui tudo é bom</i>	<i>Everything's good here, everything's good here</i>
<i>Toca bola e samba que eles baixam o som</i>	<i>Play football and samba and they'll turn down the sound</i>

[Song, O Iraque é aqui. Jorge Aragão]

We left the meeting to hang up one of the banners that announced the demonstration at the border between Vila do João and Vila do Pinheiro. As there were no signs that there could be gunfire at that time, we crossed a small bridge over the sewage channel that divided the two places. We were at the “heart” of the conflict, and while we were hanging up the banner, one of the young people exclaimed: “It’s been months since I last set foot on this side”.

Afterwards, I had lunch at a nearby restaurant with one of the representatives of Ação Comunitária (Gabriel), and I took the opportunity to visit the NGO’s facilities, which operated in Vila do João. That afternoon, I walked to Nova Holanda inside the neighborhood, and not via Avenida Brasil (outside) as I had done the last time. I was accompanied by Gabriel, who knew the best ways to avoid possible armed confrontations. We were still in Vila do João when we came across a *Caveirão* parked on one of the streets, with police talking next to the armored vehicle. Children were playing in the neighboring streets, which seemed to suggest that there was no imminent danger of conflict. We passed by the *Caveirão* and, in Conjunto Pinheiro, Gabriel showed me the path for pedestrians, which crossed the Linha Amarela (one of the city’s important expressways), that made the connection to the other part of the neighborhood, and I continued my journey alone. From the heights of the footpath I could see the vastness of Maré, with Timbau hill and Conjunto Bento Ribeiro Dantas, better known as “Fogo Cruzado” (Crossfire), in front of me. It is formed of post-modernist inspired houses: its walls are brick and

exposed concrete and the roofs sloped⁵⁴. This place had been in the firing line of battles between criminal factions for a long time. So the name “Fogo Cruzado” is more than a metaphor. Nonetheless, since the recent expansion of TCP, residents in the area were experiencing times of relative calm.

5. “I want to be happy. I want to walk peacefully around the favela where I was born.” Demonstration for Peace

I arrived at Vila do João at around 8.30 a.m. to take part in the action for peace. I found some participants from the preparation meetings distributing leaflets close to the bus stops. They were apprehensive about the demonstration, because the night before there had been a “hell of gunfire between two rival gangs”. I went with one of them towards the inside of the neighborhood, when I noticed a crowd of around 400 people gathered next to the Catholic church São José Operário, located between Vila do João and Vila do Pinheiro, i.e., on the border between ADA and TCP domains. The walls of the church were riddled with bullet marks, something that was stopping worshippers from going to mass.

“I canceled the evening masses. Others, which used to bring 400 to 500 people, now barely bring 100. The church is covered in bullet holes. This is a never-ending, constant war that, as unbelievable as it sounds, sometimes reaches its peak on Saturday mornings.”

[Father João Carlos, September 20, 2009]⁵⁵

Most people who had gathered for the demonstration had just come out of mass (the best attended in recent months, as Roberto, a researcher from the Favela Observatory, told me) after the priest João Carlos had strongly encouraged the congregation to participate in the action. I asked Roberto about the residents’ apprehension. He was harsh in his response:

People may say that they’re afraid of getting shot, but when it’s time to go to a funk dance, nobody’s afraid. [Adalberto. Field Diary, September 20, 2009]

⁵⁴ Built in 1992 by the public power, Conjunto Bento Ribeiro Dantas (“Fogo Cruzado”) received residents from other favelas that were considered to be at risk from floods, landslides, etc. Its unusual architecture, specifically the sloping roofs, was planned with a view to discouraging residents from changing the original plan and avoiding verticalization (Jacques 2002:47). But this did not stop some residents making modifications to the buildings, including vertical expansion.

⁵⁵ Interview taken from the websites: <http://www.chicoalencar.com.br/chico2004/chamadas/pronuncs/pronunc20090924b.htm>



Figure 4: Action for Peace in Maré

The banner inviting people to the action led the demonstration and was accompanied by representatives from local bodies (NGOs, churches, associations), members of the human rights sector and other supporters. Many people were dressed in black, and others were in white t-shirts with the action's motto, "Another Maré is Possible. To Value Life and Put an End to Violence". There was a strong religious element, and many people (mostly women) carried chalices, crosses and other Catholic symbols, as well as flags from several countries: Brazil, Portugal, Japan, the UK, etc. We stopped in the middle of a street in Vila do João, where João Carlos spoke. He stressed the importance of unity to fight for peace and, at the end of the speech, he asked if there were any representatives from Evangelical churches who wished to speak. Since no-one appeared, he asked for all those present to join hands and pray. After this brief ritual, a neighborhood leader made a speech stressing the importance of coming together to demonstrate. Holes opened up by bullets in the walls of houses and cartridges on the ground were the physical signs of the violence that was being experienced, which was reinforced by numerous pieces of graffiti referencing gangs' power – "TCP", "3 Comando Puro", "Negão Tudo 3" – followed by traffickers' names: "Bin Laden", "Pé de Sapo" and many others⁵⁶. Jorge explained to me that at

⁵⁶ The number 3 was also used as a symbol of Terceiro Comando Puro (TCP).

that time Vila do João was a neutral area. ADA had been weakened and only controlled Conjunto Esperança.

We continued in the direction of Vila do João, and the sound car began to play the song *O Iraque é aqui*, accompanied by a recording calling people to the protest. Leaflets were distributed by the demonstrators, slogans were chanted and songs were sung, ranging from Catholic songs (in which the name of the “Lord” was mentioned repeatedly) to Rio de Janeiro funk. One of the demonstrators’ favorite songs was the funk song *Rap da Felicidade* “Happiness Rap”:

<i>Eu só quero é ser feliz,</i>	<i>I just want to be happy</i>
<i>Andar tranquilamente na favela onde eu nasci.</i>	<i>And walk in peace in the favela where I was born.</i>
<i>E poder me orgulhar,</i>	<i>And be proud,</i>
<i>E ter a consciência que o pobre tem seu lugar.</i>	<i>And know that poor people have a place.</i>
<i>Minha cara autoridade, eu já não sei o que fazer,</i>	<i>Dear authority, I don't know what to do anymore,</i>
<i>Com tanta violência eu sinto medo de viver.</i>	<i>With so much violence I'm afraid to live.</i>
<i>Pois moro na favela e sou muito desrespeitado,</i>	<i>Because I live in the favela and I'm disrespected,</i>
<i>A tristeza e alegria aqui caminham lado a lado.</i>	<i>Sadness and joy walk side by side,</i>
<i>Eu faço uma oração para uma santa protetora,</i>	<i>I pray to a saint,</i>
<i>Mas sou interrompido a tiros de metralhadora.</i>	<i>But I'm interrupted by machine gun fire.</i>
<i>Enquanto os ricos moram numa casa grande e bela,</i>	<i>While the rich live in a big, beautiful house,</i>
<i>O pobre é humilhado, esculachado na favela.</i>	<i>The poor are humiliated, abused in the favela.</i>
<i>Já não aguento mais essa onda de violência,</i>	<i>I can't take this wave of violence anymore,</i>
<i>Só peço a autoridade um pouco mais de competência (...).</i>	<i>I just ask for a little more ability from authority (...).</i>

[Song, Rap da Felicidade. MC's Cidinho and Doca]

Sometimes local leaders took the microphone and explained what was happening, to try to get residents (on the streets and at the windows) to come and take part in the protest. The number of demonstrators rose substantially during the demonstration (it almost doubled) and halfway through almost 700 people were travelling through the streets of Maré demanding peace and a change in public security policy. We crossed a narrow bridge over a sewer

channel to get to Conjunto Esperança, formed of five-storey social housing buildings. At that moment, the carnival group “Se benze que dá” joined the demonstration with several percussion instruments, which enlivened the demonstration even more. Furthermore, the songs became more political, drowning out the religious chants. One of the slogans sung was: “*Não, não, não! Não quero Caveirão: quero meu dinheiro em saúde e educação!*” (“No, no, no! I don’t want the *Caveirão*: I want my money in health and education!”)

We went back to Vila do João and continued to Novo Pinheiro. Formed of low-rise houses, mostly two storeys high, this area is better-known as Salsa e Merengue, and keeps its original housing project, which shows its recent construction⁵⁷. It was in Salsa e Merengue that we saw heavily armed young people in the demonstration for the first time. They joined us, slightly apart, for some of the journey. In spite of the tension caused, there was no hostility, and demonstrators kept up the same chants and liveliness as before. I took photographs throughout the event, making use of the exceptional situation to record not only the demonstration itself but the neighborhood, too. Capturing images was extremely restricted in Maré, since it raised strong suspicions among traffickers, who feared that the photographs would be used as a means of reporting them or informing others about trafficking operations⁵⁸. Without noticing, I turned my camera to a group of armed young people. One of the protest organizers ran in my direction to rebuke me, saying that I should only photograph those participating in the action and never local traffickers. Inadvertently, I had ended up breaking one of Maré’s most important internal codes – capturing footage of members of criminal gangs without due authorization – which could open the way to unfounded accusations (that I was a journalist or police investigator) that could put my physical integrity at risk.

A little further ahead, we arrived at Vila do Pinheiro, an area that was also planned by the state, something that could be seen easily in the wide, perpendicular streets. Several pieces of graffiti with the “newly installed” gang’s initials marked the side of the houses, some in a clear attempt to

57 Salsa e Merengue was the last housing development built in Maré, in the year 2000.

58 I rarely dared to record images in the outside areas of the favela (I restricted myself to enclosed spaces) because I did not want to be confused with a journalist, which could compromise the progress of the research. Little by little, I gained the confidence to take photographs in the neighborhood’s quieter streets, which I always did in the company of a resident.

win residents over to the recent change: “TCP. No *Esculacho* [abuse]”; “TCP. Resident. The *Esculacho* is over⁵⁹”. We went down the main streets of Vila do Pinheiro and returned to the starting point. During the journey, Jorge said that several young people in the neighborhood had been killed by trafficking gangs because of misunderstandings and abuses of power. He explained the importance of being convincing when interrogated by a trafficker, because the slightest mistake could decide a “death sentence”. He confessed that he had seen a young person murdered by a trafficker in front of him. The killer then bragged: “I killed an X-9 [spy]”. After telling this story, Jorge concluded: “here, your life isn’t worth anything”. Back at the São José Operário Church, the leaflet was read and applauded by the people present. A breakdance performance was planned, but the dancers’ delay and the intense heat forced the action to close. Although the media outlets had not come, all the participants were quite satisfied with the demonstration’s success.

The conflicts between TCP and ADA would still last a few more weeks, until the latter was definitively pushed out of Maré. Day-to-day life in the affected territories went back to “normal”: children returned to the football pitches, funk dances once again attracted young people at weekends and conversations in front of the house were no longer a risk. At least until the next confrontation with the police or between rival gangs. The lack of memory and conformism of some residents in relation to Maré’s cyclical transformation into an “arena for confrontation” (Silva 2009:192) for (criminal and state) armed groups were viewed critically by Jorge, in a traumatic assessment of that time:

A lot of people died. According to calculations by some institutions, more than 50 people died among those involved in drug trafficking, police officers and residents. Where is that shown? Who is that important to? To no one, the “guys” don’t even care, and then residents forget that people died. Today “peace” is achieved and life goes on: “let’s think about the funk dance at the weekend”; “there’s going to be pagode [type of music], “the forró [type of music] dance was full of women”. They’re the kinds of things people say. Until another faction comes in and people die again. It’s a disheartening cycle, almost fatalist. [Jorge, 34. Interview, November 26, 2009]

59 “*Esculacho*” is common in Rio de Janeiro slang, and means physical and psychological attacks or arbitrary behavior.

One of the more recent episodes of serious violence in Maré was triggered by a police operation, against the backdrop of large-scale mobilizations in June 2013, which had demands that varied from an end to public transport price increases to a public security policy that respected human rights. The police action in Maré took place on June 24, with the justification of repressing a mugger who was robbing motorists who were stopped in a traffic jam on Avenida Brasil caused by a demonstration close to the neighborhood. After the suspects of those thefts escaped into Maré, an officer from the Military Police's Special Operations Battalion (BOPE) was killed after being shot in the head in a confrontation in Nova Holanda. Retaliating against the death, several police units with hundreds of men occupied the favela, aided by armored vehicles (Caveirão) and helicopters, causing a climate of terror among the residents. What came next was a real massacre, and led to thirteen dead and nine injured (many of whom were not connected to drug trafficking in any way), as well as a series of rights violations: home invasions followed by ransacking, thefts and police threatening residents.

About the murders committed by police officers, José Mariano Beltrame said the following: "it is hard to tell if there was excessive behavior by police officers in the Nova Holanda operation because it was a war scenario⁶⁰". Once again, the justification that we were experiencing a "war" was used to exonerate police and legitimize the murder of poor people in favelas, the faithful representatives of a dangerous class that has been assigned responsibility for the increase in violence in recent decades in Rio de Janeiro. Since the military dictatorship, the expression "war" has been used to mask exceptional measures that are clearly abusive and violent. If, before, it was "terrorists" who destabilized national security, nowadays it is the poor people who live in favelas and in the urban periphery who put the "democratic" regime at risk (Coimbra 2001). In this process, the assumed inextricable connection between poverty and dangerousness is artificially strengthened, justifying acts of confinement, punishment or even extermination.

60 Declaration taken from site: <http://noticias.terra.com.br/brasil/policia/beltrame-sobre-operacao-violenta-na-mare-dificil-avaliar-cenario-de-guerra,2c4a238e6e08f310VgnVCM10000098cceboaRCRD.html>

6. Final considerations

The intensification of urban violence, its representations and fears during recent decades in Rio de Janeiro is creating distance and avoidance among residents from different areas of the city. The feeling of insecurity is chronically present in Rio de Janeiro residents' day-to-day life, from conversations at cafés to care taken when leaving the house, which compromises enjoyment of the public space and social interaction and influences discourse, social practices and worldviews⁶¹. Poor regions, specifically favelas, took hold in the urban mind-set as the cause of the violent crime that afflicted the city, a social problem that has gained public notoriety since in the 1980s. Taken for probable delinquents, favela residents are accused of spreading terror and disorder in the city, so that police brutality in the areas is seen to be acceptable by a large proportion of the Brazilian population. In this case, the language of human rights loses its effectiveness, faced with a demand by wealthier classes for a type of public security that favors rich neighborhoods and private property. This is how the partiality of the rights of those who live in favelas becomes blatant, in the different treatment that they receive from the police, from the media and in access to justice. An example of this situation is the fact that state institutions do not recognize their residents and organizations as legitimate interlocutors in political arenas, since the discourse that links them to drug trafficking is constant (Machado da Silva 2008:45). This criminalization *a priori* denies them the “power of the word” and condemns them to isolation, in a process of socio-spatial segregation that is strengthened by economic uncertainty and racial discrimination (when black people are involved), in “overlapping vulnerabilities” that restrict residents' access to the city (Fridman 2008:81).

Young people are hardest hit, both by the discourse that stigmatizes favela residents and by police repression and the arbitrary behavior of trafficking. The difficulties and dangers faced when moving around in areas dominated by factions that are rivals of those in their area of residence are much higher, since they are easily considered to be members of opposing criminal groups⁶². In this context, young people from favelas are limited by a triple “barrier”: by the traffickers who dominate their area of residence, by the police who

61 While there is historical hostility from wealthier segments in relation to poorer populations, there is also increased mistrust and enmity between neighbors of the same social class.

62 Drug trafficking gangs consist of, above all, black and mixed-race men under 30, meaning that individuals with these characteristics are much more likely to be subjected to mistrust and unfounded accusations.

constantly make violent, murderous incursions into their areas and by the prevailing portrayals that see them as a “nearby enemy” (Bauman 2004:310).

In spite of the widespread violence to which they are subjected every day, favela residents may be slightly optimistic about that matter. Indignation about their living conditions is growing, and many no longer passively accept the constant attacks on their citizens’ rights by police and by outlaws. Engaged in political, cultural and artistic projects, they draw up creative strategies to assert themselves in the city and dispute their portrayals on an equal footing. In Maré’s case, the explosion in formal and informal citizen participation initiatives, together with the many relational, political and cultural processes that are transversal to them, is an example of the rationale of “city making” mentioned by Michel Agier (2011:41). Protestation against discourses of un-civilization and non-citizenship directed towards those that live in a non-city, the favelas, has been joined by intense struggles by the population, who have achieved significant improvements in the urban conditions of a place that was once a “naked city” (idem:12). Until the 1980s, the struggles focused on more basic rights to infrastructure, in light of the neighborhood’s extremely precarious situation. That was what Eliana Silva, director of Redes, calls the first generation of Maré rights, whose demands were for water, sewage facilities, road surfaces, public schools, brick houses, etc. The achievements in that period were tremendous, and meant that over the following decades the organization’s work and community mobilization have focused on demands for other rights. Cultural institutions and urban facilities were created with the second generation of rights: access to culture, leisure, sport, education, artistic and vocational workshops. In addition to the previous demands came the third generation of Maré demands, which were more linked to recognition for individual differences and the condition of citizenship: the right to be black, homosexual, women’s rights, religious freedom and, most of all, the issue of public security. These examples are part of wider changes in the political field, in which the population’s social and civic engagement is expressed in the sphere of citizenship, identity and culture, at the same time rejecting traditional forms of organization (in parties, unions or residents’ associations). The Action for Peace expressed that new dynamic of citizen organization and participation that helps to create an alternative design for urban areas, in which the favela does not “besiege” the “civilized city” but rather become integrated into it.

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Foreword

Ethnographies of Economy/ics: Making and Reading

Eugênia Motta; Federico Neiburg; Fernando Rabossi; and Lúcia Müller

In Latin languages, the words economy and economics are one and the same, as in the Portuguese *economia*. The composite *economy/ics* reflects an approach that takes economic practices, institutions and social spaces (the economy) and theoretical ideas about the economy (economics) to be inter-related and mutually constitutive spheres, rather than discrete epistemological or ontological entities. One of the objectives of this issue of *Vibrant* is to propose anthropological research into the multiple forms produced by the entanglement of these two terms. In this approach, academic economic ideas – those produced by professionals of the economy, such as academic economists, economic journalists, market consultants and marketers – shape and are shaped by ordinary economic ideas and practices, or in other words, by the economic cultures of non-specialists. Economics thus indicates a field that extends beyond the economic sciences: indeed when we focus on the latter, it is in order to observe how they function as *dispositifs* (of knowledge and control, we could say, following Foucault). Dispositifs that, at one and the same time, shape and are embedded in what the sciences and economic experts treat as external to themselves: *the economy*.¹

1 Michel Callon (1998) has highlighted the interest of interrogating the relations between economics and economy as a way of comprehending the mechanisms through which science (economics) performs its objects. However, it is worth recalling that the question of the complex multidimensional and historical relations between economic theories – ideologies in the sense of Hirschman (1977) or Dumont (1979), or cosmologies in the sense of Sahlins (1996) – and the ‘reality’ of modern capitalism, not as a uniform ontological order but as a space of diversities, was already found at the origin of the discussions concerning the nature of modernity: principally in the German social sciences of the end of the nineteenth century and especially, albeit each in a markedly different form, in authors like Gustav Schmoller, Max Weber and Georg Simmel. For a critique of the reduction of the question of the relations between economics and economy to the problematic of performativity, see Neiburg 2006.

But while in this sense the anthropology of the sciences (of the economic sciences) compels us to speak of the economy, our approach is also constructed through an inverse movement: from the economy to economics. Maintaining the original sense of the term (linked to administration of the house), we observe how the economy extends to other socio-spatial categories: the economy of a nation or a region, the economy of a social class or a class of persons. In all cases, aggregates of persons and things constructed through different principles (geographic, national, social) but always represented by numbers and in some way associated with money, as is the case of the indexes (of equality, poverty, employment, income, indebtedness, GDP, inflation or trust, for example) produced by statisticians, macroeconomists and so many other experts (like administrators, accountants, sociologists, demographers, etc.).²

The second objective of this issue of *Vibrant* is also indicated in the title, in the plural term *ethnographies*. We are not interested here in any theoretical definition (either *a priori* or *a posteriori*) of what economy/ics is (a set of institutionalized processes or an aspect of all human behaviour, for example).³ On the contrary, our proposal is a radically ethnographic approach, interested in researching the native meanings of economy/ics, in understanding the uses and meanings of the categories that serve to think and act in the economic universe, or to act and think ‘economically’ in human relations.⁴ Nor is there here an overall framework or theoretical model through which empirical studies are applied, but ethnographies that deal with actions and ideas, concepts, values and emotions, individual and collective agencies, which provoke theoretical questions through their singularity and historicity.⁵

A reverse proposal, which creatively explores the interrelation between folk practices and economic knowledge, was elaborated by Stephen Gudeman and Alberto Rivera (Gudeman & Riveira 1990).

2 This is an approach that requires us to problematize the anthropological notion of ‘house’ itself (along with the categories more widely present in economic anthropology, such as domestic group or household) by ‘ethnographizing’ the links between the space of the family and domesticity and the economy as a government dispositif, or an ‘effect of state,’ to use Timothy Mitchell’s term (1999). Also see Gudeman (2001), Gregory (2009); on numbers, see Porter (1995), Hibou and Samuel (2011) and Neiburg (2010).

3 In the 1960s so-called ‘economic anthropology’ was obsessively concerned, at least from our contemporary perspective, with defining the economic domain of social life, oscillating between two possibilities: either a set of collective institutions linked to the “production, circulation and consumption of goods,” or the ‘maximizing’ aspect of human actions, as the subdiscipline’s ‘substantivist’ and ‘formalist’ currents respectively proposed.

4 For an argument along these lines, see Neiburg 2011.

5 In line with this approach, also see the relation established by de l’Estoile (2014) between ‘the Economy,’ ‘living’ and ‘living well.’

Though not intended to be in any way representative of the discipline's contemporary output,⁶ the set of articles making up this dossier provide a good illustration of the subjects and perspectives that have captured the interest of anthropologists of the economy in recent years: concepts and practices referring to the economy of the house, linked to the anthropology of the family and relatedness (Motta); the boundaries between legal and illegal economies, along with the practices and regulations involved in street markets in a contemporary megalopolis (Hirata); policies designed to improve the economic situation of the poor (Eger and Damo) or the spread of financial pedagogies and practices (Muller); personal and institutional assemblages aimed at producing 'better' performing markets (Onto); personal and collective feelings and passions, such as those linked to the peak and decline of times and places, the gold rush and death of cities (Guedes), or those observed in the poetic universe linked to the joy of being together (Silva). Persons and objects, processes and situations, temporalities and spaces, articulated in thick descriptions that speak about differentiated monies, entangled motivations, different agents and agencies, scales and durations.

The interest in economy/ics accompanied the birth of the social sciences and the discussions concerning the nature of capitalism, the singularities of modern rationality, quantitative forms of relating persons and things, the generalization of the use of money in exchanges, and the existence of specifically 'economic' domains and knowledge. It is this context that explains the meaning of the discussions about the nature of the 'primitive economies' that so enraptured anthropologists at the turn of the twentieth century,⁷ the mid-century concerns with 'peasant' economies or 'informal' economies⁸ or, soon after, the discussions linked to 'development' and 'modernization,' and the 'contact' or 'interaction' between populations and the regime of exchanges and temporalities inherent to 'market economies.'⁹ Over the last few decades

6 We have presented the state of the art of the anthropology of the economy in Brazil in other texts: Müller 2010 and Neiburg 2011. Also see Maurer 2013.

7 On the constitutive relations between the concepts of Primitive Man and Homo Economicus, see "Minisymposium: Homo Economicus," published by the *Journal of Economic History* (2000, 32/4), especially Pearson's article and the responses from various anthropologists, as Keith Hart, Jane Guyer, Bill Maurer, Chris Gregory and James Ferguson.

8 Mintz and Wolf (1957); Hart (1973). For a radically ethnographic perspective of the 'informal economy' in line with the argument in this presentation, see Rabossi 2006.

9 Bourdieu (1977), Geertz (1963), Bloch and Parry (1989).

the renewed interest of anthropologists in economy/ics also provides a lesson relating to the discipline's history: ignoring divisions of labour (such as the one suggesting that economists should be concerned with modern economies and anthropologists with the 'other' economies or the economies of the 'margins') and critiquing and incorporating on the horizon of ethnography itself the cosmology of the Great Divide sustaining these divisions.¹⁰

The authors of this dossier, based at Brazilian universities, study situations and processes occurring in Brazil. While this does not express the internationalization currently dynamizing the anthropological research conducted in Brazil (including in the anthropology of the economy, where more and more ethnographies are undertaken in regions located outside the country), this concentration on Brazil does allow the dossier to be read too as a set of portraits of the processes transforming contemporary Brazilian society: the subjective experience of economic cycles (Guedes), the modulation of singular forms of sociability (Silva, Motta, Guedes), the dynamics of urban low-income economies (Motta, Muller, Eger and Damo, Hirata), government control of markets (Onto, Hirata), the expansion of social inclusion policies that double as macroeconomic management policies, such as the family allowance (*Bolsa Família*, Eger and Damo) or the national financial inclusion policy (Muller).

Had this dossier been written in the United States or Europe, perhaps the global economic crisis would have a more central place in the texts that follow. As well as reflecting the peculiarity of the Brazilian setting – in tune with what we could describe as a post-neoliberal neo-Keynesianism – this comprises an underlying and structuring condition of the analyzed universes. But far from imagining stable and predictable temporalities or social configurations, the texts depict the tensions and conflicts, virtualities and developments defining the contemporary world. It is these old and new tensions that emerge in the articles presented here. Other tensions and other transformations are illuminated by the fine-grained ethnography of the growth of fairs in Pernambuco, presented in the previously unpublished article, written in 1971, by Moacir Palmeira, included in the section *Déjà vu*.

As we know, the term ethnography has two meanings. It describes a research technique that is simultaneously a personal experience lived in the

10 As examples we can cite the critical reading by Guyer (2004) of Paul Bohanan's idea of spheres of exchange, Zelizer's critique (1998) of Karl Polanyi's differentiation of currencies of specific use from those of multiple use, and Dufy and Weber's formulations (2007).

interaction with other people over lengthy periods, especially in the field, and also sometimes through written or digital sources. And it also describes the product of the work of ethnographers, presented, generally speaking, in the form of written texts. The articles collected in this dossier are ethnographies in the double sense of the term. This introduction is first and foremost an invitation to read them.

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Fevers, Movements, Passions and Dead Cities in Northern Goiás

André Dumans Guedes

Abstract

In this paper I show how people living in a small town in the Brazilian state of Goiás describe the “economic” processes that have been shaping and transforming their lives over recent decades: the gold fever in the 1980’s, the construction of three large hydroelectric plants and the complex relation between this city and the mining company that “created” it. In so doing, I focus on the ideas of *movement*, *passion* and *fever*, looking to demonstrate how such categories relate these processes to other experiences and domains. In pursuing this aim, I also look to establish a counterpoint to the ways through which issues such as the social effects of large development projects or the modernization of “traditional” areas have usually been described in the social sciences.

Keywords: popular economies; development; movements; economic fever; dams; gold mining

Resumo

Neste artigo, mostro como os habitantes de uma pequena cidade localizada no estado brasileiro de Goiás descrevem os processos “econômicos” que vêm moldando e transformando suas vidas ao longo das últimas décadas: a febre do ouro dos anos 1980, a construção de três usinas hidrelétricas e a complexa relação existente entre a cidade e a mineradora que “criou” esta última. Para tanto, eu foco aqui nas ideias de *movimento*, *paixão* e *febre*, buscando mostrar como tais categorias relacionam tais processos a outras experiências e domínios. Dado este objetivo, busca também estabelecer um contraponto às maneiras através das quais são descritos, nas ciências sociais, tópicos como

os efeitos sociais de grandes projetos de desenvolvimento ou a modernização de áreas “tradicionais”.

Palavras Chave: economias populares; desenvolvimento; movimentos; febres econômicas; barragens; garimpo

Fevers, Movements, Passions and Dead Cities in Northern Goiás

André Dumans Guedes

... and then I saw this station, these men strolling aimlessly about in the sunshine of the yard. I asked myself sometimes what it all meant. They wandered here and there with their absurd long staves in their hands, like a lot of faithless pilgrims bewitched inside a rotten fence. The word 'ivory' rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it. (...) And outside, the silent wilderness surrounding this cleared speck on the earth struck me as something great and invincible, like evil or truth, waiting patiently for the passing away of this fantastic invasion.

Joseph Conrad – Heart of Darkness

A “town of pensioners”, a town closing down, a *stilled* or *dead* place: this was how my interlocutors would invariably describe the location where I had gone to conduct my fieldwork: the town of Minaçu, situated in the north of the Brazilian state of Goiás, an area of the country that began to be populated systematically from the middle of the twentieth century. Such comments would typically lead to digressions about the events there over the last two decades, after the construction of three large hydroelectric dams made it impossible to extract any more gold from the mines (*garimpos*) located along the river courses. Deserted streets, closed houses, rundown and derelict buildings: no shortage of evidence existed that the town in question had indeed seen *busier* (*mais movimentados*) and *more agitated* days in the past – during both the mining era and the time when the hydroelectric dams were under construction

Most of the people I met there had once worked in mining or related activities. If they still lived in Minaçu, it was partly because they lacked the means to *walk away* and try their luck elsewhere after this work had vanished. There was little left to do except *wait* (*esperar*) without much *hope* (*esperança*):¹ either for highly unlikely financial compensation for the losses caused to them by the dams, or for the *arrival* of new companies reinjecting some *movement* into the town, or for some kind, any kind, of initiative from politicians – just as improbable – that could help them to *walk on their own two feet* again. In the meantime, jobless and at a *standstill*, they lived off minimum income programs² and retirement pensions, occasional odd-jobs or the food baskets distributed by a social movement formed in the region to defend the rights of those affected by the dams.

By presenting their situation to me in this way, local people never ceased to challenge some of my preconceptions concerning the difficulties experienced by those “people affected by dams” in general. After all, since the mid-1980s innumerable studies across a wide range of disciplines have devoted themselves to analyzing the social impacts of hydroelectric dams in Brazil.³ For several years I myself had worked on these issues both as an academic and as a consultant for the social movement cited above. Indeed it was partly due to this background that I had decided to carry out the fieldwork for my doctoral thesis in Minaçu.

In the vast majority of these studies, and likewise in the campaigns fought by those affected by the dams, the drama experienced by the latter population is presented mainly in terms of “compulsory relocation”: the forced migration of populations living in the areas where these projects have been implemented. However, going by what people told me in Minaçu, things there took on another guise: unable to *walk away* and made keenly aware of the sedentary and *captive* lives of those who depend on the help

1 L’Estoile’s observation (2014: 13) concerning the verb *esperar* can also be applied to this context: as he notes, the term fuses the ideas of ‘expecting,’ ‘waiting’ and ‘hoping.’

2 These programs involve financial resources transferred monthly by government bodies at federal or state levels to people classified as poor.

3 In the 1980s works by Marazzarollo (2003 [1980]), Sigaud (1988), Sigaud et al. (1987) and Grzybowski (1987) anticipated and inspired research studies that would multiply exponentially from the mid-1990s. For a partial review of the existing literature, see Magalhães (2007). Consolidation of this field was attested by the organization in Belém, at the end of 2010, of the III National Encounter of Social Sciences and Dams, held in parallel with the II Latin American Encounter of Social Sciences and Dams, bringing together more than 200 works by Brazilian, Latin American, U.S. and European researchers.

of the government and other institutions to survive, my interlocutors experienced a kind of “compulsory immobility”.

The background formed by these kinds of incongruences provides the basis for my analysis of various categories central to these people (e.g. *movements, passions and fevers*). Here I am interested in exploring the specific ways through which they reflect on the changes that have marked their lives over recent years – the *agitation* of the past giving way to the lack of *movement* of the present, for example. These reflections offer another perspective for investigating universes that, from the viewpoint of the literature relating to dams or even of our intellectual common sense, are being “affected” and brutally transformed by “economic” and “modernizing” processes. Here I do no more than try to pursue the traditional anthropological injunction to respect the native point of view, attributing my interlocutors “a measure of authority in producing an understanding of their life-worlds” (Englund & Leach 2000: 226-7).

1. Cursed money and holy nuggets

Given the hardships of the present, the gold digging era is remembered with affection and melancholy.⁴ At the same time, though, the money obtained in mining was not infrequently said to be “damned” or “cursed”, especially as money that never *stops* in people’s hands.

It never *stops*, some miners say, since it tends to be spent almost immediately on *sprees, binges (farras)* and various other temptations. Others say that the money vanishes because the eagerness for more profits encourages reinvestment of capital in the mine, where the money obtained often seems to vanish in mysterious ways. Moreover, in the complicated context in which I got to know them, some miners seemed to share the kind of criticisms formulated by opponents of mining activity – frequently describing it as dishonest or non-serious work: wealth too easily obtained and thus destined to vanish just as easily. The “curse” in this sense is punishment for those who think that they can *advance* in life rapidly without hard or decent work – without merit. As a starting point to this discussion,

4 Although a vast bibliography exists on mining in Brazil in general, few ethnographies specifically focus on this topic: among the exceptions we can highlight the works of Cleary (1992) and Laretta (2012).

we should note that references to “cursed money” are also common among groups who, like miners, are often subject to moral condemnations and who live off an irregular and inconstant flow of resources: transvestites, for instance (Garcia 2008: 250) or drug traffickers (Zaluar 2004) and prostitutes (Almorin et al. 2010: 119).

However we need to pursue the question further. While these accusations are undoubtedly widespread and taken seriously, they far from exhaust everything that the miners have to say about the mobility and *movements* of resources and wealth. Firstly my interlocutors know very well that money’s exceptional volatility is not limited to the mining industry, and they would undoubtedly concur with the rural workers of the Zona da Mata region of Pernambuco described by L’Estoile (2014: 21). For the latter, “money [...] is seen as utterly unreliable. In the experience of the poor, money withers away fast. The general expectation is that, if one happens to earn money, one spends it immediately”. In the case studied by L’Estoile too, therefore, they are frequent “stories of people who, having received significant amounts of money, spent it, and became as poor as before” (2014: 22).

This helps explain the salience of the contrast made between this “cursed money” and the gold nuggets that remain still from the mining era, which, some say, “seem holy”. Not by chance they were customarily given as presents by miners to their children, forever concerned “to leave something” for them. The physical attributes of the nuggets – which justify or reinforce the cultural meanings attached to these objects – explain why they were ideal for performing the role of heirlooms to leave for one’s offspring, just as they make explicit how these distinct resources, with their different propensities to *move about*, are preferentially associated with particular spaces. On one hand we have money or gold dust whose “liquidity” enables their rapid transformation into anything else (drink, clothes, presents...) and spent in the *cabarés* (strip clubs and brothels) or any other corner of the *rua* (street), moving very easily, becoming frittered away and lost. On the other hand we have the nugget – solid, hard and *durable* – which must be carefully hidden away (*mocozada*): preferably by a woman and ideally inside the home.

Even today, therefore, adult men and teenagers can be overheard asking women (their wives or mothers) to safeguard and store their resources – “if I keep hold of it, I spend everything..”. Even things as solid as nuggets seem to become slippery and elusive in male hands, a fact shown by the many

stories in which the lumps fall back into the river or vanish from the pocket of a miner's shorts while diving in the water, as though wanting to return from where they came. Likewise the use of gold teeth, a frequent practice among miners, is intended to confer durability and permanence to the gold, preventing its dissipation by keeping it bound to the body (and far from the miner's hands where money never *stops*).

For many people these nuggets are not envisaged as savings or a reserve, something that could eventually be transformed into money through sale. Frequently they are conceived rather as something that must be kept forever, both by givers and receivers. "No way lad! I'll never give away or sell this nugget, even if I'm strung up to die, it will stay with me". Experiencing considerable financial difficulties with no money left for food, Altino and his wife went so far as to "scrape the copper" off old mining equipment to obtain a little income. Even so they never once considered selling the nuggets they had given to their two children, still young, which could have been sold for a relatively high price.

These nuggets could be said to represent, then, the kind of "fixed points, realities that are exempted [...] from the exchange of gifts or from trade" described by Godelier (2001: 17) who also reminds us that Mauss had already highlighted the existence of two types of copper among the Kwakiutl, the most important being items that "do not go outside of the family" (ibid: 54). Moreover, as objects excluded from circulation, these nuggets seem to affirm "the existence of identity differences between individuals" (ibid: 54), male giving contrasted with female keeping (cf. Weiner 1992), where the physical limits of the house signal those "conversion thresholds" analyzed by Guyer (2011: 2215), "often implicating different moral economies". The comparison with L'Estoile (2013: 22) is also instructive: while in the case studied by myself, money's fluidity is contrasted with the duration and durability of the parental relationship with children, in the case described by the author, money – "essentially short-term and fugitive" – is contrasted with friends "valued as a long-term resource: friendship is a personal relation, which is supposedly stable over time". The references to "cursed money" can thus be conceived in light of these "moral assessments of certain adjectivally marked moneys – dirty money, hot money, bitter money, money that burns like oil, 'liquid' money – [derived] from those money's positions as hinges between short-term and long-term transactional orders (Maurer 2006: 24)".

But while examples of contexts where money is rapidly consumed are far from rare – indeed its volatility or liquidity sometimes appears inherent – why should it be qualified as “cursed”? Referring to the *tropeiros* (muleteers)⁵ of the end of the seventeenth century, Buarque de Holanda (1994: 152-4) emphasizes how they lacked the “rationalizing asceticism” so typical of the bourgeois ideal: these “rustic men” were known for a “love of luxury and the pleasures”, evident in how they spent all their earnings on brothels (*cabarés*), gambling, the theatre or decorating their horses with precious metals. In relation to the miners, Cleary (1992: 123) stresses that in the region of Eastern Amazonia studied by himself and beyond, “the stories that [they] most enjoy recounting and hearing are tales of how the profits from a bonanza were spent. The more spectacular the extravagance, the greater the esteem with which the story is held”. The references to the notorious “consumerism” of the work site labourers or *peões do trecho* – who I shall introduce to the reader below – are also as old as the references to them in the literature, in various cases pervaded with a reproachful tone from the author concerned. Is there, then, some particularity that marks and interconnects contexts like these, whose notoriety arises precisely from the excessive “squandering” of money and “extravagant” forms of consumption?

2. Times of fever and passion

While the references to “cursed money” may be used to morally condemn the behaviour of oneself or others, it is also undeniable that the accounts of the mining era are permeated by other modulations: by the *passion* and the fervour, for example, elicited even today by the memory of experiences in the past. Initial caution and reticence are gradually abandoned as enthusiasm engulfs the speaker and makes him forget or overlook what might ever be reprehensible in his behaviour... How not to become excited and *agitated* with the narrative of those *busy* days of the past, during the *gold fever*?

In the academic or native descriptions of mining, the term “fever” is commonly used to explain the dynamic unleashed by the discovery of gold-rich areas that overnight start to attract a large influx of people. Cleary

5 The *tropeiros* led the trains (*tropas*) of pack animals that plied the route between diverse centres of commercial production and consumption during Brazil’s colonial era (and up until a few decades ago in regions like Goiás discussed here).

(1992: 27) emphasizes, for example, that “most of the historical literature on gold mining in colonial Brazil [...] often seems little more than the record [of these] rushes” which erupt and vanish “just like the repeated outbreaks of malarial fever”. Cleary’s image here in fact echoes my interlocutors’ own familiarity with the disease and the association with the idea of the gold rush: both gold fever and malaria begin suddenly and quickly peak before vanishing completely soon after, probably to re-emerge at another time or place, following the same pattern.

However it should be emphasized that, for my interlocutors, the economic dynamics evoked by the idea of *fever* are not exclusive to gold mining. Back in the mid-1970s, before the town was invaded by miners attracted to gold ore, it was cassiterite that triggered an intense and rapid influx of outsiders into Minaçu. Then, from the 1980s onwards and to a large extent overlapping the gold mining activity, it was the dam construction works – Serra da Mesa, Cana Brana and finally São Salvador – that *moved* the town. *Cassiterite fever, gold fever, dam fever*: all these cases involve processes that, from the native viewpoint, converge in many aspects.

Characterized by the particular modes through which they intensify *agitation* and *movement*, the times and spaces of the *fevers* are marked, therefore, by a number of traces that manifest more or less independently of the specific nature of the productive activity. On a very general level, and without any pretence to exhaust the subject, we could cite: a) a predominantly male population, caused by the arrival of outsiders attracted by the opportunities enabled by the *fever*, including the possibility of making relatively quick money; b) the huge number of *cabarés* (strip clubs), brothels and gambling houses opened to cater for this public (many of these businesses also being “mobile”, “circulating” through different areas); c) the rapid multiplication of a rich spectrum of small and medium-sized businesses and services, both formal and informal, “local” or “outside”, offering goods and services to this affluent population or to support the productive activity responsible for setting off the *fever*; d) a peculiar pattern of “urbanization” in which temporary buildings, encampments and accommodations overlap the previously existing “provisional” nature of “popular” spaces and ways of life (that very often appear more stable merely in comparison to this pattern); and e) a reorganization of the wider regional economic flows as an outcome of the

relatively brusque changes in the kinds of goods traded, the patterns of supply and demand, and the price structures.

Here it is important to emphasize that these dynamics and processes are not and cannot be confined to Minaçu: the very character of *fever*, as we have seen, presumes the need for it to be apprehended transcontextually and in a relatively abstract form. We are dealing, therefore, with a transitory phenomenon actualized through a diverse range of productive activities, which for this reason are also present in all kinds of places. Though not entirely adequate, the term “circuit” may provisionally serve to evoke a set of geographic locales or areas that become particularly frequented or targeted due to the fact that such “fevers” have irrupted (or are about to irrupt) there.⁶

It needs to be remembered that, for my interlocutors, *fever* refers not only to a specific socioeconomic dynamic, but equally to a *passion*. The agitation and frenzy that swept through the region after the announcement of the gold find seems to have affected those living there too. A *feverish* town, feverish bodies and hearts, hot-headed and disturbed spirits... Fever in both cases (and in relation to malaria) refers to a movement that is not only sudden and temporary, but also marked by very particular intensities, where the broader process that contaminates and *moves* the localities is replicated in the persons, bodies and lives swept up by it. Altino, today *blefado e rodado*,⁷ recalls with shining eyes how he “fell in love with mining”: “night after night at the foot of the mine, I really liked that a lot, it was a real *passion*, you’ve no idea just how. The miner can’t walk away from mining so easily. It’s an addiction...”

It should be noted that the desire to mine gold is intrinsically associated in these accounts with an equal “lack of control” in consuming the wealth

6 Souza Martins (1998: 690) mentions the “waves of revolts of superficial modernization” that struck towns like Pedro Afonso and Miracema do Norte, a little further to the north and on the shores of the same Tocantins River discussed here: “for a long time regions left to stagnate after the transitory experience of being on the frontier during construction of the Belém-Brasília highway”. On *fever* in the context of large-scale hydroelectric, mineral, metallurgic and farming projects, and considering only those regions specifically familiar to my interlocutors, see Nunes (1985), Antonaz (1986), Gaspar (1990), Aquino (1996), Vieira (2001) and Rumstain (2008) for example, as well as the aforementioned Souza Martins (1998). The theme is a constant in the literature on gold mining: the best ethnographic reference in this respect is the work by Cleary (1992). Largely converging with popular conceptions of the subject, the theme of fleeting wealth followed by decline is also heavily emphasized in the historiography of Goiás state. “Goiás, despite its apparent and though short prosperity, was never much more than a stopover for adventurers who abandoned the place as soon as the mines showed signs of exhaustion” (Palacin & Moraes 2008: 73; also see Estevam 2004, and Póvoa Neto 1998 for a critique of these formulations).

7 *Blefado e rodado*: without money or direction in life, and continually drunk.

obtained. This “lack of control” can also be elucidated in the references to the *controlados*, the “controlled ones”: those who have been able to *control* themselves and economize. Not coincidentally, the latter include some who today number among Minaçu’s richest men – and who, though becoming rich through mining, nonetheless managed to escape the “vicious circle” in which miners usually become embroiled. In the case of these *controlados*, the resources acquired through mining were invested in other activities where medium or long-term capital accumulation is perceived to be more viable (money lending or commerce, for example). At the same time, the ambition for gold is not accompanied in this case by the other kinds of “lack of control” that lead, precisely, to the dissipation of wealth. We could suggest that, for the *controlados*, something prevailed similar to what Hirschman (1979) called the “principle of the countervailing passion” – which, confronting and curbing more harmful passions, explains the legitimacy of avarice and the consequent constitution of the “spirit of capitalism”. For the miners among whom I lived, however, it seems that one *passion* (“extract more and more and more”, “dig, dig”) did not serve as a “civilizing medium” or “counterweight” (Hirschman 1979: 25; 33) to others (“spend, spend”). Much the opposite: the latter seem to have been sharpened or intensified by the *feverish* search for gold. It is unsurprising, then, to note the essential role played in tales of mining by the references to women, prostitution, gambling, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes – with all these elements frequently combining in practices like the *fechar cabaré*, “closing the brothel”.⁸

Moreover the fact that the climate of the *fever* appears ideal for those who want to *fritar* or “fry” their heads perhaps helps explain something that always struck me as unusual: not just that cocaine was consumed far more than marijuana among my acquaintances, but also that harsher moral sanctions were demanded for the latter than the former. Though amplified, there are undoubtedly limits to permissiveness during a *fever*: many cocaine users become offended when accused of consuming marijuana since they primarily associate consumption of the latter drug with the *malas* or small-time crooks. The valorisation of cocaine, on the other hand, seems to be

8 “You want to know what closing the brothel means? It’s when you join up with some mates, four or five, and each one puts a thousand reais, for example, into the kitty. And then for ten or eleven hours, all the women are there just for you – for us only. And in that house, for that day, nobody else comes in, it’s all for us! So the door stays shut until the next day, until the evening, with just us inside”.

directly related to its radicalization – *heating, agitating, moving* – of the already intense temperatures and velocities of *fevers*.

However this imbrication of different kinds of “lack of control” – one *passion* stimulating another *passion* – is not limited to the world of mining. Indeed *fevers* are not limited to gold digging: in Minaçu they also erupted during cassiterite mining and during the construction of the hydroelectric dams. Consequently we need to make explicit the relations that approximate – and sometimes render indiscernible – the *peões do garimpo* (mine labourers) and the *peões do trecho* (construction site labourers).

Taken broadly, the term *trecho* – “section” or “tract” – designates the work site and wider reality of the mobile or itinerant labourers employed on a temporary basis in large-scale projects of various kinds, usually located in Brazil’s Centre-North region: agroindustrial projects, mineral and metal extraction, hydroelectric plants and infrastructural works.⁹ More generally, anyone who is far from his homeland, moving town and switching jobs with some frequency may be said to be on the *trecho* – actually a fairly commonplace experience in those parts.

As well as working as miners, the large majority of my interlocutors had also been *peões do trecho* – many of them employed in the construction of the same dams that had made their work in the gold mines impossible. Others arrived in the town to work on the construction site for the first dam and after a time went into mining. Certainly there is nothing exceptional in such cases: the overlaps between large-scale projects and mining areas are relatively common in some regions (Oliveira 1989, Gaspar 1990). In these cases, one *fever* “pulls” or combines with others: especially in “frontier” regions, a series of factors contributes – or at least did so until recently – to the opening or reactivation of mining areas in the wake of these projects: a) the prior influx of labour to these areas, swelling the local population; b)

9 In his autobiography – symbolically entitled *Urrando no Trecho. Recordações de um Engenheiro de Obras* [Howling on Site. Recollections of a Construction Engineer] – Corrêa (2007: 11) provides the only explanation I know for the emergence of the term *trecho*: “[This term] comes from the big linear highway construction works where it is common practice to divide the total volume of work into lots, allocating them to different construction firms [who are assigned responsibility for different] work sections or *trechos*. In a casual encounter between workers building the same highway, it is common for one to ask: ‘What section [*trecho*] are you on?’ followed by the reply that identifies the firm responsible for the section in question and the kilometres delimiting its section of the highway. The term *trecho* became propagated outside its initial borders and, as if all of Brazil were one immense building site, came to designate all the large-scale construction projects and the men working on them, the *peões do trecho*, the ‘section labourers,’ nomads par excellence and by necessity”.

the installation of infrastructure to support these new inhabitants, thereby facilitating the access to regions that had once been too inhospitable or remote; c) the expectations of making relatively easy money in these projects (Lins Ribeiro 1988, 2006), combined with the discovery of the “costs” of these earnings and the observation that they can be obtained without much hierarchy or discipline in the mines.

At the time I first arrived in Minaçu, with the town at a *standstill*, it had become almost compulsory for many of its residents – especially young men – to leave the area, *running or ripping up (rasgando) the trecho* in search of *busier (mais movimentados)* places: the south of the state of Goiás, the hydroelectric plants being constructed in Amazonia, soybean plantations in Mato Grosso, mining areas in Bahia and Tocantins. I have explored this point in more detail in earlier works (Guedes 2012; 2013a), looking to show how professional experience far from home – i.e. on the *trecho* – is valued as a space of young sociability clearly opposed to the obligations associated with family life.¹⁰ In their eagerness to *enjoy the movement* as much as possible – and also to *enjoy “while moving”* – many of the young men that I met valued being able to work “autonomously” and temporarily much more than a *fichado* or stable job, periodically changing employer and town – and, if necessary, occupation. What I sought to show in these earlier works were precisely some of the tensions arising from use of these “extraordinary” resources (for example, the extra money obtained working overtime): their uncontrolled and “generous” spending; the efforts of their wives to channel this money into the “home”, rather than into *worldly* spending; the proliferation of *barraginhos*, children of single mothers “abandoned” by their *barrageiro* fathers¹¹; the “local” fears concerning the arrival of these “Don Juans”, relatively loaded with money and ready to spend. Today the young people who work on the *trecho* for these different companies have experiences very similar to those enjoyed by their fathers or older brothers

10 On this point, Dias Duarte (1986:177) emphasizes that “the much discussed question of the matrifocality of the working classes, backed by the empirical evidence of a large number of households that survive without the permanent presence of the man and frequently under a succession of different men, can perhaps be better understood from the angle of this male ambiguity that translates into a real and frequent ambivalence, especially during the period of late adolescence, the crucial turning point in male trajectories vis-à-vis the project of *obligation*”.

11 This term refers to the labourers who work on the dam construction sites, who frequently move from one part of the country to another as and when new projects are implemented.

during the mining era. The tales of the latter and an entire set of ideas and symbols relating to mining thus continue to stimulate new generations to experience the kinds of intensities and movements once conspicuously associated with gold digging.

I am not concerned here with discussing the supposed “causes” of these behaviours. I limit myself to suggesting that the classic *potlatch* – emphasizing its “honour” dimension more than “credit” (Mauss 1974: 99-101) – may be useful in terms of problematizing the fairly unconvincing “critical” and “anti-capitalist” moralism of authors like Souza Martins (1988)¹². Rather than adhere to sociological explanations for these motives, it is more productive to follow the movement of native categories, the convergence between what happens in the *fever* and the *trecho*, an approach that allows us to distinguish analytically some of the meanings intertwined in the very idea of *movement*: while what is foregrounded in the case of *fever* is movement as a kind of *agitation* or frenzy, what is most evident in the *trecho* is the dimension of movement as a spatial dislocation or mobility.¹³

Beyond this distinction, it must be emphasized how both the *trecho* and *fever*, as situations or contexts marked by the radicalization of *movements*, also stimulate those who experience them to *move*, making those things – like money – with which they act just as or even more mobile.

From the viewpoint of anthropological production, there is no novelty per se in mentioning these situations where the intensification of certain emotional and bodily states circumscribes specific spaces and times, in vivid contrast to the regularities and forbearance of ordinary or quotidian life. Here, perhaps, we can also locate the importance that Durkheim (2008: 547) attached to the “festival, which through its capacity to put the masses into movement and thus to excite a state of effervescence” approximates the sacred. Mauss (2003: 475) also shows how Inuit societies conceive “winter life as one long celebration” – a radical counterpoint to the “egoism of the individual or the nuclear family” (ibid: 493) characteristic of the summer. Any of my interlocutors who had experienced the *fever* or the *trecho* would

¹² Writing about the *peões do trecho* on farming projects in Amazonia, this author (Souza Martins 1998: 6) argues that their talk “is almost always dominated by the logic of merchandise and money, quantities, and imbued by a fascination with the marvellous and unlimited array of things that can be bought and sold”, a vocabulary and logic that, he states, “do not belong to the worker but to those who dominate and exploit him”.

¹³ I have paid special attention to this dimension of *movement* as dislocation in other works (Guedes 2012; 2013a; 2013b) and do not explore the question here therefore.

agree that there is something (or even much) that is “festive” about the experience. Like the Inuit winter, these are ideal circumstances for the “phenomenon of sexual licence” (ibid: 478) and for the proliferation of “a continual round of communal feasts” (ibid: 494).

However there is no need to journey so far away from Goiás to establish productive comparisons for my present argument. We can turn, for example, to what Dainese (2013: 5) has to say about the *time of politics* in the rural community studied by herself in the interior of Minas Gerais, a few hundred kilometres from where I worked. For the residents of the locality in question, this “time” is also defined by the fact that during it “there is a lot of movement”: this is “a moment involving a greater circulation of people, a diversification of events, a transformation of spaces, an outbreak of *passion*”. Not by chance these are the ideal circumstances for the emergence of “a state of affairs called a *lack of control*”. Both in *fever* and in the *time of politics*, we seem to be presented with situations involving an “acceleration” of life (Dainese 2013). This comparison is also useful since it affords a counterpoint to the “effervescences” of Durkheim (2008: 547) and the “orgies” of Mauss (2003: 501). Unlike what happens in these circumstances, mining and the *time of politics* are not exactly celebrations of the “collective” or of established social ties. As we saw above, *fever* (and likewise the *trecho*) lead to *movements of passion* and *lack of control* that generate tensions, distancing men from their families. Dainese (2013: 11) meanwhile describes how the *time of politics* offers a perfect occasion for *fight*s, *misunderstandings* and *deaths*. Not coincidentally, one of her interlocutors emphasizes that during this period “kinship comes to an end”.

But while the similarities between these two situations are striking, we also need to highlight important differences concerning the nature of the temporalities involved. The “time of politics” mentioned by Dainese is explicitly inscribed in the line of research developed by Palmeira (2001). The latter, according to Dainese herself, shows how “the organization of social life into times – [...] time of politics, time of festival, time of harvest – implies another pace to activities and behaviours” (Dainese 2013: 5). Hence, in terms of this or that “appropriate time for the performance of particular activities deemed important by society” (Palmeira 2001: 173), we are dealing with variations that, like those considered by Mauss (2003), could be called “seasonal”. The alternation, duration and succession of these *times* are thus

minimally regulated by specific parameters that, in the end, induce a degree of order and predictability, contributing to a relative “control” of these *movements* and passions. As we shall see later, though, in terms of the *fevers*, things do not unfold exactly in this way.

3. Towns that stop, come to an end and die

Albeit quickly, it seems to me necessary to evoke a number of tendencies that, from the viewpoint of the people involved in these dynamics, contrast with the *passions* and *movements* induced by the *fevers*.

The comparisons with Uruaçu – the oldest municipality in the north of Goiás, a town that once had the same population as Minaçu, but that is much larger today – are suggestive of the particular circumstances that explain why particular localities and persons are more “affectable” by *movements* than others. Uruaçu is considered a more *stabilized* town, though, not only because of the presence of “farms” that have been there for decades, but also because “well-established folk” live there. Uruaçu, after all, is not like Minaçu, the latter being a place full of *andarinos*, “outsiders” and “single girls” (in the joke that does the rounds in the town, these young women need a *poloque* on their neck – one of those bells used on cattle to prevent them from becoming *lost*).

Minaçu itself is traversed by vectors that, resisting what seems so turbulent in *fevers*, help us to understand why this locality continues to exist – albeit precariously and at least for now. It is in this sense that we can comprehend the apparently contradictory local opinions concerning the asbestos mining company responsible for the emergence of the town in the 1960s. Known for its past cruelties and for the serious health problems that the mineral’s extraction caused to its workers and Minaçu’s residents as a whole, the company is nonetheless defended tooth and nail by the latter.

The epithet attributed to this company – known even today as the “mother of Minaçu” – sheds light on the native meanings concerning the economic *movements* that constitute this context (and other cases like it). In a universe marked by instability, movement and a constant to and fro – traits that help define the *world* as a native category (see Woortman 2009, Scott 2009, Vieira 2001) – the tie to the *mother* is seen to represent everything that is most solid and resistant. This perhaps helps us to understand the meaning of the gesture of those men deeply concerned to

“leave something” for their children, and also why gold nuggets are so well suited to this purpose. These fathers – who are so frequently and easily attracted to the *world* (and to the *fevers* and the *trecho*), travelling far away from home, leaving behind children who will very often only have vague memories of them – “leave something” for their children too by leaving and abandoning them. They leave a *memory*, a nugget: something that is solid (and a contrast to the liquidity of gold dust or money), something that *lasts*. The accounts of the wives of miners who, through caricatures or stereotypes, dramatize the difference between men and women, provide a clear illustration of this peculiar “sexual division of labour”. Men are the ones who lose their head and allow themselves to swept along by the euphoria or *passion* provoked by gold or *fever*. At such times little remains for women other than to lament or curse the husband revelling in a *cabaré*. In this context the *mother* signals a rooting that contrasts with the centrifugal elements of the *world*, a stability that opposes the ephemeral and voluble aspects of *fever*. In a world where almost everything is unstable and mobile, the importance of these mothers who remain, stay, do not leave, is undeniable: likewise the importance of what does not pass so quickly, what stays and *lasts* – like that which, in the words of Joseph Conrad, stays “waiting patiently for the passing away of this fantastic invasion”.

Indeed, and even though they created interesting possibilities, the *fevers* passed in Minaçu (or “through” Minaçu): despite everything seen to be problematic about it, the company remained – and because it remained, the town itself still existed. “Just look at this road, look at the *movement* of cars coming here. Almost all this *movement* is due to the mining company. Were it not for it, almost nobody would appear in these parts!” Hence this company is capable of attracting people, vehicles, *movement* and money to Minaçu – and also of ensuring that these things do not abandon the town, or do not leave it quickly or for good. And just like so many of these women that I met – in the period of the *fever* and still today having to deal with these attractions and injunctions that impel men to *go out into the world* or *ripping up* (*rasgando*) *the trecho* – the mining company seems to possess the capacity to, almost literally, “hold it all together”: a capacity to keep together, to impede, mitigate or ameliorate the dispersal of people and things, the general flight of everything and everyone through the world. After all, as the saying goes, someone without a *mother* is *thrown into the world*...

But the stability offered by this company – just like the kind provided by any mother – is relative. Over the last few years, the beliefs and suspicions relating to the town “ending” have been further reinforced by the threats that the mining company will be forced to close its doors due to the national and international campaigns for a ban on the industrial use of asbestos. If things were already bad with the mining company in operation – people would frequently tell me – just imagine what will happen if it actually does have to close its doors...

It should be stressed, though, that while the fact that Minaçu “is coming to an end” causes dismay and concern, it does not necessarily cause surprise or astonishment. After all, for those involved in mining in the recent past, the memory of what took place in the brief gold boom in the same region at the start of the eighteenth century is still very much alive – or has been “revived” as a consequence of all these events. In the interval of two or three decades, towns and villages – São Félix, Arraias, Amaro Leite, Cavalcante – lived their days of buzzing activity only then to be abandoned or become almost entirely depopulated, “vanishing from the map” too. Of some of these towns, there remain today only “catacombs”, “ruins” and “holes”, the “sawdust of the pioneers” (*casqueiros dos bandeirantes*) still at the end of the twentieth century visited by those searching for signs of gold deposits (Palacin 1979, Póvoa Neto 1998).

For many of my interlocutors, indeed, this is a plausible and potential (albeit very often lamentable) fate for towns and localities: at some point, they simply *end*. At the entrance to Minaçu, a banner was unfurled and soon removed by the local council: “Visit Minaçu before it’s over”. The same expression was used in Campos Belos, a nearby municipality where, after the exhaustion of the emerald deposits, the population fell from 6,000 to 3,000 inhabitants in a short period of time.

But while this *ending* may mean “vanishing from the map” – repeating the fate of São Félix, for example – it may also signal a process prolonged in time in which everything and everyone gradually ceases to *move*, becoming increasingly *stilled*. Even the social movement of those affected by the dams, over recent years and in the opinion of some, has “frozen”, becoming much less active and *agitated* than before. As I argued above, here we are dealing with movements and affects that fractally act simultaneously and analogously on persons, objects, relations and localities, situated on diverse and distinct

planes and scales. If the correlate of a feverish town are feverish bodies and spirits, a *stilled* town is correlated with *stilled* lives, things and people.

Amarildo, a former miner, told me how he had been feeling over recent years, unemployed and no longer sure what to do to sustain his family. “Can you see that there?” – and he pointed to a rusty piece of equipment on top of a pile of sand, probably all that remained of a motor – “Stilled, stilled like that there. That’s what I’ve been like these past few years, that is what my life has become”. Certainly he is not stilled out of laziness or lack of effort: he is stilled because, irrespective of how much he had already *gone after* things, he is unable to provide any more. There is no one to *help* him: those of his colleagues and bosses still living in the town face the same dilemma – it was Minaçu too that *stopped*, today a town unable to provide a return for the efforts of its inhabitants. He lacks the option to leave: at the age of fifty with a stomach complaint and a large family to support, how could he *venture into the world*, looking for another place to live?

Confronted with this kind of situation, it should be emphasized that even in the recent past (in the gold fever, the cassiterite fever and the dam fever) people like Amarildo were able to engage in certain activities and behaviours that later vanished in *stilled* Minaçu: survival through their “own business” and the existence of conditions that enabled and even facilitated the circulation between different jobs and *patrões* (bosses). Moreover, the transitory nature of *fever* is itself responsible for the emergence of money-making possibilities that, from the viewpoint of my interlocutors, are absent from more “stabilized” situations. Without entering into detail here on such a complex point, I would simply emphasize that in these contexts of *movement* and *agitation*, people were able to take advantage of the “informal” character of many of the economic activities. Put otherwise: in these cases, the “formalization” of activities – that is, their submission to the regulations imposed by the *papers* and *documents* so important and problematic in the life of my interlocutors – had not yet occurred, nor made much headway into other areas of social life. Situations marked by *movement* invariably generate gaps and “market niches” whose exploitation by these kinds of people tends to be temporary: not only because they tend to become regulated over time (requiring *paperwork* that they are unable to obtain) but also because this regulation – from their point of view – is invariably linked to the arrival of *firms* or individuals with more capital who will begin to explore these

opportunities “perennially”. In relation to this “regulation”, the arrival of the dams also had another impact in Minaçu, insofar as the presence of IBAMA (the Federal environmental protection agency) led to the emergence of the “environment” as an issue and the ban on extractivist practices that traditionally afforded non-monetized access to resources like game, fishing, timber collection, fruit harvesting and even small “urban” crops.

This *stilled* and *dead* Minaçu that I came to know was also, therefore, a more “regulated” and “formalized” town with a much greater presence of official agencies in people’s lives. Not coincidentally, it was only recently that many of my interlocutors, for the first time in their lives, had sought to obtain *documents* such as identity cards and tax registration numbers. They did so in part because their physical survival became increasingly independent on government *assistance*: pensions, minimum income programs and staple food baskets, receipt of which requires the presentation of such documents.

4. Mapping and hunting movement

It should be clear, then, that in speaking about mobility we are not just talking about people. From the viewpoint of my interlocutors, instability and movement are attributes of things of the *world*. In this sense it is *movement* – “where is this town’s *movement*?” – that is itself in movement, forever shifting and changing place.

Whether *stilled* like Amarildo cited above or living at the peak of the *fever*, these people make use of such *movements* in the constitution and dissemination of specific forms of knowledge. In Minaçu’s rounds of conversation, the subjects privileged by participants indicate how almost everyone valorizes such knowledge – as specialists particularly interested in monetary flow, pondering and debating the circulation of income and the coming and going of resources, continually focusing their attention on *signals* that allow them to evaluate on what footing the town’s *movements* (of money, but not only money) were, are and will be. Nobody there is unaware of what comes to pass (and what *passes by*) in the town’s main avenue, the point of concentration and attraction of what remained of the *movement* in Minaçu.

The day I set foot there for the first time, I was asked a question that would be repeated throughout my stay. “So, you come from Rio de Janeiro

then? What *firm* do you work for?” Concerned to make my purposes clear, I would invariably reply that I was linked to the university and there to carry out *research*. It was only towards the end of my field research that I realized that, by stating things in this way, I was suggesting to my interlocutors something quite different to what I intended. As I would discover over time, the people there have been familiar with visitors like myself for some time: someone white, *educated*, coming from a large urban centre to *research* a subject in places like Minaçu. In the hotel where I stayed during my first days in the field, I was in the company of other people with the same characteristics: but they were there to conduct *mineral research*.¹⁴ If local residents are always attent to the circulation of such people, it is because everyone knows that *research* work may announce the *arrival* of another large mining firm: “yeah, they say that Vale is arriving...”¹⁵

Researching those who conduct *research*, mapping the *arrival* and circulation of these outsiders, *ficar curiando* (pretending to be naïve, but listening carefully), learning about the *rumours*: a car with the logo of such-and-such company parked in the town centre, a truck without any identification drove past carrying prestigious and *well-read* people – and some person already become *agitated*. In an interview given to the local radio station, the mayor comments on his visits to Brasília or Goiânia, can one really believe that he will bring these investments to Minaçu? “And if Minaçu is left with just the town council, you know how that will turn out...” The “town council” here refers metonymically to all the state resources passed onto the town. It is also for this reason that the idea of turning into a “town of pensioners” alarms the residents so much. Everyone knows what a town “without a firm” means. Many have been born in such places, or have passed

14 Certainly this is no mere coincidence. On the historical relationship connecting fieldwork in geology and anthropology, see Kuklick (1997).

15 “The excellent performance [of Goiás’s mineral economy in the 2000s] attracted the interest of various groups active in the sector that had turned their back on mineral exploration in the state. They returned in force. In 2004 the mighty Companhia Vale do Rio Doce (CVRD) alone [the company Vale mentioned in the above comment, a Brazilian firm that is today one of the largest mining companies in the world] requested more than 200 permits from Goiás’s National Department of Mineral Production (DNPM) to explore the state’s subsoil” (Galli 2007: 63). While I was still conducting my fieldwork in the north of Goiás, it was the town of Crixás – founded during the eighteenth-century gold boom and since then experiencing an alternation between periods of ostracism and *fever* – which *moved* with the activities of the mining companies, even coming to be called “the Dubai of North Goiás”: “The frenetic buzz of motorbikes, the lack of hotel vacancies, a throbbing commerce. The buzz typical of a large economic centre has taken over the apparent tranquillity of the Goiás municipality of Crixás, a little town of 15,100 inhabitants, 350km from Brasília” (Correio Braziliense 2010).

through them or lived in them for a while, or have family and acquaintances living there. The absence of *movement* also alarms people because it generates certain conditions that make the much feared and always possible *return to captivity* more probable: the return to a life marked by a lack of autonomy and freedom, like that experienced by their ancestors when they were living under the slavery system.

But as a result of their experiences too, my interlocutors were far from buying into the discourse propagated by these *firms* and politicians, remaining fairly sceptical about the solution promised by initiatives such as the arrival of Vale in Minaçu. Apparently more wary and less enthusiastic than the town's "elite", their ambitions on this matter were far more modest: rather than "progress" or "development", they dreamt of finding an odd-job or some temporary work, or obtaining more demand for the basic services they could offer should *movement* return to the town. ("Clothes washed. I make uniforms for firms in general. Rooms for rent. Builder and carpenter. Abelha Rainha Cosmetics Reseller. I do any kind of design. We paint chairs and tables. Sweets, cakes and savoury snacks sold. Popcorn Pete – parties and events".)

For the night guards and maids working in guest houses and hotels – just as for their employers – the information and contacts obtained in these establishments seem to function as a supplement to their paltry wages: they found half a dozen muddy uniforms to wash, a job as a topography assistant in Minaçu itself, help for a brother trained as a drill operator to get a job on a project in Niquelândia, a tip concerning which places are *hot* right now.

These tips are also provided by those who are already working on the *trecho* and have returned to spend some days at home, or telephoned to advise about a job opportunity to be taken up without delay, as well as by travelling salesmen, truck drivers, dam construction workers, state employees or anyone who is *roving the world* and passing through Minaçu. As the *movement* is weak in this town, and while *moving about* and *advancing* there is increasingly complicated, it has also become more and more necessary – for those who are able to *drift away* or *rove* – to research and map what is happening elsewhere too. (Moreover these networks and techniques together with this readiness to *leave smoothly* (*sair no liso*) – that is, without any prolonged or prior preparations, with attitude and lightness – would seem to explain the absence in the town of the figure emblematically associated with the *trecho*: the *gato* (cat) or workforce recruiter, more

often seen operating in rural communities and places less “mundane” and “accelerated” than Minaçu).

On a quick visit to people she knew in Rubiataba, town located a few hours from Minaçu, Aparecida used her time to learn more about the town’s *movement*. She discovered that it was a “city without a firm” and that it also did not have any *movements* like the movement of people affected by dams, which guaranteed her a staple food basket each month. Aparecida also checked how much the local council paid its street cleaners: not only because she could do this job, it would also provide her with a parameter to measure the regional variations in the basic decent wage paid to workers without any qualifications or *study*. “No, best to forget for now this idea of leaving here just to be a bit closer to my sister...”

The techniques and knowledge used by miners to localize a deposit, a good boss or an ideal place to work seem to have been extended to other spheres, guiding the search for other opportunities and *movements*. Here the suggestion of Banaggia (2012: 42-3) is valuable: he suggests that the miners of Chapada Diamantina consider their activity “more akin to hunting than gathering”. This is especially because the diamonds sought by the local miners “have their own life”, “capable of moving about on their own free will”. What is most interesting about this approximation to *hunting* – a term indeed widely used by this people, *forever hunting for better, hunting their direction, hunting their destiny* – is the idea that both those who search for something and the thing sought are in *movement*. (For people who are always *on the move*, “hunting” for *movements* is an imperative: but is it not also this “hunting” for *movements* which places people in *motion*?)

It needs to be remembered that frequent and “well informed” dislocations have always characterized the practice of mining. Among the institutions created with this purpose, we can highlight the *rádio-peão* or “worker radio”, a native term for the informal networks through which information circulates that allows, after an area’s decline, the miner to look for another place to work.¹⁶ Given the relations and passages existing

16 “It is no exaggeration to say that informal chat is one of the most important processes in gold mining. It broadly explains, for example, how the miners move from region to region with such ease, travelling distances that would seem immense to a European, but which a *porcentista* [miner working on a percentage basis] will regard just as nonchalantly as a *carioca* [a Rio de Janeiro resident] might contemplate a walk from Ipanema to Copacabana. Very often a miner without any experience of an area will travel with another miner who he met at another mine and who knows the area very well. Even when he travels alone, a miner will invariably have an idea

between the universe of mining and that defined by the large construction works and projects, it is unsurprising that a *rádio-peão* is also found among the workers of the latter. For a specialist engineer in these projects (Corrêa 1987: 23-4), the latter is “one of the quickest means of communication existing on the face of the Earth [...] [and] it possesses an impressive speed and reliability. Everything is known through it”.¹⁷

5. Fevers and movements: surprising or familiar?

Comparing Minaçu with other “more stabilized” towns, the reflections of my interlocutors were not very distant from those informed by the opposition cherished by rural and peasant studies in Brazil: namely the contrast between areas of long-standing occupation and the new or frontier zones.

In the discussions on the agricultural frontier of the 1970s and 80s (e.g. Martins 1997, Velho 1981, 1979) or in the more recent debates concerning the effects of the advance of new frontiers of accumulation (e.g. Almeida 2010), this idea of “frontier” opens up a privileged space for considering various situations and phenomena in the light of questions not only relevant to the social sciences but also properly constitutive of them. Along these lines, we could suggest that such “frontier situations” have offered (and continue to offer) the researcher studying the Brazilian case the opportunity to accompany, in situ and through field work, phenomena that in other situations – in Western Europe or even in the USA say – can only be apprehended through historical accounts: Marx, in the famous Chapter XXIV of *Capital*, describes the aggressive process of expropriation that separates peasants from their means of production and uproots them from their traditional world, while simultaneously constituting land and work as commodities. The very geography of populating and occupying

of the best route, the best mines, and the kinds of problems likely to be encountered, through prior contact with a miner who worked in the region. This information is frequently very specific, including the names of hotels and owners with a good reputation. This makes the movement between the mining regions much less problematic” (Cleary 1992: 141).

17 On this point, the anecdote (or real story?) narrated by the same author is suggestive: “One time two engineers, to test the stealth and speed of this network of intrigues and rumours, scribbled on a sheet of paper the list of wages for recruiting employees at a non-existent project for maintaining, operating and lighting of the TransAmazonian highway [...] The wages proposed were something like five times the amounts typically paid in the region. They left the scribbled sheet on the meeting table in an envelope labelled ‘confidential.’ The next day, on arrival at the work site, there was an enormous queue of candidates looking to be hired [...], even presenting letters of recommendation from local politicians” (Corrêa 1987:23-24).

the country, with its correlate formation as a nation state, helped visualize the advance of this “moving frontier” (Velho 1979: 14) over the immense remainder inexorably destined to be “integrated” and “civilized”. From the Brazilian March Westward to state-directed colonization in Amazonia, passing through the creation of Brasilia and many other moments, there were also many who – even if silenced or ignored – described and denounced the violence and dramas unleashed by such processes. In our own way and emblematically, we have also therefore experienced the vicissitudes of “modernization”.

In Marx and in so many other founders of sociological thought (Durkheim and Simmel being just two of the most obvious examples) the descriptions of this “modernization” seem to imply – somewhat tautologically – a “specific emphasis on rupture” that, according to Englund and Leach (2000: 227), “organizes, as ever in the discourse of modernity, the ways in which relevant research questions are identified and their potential answers circumscribed”. Constitutive of sociology as a discipline and shaping a referential framework of crucial importance to the West’s self-image, it is far from surprising that this “emphasis on rupture” has been subject to critiques from anthropologists and sociologists who, just like the latter, have sought to analyze – with some pertinence, I think – the analytic implications of its naturalization. Callon (1998: 39) argues, for example, that “there is no Great Divide between societies populated by calculative agencies and societies in which the agents do not calculate. Even Deleuze and Guattari were on the wrong track with their concept of deterritorialization, that extraordinary faculty bestowed on capitalism for breaking all ties and undoing solidarity”. Maurer (2006: 16) meanwhile welcomes the recent production on the anthropology of money – the correlate and index par excellence of the “modernizing” or “capitalist” advances – since they furnish elements that contrast with that “same story of the “great transformation” from socially embedded to disembedded and abstracted economic forms”, thereby allowing us to circumvent this “comforting plotline we are always expected to relate about the impact of money on ‘traditional’ societies and the dehumanizing and homogenizing effects of monetary incursions on all aspects of life in our own society”.

Within the context of this very broad debate, my objective is modest. I have no intention of entering into the merits of the discussion concerning

the existence or not of a “great transformation” or a “great divide”. I merely wish to suggest how moments and situations of “rupture” have also been privileged in the descriptions and explanations pursued by the Brazilian social sciences in relation to places like Minaçu, however they have been (or are being) characterized. As the “outback”, “frontier”, the destination of “expansion fronts” or “pioneer fronts”, an area submitted to the “effects of large-scale projects” or “deterritorialization”, these locations and regions only seem to interest analysts to the extent that this encounter between the “traditional” and “modern” is re-enacted – an encounter where something like a “cultural contact” is produced “with the implications that previously impervious entities are suddenly in touch” (Des Chene 1997: 66).

I stress that I am not denying the existence of such an “encounter” – as authors like Maurer (2006) and Callon (1998) perhaps do – and much less the violence that invariably follows in its wake. In relation to Minaçu, it suffices to evoke the tragic fate of the Ava-Canoeiro indigenous groups occupying the region at the time of the construction of the Belém-Brasília Highway and the arrival of the asbestos mining company in the 1950s. Albeit to a lesser extent, “cultural contacts” of this kind exist even today.

On the other hand, the current popularity of the concept of “deterritorialization” criticized by Callon (1998) suggests how “relevant research questions” (Englund and Leach 2000: 217) are usually identified and configured through this analytic tendency to look for and emphasize such “encounters”, or to approach any modernizing initiative in the remote corners of the country through the analytic framework delineated by them. Without problematizing here this idea of an advance of “frontiers”, we could say that the concern over what happens in them reveals more about the interest in studying the advance and expansion of phenomena supposedly definitive of “our” society – commodification, monetization, deterritorialization, civilization, modernization – than about the specific reality of those who are “steamrolled” by it. Consequently, those who have already been “deflowered” by these phenomena – having been reached by them in the past and today finding themselves distant, therefore, from the frontline of the “frontier” – seem incapable of offering the social scientist much in the way of attraction as an object of analysis.¹⁸ Here we encounter

18 The participants of the Minaçu movement of people affected by dams were not oblivious to the fact that after

a modality of what Pina Cabral (2007: 95-6) denominates “cesurismo”, characteristic of the “modernist social sciences” and their emphasis on the “discontinuity in change as the privileged ‘moment’ of our experience and our reflexive cognition of it”.

Here I am interested precisely in the “cognitive” dimensions implied by this kind of formula. If we really are presented with a situation in which certain people come face-to-face with such disruptive forces – all that is solid in their world melts into air “at a brutal and blinding speed” (Ferguson 1999:2) – then it falls to the anthropologist to ask how they conceptualize what is happening. Living through new or unknown experiences does not imply, of course, the incapacity to attribute meanings to them – pre-existing cultural codes and schemes can encompass them or adapt to their apprehension. But even if this is the case, such an apprehension would be located far from what we would characterize as “knowledge” – or at least a consistent and consolidated form of knowledge of the kind discussed in the previous section.

Whether in relation to the sudden and tempestuous arrivals of economic booms and the “development” or decline that succeeds them, the people that I got to know are not surprised by such vicissitudes and alternations, or not anyhow to the point of experiencing the kind of “crisis in meaning” that, according to Ferguson (1999: 14), characterized the economic decline of the Copperbelt of Zâmbia (also an area of mineral exploration) where “the way that people are able to understand their experience and to imbue it with significance and dignity has (for many) been dramatically eroded” (Ferguson 1999: 14-15). While the mention of these “crises in understanding” or the “absence of meaning” exerts a clear dramatic (and political) appeal in terms of describing an undeniably revolting situation, they can also hinder the apprehension of the mechanisms used by those involved in these situations to explain such events.

For people like my informants, therefore, the appearance and disappearance of *fevers* is not exactly a novelty, nor indeed the turbulences, instabilities and dramas associated with them. Ironically, or even tragically, we could say that these phenomena are to some extent familiar to them. Here

some years in the spotlight, the Tocantins River Basin had become “forgotten” by the researchers and NGOs when the hydroelectric dams started to be built on the Madeira River – after the “occupation” of the Tocantins river by innumerable dams, Amazonia started to be configured as the “new frontier” for energy production in the country.

it is worth recalling that the categories *fever* and *movement* proved equally useful to describe and explain what happened both before (in the cassiterite and gold mining eras) and after the arrival of the dams.

But if the native perceptions and reflections concerning *movements* fail to match those formulas centred on the ruptures and irreversibilities correlated to them, they also do not fit the “familiarity” arising from the more or less “cyclical” succession, alternation and repetition of *times* (see Palmeira 2001, Dainese 2013) regulated by a seasonality (whether defined by the agricultural or religious calendar, or by the seasons of the year, or by elections).

One interesting possibility for dealing with this point comes from Velho (2007), who worked with rural workers from the Lower Tocantins – the same river that flows through the town of Minaçu, and the region of origin of many of my acquaintances. Analyzing the fears of a “return to captivity” among the local population, Velho argues that this formulation can be understood as the clear expression of a particular “notion of time” in which “the past and the present combine and come much closer together than the strictly linear notion (which, however, does not make it a cyclical notion)” (Velho 2007: 106). Inspired by the author’s observations, I would say that in Minaçu the native perception of changes and transformations over time is strongly marked by the presence of processes, dynamics and encounters that become repeated and are present in different moments of time, always being liable to *return*. It is not exactly history that repeats itself but some of the *movements* that constitute it: the *return* of the *fevers*, the *return* of *captivity*, the *return* of these outsiders or “blond beasts” coming from the south, abroad or the coast (Guedes 2013a, Vieira 2001)... In speaking of a *return*, we are not therefore referring to a “great transformation” or to those supposedly unique and disruptive moments in which, for the first time, contact is established with unknown phenomena. Rather we are dealing with a people whose history – individual, familiar and even “communal” – is marked, among other things, by frequent encounters with modernizing agents and forces, and also by successive (and frequent) forms of pillaging.

I am unable to examine here all the implications of the importance attributed to the idea of *return* – whether for my interlocutors, or for academic discussions like the present. I merely emphasize that, for these people, the *fever* and the *trecho* constitute privileged spaces and times for knowing the *world* – whatever is harsh, turbulent and unexpected in the

latter manifesting in a particularly striking manner in these circumstances, which also makes them such ideal “schools” (Rumstain 2009). As I looked to show elsewhere (Guedes 2013b: 338), we could claim therefore that, from the native viewpoint, “*movement* is necessary in order for knowledge and thought to exist”.¹⁹ The belief and expectation that *movements* will be present – *returning* or able to be experienced elsewhere – thus anchor a “popular cosmopolitanism” (Guedes 2013b: 337-338) which seems to entirely contradict the widespread image of “peasants” or “communities” surprised by the “modernity” that suddenly irrupts within their previously tranquil and “traditional” worlds.

We can return then to our consideration of how social life is regulated in terms of *times*. Extracting some of the consequences of this, Palmeira (2001: 172) argues that, in this case, “social order is [...] perceived [...] in terms of adapting behaviours to particular ends posed at certain moments”. Developing the author’s suggestions, we could provisionally argue that – as occurs in the “time of the strike” (seen by the managerial sectors as “the clearest example of subversion”) – the experiences of *fever* or the *trecho* are themselves “ordered” rather than being an expression of “social disorganization” or any modality of “derooting” or “deterritorialization”. Clearly they are not that “ordered”, their relative confusion and turbulence serving indeed to define them as a counterpoint to milder situations.

Making this claim is not to mitigate the seriousness or potential drama frequently involved in such modernizing projects. On the contrary, it recognizes that before the “arrival” of the latter, the people who are affected by the projects rarely experienced the “peasant”, “community” or “traditional” idyll often suggested – consciously or not – by various analysts. In this sense, the importance attached by local people to *movement* suggests how forms of knowledge, practices or ways of life both express and are conditioned by a “worldview” in which the unstable, turbulent, ephemeral and provisional possess a singular cosmological centrality – an idea

19 Carneiro (2010) and Medeiros (2010) emphasized the same point in relation to other regions but dealing with universes geographically and culturally not very distant from my own. It was Rumstain (2009), on the other hand, who first explored the implications of the frequent statement among her interlocutors (migrants from Maranhão working on soybean plantations in Mato Grosso) that “the *trecho* teaches”. Without giving much attention to this point, Woortman (2009: 219) had already pointed out in the 1980s how the experience of *movement*, via migration, constitutes a rite of passage for the male children of North-eastern rural workers: “To become a *man* it is necessary to confront the *world* [...] Having travelled makes people superior to those who have never left the place”.

confirmed by some of the native meanings attached to the notion of a *world*. It is through the acceptance – simultaneously and alternately tragic, fatalist and *trecheira* (i.e., “cunning”) – that this is the way things are that this experience of “disorder” can itself be “ordered”. Moreover, when this state of affairs is recognized and accepted, it becomes possible to make a virtue out of necessity – considering, like Sahlins (1997: 53), the reality of those “who knew how to extract, from ill fate, their [...] conditions of existence”. Those same *movements* that unleash dramas and disturb so many lives – we can think, for example, of the dam-building *fever* that led to the obliteration of mining – are seen as opportunities to start again and make new investments, albeit provisional (see the case of the small traders who adapt to the new clientele, swapping the miners for dam construction workers) or elsewhere (as in the case of miners who were able to gain basic qualifications and enter the work market for the large-scale projects, following the *movement* across the rest of Brazil).

Furthermore while the native perspective presented here in discussing this point diverges somewhat from the narratives typically found in this recent sociological literature, it seems to me that we can still usefully compare them to other academic formulations that indicate just how old the experiences and phenomena discussed here may be. Here I have in mind the formulations used by historians and some of the prominent names of Brazilian social thought to describe, across a broader time span, the economic dynamic of the country or of some of its regions. Prado Jr. (1969: 186) for instance argues that this

evolution in jumps, through cycles that alternate in time and space, prosperity and ruin [...] summarizes the economic history of colonial Brazil [...] in each declining phase, a piece of the colonial structure is undone, the part of society affected by the crisis disintegrates. A more or less substantial number of individuals become ruined, lose their roots and the living basis of their subsistence. They begin to vegetate on the margins of the social order.

For Buarque de Holanda (1990: 71-2), meanwhile, these comings and goings of “an immense floating population, without a clear social position, living parasitically on the edge of regular and remunerated activities” is a direct consequence of the “intrinsic vices of the economic system of Colonial Brazil”. Mello e Souza (1995: 90), for her part, argues that the intense mobility

characteristic of the country's interior populations, along with the instability inherent to their lives, can be seen to be a consequence of

a colony of exploration destined to produce tropical crops whose commercialization favoured as much as possible the accumulation of capital in the hegemonic European metropolises. An economy with such a fragile and precarious base [...] was destined to drag down with it a large number of individuals, constantly affected by the fluctuations and uncertainties of the international market [...] It seems evident that the poor and even moderately wealthy population suffered greatly from this instability.

Discussing the role of the “missions to the interior” and the “civilizing” voyages to the “outback”, Lima (1998: 74) claims that “repeated with Rondon is a theme widely present in Euclides da Cunha, in the reports of the expeditions made by the scientists of the Oswaldo Cruz Institute and in the literary work of Monteiro Lobato²⁰ – the abandonment that follows bursts of progress, the image of the ‘dead towns,’ to employ the famous expression of the São Paulo writer”.

6. Conclusion

The reference made above to Dainese (2013) is also interesting insofar as it reveals that the centrality – “cosmological” and “sociological”, we could say – attributed to the idea of *movement* is not limited to my interlocutors, which is of course unsurprising given the *movements* of the latter, today and in the past, through diverse areas of the country. Indeed we can note the recurrence of this category, as well as the variety of meanings that it assumes, in a series of recent works, focusing on the ways of life and thought of “outback” or “rural” Brazilian populations, especially in the north of Minas Gerais and in the states of Mato Grosso and Maranhão.

For Dainese (2011), *movements* regulate, signify and constitute not only the time of politics, but also the “affairs of the Church” (ibid: 175) and religious festivities, as well as the circulation between field and town – “lad, what are you going to do here? This town is a desert, let's go to the fields to see the movement” (ibid: 15) – and the visits and hospitality, so fundamental

20 Rondon (1922), Cunha (1966) and Lobato (1975) cited in Lima (1988).

in this universe (ibid: 316). Even so (and in clear contrast to what happens in Minaçu), the people studied by this author perceive themselves as a “movement-less people” or “with little movement” – a “people who always lived [right there]” (ibid: 60).

In the research presently being conducted by John Comerford (personal communication) in the Jequitinhonha Valley, the moments of *movement*, *revelry* and *festival* are considered to be part of the *holiday* season – a period in which, as Mauss (2003: 473) had suggested, we also experience the kind of “alternation [of] the rhythm of concentration and dispersion” that so spectacularly shapes “the morphological organization” of the Inuit studied by himself. This is when the people return home who work afar – in the *trecho*, we could say – especially in coffee plantations in the West, in the Minas Gerais Triangle and in the interior of São Paulo. The *movement* of this period contrasts not only with the rest of the year in which many houses in the community remain closed but also with the *somewhat stilled* life of those who, far from home, lack the company of friends and family.

In the view of Carneiro (2010: 45), the *movement* also produces a variety of effects. The continuous circulation of people between Buracos, in the north of Minas Gerais, “and the big world outside” helps us to understand why for the author’s interlocutors – a “people brought together in the very act of dislocating themselves” – a “land [...] only exists in the movement of its ‘people’”. The effects of “animation” and “movement” are also recognized in the relation between food and prose: “in Buracos, offering something to eat enables the conditions for prose; it gives it movement, ‘animation’” (ibid: 54); or in the joint work of the plantation, the “movement of people there” becomes an activity “making people”, “an animator of people” and a “promoter of marriages” (ibid: 209) – “daily movement is what makes the ‘people,’ where plantation activity is both an index and a framework” (ibid: 213).

In the same region researched by Carneiro, both Andriolli (2011) and Medeiros (2011) studied different transformations caused by the creation of a National Park on the lives of groups previously living there. Evoking the importance of autonomy, considering this dimension in light of the commercial possibilities enabled by the “popular” and “informal” economies, the main interlocutor of Andriolli (2011) nostalgically evokes the “time of much movement” (ibid: 38): the “time of the elders”, the “time of plenty, movement and freedom”, the “time of the right to create” (ibid: 3), the “time of

the freedom of the cowhand who, on the back of the horse and making money with their cattle, felt himself free of the ties of the boss” (ibid: 125). As in Dainese (2011), Medeiros (2011) argues that *movement* evokes the valorization of this sociability strongly based on “passing through” (ibid.: 38), “the movement between houses” that among other things ensures the “circulation of differences” (ibid: 44). Like Carneiro (2011), Medeiros (2011: 46) also emphasizes the intrinsic relationship between movement and knowledge: “whoever doesn’t walk doesn’t know”, the interlocutors of the former said. Meanwhile the latter takes as her working material those “narratives that privilege movement, in knowledge that is forged while one walks” (ibid: 94). Like my own acquaintances in Minaçu, Medeiros’s interlocutors also contrasted the “stilled life” of the present with the “movement of the past” (2011: 74): “‘the early time’ was a period ‘of much movement’”, “much less silent than now” (ibid: 68). Radicalizing the consequences of this “stilled life”, Medeiros (2011: 161) emphasizes that the “lack of movement that affected people, cattle, plantation and fire, had repercussions not only for a ‘society’ based on roaming, but also for the ‘nature’ of the conservation unit” in question with local “biodiversity” itself coming under threat.

A more systematic comparison between all these cases still remains to be undertaken. Here the references to these works are intended to situate my argument better, drawing a contrast between the ethnographic literature relating to a particular “cultural area”, the one in which my work is inserted, and the recent theoretical discussions concerning “mobilities”. These discussions are largely anchored in a substantive and/or analytic association between such “mobilities” and a particular characterization of the contemporary world. Oriented by “a concern with diaspora, deterritorialization and the irregularity of ties between nations, ideologies and social movements”, Appadurai (1996: 18) argues, for instance, that “this mobile and unforeseeable relationship between mass-mediated events and migratory audiences defines the core of the link between globalization and the modern” (ibid: 4). The reflections relating to these transformations will lead, Urry (2007: 6) suggests, to a “mobility turn [...] spreading in and through the social sciences, mobilizing analyses that have been historically static, fixed and concerned with predominantly a-spatial ‘social structures.’”

As I have looked to show here, from the viewpoint of my interlocutors, *movement*, *agitation* or *fever*, rather than signalling a recent way of life or

characterizing a novelty, are attributes of the *world* or *life*. Not that they are present all the time – or rather, not with the same intensity or strength: the instability and ephemerality implied by the idea of *fever* suggest just how “natural” are the alternations and reversals that, very often in a short space of time, lead a town like Minaçu to become depopulated, *stop* and *end*. In this sense, spatial mobility is also an expression of that “cosmological” mobility or something like a response or a form of adaptation to it.

Still in relation to the discussion of mobilities, we could equally turn to formulations such as those of Clifford (1997) and Ingold (2007) that, despite their many differences, emphasize the importance of problematizing – and not just in “contemporaneity” or “modernity” – the epiphenomenal or subordinate status of movement in the face of the primacy of more static realities. In evoking the importance of “dwelling-in-travel” and “travelling cultures”, where “practices of displacement might emerge as constitutive of cultural meanings rather than as their simple transfer or extension” (Clifford 1997: 3), or arguing that journeys and walks should be thought of rather as “ways of being” (Ingold 2007: 75), these authors are much closer to the approach outlined here. Ingold (2007: 75) for example suggests that in order to comprehend “how people do not just occupy but inhabit the environments in which they dwell, we might do better to revert to paradigm of the assembly to that of the *walk*” (my italics).

We can return, then, to the point where we started, recalling the form through which my interlocutors made explicit the difficulties they were facing when I got to know them: after the construction of the dams, they told me that they could no longer *walk*. But we must also be cautious here, especially since – at least in this case – *walking* has to be understood not just in the narrow sense of spatial dislocation, but also in reference to other sorts of mobilities – “social” and “occupational”, we could say – equally expressed by this formulation: not being able to *walk* also means not being able to *advance*, *grow* or *improve* in life or enjoy the kind of autonomy experienced by those who can abandon one occupation (and a boss) and search for another more appealing.

What the overlapping of these distinct meanings suggests is not only the “cosmological” centrality of *movements*, but also the fact that the latter provide a privileged code (or even a viewpoint) for these people to reflect on and talk about the world and their lives – and not only about

themselves, since what is in play is something like a monist perspective in which everyone and everything can be conceived, fractally, through their *movements*. Reinvoking some of the topics discussed in this article, we can speak then of the more or less cyclical movements of economic power and decline, of the role assumed locally by what *returns* or what may return, and of waiting and the expectations relating to this; of the *movements* of feverish and passionate bodies in the hunt for gold, in the time of politics, in the *cabarés* and festivals; of the importance assumed by those resources and objects that never *stop* in people's hands (and others which, on the contrary, are zealously safeguarded and excluded from circulation); of what contrasts with agitation, passions and the volatile, looking to produce some form of duration or rooting, like the kind expressed by the (relative) stability provided by *mothers*; of the very *movement* of *movement*, stimulating people to set themselves in *motion* and leave *stilled* places in order to *hunt* for it; of these contexts in which instability, the to-and-fro and movement (which help to define the native sense of what the *world* is) are radicalized and taken to an extreme: the *trecho* and the *fever*...

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Street commerce as a ‘problem’ in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo

Daniel Hirata

Abstract

The aim of this article is to describe how street commerce that has come to be seen as a ‘problem’ in two major Brazilian cities: Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The text concentrates on two periods - 1980 to 1990 and 2000 to 2010 - during which governmental intervention in street commerce radically changed, examining the flux of people and merchandise and the forms of this intervention.

Keywords: illegalism – street selling – government – entrepreneurship – militarization – securitization

Resumo

O objetivo do artigo é descrever como o mercado do comércio ambulante vem sendo construído como “problema” em duas cidades brasileiras: Rio de Janeiro e São Paulo. O texto centra-se em dois momentos de transformação das formas de incidência governamental e da conformação dos mercados do “comércio ambulante”, entre os anos 1980/1990 e 2000/2010. Observa-se especialmente, as modalidades de circulações de pessoas, de mercadorias e de práticas governamentais.

Palavras-chave: ilegalismos – comércio ambulante – governo – empreendedorismo – militarização – securitização

Street commerce as a ‘problem’ in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo

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São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro differ widely in their social, cultural, economic, political and urban characteristics. However, in the specific case of the history of governmental intervention in the ‘problem’ of street commerce, these divergent aspects converge, as illustrated by a number of events that occurred in both cities, albeit at different times. It is not within the scope of this text to present a ‘social history of street commerce’; it focuses, rather, on the transformations that occurred between 1980 and 1990 and 2000 and 2010 in the construction of the intelligibility of ‘street commerce as a problem’, in terms both of the legibility (DESROSIÈRES 2008) and of the instruments devised (LASCOURMES 2005) by government, as well as the power games in which the groups that dispute (and negotiate their participation in) this market engage¹.

The type of regulations permitting the circulation and the consumption of goods sold on the street during the two above-mentioned periods stems from this dynamic relationship, the history of which will be outlined here. This is not a new approach; it is based on the seminal work of Karl Polanyi in which he demonstrates how the social construction of the markets is effected in its classical form (POLANYI, 1944), as in the genealogical trajectory of

¹ Perceiving street commerce as a ‘problem’ or as a ‘problem creating process’ constitutes a research approach that closely resembles that way in which Michel Foucault, on several occasions, defined his own particular way of thinking and his historical work, as distinguished from the history of ideas, of representations and of mentalities. In this sense, the analysis of the conditions for the possibility of multiple solutions to a problem (facts, practices and thoughts) constitutes such a ‘problem creating process’. Foucault’s question is always: ‘How was it possible?’ See FOUCAULT, Michel. 2001. *Dits et Écrits*. Paris: Gallimard. Of special importance in this context: “*Polémique, politique et problematisation*” (text 342, volume IV).

Michel Foucault's forms of contemporary governments (FOUCAULT, 2004), a concept that has made it possible to characterize the actuality of the situation. This text will examine how these radical changes have affected the role of force and the power games that characterize negotiations between the parties; it will delineate the shifting frontiers between practices that fall either within or outside the government's control; it will examine the way in which conflicts in the governance of these markets arise and reveal the emergence of the various transformations that are of interest to a historical examination of the subject. This text thus attempts to achieve a greater understanding of the 'popular' economy and the transformations to it that the new forms of institutional intervention in the day-to-day practices of street sellers have brought about.

1. The 1980s and 90s – The right to work in the street: evolution and regulation

At the beginning of the 1990s street commerce was characterized in both cities as a problem, as it indicated a failure in the organization of the relationship between the cities and their respective labor markets. Street sellers were not perceived as workers, but rather as a segment of the population that combined loiterers, the unemployed and those struggling to survive. For this reason the main form of interface between them and the government was constructed by means of policies and instruments for the maintenance of public order. The control of street commerce became an attribute of the municipal inspectors, with the support of the recently formed municipal guards² that were summoned during the frequent confrontations that occurred between inspectors and sellers at a time when there were laws for the control and inspection of the activity, but none as yet that regulated it³. In both São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro these laws addressed the use of public spaces while failing to establish labor norms. Thus the central issue of dispute became the use of public spaces with severe penalties applied to

2 Although initially inspection was the attribute of the municipal inspectors, the use of force was applied jointly with the municipal guard. In São Paulo the Metropolitan Civil Guard was an institution that dated back to the beginning of the 20th century; it was among the first in Brazil to be reinvented as a democratic institution in 1986 (law nº 10115/86). In Rio de Janeiro the Municipal Guard was created by law nº 1887/92 and instituted the following year.

3 In the case of Rio de Janeiro, law nº 1876/92, and in São Paulo law nº 11039/91.

those that transgressed the law. Thus the juridical/political terrain was established in which the disputes were to occur: disputes over the control of the location of the sellers' stands.⁴

In a previous article I have broached the heuristic relevance of the street sellers' stands for a descriptive/analytical discussion of the various types of this 'informal' or 'illegal' commercial activity (HIRATA 2011). On that occasion I attempted to demonstrate that the use of force institutes 'mercantile exchanges' of which the street sellers' stands are the hub. The particular relevance of the stands in relation to street commerce as a whole is that they are the subject of specific forms of legal and extra-legal authorization for the purchase and sale of goods. The reference established by municipal regulations (the 'Stipulation of Permission for Use' in São Paulo - TPU in the Portuguese abbreviation - and the 'Stipulation of the Use of Public Areas' in Rio de Janeiro - TUAP) is the permission conceded for the use of public spaces for such sale. Contrary to other municipal authorization of commercial activity, the registration and concession of permission for the use of public spaces entirely fails to meet the sellers' expectations in at least three ways: the non-inclusive nature of the laws that restrict the granting of permission to sellers with a specific profile; the often unclear and contradictory criteria for concession-related decisions, a true example of the lack of legitimacy of government operations (DAS, POOLE 2004); and the complete lack of proportion between the number of authorized sellers and the number actually working on the streets, creating from the outset an inequality between demand and supply that will be hard to address. Although a number of court rulings have created jurisprudence favorable to the street sellers, the fact remains that the vast majority have not had their requests approved, or are simply selling merchandise on the streets without permission.

Due to the lack of clarity in the regulation of commerce in public spaces, the restrictions on the type of candidate that can register and the limited number of authorizations, the vast majority of stands effectively operate at

4 The term 'camelô', synonymous in Portuguese for street seller, is similarly ambiguous as both simultaneously designate the activity of purchase and sale, undertaken from a fixed point or in a mobile form in the streets of the city. For the purposes of this text this difference will be minimized, given that, even those sellers that are mobile generally exercise their activity within a defined perimeter, being influenced by the dynamic of the disputes over the location of stands. On this difference between mobile and fixed *camelôs* see MAFRA, Patrícia (2005). *A "pista" e o "camelódromo": camelôs no centro do Rio de Janeiro*. Masters' dissertation, Museu Nacional Social Anthropology Program.

the edges of the law. However illogical it may appear, they are nevertheless not excluded from 'business', nor abandoned by public institutions, as their operation is illegally authorized by officials (as, for example, the inspectors that take bribes during seizure operations). Thus my emphasis on the importance of this *decisive interaction* between government agents, sellers and suppliers. The sellers have a number of terms for referring to the bribes they pay to police: *o acerto, a madeira, pagar pau*. The term 'political merchandise' (MISSE 2006) has been adopted here to refer to these practices, that constitute the practical, daily interaction between those that control the 'informal' commercial sector and those that operate it. Although the street sellers used to pay bribes before, the regulation of the sector brought control practices that instituted the political goods market⁵. This was due, in the first place, to the fact that the regulation excluded the vast majority of sellers, forcing them to work illegally, and secondly because its instruments gave priority to the use of force against them, rather than promoting their economic integration. The use of force, legal or illegal, reinforced the process of the construction a market based on coercion.

Despite the problems that arise from the form of regulation, it nevertheless serves as a *reference* for the frontiers between legality and illegality and thus establishes guidelines for court rulings on the conflicts arising from the dispute over the legalization of stands. Before regulation the interaction between the agents in charge of inspection and the street sellers was weighted in favor of the former, who exercised their authority at random. This included the use of force, leaving the sellers completely at the mercy of case-by-case decisions as to who could and who could not sell merchandise or which sellers were to suffer penalties and which were not. This is why, despite their restrictive, limited and illegible nature, these laws (that were passed with no public consultation), are popularly referred to in both cities as the 'street sellers' law', as they establish a limited form of regulation, and protection (albeit precarious) for those involved in the activity. However,

5 'Political merchandise' and the 'political assets market' are concepts that occur in the writings of Michel Misse, in which his analysis distances itself from the concept of 'an economy of corruption' with its overemphasis on moral and institutional dysfunction. In his discussion of this specific market he considers not only the connection between supply and demand, but also the 'strategic assessments of power, the potential recourse to violence and the balance of forces, that is, evaluations that are strictly 'political'. See: MISSE, Michel. 2006. *Crime e Violência no Brasil Contemporâneo*. Rio de Janeiro, Editora Lumen Júris. Also PIREZ, Lenin 2010. *Arreglar não é pedir arrego*. Doctor's thesis, post graduation in anthropology at the Universidade Federal Fluminense.

concurrently with the legal regulation of inspection, confrontations have become generalized, with the sellers adopting the slogan of their 'right to work in the street'. Where the municipality institutes the control of the activity the social conflict is structured by means of the ways the street sellers form associations.

This is a political dispute arising from the use of public space, the occupation of which these workers consider their right. With no official employment or any formal connection with an employee, the street sellers direct their demands at the municipal government as the body that authorizes the use of public spaces for the sale of merchandise. The form by which the activity was regulated, however, institutes the urban space as the center of the dispute, and the polarization between street sellers and the municipality as the two agents that negotiate in a conflictive manner the appropriation that can be made of the city

It was against the background of this legal/political scenario that the street sellers' associations and unions were formed. These organize activities that range from marches, demonstrations, public denunciations and court hearings, to the occupation of public spaces, including physical violence and attacks on municipal inspectors, all of which construct the repertory of the activity of the street sellers (TILLY 2008)⁶.

The history of these confrontations with the public authorities was constructed exactly at the point where government action supervenes, in other words, all the multiple scenario of disputes and negotiations of the groups that participate in this market in their alliances and conflicts with the institutions that produce the regulation of this juridical/political terrain. A series of these confrontations occurred in São Paulo between 1995 and 2002 directed against the so-called 'inspector mafia', in a reaction to the kind of extortion that typifies 'political markets'. The result was a significant alteration

6 This argument confirms what Fernando Rabossi identified in Ciudad del Este, where the legal/political framework led to the formation of associations. See: RABOSSI, Fernando. 2011. *Negociações, associações e monopólio: a política de rua em Ciudad del Este* (Paraguay). *Etnográfica*.15(1).

7 The 'bribery mafia' organized the system of payments made by street sellers to regional inspectors in return for 'authorization' to store merchandise, set up stalls and receive advance warning of police interventions. It also oversaw the collection of these funds by regional administrators from which pay-outs were made to town councilors who belonged to the political parties that supported the government. The funds, that provided personal wealth for the group as well as campaign finance, represented a traditional mechanism for the maintenance of the power structure in São Paulo. See: CARDOZO, José Eduardo. 2000. *A Máfia das Propinas*. São Paulo: Fundação Perseu Abramo.

in the balance of power between the political parties in the city which led to an investigation into a group of town councilors and culminated in the impeachment of the then mayor Celso Pitta (CARDOZO 2000). Although the conflicts in Rio de Janeiro did not create as great an impact on the balance of power between the political parties, the resulting political tension was at times a decisive factor in shifts of power in the city. Less serious than in São Paulo, nevertheless the Map of Urban Conflicts in Rio de Janeiro⁸ shows that the largest number of confrontations in the city occurred between street sellers and municipal guards (NACIF 2011), a sign that the occupation of public spaces and the legal/political structure that governed them were also causes of conflict in Rio de Janeiro

There were two types of reaction on the part of the street sellers to this initial governmental intervention (mostly in the legal/political sphere). Although they frequently overlap, analytically they may appear as distinct forms of confronting governmental intervention: on the one hand, 'adaptation' practices within this 'political assets' market, and on the other practices of confrontation with the authorities affirming the right to work in the streets. These two distinct forms of achieving the right to continue their activity are organized by the same means. In this legal/political terrain some of the associations collect funds for paying illegal bribes to inspectors and municipal guards while others refuse to raise money for the illegal authorization of their activity, expressing their opposition through public denunciations, demands to local authorities and other agents that practice such abuses.

To summarize, I consider the most important element in the discussion so far to be the common ground between the governmental instruments of intervention and the groups that dispute and negotiate their participation in the street commerce market. The elements that characterize this are the following: *firstly* an approach to the control of these markets typified by the instruments of control selected and applied by government (even before the activity was officially regulated); *secondly*, the regulation of municipal authorization for the use of public spaces, characterized by the restrictions on

8 The Map of Urban Conflicts in the City of Rio de Janeiro is compiled as part of the Permanent Observation of Urban Conflicts program (ETTERN-IPPUR-UFRJ) that studies demonstrations in which 'the city is both location and target' based on the collection of data from the press and relevant government bodies. See: <http://www.etternerippur.ufrj.br/projetos-em-andamento/38/observatorio-de-conflitos-urbanos-no-rio-de-janeiro>

registrations and the small number of concessions; and *thirdly*, the construction of a conflictive field (which I have called juridical/political terrain) that includes the political goods markets and the demands for the amplification of municipal concessions.

2. The 2000s and 2010s – militarization and entrepreneurship

The dislocation that came about in the first two decades of this century has been highly significant in both Rio and São Paulo. While not supporting the hypothesis that ‘everything has changed’ I intend to examine some of these dislocations and their effect on the street sellers’ problems. Some of the governmental instruments transform themselves, giving continuity to previous lines of action, while others remain the same but with contrasting significance in relation to their predecessors. What is different, in my opinion, is the far subtler approach to the management of the ‘problems’ concerning street commerce and significant alterations in the legal/political terrain. The edifice of the juridical/political territory does not collapse, but transforms itself from the departure point of a reading of the phenomena and of effecting the way in which the government organizes itself, a fact that evidently changes the surface of the contact of the relations between governors and governed.

At first these changes may appear to concern the relationship between the cities and their respective labor markets, with street sellers still being perceived as a mixture of loiterers, unemployed and those struggling for survival. But on further examination a different equation emerges, an equation that combines business activity with the imposition of public order. Street sellers have come to be seen as both offenders and have metamorphosed into entrepreneurs due to a combination of the intensification of public order policies, via the *securitization* and *militarization* of urban space, and the new regulations aimed at their urban and economic integration as entrepreneurs with access to credit facilities. The articulation between these two fronts of government action (both of which resulted from the continuous confrontations) reflects the alterations in *government style*, very similar in both cities. This new style has applied a selectivity to the ‘problem’ of street commerce; a process that either criminalizes the activity or transforms its status into that of an entrepreneurial activity, and thus alters the power struggle for the control of the wealth that flows through the streets of the two cities.

a) Partnerships, self-government and opportunities:

Fundamental to an understanding of the change in the way in which street sellers are perceived as a ‘problem’ are the references adopted in the new rules that establish which of them are included and which excluded from operating legally. Unlike the ‘legal/political’ criteria for the concession of the use of public space that divided sellers into ‘formal’ (registered to pay tax) and ‘informal’ (unregistered) groups, the passing of supplementary law n^o 128/08 (an alteration to the General Law of Small Businesses - supplementary law n^o 123/06), that came into effect in 2009⁹, has altered the way in which street sellers’ set about achieving authorization. The law established a number of advantages for what are termed ‘individual small businessmen’, offering an alternative to street sellers who wish to be incorporated into the formal economy under the terms of the new juridical entity with its entrepreneurial characteristics. The law included a number of benefits that are more ‘inclusive’ and transparent in relation to the registration process for the concession of public space: there are no profile restrictions, online registration is available to all candidates, official requirements are restricted to a once-yearly declaration of billing (that can also be made online) and candidates are exempt from business registration fees. Thus, when compared to the illegibility of the regulations for the concessions granted under the TPUs and the TUAPs the process is considerably easier and the cost virtually unchanged.

Among the law’s most important aspects are the reduction in the tax rates charged to larger companies and the guarantee of far-reaching social welfare coverage that includes sick leave, pregnancy leave (after a given period) and a retirement pension (according to age). Thus the law confers the rights that are considered to constitute ‘citizenship’, or, in the words of Ministry of Trade ‘the right to dignity, which in the human condition implies personal, professional and social realization. Being an officially registered businessman means holding one’s head high, being able to say ‘I am a citizen; I practice my profession according to the laws of my country. Being part of the formal economy means being a citizen’¹⁰.”

9 Supplementary law 123/06, that establishes the rules that govern small companies, together with supplementary law 128/08, that creates the legal entity of the ‘small individual businessman’, are based on article 146 of the federal constitution that establishes the taxation norms that benefit small companies with lower tax rates and simplified tax regimes.

10 See the ‘portal for entrepreneurs’ on the website of the Ministry of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade: <http://www.portaldoempreendedor.gov.br/>

This new vision of citizenship, being part of the formal economy, is also supported by institutions such as SEBRAE (the Brazilian Agency for the Support of Small Businesses) and the state-owned banks that have programs for promoting 'self realization' among small businessmen. SEBRAE provides assistance during the registration process and follow-up support through technical courses, business planning and counseling in 'entrepreneurial training and aptitude.' State-owned banks such as the *Banco do Brasil*, the *Banco do Nordeste* and the *Caixa Econômica Federal* offer special credit facilities and credit lines at reduced rates. And lastly there is the 'opportunity' offered by the federal's government's authorization for the joint purchase of merchandise through consortia, with the advantage of lower prices for bulk purchase.

This new access to official registration has considerably altered government regulation of the activity. It is important to note, however, that the new model has not *replaced* the old, but rather has been *superimposed* upon it. This is because commercial activity in public spaces requires municipal as well as federal authorization. For those already installed in the streets there is no great advantage in becoming an officially registered small businessman as the most important benefits offered by the new law, notably health coverage, already existed under the simplified requirements of the TPUs the TUAPs. And only a few organizations took an interest in the sales and purchase consortia due to the cost of joint taxes. A slightly larger number took an interest in the credit facilities, not as individual small businessmen but as members of associations that, as registered small companies, achieved direct access to the banks. This trend, especially in Rio de Janeiro, facilitated access to credit through the intermediation of these associations, which also began to hire specialized companies for debt negotiation.

However, the major impact of the new legislation for the official registration of small businesses was to be found in closed environments, the so called *camelódromos* (street malls) that were set up in both cities in an attempt to assuage the conflict between the government and the sellers who considered it their 'right to work in the street'¹¹. Curiously, it was precisely

11 This dynamic is very clear in the locations where the research was conducted. The Popular Market in Rua Uruguaiana, the first 'street mall' in Rio de Janeiro, was inaugurated in 1994 after an earlier attempt in 1984 to establish a 'street mall' in Praça XI had failed. It was the result of negotiations between the leaders of the street sellers and Governor Nilo Batista, in a continuation of the policies of former governor Leonel Brizola, who

in these ‘malls’ that the new benefits were most widely adhered to, with the highest number of officially registered small businesses, the proliferation of entrepreneurial ‘training’ and ‘aptitude’ courses, the largest number of new consortia and the highest rates of access to credit. With their larger number of members and greater degree of organization, the associations (and later the committees that administered these closed environments) were far quicker to structure themselves within the framework of the new legislation and its benefits than their counterparts who worked in the streets.

What is noteworthy about the new diagram of entrepreneurship in the status of the street sellers from ‘quasi workers’ (belonging either to the ‘formal’ or the ‘informal’ economy) to that of ‘quasi companies’, with the consequent alteration in their interactions with government. The legal/political framework had established a *polarization* between government and street seller that stemmed from the concession of municipal permission for the use of public spaces and was the cause of large-scale, ongoing conflicts and demonstrations throughout the period. The entrepreneurial system, on the other hand, has transformed the interaction between the two into a *partnership* through a convergence of interest in promoting the commercial sector.

As ‘quasi workers’ the street sellers had a ‘quasi boss’, the municipal government, with the hierarchical structure imposing a virtual employer-employee relationship. Even if, in official terms, the street sellers were self-employed workers, the *de facto* relationship with the municipality, as I have attempted to demonstrate above, was one of subordination. The inequality of this relationship was reflected in the disputes over the occupation of public spaces (that characterized the above-mentioned polarization); it was not by chance that the street sellers in São Paulo referred to the state as their ‘boss’ and the associations they formed were mostly ‘trade unions’ that formed links to the *Central Única dos Trabalhadores* (CUT) and the *Força Sindical* through political contacts¹².

saw these spaces as offering potential for government action in favor of street sellers. In São Paulo the *Feira da Madrugada* was inaugurated in 2004, as a result of negotiations between the leaders of the street sellers and the then governor Marta Suplicy, in a continuation of policies initiated by former governor Luiza Erundina.

12 The CUT is a trade union that was founded in 1983, as part of the movement known as *novo sindicalismo*, in the wake of the widespread strikes of the previous years; it is currently the largest union in Brazil. The *Força Sindical*, the second largest in the country, was founded in 1991, positioned closer to the center of the political spectrum as a counterbalance to the left-wing ideological stance of the CUT.

To the extent in which the governmental supervision metamorphosed the street sellers into ‘quasi entrepreneurs’ the polarization produced by an unequal and hierarchical relationship changed into a mutually agreed contractual agreement between two equal parties, or in other words, a partnership. As companies competing for the market of low-priced goods, the associations that administer the ‘street malls’ strive to respect the parameters established by the municipality, firstly by offering training courses that provide guidelines on how to work within the new legislation, and secondly by functioning as consortia for the purchase of goods and access to credit, often acting in conjunction.

Thus governmental intervention is no longer characterized by the *limitations* it imposed (mostly legal restrictions backed by police repression) but rather characterized by the *mobilization* of street sellers within the new entrepreneurial model. The previous parameters for the regulation of retail activity in public spaces were restrictive, limiting all such activity. With such practices the new entrepreneurial model stimulates such activity, providing incentives for street commerce and thus promoting the sector.

To summarize, the whole government approach to the issue has shifted from one of perceiving it as a *problem* to perceiving it as an *opportunity* for business. In both cities the activity, once considered a labor market problem and an indication of labor disorganization, is gradually being transformed into a front for greater economic development compared to that of other cities. An example of this can be seen in recent plans for urban renovation that now include spaces for street commerce. The current plans for ‘shopping corridors’ in São Paulo and for the renovation of the docklands of Rio de Janeiro in preparation for the major events that will occur there are examples of this shift in perception and of how government intervention has moved in the direction of entrepreneurialism. The competition between Brazil’s major cities for economic resources has highlighted the importance of ‘popular markets’ as a significant component of urban economies; they are no longer seen as a problem of social exclusion and poverty but rather as an opportunity for the flow of wealth.

b) Military strategies and the securitization of urban space:

While the promotion of officially registered companies and the access to credit have been almost entirely limited to closed environments,

intervention on the streets has been intensified and the number of arrests increased under the government's policy of securing public spaces. With the territorial occupation of certain areas and its ostensive use of coercive dissuasion practices, militarization has become the instrument of preference for the control of this commerce which is now the target of ongoing monitoring and security surveillance.

Certain points should be noted concerning the militarization and securitization of public spaces by government: firstly, the creation of new secretariats has produced a new 'institutional design' of municipal administration with the restructuring of the various coordination departments, subordinate divisions and other bodies related to public order; secondly, these new secretariats have established public order programs that utilize modern verification and monitoring techniques and have developed new instruments for the agents responsible for inspection, reorganizing their attributes and modifying their powers for exercising them. The work of these new secretariats has thus altered our approach to the question of these 'political markets' which are now characterized by this *decisive interaction* between the agents that control them and the street sellers who comprise their 'target group'. These secretariats, with their new approach and instruments, have opened up a new field for the examination of the effects of governmental action on these 'political markets'.

The Special Secretariat for Public Order (SEOP) was created on the first day in office of Rio's current mayor, Eduardo Paes (by decree law 30339 of January 1, 2009). This regulation revised the entire structure of the city's administrative powers for the maintenance of public order without consulting either its legislative body or the population. These exemptions, due to its 'special' (or priority) status, mean that the law is supposedly temporary, but in effect it is structured and operates in the same way as all the other municipal secretariats¹³ (NACIF 2011). In São Paulo the Municipal Secretariat for Urban Safety (SMSU) was created by mayor Marta Suplicy in 2002. Although it was instituted by law nº 12396/02 it also dispensed with any wider form of consultation. Its intention is stated as 'promoting the control of street commerce' for which its preferred operational instrument is the use of the Civil Guard.

¹³ Formerly independent bodies have been incorporated into the Secretariat. The District Council for Inspection now incorporates what was previously the Authorization and Inspection Unit and the Inspection Unit for Parking and Towing; the Council for Urban Control now incorporates what was previously the Operational Unit for Urban Control (the Municipal Guard.)

This new institutional design, that emerged from the transformation of the old institutions into new secretariats, is characterized by the concept of *coordinated management of public order*. Coordination is required due to the increased effectiveness of public order management, which now has a wider scope, with the secretariats engaging the services of other municipal bodies through integrated management councils. Agreements have been entered into for cooperation with the district councils and other secretariats, including those for transport, public works and social assistance, that traditionally have no connection with the maintenance of public order. The municipal government has redefined the rules for the use and occupation of urban space by making use of the existing regulations at its disposal, such as the Construction Code (that defines building norms) and the Code of Conduct (that defines the social practices permitted in public places) resulting in a highly effective and consistent normalization of the use of urban space.

Thus from point of view of 'best practices' the coordinated management approach is amply justified as a demonstration of 'technical and administrative common sense'. The same cannot be said, however, of the perception that the control of public spaces in the city is a matter of protecting public order. This militarized security approach has made public safety the priority at the expense of harmonious coexistence, with increased regulation of what is permitted and increased policing of behavior in public spaces (TELLES 2012), including the incrimination of urban types seen as undesirable for social contact and forcibly expelled from areas under military control. This is a new form of urbanism whose main concern is public safety (OBLET 2008). On the one hand it is anchored in the 'new military urbanism' (GRAHAM 2011) that aims at the integration of police strategy with urban planning, and on the other in what is termed 'governmental acclimatization' (BOULLIER 2007), an important contemporary model for the urban organization that has abandoned the idea of 'deep causes' in favor of dealing with 'surface events'. Thus methods of surveillance and militarization become integrated with the creation of urban spaces, altering the very concept of what constitutes these spaces of coexistence, that are no longer perceived as places of citizen appropriation (LEFEBVRE 1968) but rather as a means for the construction of urban order.

For an exposition of the significance and effects of this new form of construction of public order it is fundamental to understand precisely how

the programs of these secretariats operate. Despite the general success of the SMSU, the experience of transferring the attributes of the inspectors to the municipal guard has not been seen as entirely successful. São Paulo's municipal guard is one of the most militarized in the country; nevertheless its control of street commerce has been seen as not being sufficiently 'energetic' in terms of 'imposing itself'. The effective acquisition of coercive control was legally granted a few months after the transference of control, on December 2, 2010, in an agreement signed between the state (representing the military police) and municipal (representing the district councils) governments of São Paulo (law nº 14977/09 and decree nº 50994/09, commonly known as 'operation delegation'). The new law allowed military policemen (a state controlled body) to work for the municipal government for up to 96 hours per month on their days off, in return for extra pay.

The operation began with an intervention in the area of Rua 25 de Março, and a few days later the head of the military police announced a reduction in the occurrence of minor crimes such as theft. The results were divulged in indices that indicated a reduction in petty crime and were hailed as proof of the unquestionable success of the intervention, which was then extended to other areas of the city. Street commerce was included in these indices of reduced criminal activity, even though the activity in itself does not constitute a crime. It would appear as no coincidence that at the same time the municipal government also assumed the responsibility for the repression of pirated goods (by means of a global program organized jointly by the UN and the World Bank that had recently been adopted by the Ministry of Justice)¹⁴.

However, the significance of this delegation of functions, that effectively means the transfer of responsibility for the control of street commerce from the inspectors appointed by the district councils, with backup from the municipal guard, to the military police, goes deeper than might appear at first sight. More than merely a means of providing extra remuneration for police with the justification of a reduction in criminality, it constitutes a 'legal shortcut' that violates the constitutional division between the roles

14 The Justice Ministry's program is called 'City Free of Pirated Goods' and is administered by the Brazilian Institute for Ethical Competition. The program attacks piracy on a number of fronts, including promoting municipal responsibility for the fight against pirated goods, with incentives to town councils for the 'creation of local mechanisms for their prevention and suppression' and the 'prevention of this illegal commerce' by local government.

of the two institutions, diluting the specific attributes of the inspectors in favor of expanding the powers of the military police. It was the provisions of this new law that enabled the military police to intervene in the traditional district of Brás, the center of ‘popular’ commerce in São Paulo, during which storm troopers, cavalry, mobile bases and special units were employed in large numbers for the occupation of the district.

However, this centralization of attributes, previously divided, has led to a greater degree of agility and efficiency in the day-to-day control of the district of Brás. Major Wagner Rodrigues, head of the administrative and operational division for the city center, has stated that this conception of inspection stemmed from a number of experiences of previous operations that he had commanded, and that it was now realized that the division of attributions ‘prevented efficient control’. As an example he cited the ‘parachutes’ - street seller that spread out their merchandise on cloths to enable them to make a quick escape when the inspectors appear - as when the cloth was spread out on the ground inspection was an attribute of the municipal guard, whereas when it was rolled up in the form of a bag only the military police were empowered to conduct a search. This “small interactive scene of social control” illustrates what has changed in the daily routine of the district: in the first place the discretionary powers of a policeman working on his days off are now broader than those he is attributed when working officially, as ‘operation delegation’ has limited the attributes of the municipal guard and the district councils’ inspectors; in addition, these broader powers are guaranteed by their superiors, policemen appointed to positions of command by the district councils, responsible for the overall planning and operation of inspection, including seizure of goods and the occasional arrest of street sellers in a process that could be termed administrative ‘insulation’¹⁵.

In Rio de Janeiro, the main activity of the SEOP has been a series of operations known as ‘*Choques de Ordem*’ (public order offensives). At the outset these operations caused considerable impact by which the municipal government was ‘sending the message’: its new model of intervention, characterized by its multiplicity, mobility and media impact (VELLOSO 2012), meant that

15 Military police officers have been appointed to managerial posts in the District Councils that come under the control of the State Secretariat for Public Safety, the Transport Secretariat and the Traffic Control Division (CET), as well as in the Funeral Service, the Ambulance Service and the Civil Defense Department. See the report by Gabriela Moncau in *Revista Caros Amigos*, July 2011 edition, ‘*Kassab reforça o Estado Policial em São Paulo*’.

'everything had changed'. In its first year it conducted a new registration process for all street sellers (the Consolidated Street Commerce Register - CUCA). In its second year the SEOP renewed its public order offensives, now called '*Choque de Ordem II*' for which the most important operational instrument was the Public Order Units (UOPs). This was a time when major police operations to occupy and pacify the favelas in Rio de Janeiro (UPPs) were having enormous impact and repercussion; the UOPs' model of territorial occupation reinforced the practice (that had already been established during the first '*Choque de Ordem*'). Thus the permanent occupation of territory by the forces of public order has come to be seen as the most effective form of applying the programs and projects of the SEOP.

The first indication of the new strategy came with the arrival of the municipal guard in the early hours of the morning, before the sellers had set up their stands. The commander of the municipal guard has stated that 'territorial domination' before the stands open for sale facilitates intervention; it serves as a warning, showing who's 'in command', and incurs lower 'costs' than interventions that occur later in the day. Thus the effectiveness of territorial control, previously applied by the municipal guard, has been reasserted in the wake of the installation of the UPPs (the pacification of the favelas). However, as territorial occupation was not an attribute of the municipal guard, the question arose of which new instruments should be adopted. Nevertheless, even with the increase in the trend towards territorial occupation, the central role of the municipal guard in SEOP's operations has continued to increase, consolidating its position as the leading instrument for the control of social and urban space issues. In fact it is the employment of the municipal guard that has made the implementation of the UOPs and territorial occupation possible as political strategies for maintaining public order.

The increase in the powers of the Municipal Guard was intended to achieve the strategic aim of increasing its efficiency as an instrument of intervention in the control of public space, the new model of which is now territorial occupation. This has led to far-reaching changes that include new operating, planning and result assessment methodology, including the mapping out of areas with specific characteristics and an evaluation system based on questionnaires answered by local inhabitants; the purchase of modern devices such as smart phones and tablets connected to an operations intelligence center; far-reaching structural changes contained in the Standard Operational

Procedure (POP); training programs for the use of new technology and the reformulation of the Special Operations Group (GOE), that had existed previously, but whose role is now to 'prepare the terrain' for the installation of the UOP (in the same way as the military police's Special Operations Battalion does prior to its interventions during the pacification of the favelas), thus becoming the predominant agent for the occupation of public space, with a wide range of coercive and dissuasive instruments at its disposal.

3. Conclusion

The occupation of the central districts of both Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo has altered the dynamic of *decisive interaction* between the street sellers and the agents responsible for the control of their activity. In both cities the adoption of territorial occupation as a form of control has resulted in a 'centralization' of the 'assets' of this 'political market'. In direct terms this means extortion has become 'wholesale', as it is now negotiated between the military command and the associations that run the 'street malls' and control the flow of merchandise. The associations of sellers who work in the streets are less well organized, without the capacity to pay the increased price of these 'political assets'; they are thus excluded from the negotiations, except for occasional handouts (or 'retail' extortion) where there is no guarantee that in return their activity will be protected.

Thus the selective application of policies that encourage the creation of companies and provide access to credit, alongside those that promote the increased policing and securing of public spaces, have entirely altered the nature of the disputes involving the location of stands. The inevitable process of the incorporation of the activity into the formal economy is being assisted by the authorization of closed environments ('street malls') that reinforce the tendency towards economic concentration and political centralization, as well as by the emphasis on the policing and securing of public spaces. It would be an exaggeration, and therefore incorrect, to say that these changes have been purposefully enacted *in order for* the markets to operate in this way; but a combination of tendencies unquestionably exists within the government that *produce effects* of this kind.

In summary, it is the unpredictable conditions of the time that determine the dynamic that composes the power groups that dispute and negotiate

the flow of merchandise and the enormous potential for profit generated by street commerce in cities like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. These conditions depend upon the exercise of their legal authority by state institutions, that are both their product and producer. Whenever a new regulation, law or decree is sanctioned by municipal, state or federal authorities, the conflicts between these power groups assume a different form. At the same time these groups exert what pressure they can to influence the law making process. In the case of the groups that dispute the 'popular' commerce these conflicts register a structural selectivity that possesses a spacialized form. This, then, is the threefold process that now governs the locations of street stands: where they are permitted and even encouraged, where they are merely tolerated and where they are repressed with the utmost severity.

The issue indicated here is a change in the differential management of illegalisms (FOUCAULT 1976); in other words, the alteration in the balance between tolerance and repression as selectively applied to these markets. According to Foucault, in order to acquire an understanding of how this selection process works one must examine the power games that delineate the frontiers (between legality and illegality) (TELLES, HIRATA 2010). In the case of street commerce this *reference* of the demarcation of the frontier between legal and illegal has been dislocated from the old juridical terrain by means of the new policies that promote the registration of companies and access to credit (that have included some of the street sellers), while at the same time the militarization and securitization of urban space have become more radical, incriminating the vast majority that has been excluded from these policies. This does not mean to say that the dispute for street commerce has ceased, but that it now occurs under entirely different conditions with a segment of the sellers permitted to work with the blessing of the very government that represses the activity of their comrades in public spaces.

In this brief discussion of the way in which street commerce has come to be seen as a 'problem' in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, I have attempted to outline the changes in the type of governmental intervention in this activity. It is this delineation of the frontiers between legality and illegality, and the effective positioning of day-to-day practices within this spectrum, whether or not in accordance with state control of the activity, that characterizes the control of the immense volume of wealth that circulates through the commerce conducted on the streets of Rio de Janeiro and

São Paulo. It remains to be seen whether the conflicts over the authorization of street stands will assume new characteristics due to this government approach of ‘street commerce as a problem’, or whether the fundamentals of the dispute will be called into question.

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Houses and economy in the favela

Eugênia Motta

Abstract

A particular house provides the thread for a description of how people manage their domestic spaces, plan for the future, earn and spend money and care for their family. The aim of the article is to reflect on the elements that modulate the economy of the favela where they live, setting out from the notion of house, taken as a complex array of people, objects and spaces constructed in relation to other houses. These relations involve interdependence, asymmetries, affects and conflicts visible through everyday exchanges, commensality and the use of money. The ethnographic approach allows us to take economic practices as a window onto the ways in which the many dimensions of social life are intertwined: economy, family practices, gender relations, morality, spatiality and temporality. The text aims to engage in a critical dialogue with views of the favela as a place of absence and of the economy as a separate sphere of life.

Keywords: economy; favela; Complexo do Alemão; house

Resumo

Uma casa em particular é fio condutor para a descrição de como as pessoas gerem as suas casas, planejam o futuro, ganham e gastam dinheiro e cuidam de suas famílias. Trata-se de refletir a partir daí sobre os elementos que modulam a economia da favela onde vivem a partir da noção de casa, tomada como um arranjo complexo de pessoas, objetos e espaços construídos e que se constitui em relação a outras. Estas relações envolvem interdependência, assimetrias, afetos e conflitos visíveis por meio das trocas cotidianas, da comensalidade e do uso do dinheiro. A abordagem etnográfica permite tomar as práticas econômicas como uma janela a partir da qual é possível reconhecer como diversas dimensões da vida social estão entrelaçadas: economia,

práticas familiares, relações de gênero, moralidades, temporalidades e espacialidades. Pretende-se dialogar criticamente com visões da favela como lugar de ausência e da economia como esfera separada da vida.

Palavras-chave: economia; favela; Complexo do Alemão; casa

Houses and economy in the favela¹

Eugênia Motta

Aliança² is one of the favelas forming an area known as Complexo do Alemão, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Maria and Antônio have lived there for more than thirty years. They came from other states: Maria from a bordering state and Antônio from one in the northeast. A number of their relatives also live in this favela, including their two daughters with their respective husbands and children. Since going to live in Complexo do Alemão they have lived in a series of houses and earned money in a variety of ways. Antônio worked in various factories and today is a concierge. Maria used to be a cleaner and has sold food on the beach and in the street. The two also used to run their own snack bar. Maria today splits her time between her home and her social project, a rented place a few dozen metres away, where she organizes several activities for children of the community to, in her words, keep them off the street where they could get into bad company. The following view of life in the favela sets out from the life of this couple and their house.

Situated in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro city, the first occupation of what is today known as Complexo do Alemão dates from the start of the twentieth century (IPEA 2013). The area forms part of the so-called Leopoldina Suburb, referring to the branch of the railway line around which the districts of Ramos, Inhaúma, Olaria and Bonsucesso developed. Today only the names survive of most of the many factories once located in this region. These names – ‘Coca-Cola,’ ‘Poesi’ (a lingerie factory) and ‘Castrol’ – serve as local reference points for residents and visitors to Complexo do Alemão, though the factories themselves have vanished.

1 I wish to thank all the colleagues and friends who have commented on earlier versions of this text: Andrés Góngora, Flávia Dalmaso, Pedro Braum and Joseph Handerson. I am especially grateful for the important contributions from Federico Neiburg, Fernando Rabossi, Louis Marcelin, Gustavo Onto and Benoît de L’Estoile. I also thank all my colleagues in Rio and Paris who patiently listened to and commented on presentations of this work.

2 The names of the location and the people cited in this paper are fictitious.

Along with Complexo da Penha, Complexo do Alemão forms a continuous area of occupation extending across a sizeable part of the Misericórdia ridge. Many residents disagree vehemently with the official data produced by the 2010 Population Census by the IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) which registered 60,583 people living in 18,442 households. The number of favelas or communities³ making up Complexo varies according to the source, but the residents divide the region into fourteen main localities: Morro Alemão, Pedra do Sapo, Grotta, Canitar, Alvorada, Palmeiras, Nova Brasília, Fazendinha, Casinhas, Relicário, Morro dos Mineiros, Matinha, Morro do Adeus and Morro da Baiana.

The Aliança community extends from a large, busy avenue to the top of a hill. Paved two-way streets cross the favela, used by motorcycle taxis, vans and trucks. But the roads are not the only spaces people use to move about. Alleys, steps and passageways criss-cross apparently randomly in every direction. People use these to circulate on foot or sometimes by motorbike. Some of the few open spaces contain courtyards and small squares. A number of these were built as part of the urban interventions recently implemented in Complexo.⁴

Some houses in Aliança have two or three floors and tiled walls. Others lack plaster, leaving their structure exposed. At the top of the hill are houses made from wood, very often containing a single room and frequently without a bathroom. In the geography of the favela, the higher up the location, the cheaper the house and the poorer the people living there are presumed to be. The precarious condition of the sanitation and water supply is one of the factors differentiating this zone, along with the greater distance from the transportation routes that provide access to other areas of the city.

Over time one learns that a door on the street may lead inside a house but also into corridors, or sometimes a series of corridors leading to several houses. There are also *vilas*, closed-off groups of houses whose gates impede connection to public areas of circulation – the streets or alleyways. This internal geography is invisible from a distance, meaning that from a bird's

3 Both words are used by dwellers to refer to the place where they live. The use of one or the other is situational and depends on who is the interlocutor and the topic, with 'community' being the more commonly used in everyday conversation.

4 Primarily through the works linked to the Federal Government's Growth Acceleration Program (PAC: Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento), executed in the region since 2007.

eye view there often appears to be no space to walk between the constructions. An outsider may easily get lost.

Many shops, beauty parlours, workshops and snack bars line Aliança's streets. All kinds of clothing can be bought, as well as beauty products, groceries, construction materials and mobile phones, while almost anything can be brought to be repaired. The alleys also contain bars and small shops, and posters can often be seen on the house doors announcing small clothing repairs or food for sale.

The roads are fairly busy, especially those used by vans and motorbikes. At school opening and closing times they fill with children in school uniform, and at the end of the afternoon with men and women, many of them also in uniform, climbing up the hill, arriving from work, or walking down to the churches found scattered throughout the favela. Officers from the Pacification Police Unit are also always visible in the main street, the amount of firearms on display and the position of the cars varying from day-to-day.

Spanning from large houses to shacks, broad paved roads to narrow alleys, large supermarkets to tiny stores, Aliança is a place of enormous diversity. These differences are perceived more clearly the closer one is to the everyday life of local people.

Following the suggestion of Federico Neiburg (2014), in this text I look to show some of the "elements that modulate the economy" of Aliança through an analysis focusing on one house – that of Maria and Antônio – and other houses interrelated through theirs. I describe various forms of earning, spending, keeping and loaning money, and how various objects circulate, in order to comprehend how people manage their houses on a day-to-day basis, care for their families and plan for the future. The ethnographic approach enables the observed economic practices to become a window onto family practices, forms of thinking and building material spaces – to limit ourselves to the main questions to be explored here. This involves a shift, therefore, from the question of 'whether' morality, affects and kinship, for example, are involved in economic practices to an attempt to comprehend 'how' they combine in the shaping of a social world.

In the first part of the text I briefly present a discussion of the ideas of 'house' and 'configuration of houses' as analytic strategies that afford a positive perspective of the economy and the favela. Just as the house allowed kinship and family studies – in which the concept gained strength – to

examine relationalities and processes (rather than structures, models and functions), it also enabled the construction of a perspective that opposes the normativities typically present in outside views of the favela and definitions of 'the' economy. The material house, from this viewpoint, is one of the elements in a complex arrangement of relations that also includes people and objects. This arrangement and their elements are mutually constituted in the circulations and transformations – in motion.

Next I shall describe two forms through which new houses were made: the house of Maria and her daughters, and the house of one of her nephews. The tie of origin between the houses places them in a relation that is maintained over time and involves mutual obligations and moralities. Ideas of autonomy lie at the base of the house's genesis and are strongly linked to the relation of care between those connected to it. As an autonomous space, the house is founded on the interdependence expressed in the asymmetry between those who care and those who are cared for.

After this I shall show, based on the everyday exchanges related to food, how the configuration of houses is constituted. Observation of how meals are organized and prepared, and how the objects surrounding meals circulate, reveals that the houses are related to each other in different ways and that these relations only become intelligible when relations internal to the house are considered simultaneously. The kitchen is a central place in these relations and the basis for the expression of a particular order between people in a configuration of houses, which differentiates men and women, adults and children. Observing the control over planning, preparing and consuming meals by a woman and other processes involved in the management of the food, it is possible to perceive the hierarchies, relations of proximity and affect displayed in the acts of cooking and eating.

The 'house money' provides the basis for understanding the forms through which earnings and expenditures are managed. The expression eloquently points to the centrality of the house and defines obligations and prohibitions in relation to its maintenance, in the strong sense of the word, including its integration with other houses. Still in relation to money, I shall call attention to specific circuits that are formed through the perceived identity between objects or between forms of earning and spending money, highlighting those circuits that are distinctively female. Notions such as "domestic budget" and 'family income,' used in government statistics and

public policy planning, are thrown into question. In the construction of public numbers (Porter 1995), domiciles and families not only comprise discrete objects, their isolation is also the basis for the organization of statistical data. Management of the house, as far as the use of money reveals, is not organized through calculations of global incomings and outgoings, nor based on the house as a closed unit.

Finally I shall discuss a central aspect of the houses in Aliança: the mutability of the constructed spaces. The transformative possibilities of the constructions are allied to the combination of different activities in which people engage to earn money, whether at the same time or over their lifetime. I shall show, particularly in relation to women who are mothers, how the possibility of constructing a business space is combined with perceived risks to their children. Parents commonly fear that their children, especially boys at the beginning of adolescence, may become involved in activities linked to the illicit drugs trade or those perceived to be linked to them, like stealing. People usually refer to these perceived threats as the possibility of youngsters “getting to do something wrong” or getting involved with “bandits.”

Another form of earning money is linked to the possibility of possessing or multiplying constructions (with the division of a house or shop into two, for example) – namely renting out properties, considered a ‘sure’ source of money. The dividing up of spaces enables the multiplication of earnings and activities, central to the strategies of Aliança’s residents.

Based on questions linked to mutability of spaces, I shall briefly raise some points concerning the regulations for using and transmitting constructions by selling or leasing. The interpretative framework of ‘informality’ proves fallible in terms of making these relations intelligible, connected as they are to multiple kinds of regulations and legalities, state laws and technologies among them.

Another aspect of the mutability of the constructions concerns the past, imagined and supposed transformations that compose a repertoire for speaking about the past and future, evaluating good and bad business deals, and building reputations. The constructions are the basis for a kind of temporality that eschews the divisions of the calendar. In the narratives on the past, births and deaths (the events rather than the dates) merge with the houses and their transformations to become temporal landmarks, just as when people talk about their plans through imagined transformations to the buildings.

The viewpoint from the houses in Aliança is pre-eminently female. Women are at the centre of houses and of the relations between them. Annette Weiner (1992) has shown how the observation of women's practices and viewpoints challenges some explanatory models. For the author, female subordination is shown to be an implicit premise that obscures the complexity of actual exchanges and power relations. Following Weiner's arguments, the female perspective adopted in my own approach aims to provide a more intelligible account of this social world in which women are the main agents in managing the house, care and day-to-day exchanges. As Janet Carsten (1995) suggests, women here are not linked to the house in opposition to a supposed 'public' space, but through everyday practices that form the basis of the everyday economy of Aliança.

Houses and configurations of houses

An examination of houses can be found throughout much of the anthropological tradition. In Brazil the classic studies of social transformation in the Northeast showed the central role of the house in comprehending social relations in rural areas, including questions linked to work and the economy (Heredia 1979, Garcia 1975, Palmeira 1977). Kinship studies, however, is where the idea of the house assumes a much greater centrality and density, the landmark being Lévi-Strauss's proposal concerning the 'société de maison' (Lévi-Strauss 1991).

According to some authors who have worked to develop Lévi-Strauss's original insight, the concept of 'maison' derives its strength not so much from the success of formulating a principle of social organization capable of explaining concrete situations where neither of the two principles of kinship – descent or alliance – applied, but in his proposal to construct a relational approach that also included the physical house. This is the direction taken by the critiques and attempts to move 'beyond' found, for example, in the book *About the House: Lévi-Strauss and Beyond* (Carsten & Hugh-Jones eds. 1995). According to Carsten, the merit of the formulation is its recognition of the importance of this native category and its fertility when it comes to understanding some social worlds (Carsten 1995: 225).

The critique made by Louis Marcelin in his works on black families takes the same line. Although Lévi-Strauss's 'maison' allows us to question

the concept of household by suggesting an analytic integration of the physical house and kinship relations, it is nonetheless of little use when it comes to thinking of the social world of Bahia's Recôncavo region. One of the main questions identified in this shift away from the 'société de maison' is Marcelin's interest in investigating "the conditions for the emergence of the house and of the social practices that both construct it and are constructed by it" (1996: 97), a question that Lévi-Strauss does not tackle. Marcelin incorporates the suggestion of "introducing the house as a physical reality and social institution into the centre of the analysis of social organization" – recognizing the significance of Lévi-Strauss's contribution – but proposes to 're-situate' the concept (ibid: 96). Hence Marcelin's use can be seen as a reformulation that proposes to deepen the basis of Lévi-Strauss's proposal while dropping its explanatory pretensions, in part because these are based on resolving a problem – the failure of a particular structural model to explain certain phenomena – that for the former does not apply.

The possibility of exploring the favelas from the viewpoint of their houses was suggested by Marcelin in a footnote to his doctoral thesis (1996) on the need to produce positive descriptions of the houses found in the poor urban peripheries. As he observes, many analyses adopt a 'miserabilistic' approach that identifies the relations between houses, families and environments depicted as anomalous, or takes the house to be the expression of the capacity to adapt to a context of deprivation. Marcelin also calls attention to a text by Klaas Woortman, 'Casa e Família Operária' [The House and the Working Class Family] (1980), one of the few texts to emphasize the importance of considering the house beyond its 'material dimension' as a 'basic need' in the specific context of favelas.

At an analytic level, therefore, I shall follow the suggestion by Marcelin, which he in turn attributes to Lévi-Strauss, namely to "place the house at the centre of the analysis," combining its physical and social aspects within a relational approach. Marcelin also suggests focusing on the genesis of the house – a question to be discussed later in this text in relation to Aliança – and on the house as a 'process,' which resonates closely with the idea of focusing on movement and transformation, in contrast to the construction of fixed discrete units in the spheres of kinship or economic practices.

Marcelin writes:

The house is not only a transmissible individual property, a thing, a family property, an ideology. It is a practice, a strategic construction in the production of domesticity. Neither is it an isolated, self-contained entity. The house only exists in the context of a network of domestic units. It is thought and experienced in inter-relation with the other houses that participate in its construction – in the symbolic and concrete sense. (Marcelin 1999: 37)

In Marcelin's analysis, the idea of a 'configuration of houses' is inseparable from his proposal to pursue a house-based approach. The configuration is defined as the "analytic representation of an array of positions that connect networks of houses" (1999: 37), which summarizes the definition presented by Marcelin in longer form in his thesis (1996). Sometimes, however, the configuration is treated as a "set of houses structured by an ideology of family and kinship" (1999: 33), constituting a unit in itself, both discrete and empirically identifiable. It is this formulation that allows us to perceive, for instance, that a person belongs to a "configuration of two to seven houses." These two modulations of the concept of configuration are not contradictory or mutually excluding, considering Marcelin's approach, but it does suggest that this second use is specifically linked to its empirical universe. Consequently, though inspired by Marcelin's formulations, the use of the concept of configuration of houses made here should be specified clearly.

In Aliança the houses related to each other do not constitute discrete units and the relations between them are not always expressed through the language of kinship. The relations between houses can only be qualified by taking a particular house as a reference point. The places occupied by the houses in a configuration are not a quality of the configuration itself or of a house but of the position of one house in relation to others.

Therefore I choose to turn to an earlier development of the concept by Norbert Elias (1980).⁵ Elias's proposal is based on rejecting both methodological individualism and the reification of 'society' or the 'group' as perspectives through which one can comprehend the social world. Configuration for Elias ('Figuration' or 'Interdependenzgeflecht' in German, literally 'mesh of interdependence') is an analytic perspective that allows us to see via arrangements

5 Louis Marcelin does not refer to the concept as formulated by Elias, but explains that he makes 'the same use' as the latter author in *The Society of Individuals*.

that are only intelligible through the relations between the elements composing them. It is presumed that these elements are relatively autonomous and for this reason establish diverse and mutable relations among themselves, constituting something – a configuration – that possesses a degree of intelligibility, but lacks agency. We are not dealing here with people but houses. Applying the idea of configuration to Aliança and its houses, therefore, we can define the ‘configuration of houses’ as a perspective that affords a more intelligible account of the multiple and diverse relations between a house and other houses, each one of them relatively autonomous but dependent on others. The house and the configuration of houses will give substance on the analytic level to what the ethnography allows to emerge through the observation of everyday practices.

The pioneering work of Marcelin has shown the productiveness of the use of the idea of house and configuration to situate the study of family in terms closer to how these relations are experienced. My adoption of this analytic proposal in order to conceptualize the elements modulating the economy of Aliança has the same purpose: to produce positive descriptions, eschewing the normative models that present themselves at various levels in relation to economy, family and favela. This allows us to comprehend who the subjects of these practices are and how objects, people and constructions are related and mutually constructed. But it is not just at an analytic level that the concept of the house will relate here kinship and economics. The proximity between the approaches goes beyond the abstract. The house enables us to qualify the forms through which the spheres of economics and kinship are intrinsically linked in everyday practices.

The relation between the houses of parents and children is the strongest in the configuration of houses. I shall show that the man’s father and the woman’s mother are particularly important figures in the genesis of the house and in the ties that it maintains with the houses from which they originated. Care of grandchildren also plays an important role in the exchanges between the houses. This care is seen to be extremely important in Aliança in relation to boys, given the perceived risk that “they could do something wrong.” The languages of the house and kinship are used to qualify relations of proximity, affect and obligation in Aliança. Based on specific local uses, I intend to show how the language of kinship and house are used to express proximity, affect and expectations of obligation and respect.

The centrality of food in the configuration of houses connected through Maria's house – its preparation, the place it occupies in the construction of the house and commensality – is an important link that enables economic practices to be analysed in closer proximity to the relatedness expressed by kinship ties. The relation suggested by Janet Carsten (1995) between the house, bodies (particularly the female body) and the construction of kinship through the sharing of substances via food helps reveal the interweaving of practices between the dimensions of the economy and relationality. Marshall Sahlins's (2013) definition of kinship as “mutuality of being” stresses the role of such relational aspects to the construction of kinship ties.

Making a house

The genesis of the house affords an understanding of the ways in which ties between houses are built. The asymmetry present in relations of care within the house forms the basis for the relations between the new house and those from which it originated, including moralities and mutual obligations. The ideal of autonomy is central to the construction of a house and also has to do with care and responsibilities over the behavior of youngsters.

When they married, each of Maria's two daughters received help – this is the word used – from their parents and parents-in-law to buy and improve their houses. Maria gave as a present some furniture bought with a credit card and lent a sum of money. The mother insisted that the two daughters went to live in a house on the same street as her own. The houses were less than ten metres away from each other.

One time Maria was close to home when she met José, her brother-in-law. In a teasing tone she said to him: “I heard that Márcia is already pregnant...” The girl to whom Maria referred was the girlfriend of José's son. Stunned, her brother-in-law replied: “Who told you that?” and added, now serious: “I am already making a house for them!” Some time later the couple married, before the baby was born, at a party in the bridegroom's parents' house. This was held as soon as the house being built for them was deemed ready enough to be inhabited.

The help given by the parents of a new couple towards building or buying a house can take the form of money or construction materials. This is common in Aliança and other research studies describe similar processes in

favelas and other localities.⁶ A new house is the offshoot of one or two other houses and remains linked to them. It is common for young couples to continue to receive presents and financial help from the parents for a long time after. Those who are cared for (usually the children) constitute new houses with help from the parents' house, simultaneously marking the end of care and generating the possibility of themselves caring for others: their own children and in the future, for example, elderly parents or sick relatives.

When a woman becomes pregnant before constituting a house (before marrying), the parents, generally the young man's, feel obliged to "set up a house" for the new couple and even if they lack the means to sustain themselves, the parents (generally the young man's father) make every effort possible to establish a new house. Depending on the means available – such as money and land – this includes making efforts to delimit separate physical spaces and give them the concrete appearance of autonomy that a new house possesses socially.

The house is the delimitation of a space – physical whenever possible⁷ – in which care is central to the asymmetry that underlies both the relations constituting the house and the relations between this new house and the house(s) of origin. A new baby must be cared for and, at the same time, creates the obligation to care. As we can see, through the value attributed to the obligation to make a new house when a child's arrival is announced, someone who cares is no longer cared for. The relation of care within a house is converted therefore into a relation – likewise asymmetric – between the houses inaugurated by the 'help' given to make the new house. Despite the fact that these two examples involve parents and children and that these tend to comprise the positions of the members of the original house and the new house respectively, what I wish to show here is that we are not dealing with a model involving obligations between parents and children: rather, what is at the base of the houses and their relations are the asymmetries defining the interdependence that constitutes them.

The ideas of each house being autonomous and the obligations and interdictions in relation to other houses involve moralities, and a substantial portion of the gossip and the construction of reputations – both good and

6 See Cavalcanti (2007) and McCallum & Bustamente (2012).

7 I shall discuss later the material aspect of the autonomy of the houses.

bad – occurs around them. The story of Márcia’s pregnancy had already been told to me in a gossiping tone as something that sullied the reputation of the families concerned. It is considered desirable for the couple to have a house before having children. José rushed to ensure this happened. Some mothers told me proudly that their daughters had only become pregnant after obtaining their own houses.

The idea that a house should be composed of a father and mother and their children participates in the symbolic and material shaping of the house, combining the ideals of autonomy and a space of care. This native representation should not be confused with the model of the nuclear family on which normative views are based. McCallum & Bustamante call attention to the necessary distinction between native representation and analytical essentialization, which grounds the classification of poor families as anomalous entities. On one hand we need to put aside the normative view of the family at the analytical level, while, on the other, paying attention to indigenous notions of normality and abnormality. Situations deemed shameful or to be avoided show that the principles of care, responsibility and asymmetry underlie the idea of normality and abnormality. The couple with children is the ideal modality for what is considered normal and socially acceptable.⁸

Lucia’s house is one of the situations considered abnormal. She lived with her husband and son. When the son reached the age of 14, or thereabouts, the father left. The boy began to attack his mother physically, demanding money and complaining about the food. He prohibits her from going out without his permission. The boy refuses to work and “brings no money home.” This situation is considered a source of vexation and shame by Lucia and her neighbours. The boy is young, earns no money, and yet he exercises a role of authority that contradicts his lack of involvement in maintaining the house.

Dona Berenice is the mother of Solange, married to Nelson. When the mother went to live in Aliança, having separated from her own husband, she did not go to live in her daughter’s house. Instead the daughter divided up the space that her own house occupied in order to build a house for her mother: a room with a bathroom and a small kitchen, with an entrance separate from her own. The mother could not occupy either the role of

8 McCallum and Bustamante show that the native representation of the nuclear family as ‘normal’ participates in the configuration of houses, allowing those recognized to belong to this category to establish relations with other houses.

caring – the daughter is married and has her own children and grandchildren to care for – or the role of being cared for, since she is a healthy woman who earns her own income and works. The construction of a house was perceived, therefore, as a necessity. A single space – which had been occupied by Solange’s original house – had to be transformed into two houses, in order to be able to develop the autonomy needed to function as a space of care.

Care also involves the responsibility of the care giver over the conduct of the care receiver. Young people who are considered to “do wrong things” – becoming involved with drug trafficking, thefts, consuming drugs – cause shame to those expected to care for them. Maria recounts that after learning that her son was working with ‘the bandits’ she was “unable to look the neighbours in the eye.” She says that mothers in these cases “feel a great deal of shame.” The bad conduct of young people can be attributed to the way in which they were ‘raised,’ as a failure to fulfil the responsibilities of caring. When those who care have an undeniably positive reputation in the community as ‘workers,’ the problem is seen to reside in a fault in the youth’s own character. On the other hand, some families are famed for being a ‘family of bandits,’ meaning that it is seen to be only a question of time before the youths become involved in “something bad.”

When they came to Rio de Janeiro, Maria and Antônio initially went to live in the house of Antônio’s brother who already lived in Complexo do Alemão. During this time it was up to José to shelter his younger brother, wife and two children, sharing not only the dwelling, but also food and the work of caring for the children. The newly-arrived brother was the youngest child of the family, meaning he could momentarily assume the position of someone to be cared for and, by extension, his family too. This was a very common form of creating new houses in the favela, linked to the migration of people from other parts of Rio de Janeiro state and other regions of the country.

This way of creating new houses is related to configurations of houses that extend far beyond those built in close proximity. Many houses in Complexo do Alemão were constituted through configurations with houses in other states. One locality in particular, for example, concentrates houses that belong to configurations with a specific locality in another Brazilian state. At the end of each year the residents hire two coaches and travel to spend the holidays with their relatives from the houses in this city.

The configuration of houses that I discuss here also include houses from the *sítio* (a rural smallholding) where Antônio's family live in the interior of Pernambuco. This link is represented by Maria through the relation with one house in particular: the house that the couple built when they lived in the Brazilian Northeast, 'given' to a sister of Antônio after they came to Rio de Janeiro. This is the house that Maria still treats as 'hers' and where she stays when she goes with her husband to visit his family.

Studies of migration from rural areas to the city have shown how the relation between rural houses maintain continuities with the new houses in urban areas, both in terms of their form of organization and in the relation that they maintain with the houses in their places of origin (Garcia 1975, Heredia 1979). This is the case of Maria's house, both its origin and the relation maintained with the *sítio* where Antônio's parents live and some of his brothers and sisters.

Food exchanges and the configuration of houses

The configuration of houses is constituted in the exchange relations occurring between them. Food – and objects related to it – is the principal element of day-to-day exchanges, making the kitchen a central space in the relation between houses. Women, as managers of the kitchen – from planning meals to preparation, organization of the space and how people eat – are the leading figures in maintaining the ties that unite houses.

What is exchanged, but also the form in which one exchanges – what is exchanged for what, the time waited before returning a loan, who delivers the objects – are aspects of the relations between the houses involving relations of trust, love and friendship, as well as distrust and conflicts.

It is common for a number of people to visit Maria's house during the day. Some of them shout at the door waiting for the reply telling them to come in. Maria's grandchildren, daughters and sons-in-law do not do this. They enter the house merely announcing their arrival in a loud voice. These people who do not wait for permission to enter are the same ones who always eat when they are there when a meal is being cooked or served. When Maria needs a particular tool or household appliance, Maria goes to her daughters' houses. She asks to borrow the fan, a cake tin, or asks for some ingredient she is missing to make a dish. Her daughters do the same. Maria's oldest

grandson spends most of his afternoons in his grandmother's house where he makes the meals, uses the internet and sometimes has friends round to play. The youngest grandson spends the night there sometimes when he is ill. When Maria's younger daughter underwent a medical operation that limited her movements, her mother went to clean the house and make food for her, her husband and their son.

But not only the daughters, grandchildren and sons-in-law frequent Maria's house. Various women and very rarely some men also visit the house. Most of the people are considered 'friends' and they are always invited to share the meal being prepared. Maria is also always invited to eat in these people's houses. This is the case of Solange, who owns a shop nearby. The two women used to have a trailer selling snacks together. Maria gets things from Solange's shop and pays later, runs the business when Solange travels and occasionally helps her organize the stock. Solange helps Maria with her social project. When I arrive at Maria's house and she is not there, I go straight to Solange's shop where the two friends are usually chatting.

One time I arrived at Solange's shop with Maria and she was visibly upset. Maria told me that she was annoyed because of Andréa's – one of Maria's daughters – party. After a party in Andréa's house, her mother had gone to the shop to take a piece of cake to her friend. Many times I saw Maria taking pieces of cake to the houses of other people the day after a party in celebration of her birthday or that of her husband, or in her daughters' houses when these people allegedly "had been unable to go." It is a form of them participating too in the celebrations, being included in the exchanges involved in them – the obligation to return the invitation and give a present. Solange was upset because she thought Andréa herself should have taken the cake, not her mother. She refused to eat it, telling Maria that Andréa did not like her, which was why she herself had not brought the cake.

Even though part of the configuration of houses belonging to Maria's house, Andréa and Solange do not much like each other. Andréa goes to Solange's shop and they treat each other politely. The close relation each of the women have with Maria keeps them related to each other. It is everyday acts of exchanges between the houses, like the one that occurred with the cake, that reveal the conflict between the two. As can be perceived, the objects and food do not only circulate: the forms in which they circulate are important to the configuration of houses. Solange says that the cake would

be very welcome were Andréa herself to take it, since it would show that she ‘likes’ her mother’s friend. Taken by Maria, the cake loses all its value as a form of including Solange in the party.

I arrived in Aliança one day and all the businesses – bars, newsstands, shops, banks and street vendors – were closed. Nothing was sold or bought in the street. It was not a holiday. The media had reported that a famous and important drug dealer had been killed the night before and there had been orders from the *tráfico* for none of the businesses to open anywhere in Complexo do Alemão.⁹ I arrived at Maria’s house and she had just learnt of what was happening. She had gone out to buy ingredients to make lunch and found the markets with their doors closed, the road empty and in silence. She was agitated because to make and serve our lunch she needed soft drinks and onions, at least. So went to the house of Kelly, Maria’s youngest daughter, where her son-in-law and grandson were too. Maria went straight to the kitchen and searched the cupboards. She failed to find what she needed. She then went to Solange’s house, where the latter’s mother was visiting. She did not have what she wanted either, but Dona Berenice said that she had food and that we could eat there. Maria declined and Berenice said that Solange’s husband was eating “at Leandro’s.” Maria gave a little cry of joy. The metal door to Leandro’s snack bar was open just 50 centimetres. Maria squeezed through the opening and said: “Aha! I knew that you lot were here!” The three men who were sat at a table eating asked her to speak quietly, “because the boys are at the door on the lookout.” Maria said what she needed and Leandro handed her a plastic bag with two onions. She said that she would give them back the next day and asked for a bottle of soft drink to which Leandro refused. Having solved the onion problem, Maria still needed drink to go with the lunch. She then knocked on the door of Zélia’s house and her daughter answered. Maria said: “Lend me one of those fruit juices that your mother bought yesterday.” The girl brought her a packet of powdered juice. Having everything she needed, Maria returned home and began to cook. After a while Geralda appeared. She said that she needed meat to make lunch for her husband. Maria opened the freezer and said that she could lend her some chicken, because the meat she would use for her own husband, since the food

9 Prohibiting businesses from opening in their area of control is a common form used by armed groups of drug dealers to display mourning for an important leader who has just died. It is also an eloquent form of demonstrating – and reaffirming – the power over a territory after a significant loss from their ranks.

she was making in the saucepan was for me. Geralda left satisfied with the chicken. Feeling bad because Maria was cooking the meat that should have been for her husband, I told her that she did not need to cook for me. Maria said: “Don’t worry. I didn’t lend her the meat because I know that she can’t give back meat. Chicken... perhaps there’s a chance...”

The houses related to a particular house do not all relate to it in the same way. On the day when the businesses were closed, Maria prioritized going to certain houses first and later to others, and the order of the visits followed the order of proximity that Maria perceives in relation to the houses. At the same time the ‘loan’ to Geralda showed that there exist differences in relation to the value that can be lent, depending on the proximity which people perceive to exist between them.

The word ‘loan’ utilized here in relation to things that will be consumed (onions, juice, chicken) is used in contrast to selling and giving, and is used when the person receives something for which they asked, such as a missing ingredient needed to make a meal. What the person receives will be returned through things equivalent in value and substance and in a short space of time. The types of exchange vary in relation to those who are exchanging and in relation to the situation in which the exchange takes place.

Most of the times I was with Maria she was preparing a meal. She never let me help her, except for the days when a party was being held and many people would help, including her husband. On a day-to-day basis Maria maintains strict control over the space of the kitchen and the preparation of food in her house. She decides what she is going to make and manages the ingredients so that they are sufficient and adequate to the occasions when they will be consumed. People who may be present for dinner and lunch in Maria’s house include her husband, daughters, sons-in-law and grandchildren, friends and occasionally someone who is staying in the house, such as the case of two of her friends who used to live nearby but moved to distant places: their houses remain part of the configuration of houses, Maria being godmother to the son of one of the women. When the meal is ready, she first serves her husband, then the plates of other adult men (usually her sons-in-law) and any children (usually her grandchildren). Sometimes she also serves food to the daughters’ plates, or they serve their own food. Finally the other women may serve themselves from the pans, with Maria serving extra to anyone she thinks was served little food because they are ‘being

polite.’ Preparing a sufficient and satisfactory quantity of food is sometimes a physical effort requiring significant financial resources from Maria and has a moral value. ‘Eating well’ is a sign of respect and recognition vehemently sought by close observation of people’s plates to see whether they were sufficiently full at the start of the meal and completely empty at the end. Finally Maria serves herself and always begins to eat after everyone else.

McCallum & Bustamante (2012) show how activities like cooking, cleaning and caring for children are gendered and how they participate in individuation and the construction of relations between people in a house and between houses. What we can observe in Maria’s kitchen is that it refers not only to a house but to other houses too. The form in which people belonging to other houses take part in meals shows that the control of a kitchen extends – no longer as a strict control or monopoly – to the relations outside the house to which it belongs.

Men also participate in the exchanges between houses by carrying out repairs to the buildings, furniture and electrical appliances. The men connected to Maria’s house earn or earned money performing activities similar to those involved in these jobs: Antônio worked in civil construction, Kelly’s husband is a joiner, and Andréa’s is a metalworker. Taking care of aspects such as plumbing, electricity and the proper functioning of domestic appliances (washing machines, ovens, refrigerators) identifies men with the value of being a ‘worker’ and signals that he “cares for the family.” The worker category is central in the favela and distinguishes men in relation both to ‘bandits’ and to men dishonoured for being lazy or dishonest.

Maria sometimes buys clothes in Solange’s shop and pays later. Sometimes she takes money to pay for transport when she needs to travel outside the community. Solange sometimes gives money for the parties that Maria organizes as part of her social project. When she had a snack bar that sold meals, it was there that Maria’s teenage son ate every day.

Shops and business spaces also compose configurations of houses, always attached to the main house to which the shop is related. A shop is generally linked to a house which it supplies with an income and whose members all assume responsibility for its activities in some fashion. These shops form part of the configuration to which the house belongs, both as a space of sociability and as source of resources for the exchanges. This does not imply that the shop and house are indistinguishable, a subject to which I shall return later.

House money

In Aliança distinctions are made in the use of money. These are based on the centrality of the house and the relations it maintains to other houses through the separation of the 'house money.' Circuits of products and money are based on identifications between ways of earning and spending: so, for example, money from selling cosmetics is used to pay for similar products, money from rent is used to pay rent, and so on.

Maria sells products made by the cosmetic company Natura. The company's sales system works as follows. The person qualifies to become a 'consultant' and begins to receive magazines with the products. The clients choose the product from the magazine which shows the price. The consultant then orders the products by telephone or internet and receives them at home, delivering them to the clients later. Along with the products she receives an invoice relating to them. The price paid by the client is 30% higher than that paid by the consultant, the difference providing the earnings from the sale. The consultants have a minimum sales quota per month to guarantee their continuation as sales representatives.¹⁰

Maria earns little money from this activity, but benefits from having access to a certain type of product at a lower price than she would pay as a final consumer. One day she was showing me the products in a parcel that she had received from Natura. She told me that she had bought various things for herself and her husband, but that the value of the purchase was almost identical to the profit from the sale of the products ordered for other people (who pay the magazine price, 30% higher than the price she pays). She explained: "In the end, for all of this I am only going to pay ten reais. I'm not going to use house money to buy these things!"

The 'house money' is what ensures the payment of regular bills (in Maria's case, the internet, cable TV, telephone and gas), as well as food, cleaning products and some products of personal hygiene. Just as part of the money – which in Maria's case comes from her husband's wages – is marked as 'house money,' so the profit from the Natura sales is already earmarked for

10 Joint strategies exist among consultants who are friends to ensure that they meet the necessary monthly quota. A seller who has been unable to get enough orders will commonly ask a friend to make orders through her. In other words, the women distribute the orders in a form guaranteeing each of their quotas are met. Additionally, when there are problems with the orders or a client requests something soon after the order has been sent to Natura – which would mean having to wait until the following month to make the order – the women also turn to other friends to attend their clients.

spending on Natura products for herself and her husband. Even if it comes from her husband's salary, this part of the money is not considered to belong to him individually. It is allocated to maintain a unit that does not serve just to maintain the life of the two residents, but is also linked to other houses whose members, for example, will make meals and consume food bought with house money.¹¹

It is between the individual receiving of the salary and its transformation into house money that we encounter one of the most serious accusations that can be levelled against a man's honour. More serious than the accusation of betrayal and adultery – tolerated by the wife and socially too in some cases¹² – is the accusation of “taking house money” to give to a lover. At the same time, various women told me, between reflecting on some aggression suffered or a prohibition on leaving the house, for example, that the fact that the husband concerned “made sure everything was provided for at home” was a motive for staying with him and in some cases obeying him. Being the provider of house money has a moral value for the majority of men and for some being the sole provider is a non-negotiable issue. A number of women told me that their husband stopped them from working. All of them said that their husband was ‘jealous’ and that they suspected that the money brought by their wife might have come from other men, their lovers. The distrust in relation to the sexual conduct of women is used by men as a justification for keeping them at home.

For her social project, Maria rents a space for which she pays 500 reais. Her husband earns 800 reais. Maria today does not have another source of income and the project receives no funding. This means that a sizeable portion of the couple's monthly earnings is used to keep the project going. However the money spent on renting the space for the project is paid for by money received as rent from a house that Maria and Antônio bought shortly before setting up the project. Here we can observe a separation of the money which means that the rent is paid by money from rent. Despite claiming that “it has never been so hard,” the money that she receives in rent and paid for another lease is not conceived as transformable into ‘house money.’

11 Flavia Dalmaso (2014) describes a similar arrangement in houses in Haiti. The money used to buy food and pay for energy and water is a specific kind, associated with the position of the couple who ‘own’ the house – similar to the position of ‘carer’ in the houses of Aliança.

12 This occurs especially when the wife is considered ‘sick’ and unable to satisfy her husband sexually.

Recalling the separation of the money earned from the sale of Natura products, we can identify the existence of specific circuits in which how money is earned and what is bought (or paid) with this money are related by the proximity between the objects sold and bought (not necessarily things, but services and rent, for example). As Viviana Zelizer (1994) shows, the use of money involves separations, demarcations, obligations and restrictions that distance the currency from its supposedly homogenizing function in terms of house management practices.

One Tuesday afternoon in Maria's living room, I was talking with another three women. Two of them were in their fifties while the other was less than thirty. They told me how all of them had sold knickers, clothes and jewelry, and how they had dealt with loans and paying the suppliers. They also said that the period when they were selling was also when they were better dressed, because they had money to buy "things for themselves."

Since the selling of cosmetics and underwear by consultants as a type of commerce is not connected to a specific space (a shop), women very often combine this activity with paid jobs outside the home. This trade in general is linked to women not only as sellers but also as the main buyers and to the kind of product identified with the female sphere. The money that the women earn in this form is also mostly used to buy beauty products and clothes or as savings, always with a specific use in mind: purchasing a car, improving the house or paying for plastic surgery. Using money from the sale of these products to buy similar products, or those perceived as 'women's' items, shapes distinctly female circulations of objects and money. Albeit from a different perspective to the one identified by Isabelle Guérin (2002), what we observe here is female money, not seen as secondary in the family budget, as the author shows, but belonging to a particular universe of objects.

House, family and statistics

The relation between house, family and economy is a concern of the professional of 'large numbers' to use the expression of Alain Derosières (1993), who also identifies a connection between house, money and family, especially through the notion of the 'household budget.' The IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), for example, first defines the

‘household’ through its physical independence,¹³ and from there defines its residents – who as individuals constitute the first level in the aggregation of basic units within the IBGE Census – as members of ‘household units.’ The ‘monthly household income’ is the combined total income of the members of these household units.

The first thing to observe is that the physical construction and its independence precede the other definitions – household, family, for example – along with the supposition that each person can only belong to a single domestic unit. The census includes a series of recommendations and procedures to avoid counting the same person more than once. Physical isolation serves as the basis for defining how incomes are understood, which become related to a set of persons (reinforced by the existence of the category of ‘per capita income’) but only by derivation. While the house (in this case, the physical house) is a determinant factor in calculating income, in contrast to how the house is perceived in Aliança, it is its isolation that renders it intelligible. Taking into account that the IBGE uses the same criterion for its studies of family consumption, we are presented with the house as a discrete unit where no ambiguity exists on belongs among its resident and which is seen through an ideal similar to that of a company, also ideal, in which the circulation of money can be summarized on a balance sheet of incomings and outgoings.

In a United Nations document containing recommendations on censuses (UN 2007), which aims to homogenize data from demographic studies, there is one mention of the difference between the concept of ‘house-keeping’ and ‘house-dwelling’ in the definition of household units. The former takes the relation to money and the upkeep of the unit as the most significant, making it necessary to distinguish between people according to their position in the economic maintenance of the house. The latter, which was used by the IBGE in the 2010 Census, takes ‘dwelling’ to define the domestic unit.

According to the concept of ‘house-keeping,’ a household can be composed of various domestic units. In the 2000 Census this was the conception that guided the definition of the ‘family,’ which allowed for the existence not only of ‘cohabiting families’ (more than one family living in the same

13 “*Domicílio* [household] is the structurally separate and independent locale intended for the habitation of one or more persons, or which is being used as such. The essential criteria in this definition are those of separation and independence” (IBGE 2012).

household), but also of figures like ‘uniperson families’ and ‘unrelated families.’ We can note, therefore, between the 2000 Census and the 2010 Census is a change in the concept used by the IBGE, switching from a ‘house-keeping’ model to a ‘house-dwelling’ model, which removed the concept of ‘family’ from the survey.¹⁴

What I wish to highlight here is the relevance given by professionals of large numbers to the definition of economic units based on the idea of ‘household,’ ‘family’ and ‘domestic unit,’ which, very different from the house that we are discussing here, is a discrete and independent unit. The understanding that can be generated from this conception necessarily distances itself from the economic practices found in universes like Aliança. This incongruence between the statistical models and the everyday economy is one of the bases for the construction of the favela as ‘subnormal’ and ‘anomalous.’¹⁵ My interest here is not to show the distance between the ‘reality’ and the public figures, but to comprehend how the form in which they are constructed and their underlying need to construct discrete units generate spaces that are understood as anomalous. Foucault ([1977-8] 2008) helps us understand this when he shows that regulations do not reflect the desire of someone who wants things to operate precisely according to the models, but create the boundaries between what will be considered ‘normal’ and – in this specific case, for instance – the ‘subnormal.’

Houses and businesses

Various works have demonstrated how houses as material constructions are related to domestic cycles (Fortes 1971). Cavalcanti (2007) in turn shows both the construction of a *vila* with various houses, related to the growth and marriage of the children, and the relation between the successive improvements made to the houses and the idea of the family’s progress. McCallum & Bustamante (2012) show the relation between pregnancy and the arrival

14 On the critiques of the model used by the IBGE in the 2000 Census, see, for example, Alves (2005), Feijó & Valente (2003) and Saboia & Cobo (2007).

15 The category ‘subnormal agglomerate’ is used by the IBGE to delimit the census sectors where favelas are generally located. According to the IBGE, the subnormal agglomerate: “is a complex constituted by at least 51 housing units (shacks, houses, etc.), most of them lacking essential public services, occupying or having until recently occupied land owned by third parties (public or private) and generally distributed in a disordered and dense layout” (2011).

of children and the construction of new dwelling spaces as offshoots of one woman's house. The factors identified by the authors are present in Aliança and represent various aspects of the mutability of the houses, including the possibilities for improvement and multiplication, but also the potential for transforming them into business spaces and sources of income.

The first time that Maria, in her own words, “laid her hands on her own hard-earned money” was when she decided to sell cuscuz (tapioca cake) on the beach. Maria could prepare the food at home and sometimes took her oldest daughter with her to Copacabana to help her with the sales. A friend who already did this taught her how to make the cake and some sales skills derived from her own experience of perceiving opportunities, reading the weather, and perceiving the different seasonal fluxes that lead to increases or drops in sales.¹⁶ The sale of cuscuz inaugurated a personal trajectory linked to commerce, especially of food.

Having pursued this activity for a while, Maria then began to sell within the community. After she had moved to live in Aliança, she bought ice-creams and sold them at the corner of her house from an ice-filled Styrofoam container, where she would stand pitching the product in a loud voice. Soon after she began to sell cakes and sweets at the front of the house and ended up turning the room into a shop.

During my time in the field, a friend, Zélia, had transformed the small yard in front of her house into a clothing and perfume store. She worked as a caregiver for an elderly man in the house of a middle class family. She used to open the shop when she was home. The space offered the possibility of earning more money than her salary as a carer (for which she was formally employed with a signed work card), as well as allowing her to take care of the house, her children and her sick mother who lived with her. Zélia was dismissed after the elderly man she looked after died. She used the redundancy payment to train as a hairdresser. As she neared the end of the course, she became stricken with doubts about how to exercise the new activity,

16 In Rio de Janeiro the beaches are important places for businesses. There are stationary places where it is possible to buy drinks and food or rent chairs and sunshades. Another kind of commerce is undertaken by people who walk along the beach selling mostly food and drinks but also hats, bikinis and sunblock. On weekends and holidays, especially in the summer months, the most popular entertainment venues in the city are also seen as good places to make money. Besides the physical difficulty involved – walking on sand in the sun with temperatures near 40°C – the commerce on the beach, as Maria once explained, depends on a good capacity to predict the weather and people's behavior (where the trendy spots are, the proximity to paydays, major events in the city that may attract people etc).

especially whether she should start a company with a colleague from the training course, deciding in the end to start up a business by herself. The space that had been used as a shop was transformed into a salon, therefore, where Zélia cuts and dyes hair, and offers various beauty treatments, while her teenage daughter provides a manicure service.

Leaving employment outside the home and starting to work in the commerce within the favela is a fairly common trajectory for women who have children, especially sons. Several women I knew who own shops, stalls or sell from their own houses opted for commerce in order to stay close to their male children when they reached a certain age. All the women were concerned with keeping their sons away from ‘bad company’ to prevent them from doing ‘something wrong.’ As mentioned before they referred more or less directly to the possibility of the children being recruited for services linked to the illegal drugs trade.

The fear that a son could turn into a ‘bandit’ is one reason why mothers decide to work near or inside their own homes, abandoning jobs and activities far from the house and with regular payment despite the disadvantages of this option, as in the case of one woman I knew, a trained teacher, who gave classes in a nearby school. Today she has a shop and told me that commerce is a ‘prison with open doors,’ but that she needs to keep her boy in her sights.

Here it is also important to note that women perceive the most critical moment when they need to be close to their sons to be not when they are babies or infants, but when they start to move about alone, around the age of ten. The fears in relation to daughters come a little later and are primarily related to becoming pregnant without having established their own house first.

In the cases of Maria and Zélia alike, the possibility of transforming house spaces into commercial spaces was fundamental to them being able to embark on a new activity, while also allowing the women to remain close to home. At the same time, the compensation received on being dismissed enable a large and immediate investment in a new occupation. The mutability of the constructions is one of the conditions that makes possible the simultaneous and/or successive combination of different activities to earn money, connected to strategies that involve responsibilities and possibilities relating to houses and to the configuration of houses to which they belong.

The transformation of house spaces into business spaces does not imply a mixture. Rather the houses are mutable spaces and can sometimes be

transformed and places given over to activities other than the caring and routine life activities, such as cooking, sleeping and safeguarding ones belongings. When a house space is turned into a shop, it is effectively transformed, ceasing to be used by residents for the activities of the house. The same physical space can be accessed in a different form – for example, by people who do not have close relations with the residents or enter the house, who can, as clients, enter the place now transformed into a shop.

The house in the favela is a unit that is not defined by the physical continuity between walls or roofs in relation to what can be seen from outside. The house is defined by the place that a group of people take as a reference point for the everyday life activities, such as sleeping, eating and cooking, taking baths, storing their belongings and staying when nothing else demand attention outside. Its autonomy is defined by a door. But not all doors define singular houses. Very often, a door or alley leads to various other doors and gates until finally one arrives at a house.

It is very rare for there to be any ambiguity for residents and visitors concerning the limits between the house and the shop. This is made clear by the fact that usually people remove their footwear close to the doorway to a house but not to a shop. The shoes define which door (among the many which one may cross to reach a particular house) belongs to the house itself. Efforts are made to make this threshold as evident as possible, such as physical barriers that block entry to the house, or visual signs, such as different colours on the walls. It is common to fix curtains between the shop and the house when the spaces are not divided by walls.

Jacob Nacht (1915) showed that shoes are important symbolic elements and are especially related to power. Religious prescriptions and superstitions – as he calls them – related to shoes are common to multiple social worlds. André Dumans Guedes notes the importance of a rich vocabulary linked to the feet (2011). In a social world in which mobility is highly valued, expressions connected to everyday forms of moving about, as Guedes shows, reveal hierarchies linked to gender and wealth (and poverty). In *Aliança*, although feet are not part of a particularly relevant vocabulary, removing ones shoes is a central gesture in the demarcation of the spaces of the houses, linked to different forms of conceiving circulation: outside the house people walk around with footwear and inside barefoot. We can extend this observation of mobilities further by highlighting the distinction between sandals and shoes.

Sandals are the footwear used to circulate between the nearby houses and the favela. The ease with which they are removed and put on combines with the intense circulation. Although a radical distinction cannot be made, it is more common for people to use shoes when journeying outside the favela. The types of footwear mark the moments of two forms of moving about – two mobilities – that are strongly linked to the spatial dichotomy of ‘inside’ and ‘outside,’ through which they delimit the ‘favela’ but also the space closer to home and those more distanced socially (rather than spatially).

Selling, buying and renting houses

The possibility of transforming constructed spaces not only relates to the transformation of house sections into shops. José told me that he managed to increase his earnings when he divided down the middle (with a wall) a large shop that he owned and was able to rent both sides for a price that, combined, was higher than the rent previously for the single shop.

Maria also divided up a house that she bought to lease. The house was large and was transformed into two homes: one with two bedrooms, a living room, bathroom and kitchen, and the other a ‘kitchenette’ (a space without internal walls to dividing the room from the kitchen, plus a bathroom). Again the combined rents were more than the value of the rent for the house prior to the division. Dividing up spaces is a recourse commonly used to increase the income from sales and leases of properties in the favela. Jane Guyer (2004) shows how the successive dividing up of products enables the multiplication of revenues from the same quantity of things. In a chain of successive sales, each link can benefit from the sale in increasingly smaller quantities, increasing the relative profit. In this case dividing up the buildings enables increased revenues too, but in general by multiplying the earnings from a house.

The income derived from renting out a house or shop are considered ‘sure.’ Maria once told me that the houses she leased were her ‘pension fund.’ Zélia refers to the house she rents to another family as her “guarantee that she will have something to eat.” As well as being perceived as a constant source of money, ownership of the house assures what is perceived as the minimum of dignity that a person can have: “a roof over their head.”

Since the initial occupation of Complexo do Alemão, people needed to ask for permission to buy or rent spaces to build (IPEA 2013). Any kind of

transformation that may be seen to affect other houses is a motive for negotiation or even disputes between neighbours. An intense real estate market exists in Aliança and rent is an important element in the favela's economy. A perspective that is both historical and ethnographic allows us to perceive that the building and transformation of the constructions is highly regulated and constitutes a vigorous market.

The rules and contracts governing the constructions and the commercial property transactions are not registered in the ideal form presented in legislative texts and state regulations. However neither should it be thought that there is a complete divorce between them, for two reasons. First, constructions often have some kind of record with the state authorities, the result of land regularization processes, for example. Many commercial relations include at some point documents and money transfers that pass through channels regulated by state instruments. Second, the regulations, documents and state processes are commonly taken as frameworks for the practical implementation of the ordinary regulations. One example is the existence of written contracts for rentals and for buying and selling, though they are not registered with the bodies that would validate them officially.

Based on ethnographic observation of how the favela's spaces are used, therefore, we can see that not only do regulations exist, they are not opposed to state regulation, the latter being one element among others that modulate the possibilities and restrictions with which people deal when it comes to managing the use of spaces.¹⁷

Houses and temporality

The mutability of the spaces is not only central to the possibilities for earning money (whether by transforming part of the house into a shop, or by renting out the properties) but also to the form in which the past is narrated and the future imagined. This is similar to what Mariana Cavalcanti calls 'building imagination' (2007).

¹⁷ The works of Rafael Gonçalves (2012) and Claudia Franco Correa (2012) tackle the question of state regulation of dwellings in favelas. Gonçalves shows how legal treatment was historically ambiguous and enabled residents to become subject to the vicissitudes of political disputes in Rio de Janeiro and the interests of the dominant classes. Correa, for her part, is concerned with the distance between state law and rights in rem, in particular the 'right to a floor,' identifying the former as a factor in the exclusion from the right to an abode, and the latter as way of meeting this right in practice.

Maria told me about her plans for producing savoury snacks. We were in the kitchen of her house. She showed me how she was going to block out the window that looks onto the street and put a door there instead. She would also knock down a section of the opposite wall, placing an archway connecting the new kitchen to the bedroom. She even indicated the positions of the tables and the equipment that would arrive. She predicted that Antônio would be ‘fuming’ when he learnt about all the changes to be made. Maria later told me that she had heard that the owner of the space rented for her social project was thinking of selling the property. She had spoken to him, and he had given his assurance that he would not remove the project from there. “But I’m not daft and I’m already thinking of what to do if he does that.” She told me that she could remove the people who pay rent in the two houses she owns and knock down the wall separating them. She would move the location of the bathroom and make a small room with a table and computer. On the roof she could build a house to live in and rent out the house where she lives now. Another time Maria did the sums for me. She could sell one house for R\$ 15,000, the kitchenette for R\$ 10,000 and the paved floor space for R\$ 20,000. With the money this time she would give a down payment for the space she occupies with the project and would pay the rest in instalments.

People’s recollections of events in their lives are punctuated by the transformations made to their houses, and when they speak of their plans, the houses and shops are always taken as reference points, together with the possibility of transforming, selling or renting them. The constructions mark the moments of a lifetime. Everyday conversations often include evaluations of the good and bad deals people have made with their properties, the possibilities still to be exploited, the high or low prices demanded in sales and leases.

Stories about events in the more distant past are commonly narrated with constructions as a backdrop. The temporal landmarks of births and deaths (without alluding to dates) are supplemented by references to adding a room, opening a door and plastering a wall, for example, with these elements frequently being shown to the interlocutor. It is also common for the constructions and the evaluations initially linked to their material form provoke the beginning of conversations about the past that include the family and activities for spending money. Passing in front of one of the houses where Maria had lived, she began to talk about the structure of the house, the fact

it had two storeys, three floors, the colour of the walls. Telling me about the construction, she went on to recount part of the family's history based on a temporality linked more to experience than chronological time, but always imbued with affects related to the choices made over time. The physical house, and more specifically its transformations, gave meaning to the family's history, whether temporal or affective.

One day we were leaving Maria's house when Pastor Carlos called us to see the house he was building. We went inside, myself, Maria and another friend. The two women praised the pastor's work – he himself had been working on the kitchen fittings. They commented on how the bathroom was large and the kitchen beautiful. They then began to talk about how much the pastor could charge for rent, to which he replied: "I won't charge any less than 400!" Looking through the window Maria showed me a concrete structure still without the floor. The three of them began to calculate for how much the structure could be sold. "It's strong, very strong. It can support another two floors, easy. You could make 7 or 8 kitchenettes. Each one about 300 in rent... You could make a lot of money." When we left the house and Pastor Carlos was out of earshot, Maria and her friend chatted about how much the pastor would earn in rent from the house he had shown and the other he was building on the floor above: "The pastor is going to be rich."

One aspect to be considered about the transformations of spaces is that these are closely observed by neighbours on a daily basis. Discussing the Bela Vista favela, Mariana Cavalcanti (2007) notes that the fact that how houses are built is public knowledge, including the type of material used and the quality of the work involved, makes it an important factor in the composition of house sale prices. This factor is also present in Aliança. Moreover this everyday observation also provides elements for the house plans and strategies to be evaluated by others, feeding the reputations of good and bad workers, and those with good and bad luck. The transformations in the house or shop can be interpreted as a sign of progress or as a sign of failure when they provide the means for another activity that may have 'turned out badly.' The gaze of neighbours is always a factor taken into account, especially when people conclude that a transformation to the house may generate envy, a feeling thought capable of causing sickness and sudden ills, depending on who the onlooker is.

Moving objects and transformations inside the house

There is another aspect to the transformation of houses, this time relating to the transformations in the organization of the objects inside it. During the time I frequented Maria's house changes were made to the decoration and the position of the furniture in all the rooms: the living room, bedrooms, kitchen and even the bathroom. Every time that I arrived to find the house different, Maria would explain to me the reasons for the changes. In each case she told me as though she herself had decided and physically moved the furniture and objects.

In her explications for the changes to the position of the furniture, it was also common for Maria to remark on how she disliked the house where she lived. She had bought the house "in desperation" when she had to leave the house that "she herself had built" after her son became involved "in something wrong." She told me several times that she felt ill at ease there. The changes seem to be linked to this dissatisfaction with what is expected from a house – that it makes the person feel good, that its purchase or construction results from free choices. When sometimes we pass in front of the house built 'by her,' Maria always tells me, nostalgically, how the house 'is good' and how she "liked living there."

Observing the transformations both to the construction itself, which allow the cultivation of plans and strategies for earning money, and to the internal disposition of the house's objects, we can perceive a connection that links a kind of object and construction – the house – to two levels of expectations, linked to future opportunities but also to the values relating to how a house should be made.

The constant work on the interior of the house became particularly intense at the end of the year when, throughout the month of December, new decorative elements were introduced and the furniture moved about. Decorating the house not only took up some of Maria's time, it also involved buying new objects, various rearrangements and was a regular topic of conversation in which she reflected on the disposition of angels, lights and the nativity scene. This is another type of transformation that expresses not an unease in relation to the house, but the effort to express positive values associated with religiosity through it. The concern over the hierarchy of symbols – the infant Jesus in the manger should stand out in relation to the other figures – and over the aesthetic value of the decoration – it should not

be ‘tacky’ – reveals another aspect of the transformation of spaces linked to the expression of values. In everyday life this expression occurs through the presence of religious symbols and family photos in people’s living rooms.¹⁸

Conclusion

In this text I have attempted to propose, based on the ethnographic research undertaken in a favela in Complexo do Alemão, an analysis capable of accounting for the complexity that emerges from paying attention to ordinary economic practices. In seeking out the elements that modulate Aliança’s economy, we come face-to-face with practices that challenge interpretative models based on fixed boundaries between spheres of life, between houses, between objects and people, and between economy and kinship.

The concept of house has already showed to be productive in kinship and family studies by integrating its symbolic and material aspects at an analytic level. Here the house renders ordinary economic practices in the favela intelligible by showing the ways in which they interlace family practices and the transformation of spaces. This reflection maintains a critical dialogue with normativities present in the commonplace treatment of these two objects of study.

The first normativity contested here concerns what is called the ‘great divide’ (Dufy & Weber 2009), a term attributed to an analytic principle, not always explicit, which provides the basis for views of the economy as a sphere separate from life, governed by rationality, calculation and self-interest. This seems to be an issue in principle resolved, given that most anthropologists explicitly reject this view in their work. However we still need to overcome more subtle manifestations of the ‘great divide’ paradigm, namely those that take for granted certain classifications that remain unproblematic. The risks of these ‘small divides’ include establishing boundaries, privileging certain spaces and practices considered a priori as ‘economic objects,’ and thus foreclosing the possibilities of – and need for – analyses that take into account other dimensions of social life, and analyses that lead

¹⁸ In Aliança the display of religious symbols is also important in the distinction – very often overt – between Catholic and Protestant houses. There is no space here to pursue this discussion in depth, but it involves the identification with values claimed by or attributed to one or other religion, all of which is of considerable significance in people’s judgments and expectations concerning everyday conduct.

to dialogues with other analytic viewpoints, challenging the divisions of labour within the disciplines too. The ‘economy’ and ‘economic practices’ are necessarily provisional propositions and methodological resources which enable the establishment of dialogues and a starting point, but which should be continually challenged by ethnography.

One of the premises of the ‘great divide’ approach which is questioned here is precisely who the subjects are when we observe economic practices. The interactions observed in *Aliança* reveal that these subjects do not comprise rational individuals making choices in accordance with the possibilities for larger concrete gains. A house-based approach shows that the exchanges can only be comprehended by taking into account the multiple relations in which they are involved. Choices concerning how to make a livelihood, how to spend money and so on are immersed in moralities, obligations and conceptions of the future. ‘Helping’ to build a house, separating ‘house money,’ sharing meals, making loans, all involve decisions and strategies that are unintelligible if we look for ‘individuals.’ Furthermore the radical separation between people and ‘things,’ whether these are objects, food or constructions, is also contested. In particular I have looked to highlight the diverse levels on which practices linked to food, through its movement and transformation (circulating between the houses, preparing meals), shed light on the intrinsic relation with the development of social ties. The constructions themselves, for their part, are not immobile: they are spaces that not only experience constant transformation, but whose very mutability determines both their economic value and their value as dwellings.

Another level of normativities with which we need to dialogue when studying these issues in a favela concerns the depiction – by public opinion, but also by social scientists – of these spaces as anomalous places. The anomaly associated with favelas – interpreted by prejudiced and criminalizing gazes, but also by gazes that are benevolent or critical of the injustices thought to be experienced by their residents – produces a view of the favela marked by absences: of money, education, police, the state. This translates into a treatment that considers questions like money, markets, work and houses through two prisms. In one of them these absences are interpreted through the framework of ‘poverty,’ which takes the favelas as its main locus of expression in Brazil’s urban environments, making

it not only a given characteristic, but also a factor capable of explaining ‘problems’ like violence, for example. A second approach, especially present in the discourse of the professionals responsible for producing diagnoses and proposing solutions to “improve people’s lives,” associates these spaces with informality and illegality.

As Valladares (2005) has shown, the interpretative frame of poverty is central to the way in which favelas have been analysed historically. As the author demonstrates, at a certain moment of the production of the Social Sciences, anyone intending to study poverty conducted research in favelas and almost all research conducted in favelas was on poverty. Oscar Lewis, in his classic book on poor families in Mexico (1961), suggested that deprivations are so determinant of behaviours that one can speak of a ‘culture of poverty,’ which closely assimilates the poor of the city with the poor living in rural areas, and even those in different regions and countries.¹⁹

In another classic work, Larissa Lomnitz ([1975] 1981) uses the notion of ‘survival’ in her depiction of the population of a *barriada* in Mexico City which echoes Lewis’s perception of a particular form of living. The similarity identified with Rio’s favelas and other urban spaces in large Latin American cities forms part of the author’s argument concerning the marginality – produced by the subordinate integration into modern industrial capitalism – of the people living in these places in relation to the cities and of Latin America in relation to the world. Unlike Lewis, Lomnitz takes a more integrated approach to studying this population, investigating the relation between economics, the family and networks, while simultaneously including larger scales in her analysis, highlighting the importance of migration and of relations with the city. Her analysis matches the tone of the debates in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s, centred on the dilemmas of a modernity that never materializes.²⁰

From many points of view Aliança would be treated as a place of poverty. Right from the outset, however, this classification becomes problematic, analytically speaking, insofar as ‘poverty’ is a native and polysemic term, one

19 “Poverty becomes a dynamic factor which affects participation in the larger national culture and creates a subculture of its own. One can speak of the culture of the poor, for it has its own modalities and distinctive social and psychological consequences for its members. It seems to me that culture of poverty cuts across regional, rural-urban, and even national boundaries” (Lewis 1961:17).

20 For a critique of the ‘Brazilian dilemma’ strand in anthropology (the expectation of an unfulfilled modernity) focused particularly on the notion of the individual, see Pina-Cabral (2007).

which primarily denotes a perception of difference. 'Poverty' almost always refers to people and places perceived to be socially distant. It is always 'over there.' People only refer to themselves as poor when they wish to emphasize injustices attributed to the 'government.' It is only a category that unites residents in some form when referring to a set of abstract and depersonalized entities and spatialities: 'government,' 'the police.' While on one hand the native uses of poverty suggest a problematization of the category, what the ethnography shows is that the assumptions and applications of the use of poverty as an analytic category are unsustainable.

Two factors are decisive here: the place occupied by plans and perceptions of the future, and the perception that choices exist (and indeed they do exist) to be made. The use of the notion of 'strategy' here looks to make evident both the centrality of perceptions concerning the future and the combination of choices and the perception of opportunities. The ethnographic material shows how people are very far from being conditioned by lack and, much the opposite, combine diverse aspects within their universe of possibilities in order to make a living. People in Aliança live rather than 'survive.'

The association between favela and informality is also widespread. It can be noted that the approaches vary between those focusing on the generalized informality that supposedly characterizes the favela (called the 'informal city' by some) in terms of the economy but also of housing and constructions, and those focusing on the illegal market of banned drugs.²¹ At the same time as being a simplifying homogenization of the favela economy, the prism of informality sets up a dichotomous distinction that takes state regulations as its parameter. These state regulations are one of the elements involved in shaping the economy of Aliança, or more precisely, they are one factor among others that compose a universe of possibilities in which people move about. Understood in this form, we can comprehend how the boundaries established by multiple regulations are manipulated in the everyday life of Aliança (Rabossi 2011, Telles da Silva & Hirata 2007). In relation to work especially, we can perceive that there is no dichotomy between formal

21 Most of the works examining the market of illegal drugs do so through the prism of its role in the generation of 'violence.' Michel Misse draws an interesting connection between the shaping of the market of prohibited drugs and the distinct forms of criminalization to which different agents are subjected according to the perception of their potential for violence, proposing an approach that takes into account wider circuits (outside the favela) and integrates them with the circuits of "political commodities" (Misse 2002 and 2007).

employment, small trade or temporary work, but relations between the diverse forms of earning money and between these forms and affects, plans and caring for the family.

In this universe there is no dichotomy between the principle of security associated with formal employment and the autonomy represented by running one's own business. Different forms of making money are combined simultaneously and over a lifetime. The regulations relating to work and, for example, the opportunities created by redundancy payments combine with various kinds of possibilities and constraints (the possibility of transforming a house, the need to take special care of boys) in shaping a universe of possibles.

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The market as lived experience

On the knowledge of markets in antitrust analysis

Gustavo Onto

Resumo

Este artigo descreve algumas reflexões, histórias e práticas analíticas de assessores e conselheiros do órgão antitruste brasileiro (CADE) a respeito dos mercados, setores, indústrias – ou seja, do mundo econômico – que eles buscam compreender e administrar. A atividade desses profissionais exige, principalmente, uma avaliação de determinadas características de mercados para que se possa estabelecer uma estratégia de investigação de alegações de práticas anti-competitivas de mercado e para que se possa julgar os casos sob responsabilidade deste tribunal antitruste. A partir de entrevistas com esses profissionais e de observação participante do trabalho analítico por eles executado, procura-se ressaltar modos de conhecer e conceber os mercados que são paralelos àqueles utilizados oficialmente e mais explicitamente pelos burocratas da autoridade antitruste. A descrição desses modos laterais de conhecer, que aqui aparecem como um conjunto de experiências vividas – pessoais e familiares –, é posta em relação com as práticas etnográficas de produção de conhecimento, tendo em vista refletir sobre a importância da experiência vivida na literatura de antropologia e sociologia dos mercados. **Palavras-chave:** mercado; experiência vivida; para-etnografia; conhecimento; antitruste; CADE.

Abstract

This article describes some of the reported thoughts, anecdotal observations and analytic practices of advisors and commissioners working at the Brazilian antitrust body (CADE) regarding the markets, industries, sectors – i.e. the economic world – which they aim to understand and regulate. The

activity of these professionals primarily requires an evaluation of certain market characteristics in order to establish strategies for the investigation of allegations of anti-competitive market practice and for passing judgment on administrative cases filed before the antitrust tribunal. Based on interviews with these professionals and participant observation of their analytical work, this article seeks to describe modes of knowing and conceiving markets which are parallel to the modes officially and more explicitly relied upon by antitrust bureaucrats. We present these lateral modes of knowing as a set of personal lived experiences and compare them to ethnographic practices of knowledge production, in order to reflect on the importance of lived experience in the anthropological and sociological literature on markets.

Keywords: market; lived experience; para-ethnography; knowledge; anti-trust; CADE.

The market as lived experience

On the knowledge of markets in antitrust analysis

Gustavo Onto

Introduction¹

The most fundamental problem antitrust confronts is dealing with complex market information through institutions whose competence is limited. (Hovenkamp, 2005:11)

I realized very early on that, in my fieldwork in Kabylia, I was constantly drawing on my experience of the Béarn society of my childhood, both to understand the practices that I was observing and to defend myself against the interpretations that I spontaneously formed of them or that my informants gave me. (Bourdieu, 2003:288)

On April 3rd, 2013, I accompanied the work of an advisor from the Administrative Council for Economic Defence (CADE), which is a governmental body under the auspices of the Brazilian Ministry of Justice responsible for Brazilian antitrust policy, or ‘competition defence’ policy as it is also known. The advisor’s work on that occasion involved ‘defining the relevant market’ for a company takeover in the oncological treatment sector. When notified of a proposed merger, acquisition or other ‘act of concentration’ CADE usually needs to define the relevant market, in order to be able to evaluate the likely impact on competition. The takeover operation that had

¹ I especially wish to thank Federico Neiburg, Juan Pablo Pardo-Guerra, Afrânio Garcia, Eugênia Motta, Benoît de L’Estoile, Fernando Rabossi, Laurence Fontaine, Andrés Góngora Sierra, André Dumans Guedes, Rejane Valvano, Luiz Alberto Couceiro, Rodrigo Cantu, Pedro Magalhães Batista, Isabelle Menezes, and Taylor Nelms whose comments, suggestions and questions helped make the argument of this article more precise and coherent. I also would like to thank Jonathan Francis Roberts for the detailed revision of this article in English.

been reported to CADE and assigned to the advisor for analysis, involved the acquisition of one hospital by another in the municipality of Rio de Janeiro. The acquisition gave rise to a risk of market concentration that could reduce competition: it was therefore necessary, to define the market that might be affected by the takeover in order to then draw up an ‘index of concentration’ and decide on any action that might be necessary.

In this specific case, the question was whether ‘hospitals’ and ‘clinics’ could be considered players in the same market and, therefore, potential competitors in the provision of medical-hospital services for oncological treatment. If they were part of the same market, the acquisition would cause little alteration to the market concentration, given that the number of clinics in the region was large enough to counterbalance the market power of the new hospital. After explaining how she usually defined the market in this sector, by calculating the radial distances between clinics, the advisor, a law graduate, stated that: ‘in this market, from my own experience, I know that the clinics probably don’t compete with hospitals.’

Somewhat taken aback by her seemingly abrupt conclusion, I asked how she had acquired such specific information. She explained that some years previously her father had been diagnosed with cancer and that she remembered vividly that her father had not needed to go to hospital to undertake his chemotherapy sessions. This was because, she added, of a new treatment that did not even require the patient to visit a clinic every day. The treatment involved an implant placed over the chest, releasing the medication during the course of the day, making it unnecessary for the patient to leave home, she explained. This meant, she added, that ‘there is, perhaps, no horizontal concentration between hospitals and clinics’, since her father had not needed to visit hospital, only a clinic from time to time. Logically, therefore, ‘clinics’ and ‘hospitals’ could not be competing in the same market, since the services they provide are different.

The technicality of ‘defining the relevant market’ can be obscure and incomprehensible to anyone unfamiliar with the world of antitrust policy and law. The way in which the advisor established a relation between the market definition and her father’s treatment exemplified the reasoning implicit in this antitrust practice, but also demonstrated an alternative way of understanding the market. During the analysis of administrative processes, the professional staff of the Brazilian antitrust body, whatever

their academic background, frequently draw on personal or lived experiences (which may be their own personal experiences or the experience of others known to them) to help them infer particular characteristics of markets, sectors, industries or companies – i.e. the economy. These experiences lived by advisors, commissioners or technical assistants – which, I argue, can be conceived as ways of knowing or assessing the economic world – are used alongside the official practices of knowledge production typical of administrative law. Lived experiences may be drawn upon either as a complement to official practices or as a way of questioning them. Turning to examples such as the one presented above, my goal here will be to describe these intuitive, experiential, ‘lateral’ knowledge practices (Maurer, 2005; Riles, 2011), which permeate the analysis and judgement of cases, in order to reflect on the interpretative tools regulators use. I conclude that market experiences are relevant elements in comprehending market expertise and market constructions.

The Brazilian antitrust agency², CADE, where I undertook the research leading to this article³, acts in accordance with principles and methods commonly used by antitrust agencies world-wide. This autonomous legal body (*autarquia*⁴) which operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice, is responsible for enforcing antitrust law and policy in Brazil. Antitrust can be defined as a ‘set of policies and laws designed to ensure that competition in the markets is not reduced in a way that diminishes economic well-being’ (Motta, 2004:30). Antitrust bodies across the world base their decisions on the assumption that competition⁵ in markets is

2 Strictly speaking, CADE is not an ‘agency’ under the specific legislation governing regulatory agencies – I use the term here as a more convenient way referring to ‘autonomous administrative bodies’ (see footnote 4 below).

3 I conducted the ethnographic research over a two-year period at the offices of the Brazilian antitrust agency, in Brasília, as part of my doctoral thesis in Social Anthropology at the National Museum (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro). The research involved observation of the knowledge practices needed for the investigative proceedings relating to competition law and included, for one semester, my active participation as a technical analyst for CADE’s General Superintendence.

4 According to Meirelles (2010:380): ‘*Autarquias* are autonomous administrative bodies, established by specific laws, legally defined as a domestic government bodies, with their own assets and specific state powers [...] these bodies are self-managing, in accordance with laws issued by the entity responsible for creating them.’

5 The concept of competition is perhaps the most ambiguous concept in antitrust analysis, despite being a central notion in said field. Economic theory is not unanimous on the definition of competition for the purposes of antitrust policy and, consequently, competition is defined in a variety of forms for different analytic purposes. See Davies (2009) on the potential differences in the concepts of competition applied by antitrust agencies in the United States and the United Kingdom.

economically advantageous for consumers and for the national economy as a whole. Competition is presumed to enable consumers to purchase products at lower prices and to make companies more innovative and productive (Forgioni, 2013). Antitrust policy, which is present throughout most of the industrialized world in a remarkably similar manner, is an ever-increasingly important feature of the Brazilian government's economic policy. Starting in the 1990s, new competition laws have been introduced seeking to bolster anti-inflationary measures (Onto, 2009). Policymakers consider antitrust policy to be an essential feature of an open modern economy, effectively guaranteeing one of Brazil's constitutional principles: free competition (Salgado, 1995).

The Brazilian antitrust body is responsible for the filing, investigation, prosecution⁶, and judgment of administrative proceedings relating to competition law. During an investigation, the agency generally seeks to gather legal-economic evidence for use in the administrative proceedings. The investigation commonly includes the analysis of documents and interviewing or consulting relevant individuals, companies, political authorities and entities in the public or private sector. The agency may apply for search and seizure warrants in order to inspect the headquarters and other premises of the companies under investigation, and seize objects, papers, computers, etc. All these measures are aimed at the gathering of the evidence needed to determine the veracity of allegations of potentially anti-competitive behaviour or to determine whether a merger might lead to a possible economic harm for consumers or competitors.

These administrative procedures or practices are designed to gather information on the specific characteristics of the markets, companies and consumers involved or affected in the case. The many factors analysed include, for example, information on the respective revenues of the relevant market players, the start-up costs that a new player must incur in order to

6 *Instrução* [investigation] refers to the set of legal formalities and level of information needed for a case to reach a state where it can be judged. According to the legal expert Hely Meirelles (2010:742): 'investigation is the fact-finding phase, involving the production of admissible evidence by the plaintiff in punitive processes, or additions to the initial evidence in control and licensing processes: this evidence ranges from testimonies from the parties involved, examination of witnesses, personal inspections, technical reports, to the gathering of relevant documents. In punitive proceedings, responsibility for the investigative measures rests with the prosecuting authority or commission, while in the other kinds of processes it lies with the parties who have an interest in the decision concerning the object of the case, through direct presentation of evidence or official request for its production through regulatory procedures.'

enter a market, the sector's production and innovation characteristics, how product prices are formed, the relevant brand or trademark values and the location of production and distribution units. This information is needed for a conclusion as to whether or not a merger between firms might result in a competition problem or whether a particular business practice amounts for example to a cartel, being a 'violation of the economic order' under the national competition law.

Although I focus on lateral knowledge practices in this article in no way do I seek to diminish the importance of the legal and institutional methods antitrust authorities rely upon in their work. Lateral knowledge practices are no substitute for the *need* to abide by formal data collection procedures, but may serve as an alternative or complement in the *interpretation* of real world situations not entirely detached from the experience of advisors, analysts, commissioners and interns. In fact, as we shall see, these professionals bring personal and other familiar experiences to the centre of antitrust analysis in a continual dialogue with the procedures, reasoning, doctrine and theories which characterize what the sociological and anthropological literature on markets refers to as economic or legal expertise (Mitchell, 2002; Riles, 2010). According to Holmes (2009:410), these kinds of lateral practices are common among experts who manage or regulate the economy, given that 'these actors are fully aware of the unstable nature of the economic phenomena they are charged with managing as well as the limitations of their analytical tools designed to measure, if not predict, its performance.'⁷

In a series of articles, Douglas Holmes and George Marcus (2005, 2006, 2008) developed the notion of 'para-ethnography' in reference to a new ethnographic possibility for the exploration of fields of expertise in which a scientific or technocratic ethos prevails. This concept refers to forms of knowledge production that are similar to ethnography and which are used by informants to complement mathematical and statistical theory in their attempt to understand the economy. In the case they studied, Holmes and Marcus give as an example of para-ethnographic procedures the calls and conversations frequently initiated by the President of the US Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, in order to 'sense' the economy. It was more through the knowledge obtained from these 'parallel' conversations, than the official

7 See also Miyazaki and Riles (2005).

indicators produced by the bank that the President of the Fed sought to comprehend the market's expectations and the various potential economic scenarios. Para-ethnography therefore constitutes a reflexive and critical genre of understanding, a 'variety of traditional interpretive concerns with "native points of view"' (Holmes and Marcus, 2005:247).

Para-ethnographic knowledge practices – which draw on such forms of knowledge as intuition, memory, anecdote or experience – can also be described as ways of providing an explanation, a more intimate or localized context, for a phenomenon which is usually explained by abstract models (Reichman, 2011). These forms of 'illicit knowledge,' as Holmes and Marcus define them, appear to translate the abstract into the concrete, and point to the need to introduce contextual elements that can bring a more detailed account to overly generic models – in the form of what we could call 'ethnographic sketches'. However, as Daniel Reichman suggests, para-ethnographic elements may also involve a decontextualization and generalization of phenomena understood as local and particular. Whether as generalizations (decontextualizations) or through particularizations (contextualizations), the observation of para-ethnographic practices in fields of economic expertise permits the ethnographer to approach the intuitive and experiential aspects that permeate analytic reconstructions of the economic relations by drawing on comparisons, analogies or information coming from experiences of other times and places. These knowledge practices aim to reconstitute, interpret and define economic phenomena that cannot be simply measured and calculated (Holmes, 2009).

Reflecting on the above studies, I seek to describe in this article some of the interpretive practices adopted by CADE advisors and commissioners during their analytic work. Given that these lateral practices are not formally documented and are not therefore made textually explicit as part of the decision making processes, either in the formal rulings of the commissioners or in the technical reports produced by the analysts and advisors, these ways of knowing are not easily visible other than by close ethnographic research. In this paper I draw on interviews with CADE employees and my observations of dialogues between employees during their work on cases of suspected anti-competitive activity. I have focused in particular on the lived experience that they brought to their work and upon which they relied as a formative part of their processes of constructing lines of analysis

and judgement. When CADE employees work on defining markets or on ascertaining whether a competition problem exists, they need to produce not only knowledge of markets, but also (or indeed as an alternative) they may need to bring to light knowledge produced *from* or *within* markets.

Firstly, therefore, I argue that lived experiences must be regarded as a central element of socio-anthropological conceptualizations of the market, even when these experiences are described by agents who are only ‘laterally’ connected to the markets such as, for example, state regulators (Elyachar, 2010; Riles, 2011). This emphasis on the experience of regulators also seeks to reflect on the way in which the literature deals with market expertise. Instead of defining such expertise merely as a ‘specialized body of knowledge’, par-ethnographic practices require us to consider more fluid, ambiguous and contextual forms of expertise, as Annelise Riles (2010) proposes. Economic regulation bases itself both on the personal and professional experiences of regulators as well as on models and techniques set out in textbooks and guidelines on economic analysis.

Secondly, I argue that the fact that these lateral modes of market knowledge may be considered analogous to the ethnographic practices of anthropologists, and that they play a key role in the analysis and judgement of many cases dealt with by the antitrust body, requires us to reflect on contemporary forms of market regulation and how best to study them.

This article is divided into three parts. In the next section I briefly describe CADE’s activity, based on the agency’s official documents, highlighting the way in which an administrative proceedings are investigated and then tried by the Council. This overview is necessary in order to demonstrate how lived experience can be perceived as a lateral knowledge practice. In the following section I describe situations arising during the investigative phase of two different sets of proceedings in which the production of market knowledge drew, in different forms, on knowledge constructed in personal situations, which backgrounded the official administrative investigation practices. Finally I conclude with a few remarks on market construction, expertise, and regulation.

Antitrust analysis on paper

In Brazil, the antitrust body (CADE) performs the functions assigned to

it under the Competition Law⁸, its mission being ‘to strive to ensure free competition in the market’. The antitrust agency investigates two main types of administrative proceedings⁹ or cases: (i) ‘acts of concentration’, that is, mergers, acquisitions, incorporations, joint ventures, and other forms of cooperation, whether temporary or permanent, between large companies and that may jeopardize ‘free competition’, (ii) ‘anti-competitive practices’, the most well-known being cartels.¹⁰ In the former case (acts of concentration), CADE carries out an investigation in order to decide whether or not to authorize the act of concentration in question. In the latter case, it investigates suspected anti-competitive practices in order to decide whether or not to impose sanctions. In relation to acts of concentration the analysis is undertaken with the aim of preventing the potential harm that a concentration may cause to market competition in the future, while in the case of suspected anti-competitive practices the investigation is retrospective, seeking to determine whether a particular individual practice or one coordinated between two or more companies, in the relatively recent past, caused any harm to competition.

In organizational terms CADE is made up of the Administrative Tribunal for Economic Defence (*Tribunal Administrativo de Defesa Econômica*), the General Superintendence (*Superintendência-Geral*) and the Economic Studies Department (*Departamento de Estudos Econômicos*). The Administrative Tribunal is composed of a President and six Commissioners¹¹ and is responsible for judging the administrative proceedings and for ratifying settlement agreements between the agency and the companies involved in anti-competitive practices or acts of concentration. The General

8 The new Competition Law 12.529, introduced on November 30th 2011, in force on May 30th 2012, replacing the previous Law 8.884 of 1994, altered the institutional structure of the so-called ‘Brazilian Antitrust System’, transferring the functions of the Secretariat of Economic Law of the Ministry of Justice to the General Superintendence of CADE and including the need for pre-merger notification to the antitrust agency.

9 ‘The Public Administration, in order to record its acts, control the conduct of its agents and resolve disputes involving those under its administration, makes use of diverse *procedures*, collectively denominated an *administrative proceeding*’ (Meirelles, 2010:734).

10 A wide variety of anti-competitive practices exist, such as, for instance, exclusive dealing, concerted refusal to deal/sell, price fixing, price discrimination, cartels, predatory pricing and tied selling. These practices may be unilateral, when the action of a single company is involved, or they may be coordinated. Investigation of these practices may begin with a report/accusation made by a company or on the basis of market studies carried out by CADE itself.

11 Under the new legislation, the Commissioners and President are appointed by the President of the Republic following approval by the Federal Senate. They have a four-year non-renewable mandate. Both the CADE President and the Commissioners must have significant knowledge of economics or law.

Superintendence (SG) is headed by a General Superintendent and two Vice-Superintendents, and is responsible, amongst other things, for commencement of *ex-officio* proceedings and the investigation of all proceedings, referring them to the Administrative Tribunal to be judged, whenever necessary. The Economic Studies Department (DEE) produces studies and economic reports to assist the analyses of the SG and the Tribunal.

The analysis of ‘acts of concentration’, on which I focus in this article, follows the filing of a petition by companies requesting approval for the act of (market) concentration, or ‘operation’ as these acts are called. Under the new Competition Law, this request is obligatory and the failure to present the operation to CADE in time may lead to the imposition of heavy fines on the companies.¹² This means that the companies cannot combine their operations administratively or legally without CADE issuing a final report of approval. The initial petition, drafted by legal representatives of the parties, is accompanied by detailed information on the companies taking part in the operation and the markets in which they participate. CADE’s employees use this information to begin their analysis.

Under the former Competition Law (8.884/94), companies had to send notifications of their acts of concentration to the Secretariat for Economic Monitoring (SEAE) of the Ministry of Finance, which carried out the investigation of the process and sent a ‘technical report’ to CADE for judgement by the plenary. At the Plenary Council, if the Reporting Commissioner deemed it necessary, a complementary investigation could be undertaken to obtain additional information on the operation. Under the new legal system, the SG is responsible for the analysis of the acts of concentration and, in many cases, for making a final decision as to whether or not such acts may be authorized. In cases which the SG considers to be complex¹³, SG staff will draft a report and submit the issue to the Tribunal.

12 In relation to acts of concentration, Article 88 of the law states: ‘The following are to be submitted to CADE by the parties involved in the operation of acts of economic concentration in which, cumulatively: I - at least one of the groups involved in the transaction has registered, in the last balance sheet, annual gross sales or total turnover in the country, in the year preceding the transaction, equivalent or superior to four hundred million reais (R\$ 400,000,000.00) [approximately 168 million dollars]; and II - at least one other group involved in the transaction has registered, in the last balance sheet, gross annual sales or total turnover in the country, in the year preceding the transaction, equivalent to or greater than thirty million reais (R\$ 30,000,000.00) [approximately 13 million dollars].’

13 The classification of a case as ‘complex’ tends to be related to a higher likelihood of the operation causing a ‘competition problem’ in the market under analysis. As a result the Tribunal often deals with the potentially

In the more straightforward cases which the SG handles alone, the SG report constitutes the agency's final decision.

Several members of CADE staff (advisors or analysts) may be involved in the analysis of the facts and issues pertaining to an act of concentration. Their analysis is based on assumptions taken from various economic theories, particularly those relating to industrial organization and microeconomics¹⁴ which enable the formulation of hypotheses on the behaviour of companies, competitors and consumers in a scenario of increased economic concentration. Financial, accounting, corporate and contractual analyses may also be used in a case report. The analysis evaluates the impact a particular concentration of companies is likely to have on market competition in a specific geographical location.

The *Guia para Análise Econômica de Atos de Concentração Horizontal* (Horizontal Merger Guidelines) published by Brazilian antitrust agencies in 2001 suggest a five-stage process for the analysis of acts of concentrations¹⁵. The first of these stages is the definition of the 'relevant market', that is, the delimitation of the market affected by the operation. The precise definition of a market (the definition of the competing companies, products or services offered and the geographic locality affected by the operation) is almost always necessary in order to establish where the impact of the concentration will be felt. The second stage is the estimation of 'market power', that is, the relative market share held by one or more companies within a relevant market. Estimation of these market shares enables analysts to construct indices of market concentration (such as the C4 index set out below), providing a quantitative prediction of future market scenarios. The third stage involves the analysis of the market's present and future 'entry barriers', that is, the actual and potential conditions for new competitors to enter the market. The fourth stage involves an evaluation of the potential gains and losses for consumers and competitors arising from a merger within

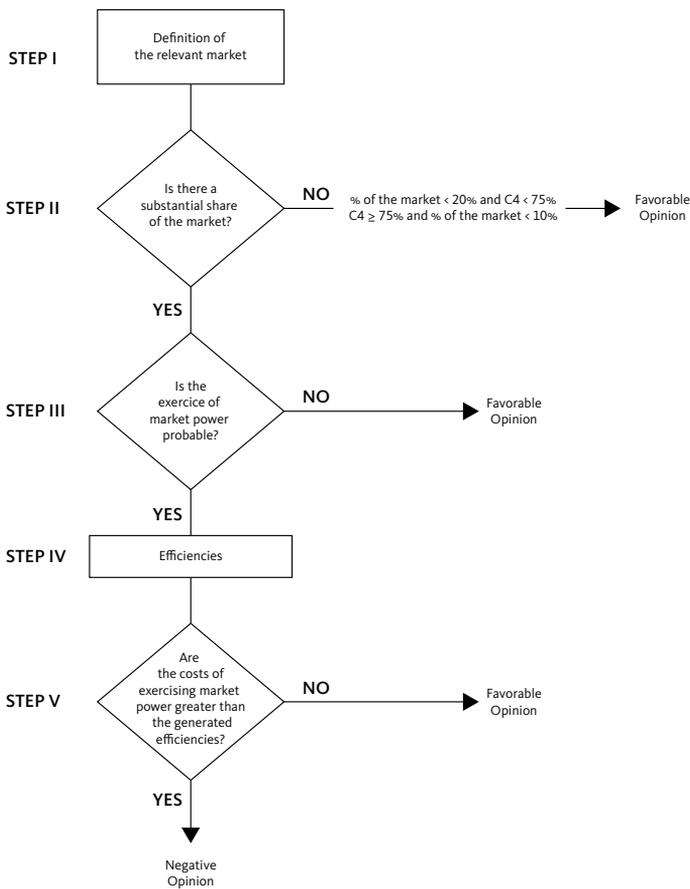
more harmful cases, which demand more time for assessment by the antitrust agency.

14 The contemporary economic antitrust analysis of market concentrations draws on theories and methods from both the so-called Harvard School of Industrial Organization and the Chicago School. No single approach prevails over the other in the Brazilian agency, albeit individual Commissioners might be more inclined towards a particular theoretical approach. In general, structural analyses (Harvard) are combined with analyses of the operation's economic efficiency (Chicago) or more recent considerations related to transaction costs (Hovenkamp, 2010).

15 Horizontal mergers occur when two companies competing in the same market merge or join together. A vertical merger is one in which a firm or company joins a supplier or distributor.

the market, including assessment of the ‘economic efficiencies’ that can be generated by the operation. This means that analysts look to measure the potential gains and cost reductions for the merging companies as a result of reorganization of production or the capacity to innovate. Finally a cost-benefit analysis is undertaken, looking at the trade-off between the gains and losses of the concentration, combining all the information collected in the investigation and assessing whether the operation poses any risk to competition in the analysed market.

All these analytical questions suggest that the more information the agency possesses on the companies, competitors and consumers in a market, the better-placed it will be to estimate the impact on competition caused by a concentration. The chart below, produced by the SEAE and SDE (the defunct Secretariat of Economic Law), illustrates the various stages of the procedure:



Steps in the Economic Analysis of Horizontal Mergers (SEAE/SDE, 2001)

The analytic model presented above, which is based on the U.S. Federal Trade Commission merger guidelines¹⁶, presents an outline or framework for the analytical activity of bureaucrats inside the antitrust agency, by illustrating, for the purposes of accountability, what they do (or should do) when they analyse a case. The guidelines also enable a series of agents outside those agencies to undertake their functions in line with the activities of the antitrust body¹⁷. These external agents include the ‘business community’ and the ‘antitrust practitioners’, that is the lawyers and economic consultants who need to ‘speak the same language’ as the antitrust body, which requires them to be capable of evaluating market concentrations in a similar way (Onto, 2009)¹⁸. That said, it is worth noting that the techniques and procedures described in the guidelines, whilst frequently adopted, are not necessarily required in every merger investigation. The extent of their use depends on the needs and specific characteristics of the case analysed.

While the merger guidelines point to the economic reasoning underlying the analysis of the cases by the Council, another set of documents – resolutions, directives, flowcharts, legal texts – describe how this analysis is (or should be) undertaken in practice – i.e. the formal and legal procedures for carrying out the analysis.¹⁹ Generally (and formally) speaking, CADE’s

16 The U.S. merger guidelines are widely relied upon as a reference for other countries’ merger guidelines, given that the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Department of Justice (DoJ) are considered by antitrust experts to be among the most efficient and technically sophisticated antitrust agencies in the world. As one bureaucrat at the Brazilian antitrust body said to me: ‘we are living in an environment in which the wealthier economies dictate antitrust “best practices”... so, consequently, as you can see, Brazilian analytic practices and procedures are now starting to become part of world’s best practices and are being praised by the OECD and ICN [International Competition Network]’.

17 A report on merger guidelines produced by different antitrust agencies worldwide contains the following description: ‘Guidelines set out how authorities intend to apply the laws and regulations in their respective jurisdictions to the cases that come before them. Guidelines are important not only for deliberation on those cases but also for obtaining consistent results in law enforcement. They might influence which merger proposals are made in the first place and they are a mechanism for the authorities to be transparent about the operation of the policy, and to be held to account for its proper implementation.’ (ICN, 2004)

18 In the case of the U.S. and other jurisdictions where investigative proceedings and trials are conducted by separate institutions, the guidelines serve the purpose of educating judges in antitrust economic reasoning. Courts that try antitrust cases are expected to be able to follow as closely as possible the modes of reasoning described by antitrust agency’s guidelines, although this does not always happen, in practice (see Hovenkamp, 2005).

19 Comparing the merger guidelines with the other documents produced by the agency allows us to explore one of the possible modalities of the relation between law and economics within antitrust agencies. These agency documents describe a relation in which economics (and ‘the economy’) comprises the content of the analysis and law comprises the form in which the analysis must be performed. According to one economist, also a CADE employee: ‘In antitrust, the law adopts an economic criterion of legality. Moreover, while the legitimizing principle – the promotion of competition and efficiency – is economic, the means are legal and institutional.’

investigative and analytical activity is no different to that performed at other state administrative or regulatory bodies in accordance with procedures common to Brazilian Administrative Law. These procedures include the sending of official communications to the companies involved in acts of concentration and to their competitors, together with questionnaires and spreadsheets to be completed, the inspection of production facilities, meetings with company lawyers or directors, research in newspapers and magazines or on the internet, telephone conversations, and other activities.

However many of these investigative/analytic practices are not written into the agency's internal resolutions and directives, much less into the Competition Law or the Federal Constitution. Likewise many of these practices also pass unmentioned in the most important textbooks on the area of Competition Law or Antitrust Economics, whether foreign (Hovenkamp, 2005; Motta, 2004) or Brazilian (Forgioni, 2010). It could be said that the official documents and text books in the area do not seek to describe these practices, since they would be as numerous or diverse as the number of professionals and processes that pass daily through CADE. As anthropologists of the State would argue, making these practices explicit is not the objective of such documents. Timothy Mitchell (2002), for example, suggests that para-ethnographic practices cannot be legitimized as official since they would eliminate the very formality that the State strives to maintain. It is these knowledge practices, which are frequently employed but not officially made explicit and are kept in the background, that we call lateral, or para-ethnographic.

To avoid any misunderstanding of the central argument of this paper, it is worth stressing that jurists do not deem the use of personal experiences to be improper, illegitimate or illegal. From a legal point of view, para-ethnographic practices are neither strange nor indeed unusual, but, rather, they are a common interpretive exercise in judicial proceedings. It is not my intention in this paper to discredit legal rationality by arguing that the process of case judgement is subjective and 'ideological'. What I seek is to reflect, from the

This is because antitrust policy is exercised by the application and interpretation of what the law characterizes, in accordance with these objectives, as anti-competitive and abusive (and therefore unlawful) practices, or as circumstances that increase the probability of harm to competition – making these circumstances undesirable and liable to control. Consequently to the extent that the promotion of a competitive environment requires state intervention, it ends up attributing a significant role to law, albeit wrapped up in an “eminently economic function”, since it is designed to obtain efficiency through its norms’ (Alves, 2010:61).

point of view of legal advisors and commissioners, on the production of knowledge concerning markets, their agents and their transformations.

My doctoral research at the Brazilian antitrust agency began in March 2012, but it was only from September of the same year that I was able to follow the work of three advisors and two interns at the office of one of the agency's commissioners. For six months I accompanied, as an observer, the work carried out at this office. Apart from the commissioner, who had a PhD in Economics, and the head of the office (a psychologist by training), the other employees were all Law graduates or undergraduates. Furthermore, the advisors in question, who in this case had only been working at the agency for a few months, did not have any specific training in antitrust policy and legislation. They were learning, almost at the same time as myself, how to carry out a competition analysis.

When I mentioned my interest, as an ethnographer, in understanding how analyses and judgements were carried out at the antitrust agency, the advisors and commissioners would immediately point to textbooks, decisions, guidelines and the internal regulations as a broad description of the work that they did. As they well knew and warned me, however, these various forms of guidelines merely introduced me to a set of practices, theories and questions that might assist in the difficult task of understanding how a concentration of companies was to be analysed. As David Mosse states (2007), all the variety and contingencies which relationships, interests, events, expectations and experiences produce in the practice of public policies are reduced to a minimum when one observes the description provided in official documents.

While the discourse contained in these documents necessarily 'suppresses the relational', 'refuses significance to the event, the individual and compromise [...] in favour of the rule, instrumental ideas, [and] professional models' (Mosse, 2007:12-13), the day-to-day analytical practices performed by the employees seemed to bring to the fore personal and professional relationships, making the activity of administering markets less bound to a certain pre-established rationality of how the economic world works. Similarly, but certainly not identically, to the modes of knowledge construction typical of ethnographic practice, the CADE investigative analysis of markets and their agents also sought to contextualize (or decontextualize) certain economic relations in order to be able to

comprehend the potential effects of a market concentration. Many of these knowledge practices manifested as an extension of the antitrust analysis to the sphere of lived experience, as exemplified in the next section.

A personal experience

The work of investigating processes at CADE never seems to leave the computer screens. Advisors, commissioners, technical assistants and interns spend the whole day writing texts or filling out spreadsheets in the commissioner's offices and at other coordination offices. Discussion between advisors and commissioners concerning the particularities of cases is limited due to the short amount of time available and the large number of cases to be analysed. Even so, it is notable that in constructing their understanding of cases during these brief parallel conversations, whether at occasional office meetings or during summarized explanations of cases, staff members refer to considerations and assessments of characteristics of the market under investigation that do not come from information contained in documents sent by the companies or from the agency's case law. Rather, they draw on lived experiences and other subjectivities. It was as the result of a question an advisor at CADE asked me, in relation to my own personal experience, that I began to consider these lateral knowledge resources as an ethnographically significant object.

In the office where I was conducting my research, the advisors and commissioners would meet fortnightly for a case conference on the issues they were currently handling. The case files were placed on the meeting table and opened one-by-one in order to discuss the possible ways of proceeding with the analysis. One of the advisors would pick up a file and read the first pages out loud so that the others might know what the case involved and the possible 'competition issue' it raised. In general the questions that then arose related to the type of additional material (information or data) that needed to be requested from the applicant company²⁰ (or from its competitors) in order to clarify any important points and assist the commissioner, with the advisor's help, to draft this or her written decision.

20 As mentioned earlier, the examples cited in this work all relate to acts of concentration. For this reason the companies are referred to as 'applicants' since they applied for administrative authorization to carry out an operation (merger, acquisition...), rather than being termed 'representatives', or 'represented parties', as the companies are called in investigations of violations of the economic order, such as cartels, for example.

In the period in which the ethnographic research was undertaken, CADE was undergoing a period of transition. The new Competition Law had come into force but there were still a number of pending acts of concentration which had arisen whilst the former law was in force and were therefore governed by the former statutory provisions. Such applications were called the ‘stock.’²¹ The cases concerned were distributed among the commissioners and the entire investigative process was undertaken within their offices. It was by accompanying some of these investigations that I began to familiarize myself with the Council’s processes of analysing and judging acts of concentration.²²

At a meeting of the commissioner with two advisors in October 2012, the group’s attentions were focused on a spreadsheet, which covered an entire page of a petition,²³ bearing the names and location of a series of university centres. The location of the centres was identified by the complete address, most of them located in the Greater São Paulo region. The spreadsheet had been sent by the applicants in order to enumerate the complete set of university centres that would form part of a single economic group, if the act were to be approved by CADE. This is a mandatory requirement in applications of this nature²⁴: in the case at hand, two companies that controlled separate universities and faculties were merging to form a single economic group.

After the spreadsheet had been passed around to everyone present, one of the advisors asked me: ‘So, Gustavo, you **lived** in São Paulo, what’s the **distance** from Avenida Paulista to this place here in São Bernardo do Campo?’ He pointed to two different university locations presented by the company. ‘Oh, and from Avenida Vergueiro to Avenida Paulista?’ I replied that I could not say what the exact distance was, but that it probably took

21 The elimination of this ‘stock’ was a priority for the Presidency of the Council following the promulgation of the new Competition Law. Judging all these processes would mean, in practical terms, a shift to a new legal framework, considered by government officials as more efficient and effective than the previous one for the task of enforcing competition.

22 It would be impossible to describe the entire process of analysis of a single case, from start to end, from an ethnographic viewpoint, due to the impossibility of accompanying a case as it moves through the different commissioner’s offices, coordination offices and departments within the antitrust agency. My aim is merely to indicate the existence of lateral knowledge practices that, at any moment of analysis, may be utilized by advisors, commissioners and interns.

23 ‘Petition’ is the name given to the document that includes a response or request from the applicant company.

24 CADE Resolution n.2, May 29th 2012.

more than thirty minutes, without heavy traffic, to travel from Avenida Paulista to São Bernardo. The advisor then asked: ‘But you, **if you lived** in the Paulista region, **would you commute** to São Bernardo to study?’ I said that I probably would not, as there were several universities closer to Avenida Paulista that were probably very similar to the one in São Bernardo and that I could not imagine anyone commuting in such circumstances.

The advisor’s questions reflected his attempt to comprehend how the information set out in the table could lead to a conclusion on the existence or absence of a ‘competition problem’. The first question, which referred to the distances between university centres, sought to identify the concentration of units in a spatial, geographic dimension. In other words, were the units presented by the applicant concentrated in a particular region? If so, what was the scale of this supposed region? Since at that point in my field research I already understood why the advisor was interested in the distance between the units, I replied with another item of information: the estimated time required for travelling between the two.

My reply provided something that for me, based on my own personal experience, was easier to calculate. I do not remember ever covering this specific trajectory by car, but I had already commuted enough by car in the city of São Paulo to be able to provide a reasonable estimate of the time taken between two locations. In my reply to the first question, the variables of distance and time travelled indicated characteristics that could be translated into an economic vocabulary as characteristics of the ‘supply side’, indicating the availability of services in a particular region. The question asked of me concerned my experience as a resident of São Paulo, someone familiar with the city’s geography, its distances and above all the road traffic conditions.

The first question could provide information on something that the documents did not contain (yet). Undoubtedly these questions could be answered in replies to official communications sent to the applicant company and its competitors. In fact, the applicant company was in due course formally requested to present evidence of the distance between its units. The distance and time involved could also have been calculated at CADE using Google Maps, as is done normally. However, the answer to those questions, at that moment of office meeting, enabled a quicker estimate of the characteristics of the market concerned and facilitated the formulation of other relevant questions and other potential lines of enquiry.

The question subsequently asked by the advisor took into account different variables, which could result in a more precise estimate of the geographic area he wanted to define. The question ‘if you lived in the Paulista [Avenue] region, would you commute to São Bernardo to study?’ placed me in the situation of a potential consumer of ‘educational services’ who lived near Avenida Paulista and would have a decision to make were he to go to university. What would I (or someone like me) do in this situation, the advisor wondered? Looking to complement the information obtained from the first question, what the advisor wanted to know, in economic terms, was the ‘demand side’ of this market, that is, how a consumer of educational services and resident in São Paulo’s central region would behave. In reply I added another piece of information relating to ‘supply’ in this specific region: I said that the universities were potential competitors in the region of Avenida Paulista. Hence it was neither necessary nor reasonable to suppose that a consumer would commute from the Paulista region to São Bernardo (a suburban area of the city).

Based on these two responses, the advisor could infer, or at least suspect, that the market he was looking to understand would not include all the university centres in question. If a consumer would not commute from Avenida Paulista to São Bernardo to study, as I suggested, the two universities in question were probably located in different ‘geographic markets’: they did not therefore compete for students. Furthermore if many other university centres existed in São Paulo’s central region, then perhaps the competition between the entire range of universities in the area (and not just the two universities that were proposing to merger) should be the focus of the analysis. As explained in the previous section, antitrust analysis must start by defining a geographic area accompanied by the definition of a product or service that may be affected by the business concentration. Using the information I provided, the geographic area of this market could at least be estimated with greater precision, remaining fairly close to the Paulista region.

My personal experience enabled the advisor to understand, to some extent, the functioning of the educational services market in São Paulo. More specifically, it offered an insight into the decision-making rationale of a typical consumer of these services in the city. By being able to infer characteristics of consumers and the travel times involved, as well as being able to ascertain, albeit not conclusively, the presence and extent

of competition, the advisor could elaborate further questions for the merging companies and for their potential competitors in the market. The ‘competition dynamic’ in this market began to acquire a more solid (and ethnographically informed) character that enabled an evaluation of whether the proposed merger would cause any harm to the ‘economic order’.

A familiar market

Some of the cases referred to CADE end up generating a huge amount of work for those responsible for their analysis. Some cases in particular call for very detailed examination of the issues. Two notable examples are (i) cases in which there is a perceived likelihood of CADE rejecting an application for a merger (circumstances in which CADE analysts must provide clear and thoroughly researched analyses upon which the Tribunal can rely as grounds for the rejection) and (ii) administrative proceedings in which there is a possibility of the Tribunal imposing a fine or other sanctions for anti-competitive practices (e.g. in the case of cartels). The rejection of an operation or the imposition of a penalty for anti-competitive practice are discussed extensively at the meetings of commissioners and are, later on, subject to intense challenge from the lawyers representing the parties. The advisor and in particular the Reporting Commissioner on the decision come under considerable pressure that demands, simultaneously, significant technical rigour in the analysis and considerable flexibility in interacting with their peers and representatives of the companies involved. One of the cases I accompanied at a Commissioner’s office also demonstrated to me the importance that knowledge from and within markets has in the evaluation of the effects of an act of concentration.

The case involved the purchase of a hospital by the shareholders of another hospital in a town I shall call Pequi, located in the interior of Minas Gerais State²⁵. The town only had two hospitals and so the acquisition would result in the total control of the provision of hospital care by one company, Santé. The applicants’ lawyers claimed that the acquisition was necessary for ‘logistical reasons’ and would not harm competition since the hospital being

²⁵ Because of the confidential nature of the information on the proceeding, the names of the location and the company involved in this operation have all been changed.

purchased was on the verge of bankruptcy. Failure to purchase the hospital would, they said, generate more unemployment and reduce the supply of medical services since the hospital would close²⁶. Furthermore the demand for medical-hospital services in the town could not economically sustain two hospitals competing for clients. In other words, despite creating a single economic group, which would control the town's only two hospitals, the acquisition would benefit the market of hospital services in this location, or at least prevent its decline.

As well as stressing the potential bankruptcy of the hospital they were attempting to buy, the applicants alleged that control of the two hospitals would generate economic efficiencies that would compensate for the existence of an inevitable monopoly in the town²⁷. The two hospitals could jointly purchase medical supplies and combine their organizational departments, thereby saving resources, which would lead to lower variable costs and, therefore, lower prices for patients. Santé was the owner of both the purchasing hospital and of the health insurance plan used by the majority of the town's population. This, according to its lawyers, would allow the company to improve its performance by adjusting the hospital's and the health plan's objectives, resulting in 'allocative efficiencies' that would benefit both hospitals and the consumers.

In daily conversations with the Reporting Commissioner, I witnessed his difficulty in accepting the arguments presented by the applicant companies. In his view, the likelihood of the purchased hospital going bankrupt was small. If there were a real risk of the target company becoming bankrupt, it would be reasonable to suppose, for example, that other companies would also have made bids for the hospital, but this had not happened. On the contrary, only the controlling group of the town's largest hospital had shown an interest in the purchase. Moreover the profitability and liquidity indicators from the target hospital, taken from its balance sheet and financial statements, did not point to any major risk of insolvency. It would

26 This argument is known as the theory of the failing firm: 'The failing firm defence (FFD) has arisen infrequently in merger cases but is expected to be used more frequently in the current economic climate. The FFD exists in most OECD jurisdictions and exempts an otherwise anticompetitive merger from challenge under the competition laws if the target company is in such poor financial condition that its only other option would be to exit the relevant market' (OECD, 2009).

27 I use the term monopoly although in fact there was a third (very small) hospital in the town, which, due to its diminutive size, 'was incapable of rivalling the other two' (Felipe, advisor, personal conversation).

be difficult for CADE, with this data, to agree to a concentration that would place in the hands of one company the control of over ninety per cent of hospital services in the town of Pequi.

Later on during the investigation of the process, an advisor named Felipe, who was assisting the Commissioner in this case, visited the hospitals in Pequi (at the request of the Commissioner), in order to obtain ‘a concrete notion of the case’. Visits to companies take place in a few cases only, usually at the request of Commissioners or at the invitation of applicants. According to the advisor, in the case in question ‘as it happened, the Pequi hospital was indeed extremely run down, in a much worse state than the other one [...] I recall that the X-ray room was under the staircase and had mildew, it was a very precarious situation...’ During his visit the owners of the other hospital had assured him that they intended to modernize the purchased hospital, bringing it up to the standards of the facility they already controlled. Faced with this range of information, it was no simple matter for the Commissioner to reach a final judgment, particularly after Pequi’s mayor visited CADE to say that the takeover would benefit the region’s health sector.

Despite the mayor’s visit and the findings of the advisor, the Commissioner ended up rejecting the operation, blocking the purchase of the hospital. When I asked him, after the ruling why he had come to that conclusion, he gave an explanation that had not been set out (or even alluded to) in the written decision:

*‘The situation was as follows. My **father-in-law** was an auditor for Santé [health insurers] and my father set up a dermatological clinic for my **sister** there in [the town of] Uberaba²⁸, there in a small building she [my sister] owned, on one floor. It so happened that my sister did not have Santé there²⁹. She had Amil [another health insurance provider], among others, but not Santé. And there you had a problem of ninety per cent having [the health insurance of] Santé. The population in Uberaba, right? Almost all the doctors were accredited by Santé. So then I remember the **struggle** of my sister, my mother. And my sister trying to speak to my father-in-law: “look into it for me, I need to be **accredited**. I’m already accredited with Santé in Belo Horizonte [capital of the State of Minas Gerais], but I need to be accredited by Santé in Uberaba”. Why? Because she wasn’t able to get herself accredited. My father-in-law told her: “It’s no use,*

28 Uberaba is a relatively small city in the State of Minas Gerais, not far from the town I have called ‘Pequi’.

29 This means that she was not authorized by the Santé health insurance to treat their clients.

*there are already so many [accredited doctors] there, Santé won't add any more." And they didn't, she was unable to get accredited by Santé in Uberaba. She couldn't manage it. Right? So she had to **charge** for appointments. Except that in a town like Uberaba, with a very poor population, if you charge 100 reais, which is really cheap for a doctor, people just won't pay it, they will look for a dermatologist covered by Santé's insurance. What happened? She stayed open a year and half, two years. And **closed**. She simply closed the clinic and went back to Belo Horizonte. Why? Because it wasn't worth keeping the clinic open. She closed the clinic because she was unable to keep it going.'*

The account transcribed above contains another example of Santé's activities in a small town. Although the issue of concentration in Pequi (the issue that was before CADE) was quite different to what had taken place in Uberaba (a town in which the Commissioner had once lived), the company involved was the same. In the case under investigation, Santé sought to takeover a hospital that, according to Santé lawyers, was not economically self-sustaining. In the events that affected the commissioner's sister, what seemed to be worrying (from a competition standpoint) was the power Santé had over the provision of medical services, that is, over the doctors themselves. Despite her father-in-law working for Santé, The Commissioner's sister had been unable to obtain the accreditation needed for her to treat patients covered by the company's health insurance. The Commissioner's explanation continued:

*'When I took the Santé case, this thing did not **come to my mind** immediately. This thing came to my mind following numerous discussions with the plenary [meetings with the other commissioners] and with the lawyers, who were saying that people would be made unemployed. "Look, if it weren't for this merger, if it breaks down, you'll see people **unemployed**". So right then, this came into my mind. I said: "but what about the doctors who will be made unemployed? There are several who will become unemployed. Whose unemployment are you talking about?" Then the **story** of my sister came into my head. I had also received an email from a doctor in Pequi, saying: "I'm going to have to leave Pequi, I'll have to work in Ouro Preto, because I have nowhere to work. I'm not with Santé, I was with Regional [another health insurance provider]." That was when I said to everyone in the plenary discussion: "Listen everyone, what unemployment are you talking about? Because look, if you allow 90% of the health insurance coverage in two hospitals, the doctors will be unable to work [...] You can require the applicants to sign a Term of Commitment if you like,*

but it won't work." So they suggested a fifteen-year TCD³⁰ and I said: "Do what you like, only you're generating inefficiency and there will be people who won't be able to **enter this market**. Right?" That was the connection.'

The Commissioner said that it was only during the discussions in which the argument on unemployment arose that the story of his sister 'came into his head'. The email from a doctor from Pequi made him realize the connection between his own family experience and the case under his analysis. This, for the commissioner at least, added another dimension to the issue. That the near absence of competition between hospitals would result in fewer options for consumers was just one of the possible effects of this merger. He became aware of another market: the employment market of the Pequi doctors. This market would also be affected by the merger, and in a way with which the commissioner was very familiar since he had witnessed the professional difficulties faced by his sister.

*'Unemployment might affect the X-ray technician, the guy who cleans the hospital, but here you are making unemployed someone **specialized**, a doctor. The doctors are left without options; you **close the market** for them. I have investigated other closures which were like that: it was the same case as my sister. More than that, you are not closing only [the market] for the doctor, you are closing the clinics, because look, what happened to my sister was that they closed the market of a dermatological clinic, it had to close [...] The haemodialysis clinic did not survive, the oncology clinic did not survive, it is all integrated, it all depends on doctors referring [the patients]. So when you close the oncology clinic you lose the cleaners working in the oncology clinic [...] so it is necessary to ponder both things. What type of unemployment are you talking about? We have to make a **choice** then. A trade-off between who is going to be made unemployed. The truth is this: it's not possible for everyone to keep their jobs. But it is obvious that if you **leave some competition** the probability of someone staying employed is higher than without competition. So I used the **experience** of my sister, you see?'*

As well as the job market for self-employed doctors, there was also the risk of negative impacts on the clinics that depended on the functioning of the hospital. The predominance of just one health insurance provider in the town would make competition between clinics non-existent. The hospitals

30 A TCD (*Termo de Compromisso de Desempenho*) is a Term of Commitment signed by the applicants and CADE in order to guarantee a certain conduct by the companies, insuring that market competition conditions are not transformed after the act of concentration.

(both controlled by the same health insurance company) would refer patients to accredited clinics only, 'closing the market' to the others. Furthermore, in his view, the unemployment of doctors was more serious than for other staff (cleaners, technicians...). A specialized professional like a doctor would be unable to find work elsewhere in the town. The Reporting Commissioner became convinced, through his personal experience, that the promised economic efficiencies would not compensate for the monopoly in Pequi. For this reason he preferred to vote for the rejection of the acquisition, deciding to keep at least one competitive 'rival' in the market instead of permitting the formation of a monopoly of medical-hospital services.

Concluding Remarks

To recover the knowledge which comes from perceiving structural relationships between events, we might have to seek the counterpart of our systematizing endeavours in people's artefacts and performances, in the images they strive to convey, and thereby in how they present the effects of social action to themselves. (Strathern 1990:28)

This article has sought to show the ways in which employees of Brazil's antitrust agency make use of lived experiences (their own, or experiences known to them) in order to understand economic relations in given markets and the effects that acts of concentration can have on these relations. Each of the examples given illustrates knowledge practices that constitute merely one moment in the process of analysing an antitrust case. The variables influencing the analysis and judgment are practically infinite and it would be impracticable to enumerate them all or even classify the most significant according to their importance in the final decision. The described moments – which constitute what we can call para-ethnographic knowledge practices, following Holmes and Marcus (2005) – may vary in terms of their degree of influence on the decision-making process. What seems to be more important, from the point of view of economic anthropology, is not the pervasive influence these practices may have on the decisions and judgments, or even the fact of their being used instead of formal analytic procedures, but, rather, the way in which these lived experiences become tools in antitrust analysis for interpreting how market competition operates.

In a recent ethnography of the Japanese financial market, Hirokazu Miyazaki (2013) explains how the concept of arbitrage and its principle of eliminating differences was used by traders as a general interpretive mechanism. As an exchange strategy, arbitrage involved the buying and selling of shares with the expectation that the market would change in the near future, allowing the trader to obtain profits from the alteration in asset prices. According to Miyazaki, traders did not apply this principle to their work alone, as a method of profit making, but extended it to their personal dreams, their future business plans and their analyses of the Japanese economy. The ethnographer writes: 'In these extensions of arbitrage as an interpretive device, Sekai [bank] traders alternately became both subjects and objects of arbitrage' (Miyazaki, 2013:33).

In a different, albeit comparable environment, the para-ethnographic practices of antitrust policy, which construct associations that give meaning to the case under investigation, show how market competition is both an object to be managed and, simultaneously, part of the life of the agency's employees. These employees may be consumers, residents at specific locations or simply people who are familiar with the markets in question, being subjects who have experienced market relations similar or identical to those that the agency is required to interpret³¹. Regulators try to deal with external, imponderable market realities by putting themselves, whenever possible, in the position of decision-making market participants (consumers, CEO's, shopkeepers...). These lateral knowledge practices place the employees in the position of active subjects of the markets, experiencing the inner workings of such markets,³² in a manner which is similar to the activity of the ethnographer who puts him or herself in the place of the objects studied in order to objectify his or her relations with them (Bourdieu, 2003).

31 Not all markets are capable of being easily understood through personal experience so, in many cases, this form of knowledge is not relied upon. Markets such as 'laminated steel', 'piloting' or 'fertilizers', for instance, generally do not fall within the scope of the life experience of professionals such as economists and lawyers.

32 The employee's previous professional experience or interest generates a social distribution of expertise in relation to markets within the antitrust agency. Many of the agency's advisors or analysts end up becoming specialists in a given sector. It is common to hear, for example, that some advisor has more background knowledge of a particular market or sector (due to professional, life experience or even personal interest), which results in him being called upon to give his opinion about cases falling within his field of knowledge. Companies can also be known para-ethnographically, since their practices may be part of the experiences of several antitrust employees. Discussions of brands, products and services are common, along with how they are marketed and produced, or how certain companies work and what past history and reputation they have.

The question then arises, how can the dimension of lived experience and, sometimes, highly individual experience, contribute to the study of market performances, which has been developed in the anthropological and sociological literature on markets (Callon, 2007; MacKenzie, 2009)? How does subjectivizing practices help us to understand better the market constructions, which are part of antitrust analytical work? The anthropological literature on markets has focused attentively on the socio-physical construction of markets, the role of economic knowledge and the material conditions needed for the construction of economic arrangements and devices, defining markets as *socio-technical assemblages* (Callon and Muniesa, 2005; Callon, Millo and Muniesa, 2007; Çaliskan and Callon, 2010). Markets are understood in these studies as associations between material and discursive, human and non-human elements. If these marketization studies can be defined as ‘the entirety of efforts aimed at describing, analysing and making intelligible the shape, constitution and dynamics of a market socio-technical arrangement’ (Çaliskan and Callon, 2010:3), lived experiences might appear to be merely an additional effort in the description of this assemblage, considering that antitrust analytical work is to a very great degree a study of ‘marketization’.

What I suggest, however, is that lived experiences are not simply complementary to technocratic modes of understanding the economy, but are sometimes alternatives that bring to the fore other market attachments that are difficult to grasp through traditional technocratic modes of knowledge. Therefore, as in the case of other market participants studied in the literature (Miyazaki, 2003), antitrust regulators can use para-ethnographic practices not just to enhance or bolster the analysis of competition – an almost surreptitious form of knowing that completes the judgment of a case. If we restrict the study of markets to an ever increasing enumeration of entities that compose, assemble and form them, that is, to ‘market devices’ (Callon, Millo and Muniesa, 2007), we overlook the possible alternatives market regulators and participants use to make sense of economic relations. I argue that, in particular cases, antitrust regulators use lived experiences as an alternative way of understanding markets and do so to such an extent that the traditional forms and techniques of analysis become merely legal requirements which they use pragmatically, as a way of convincing their peers, companies and interested parties of the soundness of the conclusions arrived at. By doing this, they in fact bring to the fore a new market that can only be grasped *as experience*.

Various forms of interpretive practices in market exchange have been the object of reflection in the literature of economic sociology and anthropology, particularly in the social studies of finance (Zaloom, 2003; Preda, 2007). However, the practices described in these studies mostly feature as a residue of the technical analysis with which market participants engage. Additionally, these related experiences do not extend much beyond the organizations and professional trajectories which are closely tied in to the quotidian work of traders. However, studies involving market regulators and other market builders not considered central to market exchange have demonstrated that market expertise, in the sense of a technical esoteric form of knowledge, is not the only relevant point of interest (Riles, 2010; 2011; Holmes, 2014). Experiences, intuitions, anecdotes or the capacity to 'objectivate the subject of objectivation' (Bourdieu, 2003)³³ are as important, and sometimes even more important, as an interpretive tool for understanding and intervening in markets. These embodied knowledge practices (Elyachar, 2010) enact markets as 'spaces of sensibilities'.

Concerning the world of experts on the economy, Holmes and Marcus (2005:248) affirm that their object of study 'is not the interior lives of experts as an elite as such, but rather to understand their frame, which we assimilate by collaboration and complicity, for a project of tracking the global' (to envisage the economy as a whole), where the ethnographer must be 'engaged with its dynamics from their orienting point of view.' This paper's focus on lateral knowledge practices has precisely the same aim of reconstructing this global, intuitive, native vision of the economy, required for understanding the effects, or perhaps even affects, of market concentrations. My objective is to show that the study of antitrust and other economic policies can benefit from making use of this perspective, which sees regulation 'as a kind of ethnographic account of the past with an eye toward the future' (Maurer, 2012:313).

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33 Pierre Bourdieu's explanation of his approach to reflexivity can be used as a native description of an antitrust regulator's own practices: to consider 'the effects of knowledge of my objectivizing posture, that is, the transformation undergone by the experience of the social world (...) when one ceases to 'live' it simply and instead takes it as object' (Bourdieu, 2003:289).

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Negotiating debts and gifts

Financialization policies and the economic experiences of low-income social groups in Brazil

Lúcia Müller

Abstract

Over the last decade, the supply of credit and other financial services reached various sectors of the Brazilian population that had previously been marginal to these markets. Through a study of how members of these segments experience so-called ‘financial inclusion,’ it becomes evident that while it implies submission to rules, procedures and calculations determined by market-based rationales and moralities, the use of these financial resources and tools does not lead to the prevalence of these principles in the economic experience of their users. In everyday life, these principles are combined with and even subordinated to others (gifts, selflessness) in situations of confrontation and negotiation that involve individuals, groups, networks (family, neighbourhood groups, cohabitation) as well as the state and the financial institutions themselves.

Keywords: Economic Anthropology; Financial Inclusion Policies; Working Class Monetary Practices; Credit and Consumption.

Resumo

Ao longo da última década, a oferta de crédito e de outros serviços financeiros atingiu diversos segmentos da população brasileira que até então estavam à margem desses mercados. O estudo sobre como integrantes de segmentos de baixa renda vivenciam a chamada “inclusão financeira” evidencia o fato de que, embora implique submissão a regras, procedimentos e cálculos fundamentados em racionalidades e moralidades de caráter mercantil, o uso dos recursos e instrumentos financeiros não determina a predominância desses princípios na vida econômica de seus usuários. No cotidiano, esses princípios são combinados e mesmo subordinados a outros (dom, desinteresse) a partir de situações de confrontação e negociação das quais participam

indivíduos, grupos, redes (família, vizinhança, grupos de convivência) e as próprias instituições financeiras.

Palavras-chave: Antropologia Econômica; Políticas de Inclusão Financeira; Práticas Monetárias Populares; Crédito e Consumo.

Negotiating debts and gifts

Financialization policies and the economic experiences of low-income social groups in Brazil¹

Lúcia Müller

Introduction

The theme of this article is a striking phenomenon in recent Brazilian history: the process of incorporating low-income sectors of the population into the financial services market.

Following currency stabilization in the mid-1990s, the Brazilian government began to implement income distribution programs and, from 2002 onwards, introduced a series of measures to stimulate consumption through increased access to credit. It also encouraged the agents of the National Financial System to offer products and services to low-income segments of the population² and promoted the creation of mechanisms aimed towards the “popularization of the capital market” (Jardim 2009).

It is not my intention here to assess the success or effectiveness of these policies, but merely to recognize the fundamental role played by the Brazilian state in the process of what has been called ‘social inclusion via the market,’ and its participation in the development of a financial environment that, at its outset, included high rates of economic growth, an increase in formal work, a growth in overall wages, an increase in consumption and, more recently, a concern with the slowing pace of economic growth, the increase in inflation rates and increases in debts and loan defaults among the population.

The fact is that over a very short period Brazilian society was flooded by financial mechanisms and instruments that just a few years previously had been used by a small portion of the population only. For this to happen, new

1 An initial version of this text was presented at the *Colloque International Nouvelles perspectives en ethnographie économique: modalités de l'échange et du calcul économique*, at the Museu Nacional, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, 2011.

2 In pursuing these actions the Brazilian government based itself on the methodological framework disseminated by the World Bank, which asserts that a population's degree of ‘financial inclusion’ is an important indicator of social inclusion (Sen 2000, Kumar 2004). These lines of government action were set out in the 2004-2007 Multiannual Plan and confirmed in the 2010 Banco Central do Brasil Planning Report (BCB, 2010)

kinds of services were created specifically for the social sectors outside the financial market, especially low-income groups (Banco Central do Brasil, 2011). These new services include: the offer of bank services in regions that lack branches through the implantation of service points or local equivalents that accept payments and allow the withdrawal of small sums; the creation of simplified bank accounts offering basic tax-free financial services, as well as providing debit and credit cards and easy access to loans, as well as the implementation of a national micro-credit policy focused in the generating work, jobs and income (Miguel 2012).

Moreover the banking system became the main channel of access to retirement funds, pensions and social benefits, as well as the minimum income policies paid by the State. The guarantee of a secure and permanent source of income via salaries, pensions or benefits in turn allowed access to diverse forms of credit, including so-called salary loans (*empréstimos consignados*), which charge lower rates since payment is assured by direct debit from the income source of the creditor – whether private forms or the State (Candido 2007).

On the other hand, the policies for increasing vacancies in the public universities and providing study grants for private university places (PROUNI) enabled low-income students to make use of banking services (university accounts) exempt from interest or with low rates, and the access to pre-approved loans without the requirement to demonstrate an income compatible with the value of the loans (Teixeira 2011). Possessing a bank account with pre-approved financing or a credit card cleared the way, in turn, for a considerable portion of the population to obtain approval of a reasonably high credit limit, allowing them to make purchases or withdraw cash in the main stores across the country's towns and cities.³

Consequently so-called 'financial inclusion' has led to significant portions of the population that until very recently had been outside the system incorporating new practices and forms of knowledge and introducing new rationalities into their everyday experiences. The financial institutions themselves have been obliged to establish new channels and forms of communication catering for this public – an effort made visibly evident, for

³ This is what appears repeatedly in the accounts of the informants from my research and confirmed in an interview with a credit analyst from a large multinational clothing retail store who works in various Brazilian cities. According to her, credit card holders and university students receive credit approved automatically in these commercial establishments without needing to provide proof of income.

example, in the presence of banks inside university institutions, the use of advertising specifically targeted at this market sector and the campaigns for opening new accounts conducted by directly approaching young people in academic spaces or on the public access routes to colleges and universities (campus entrances, bus stops and so on). This shift can also be observed in the increased use of television advertising by banks, financial institutions and credit card operators on TV programs intended for a popular audience, and also in the fact that the financial institutions have turned to forms of publicity and customer relations traditionally used by popular commerce, such as the direct offer of loans in city high streets through hawking and the distribution of leaflets by agents recruited from the low-income social sectors themselves (Müller 2012).

In this work I look to explore how members of low-income social groups experience 'financial inclusion' by attempting to perceive what is involved when these individuals come face-to-face with the opportunities, rules, limits and penalties imposed on them by financial institutions, looking to identify what types of resources are mobilized when individuals find themselves in extreme situations and what principles inform the negotiations for overcoming these problems.

In this endeavour I turn for inspiration to authors whose studies demonstrate first of all that popular groups have a highly complex economic life filled with financial practices (Villarreal 2004, Avanza et al. 2006, Weber 2002, 2009, Figueiro 2010, Lazarus 2010, Perrin-Herendia 2011, Wilkis 2012 and 2013, Bazán and Saraví 2012, Fontaine 2008). Working with different historical and social real-world contexts, these researchers show how we need to take into account the social and cultural diversity of the populations involved in financial practices in order to comprehend their configurations, meanings and effects.

Focusing on the concrete experiences of Brazilians who have experienced the recent process of incorporation into the consumer and financial services markets also led me to consider wider issues fundamental to conceiving economic phenomena as social phenomena. These include the relation between practices based on a market logic and those practices based on a gift logic, a relation which, in the view of the authors of classic studies in the area (Mauss 2004, Polanyi 1980), as well as the conceptions shared by experts who design economic and social policies, tends to be considered exclusively in terms

of an opposition, such that the presence or predominance of one of them eliminates or corrupts the other. Adopting a different approach, authors like Fontaine (2008) and Zelizer (2008, 2009, 2010) have shown that, when they coexist, the different principles that shape market relations (self-interest, freedom, competition) and those based on the gift (gratuity, commitment, reciprocity) do not necessarily lead to the corruption of market relations or the moral degradation and destruction of social relations. On the contrary, market relations presume the existence of social relations, at the same time as they constitute new social relations of diverse kinds.

Another author whose ideas inform the present text is Peebles (2010). He argues that it is impossible to separate the terms of the equation 'credit-debt' or associate either of them with particular presuppositions, effects and moral evaluations determined a priori since they acquire varying meanings and effects in different social and historical circumstances. Furthermore the effects of credit and debt relations cannot be considered merely in material terms, but have to be conceived principally in terms of their capacity to configure social relations. By relating past, present and future, they configure patterns of regulating time, constitute social spaces (spheres, circuits, sectors, networks and exchange patterns) and define borders and identities between people and objects (regimes of ownership) and between individuals and social groups (kinship relations, the constitution of the nation state).

These ideas form the background to the analysis undertaken here.

Lives in movement

I approach our topic by exploring the trajectory of two women who can be seen to belong to the social sectors experiencing the contemporary process of inclusion in Brazil's consumer market and financial system. Both are workers with few qualifications (a domestic worker and a service provider in the beauty sector) who live in outlying districts of the city of Porto Alegre, the capital of Rio Grande do Sul state, situated in the far south of Brazil. Their trajectories were reconstructed through a series of interviews that began in December 2008 and continued throughout 2009.⁴

4 The data analysed here result from the project "Me dá um dinheiro aí? crédito e inclusão financeira sob a ótica de grupos populares," a research project funded by CNPq and that included the participation of the undergraduate researchers Décio Soares Vicente (CNPq) and Eleonora França Teixeira (FAPERGS).

Examining these trajectories we can glimpse elements that define the conditioning factors and spaces of autonomy governing their decisions and practices, and, especially, the set of values through which these practices are experienced and explained.

Lia

Lia is 32 years old. She has been employed as a domestic worker since the age of eleven. She began working two years after her arrival in the state capital with her mother and two older sisters. Her mother had come from the interior in search of work to support her family after her husband to live with another woman. Opportunities were scarce because she was illiterate. In Porto Alegre, though, Lia's mother managed to get a job in a restaurant and put her daughter to work in upper middle class family homes as companions or helpers. The girls spent the week in their employers' homes, went to the public school closest to these residences and returned to the mother's home at weekends. Their salaries were paid directly to her.

Sometime later Lia's mother began to live with a builder with whom she had three more children (two daughters and one son). She never formally married this man because in 1994 she started to receive a pension following the death of her first husband whom she had never divorced (the pension is split with her former husband's second wife).

Having always worked as a housemaid (either full-time or as a contract worker) Lia became pregnant at seventeen. She built a house to live with her boyfriend in the yard of her mother's house, which is located in a recently occupied region in the city's north zone, with easy access to the centre of Porto Alegre. Soon after the couple separated because, Lia said, the young man, the same age as her, did not provide for their child and a real *mulherengo* (womanizer).

Since then Lia has continued to live in the same place. For around four years now she has been in a relationship with a new partner. At first her boyfriend wanted Lia to go to live with him in a rented home located in the 'neighbourhood,' but "it was not *vila*, or dirt"⁵ like the place where Lia lived.

5 In the region where the research was conducted, the term *vila* is commonly used as a synonym for *favela*. In Lia's discourse, the absence of paved roads is presented as an important criterion in differentiating between *vila* and *bairro* (district neighbourhood).

But she declined. Since at this time her mother wanted to move to a nearby town because of a new job, Lia ended up receiving help from her partner to her mother's house and the right to use the plot (she still pays instalments to a resident cooperative that administrates the urbanization of the district). Soon after Lia invited one of her sisters, recently separated ("He was all bad, really horrible. And he went to prison!"), with her two small children to live in the other house located on her land.

Some years later Lia became pregnant again and had a baby girl. Her partner and the father of her younger daughter has another three children from an earlier marriage, all of them already teenagers. He gets on very well with Lia's older son, who also calls him father. The boy is a practicing Evangelical, "but not fanatic," Lia stresses. He works for a transport company and, following a promotion that obliged him to work in another town during the week, persuaded Lia to move with him. Despite her initial enthusiasm with the prospect of having a good house to live in, the chance of getting a job at a factory and a good school for her children and herself (Lia plans to finish her secondary-level education as soon as possible), she did not sell her home in Porto Alegre. She went with her partner, but left the furnished house and virtually all her possessions in the care of her sister. She wanted to have the guarantee that she could return, if she so wanted, and to have somehow to stay when she came to Porto Alegre, which she intended to do frequently.

Lia claims that, if she wished, her partner would pay all the household expenses. But she says that she prefers to split the costs because he also has to cover the expenses of his other children (as well as paying child support, he buys clothes and pays for some of the courses that they take). Lia continues to pay the instalments on the land and buys clothes for herself and her child. Her partner pays the family's *rancho*⁶ and they "sit down to talk" about the electricity and water bills and their daughter's expenses.

For a while the father of her oldest child paid her alimony. This only happened, though, because Lia had taken legal action. And when the former partner stopped paying the alimony, she ceased to demand it ("so not to bother myself," she explains). Since this time, Lia inherited a bank account that, unknown to her, continued to charge account maintenance costs, even though

6 The term *rancho* refers to the purchase of food and other produce needed to provide for a family for a certain period of time (a week or month).

there were no new deposits. When she discovered the fact, there were already high charges in arrears. “It seems it even ended up in the SPC [Credit Protection Service]. I became scared because of the SPC. I’m really frightened of the SPC!”

After paying the overdue charges, Lia had no wish to remain a client of the bank in question, despite the offer of a new account, this time without maintenance charges. Currently she has an account at the Caixa Econômica Federal, a state bank through which she receives Family Allowance (*Bolsa Família*), a government minimum income program analysed in the text by Eger and Damo, published in the present dossier.

The Family Allowance Program is a direct income transfer program that benefits families living in poverty and extreme poverty throughout the country. [...] Every month the federal government deposits a sum for families signed up to the program. The money is withdrawn with a magnetic card issued where possible in the woman’s name. The amount transferred depends on the size of the family, the age of its members and their income. Specific benefits exist for families with children and teenagers aged up to 17, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers. (Site of the Ministry of Social Development. Federal Government. See: <http://www.mds.gov.br/bolsafamilia>).

Receiving the equivalent of a minimum wage, which in January 2009 amounted to 465 reais (roughly US\$ 200), and dividing the household costs with her partner, Lia does not explain how she managed to qualify as a beneficiary for the Family Allowance program, which was conditional on a maximum family income of 120 reais per capita (roughly US\$ 52). The allowance adds 76 reais (US\$ 33) to the family revenue but since it is directed towards her school age child, Lia says that she has opened a savings account for him where she deposits 50 reais (US\$ 21) each month. With the remainder of the allowance, she gives her son a monthly allowance of 10 reais (US\$ 4.30) and buys what he needs for school (school material and uniform). Lia also opened a savings account for herself at the same bank in which she deposits 50 reais each month, or more whenever possible, such as when she receives a Christmas bonus, known in Brazil as the ‘thirteenth [monthly] wage.’

Lia does not use cheques,⁸ only bank cards. She has one credit card,

7 SPC (*Serviço de Proteção ao Crédito*): A record system maintained by a private institution that provides associated traders with data on consumer behaviour in relation to purchases, cheque use, defaults on payments, etc.

8 Until very recently the use of bank cheques was very widespread in Brazil, which changed with the currency

which received from the building supply store where she bought what she needed for the building work on her house.

As I always paid on time, and as I was a special customer, I received their MasterCard. I didn't pay anything, just the annual fee, which is eight reais. [...] The entire year I pay nothing, at the end of the year I pay the six months, and it's sorted.

Lia is frequently besieged by operators from other credit card companies (who call her mobile or work phone) and by financial institutions offering credit and loans. But she refuses all their offers and explains that she is concerned that the same thing will happen to her that happened to her mother: she will accumulate debts from loans obtained from financial institutions and her children will have to help her pay the debts off.

Lia has cards from various stores (Renner, C&A, Marisa, Gaston). With them she can obtain discounts on cash purchases, postpone payment or split the purchase over several monthly payments and can obtain cash on credit, to be repaid with interest. Lia says that she only buys shoes in Renner and C&A because they are good quality. Not clothes because she finds them very expensive. However over the course of the same conversation Lia recounted a recent purchase at C&A of two umbrellas, one for herself and the other for her son. Each cost R\$ 39.90 and she chose to fund the purchase in four monthly payments of R\$ 20.00, since if she had paid in eight instalments as the seller had suggested, the interest would have been very high.

I have a limit. At Renner its 380 reais for purchases, and 300 reais for cash withdrawals. [At C&A] the limit for me to withdraw money is 890 reais. And I can spend 2,000 reais on clothes, but how would I pay later? The maximum I spend is 50 or 70 reais.

Lia also uses a card accepted in supermarkets. This card is regularly shared with her siblings.

Everyone works and everyone needs money. When things get tight, I have the Hipercard. Only I have it. I do a big shop [*ranch*o] for my brother and sister. [...]

stabilization and also the popularization of bank cards. By avoiding the need for advance withdrawal of money from bank accounts, the use of cheques reduced the risk of theft and prevented devaluation of the money since, generally speaking, banks corrected the value of deposits in accordance with inflationary losses through *monetary correction* (on the inflationary process, see Neiburg 2007).

Their shopping comes to 250 reais. They don't pay in instalments. They buy in one flat payment and pay me. [...] The card is due on the tenth of each month and they give me the money to pay on the eighth.

The members of Lia's family share the problems and also help each other when dealing with complex questions, such as the problem that surfaced last Christmas. Lia's mother, siblings and siblings-in-law decided to get together during the New Year's Eve celebrations to plan a joint action: persuade the husband of one of the sisters to admit himself into a detoxification clinic and raise the money required to cover the cost of treatment. According to Lia, during the week her brother-in-law is a hard worker, "a marvellous father and husband." But on Fridays he typically dines with the children and then vanishes, returning home only on Sundays at night. He even calls his wife with news. The problem, Lia says, is that he refuses to admit that he is addicted to cocaine, though he returns home with his nose bleeding and spends, alone, almost half his salary, leaving his wife (who is a cleaner) and his six smaller children facing hardships (two older children are already married and independent).

When she needs money urgently, Lia turns to her mother who, with the support of her current partner, uses her widow's pension to help her children and grandchildren (she also has an unmarried daughter and a grandson who live in her home and depend entirely on her). Moreover since she does not know how to read, she does not have a bank account and keeps her money at home, which makes things much easier. Lia also asks for help from her sister and neighbour, who herself asks Lia for help when necessary. The credit offered by cards forms part of this circuit of exchanges. "I take out cash for my sister, brother... and my mother when she needs something because she doesn't have any card, so I take out cash for her."

Lia controls the expenditure and debts, including on the cards, noting everything on a sheet of paper stuck on the fridge door.

I do as follows: at C&A, I owe four times 45 reais, let's say. From that I cross out that I've paid three times. When I see that it's very messy... that only I understand it, then I start afresh. Once a month, always at the end of the month, I start afresh.

The notes on the credits and debts relating to the other family members also end up 'on the fridge,' accompanied by the respective dates for

payment. If there is any money left after paying her own bills, Lia buys ‘an Avon’ for herself.

But things do not always run so smoothly. When she decided to move to another city with her husband, Lia resigned from her job. She was left without a salary and ‘slipped up’: she made purchases that exceeded the limit of 900 reais offered by MasterCard.

To obtain enough money to cover what remained to pay on the invoice, she used her card to ‘take out’ 400 reais at C&A, to be paid in five monthly instalments of 100 reais. “They charged a lot of interest. I was frightened. But, as I needed it, I took the money. But, thank God, I’ve already paid it off” [the MasterCard debt].

In this case, Lia did not turn to help from her family and, although she had money in her savings account to cover the debt, she preferred to pay the interest on a second loan.

I took a loan out at C&A so I would not have to touch [the savings]. [That money] I don’t have and it’s there for when I get older and need it. I’m not going to work after the age of 60. I have a little, I took out the loan because if I use the saving I won’t replace it.

Elvira

Elvira is 34. She is single and has been working for six years in a beauty saloon located in the central region of the city of Porto Alegre. She is the eighth of nine children (six girls and three boys). Her father was a technician for a state company but lost his job when Elvira was nine years old. Afterwards he was never able to hold down another job for any length of time. He began to do odd-jobs and ended up having to sell the house where the family lived. Despite the difficulties, Elvira’s parents tried hard to stay in a ‘slightly better’ district (one traditionally occupied by lower middle class families) so that the children “would not become contaminated by bad neighbours, drugs, this and that.” But with the loss of the house, the family moved to a *vila*, a dangerous place, according to Elvira. In addition, her father lost the money from the sale of the house, which “ended up being taken by a power of attorney.”

This was an important process because I was entering adolescence when I realized that we no longer lived in such a ‘nice’ district. We went through difficult

times unable to go to school, without food for two or three days, I had to retake physical education because I had no clothing or trainers to take part in the course activities and the circle of parents and masters were oblivious to the fact. This happens a lot at public schools, I passed all the courses and had to retake physical education.

After finishing secondary education, Elvira took the entrance exam for the Pedagogy course at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, but recounts that her name was only included in the second round. As she had no access to newspapers, she did not hear about this second list before the deadline for matriculation expired and she lost the opportunity. After this Elvira continued studying and ‘brazenly’ took the entrance exam for the Law course at a private university located in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre. Elvira passed the exam, matriculated on the course and, to pay the monthly fee for the two courses she was taking each semester, got a job as a till worker at a McDonald’s store (earning a minimum wage for four hours work per day).

At this time, Elvira was still living with her parents and another four siblings. After a year taking courses at the faculty, the family’s needs meant that “from time to time” she would stop paying the monthly fees in order to pay for gas and help with other expenses. “I always lived with my sisters, before adolescence, [them] becoming pregnant... This isn’t what I want for my life anymore,” Elvira recalls. But on this occasion she ended up abandoning the course.

Over this time, her younger sister also “got married, got separated, got pregnant, ended up a little lost.” To “give her a boost,” Elvira decided to live with her ‘little sister’ and her four small nephews and nieces (11, 10, 9 and 4 years old) in a low-income condominium located in the Porto Alegre suburbs, far from the city centre.

Elvira’s decision to move was also influenced by the feeling that, if she stayed in her parents’ home, she would not receive the support she needed to continue her studies. Elvira thought that her father failed to support his children due to his own frustration.

He was Evangelical. As a person he was a bit lost. He had a lot of difficulty accepting himself, accepting the children, seeing his children studying and growing. He was a very intelligent and well-educated person. He was raised without a mother and so on. He was self-made. He is one of those people who

understand many things and many subjects, but lacks a university education, he has nothing. He was always like that. In this regard he inspired me a lot. I'm very much like him. Wherever he is and whatever his surroundings, he always looked to absorb the best [only] he didn't know what to do with it, and I do know what to do. I think he didn't think he was capable, "this isn't for me," and it has a lot to do with the history of racism among their generation. They think that, because they're black, they'll never be more than a worker/employer. My generation is different and my thinking is different.

Elvira began to help her sister look after her children and, so as to be able to help with the household expenses, went to work in a beauty saloon that accepted people without qualifications, since it taught them the trade (depilation). Elvira has been in the same job ever since.

Two years ago Elvira 'discovered' PROUNI (University for Everyone Program) which is run by the federal government and offers grants for studying in private higher education institutions. The first year that she took the ENEM (National Secondary Education Exam), which provides access to PROUNI, Elvira failed to get the grade required to obtain a place.⁹ The second year she retook the exam and obtained a 'reasonable' grade, which allowed her to enter a not particularly prestigious private university whose campus is located in a municipality close to Porto Alegre., A professor from the institution concerned, one of her clients, told her that competition was less intense at this university. Elvira resumed her law studies.

For a long time I looked after her children [her sister's] when she was unemployed. She told me that I should resume my studies. We would find a way. The best way that we found was PROUNI, which is a real boon, it means we reach the end of the month tranquil without having to worry about the monthly fee. Sometimes I even get scared when I go to matriculate. I'm worried that something will go wrong.

At home, Elvira sees herself as a role model for her nephews and nieces. When she gets a good result in an exam at college, she sticks it 'on the fridge' so they can see it and feel motivated. "Suddenly there are a load of little tests from the third, fourth and fifth grades alongside mine," she recounts.

⁹ ENEM (*National Secondary Education Exam*). Performance in this exam is one of the criteria for access to some public universities and also for entering private universities through the PROUNI grants.

As the widow of a military police officer, Elvira's sister receives a pension of about a thousand reais per month (US\$ 435). From her job, Elvira receives a fixed amount (equivalent to the minimum wage) and a commission that varies in value according to the number of clients she has. In a very busy month she may make 800 or even a 1000 reais. To boost her 'productivity bonus' Elvira tries to attend a lot of clients. She also works as a cleaner at weekends and sometime sells some craft objects that she herself makes (tablecloths, little woven mats). Another form of making the most of her money is to save on transport. As she lives some distance from work, her employer gives her the equivalent of four bus fares, but she takes just two buses a day and walks one of the sections of her journey. With these extras, Elvira manages to pay for the transport to the university, which is very expensive.

In theory the household bills are paid as follows: the two sisters split the rent and the water and electricity bills. Her sister pays for the big shop (*rancha*) and Elvira pays the internet bill ("which is nothing spectacular"). In practice whoever has money to hand pays the bill that is due and afterwards they settle the difference with other bills to be paid over the course of the month.

Elvira has no bank cards: she uses those of her sister, who has a debit card and a credit card linked to the bank account where she receives her late husband's pension. She also has a card from the Marisa store where the two sisters buy clothes.

Elvira has no free time to visit the university library and, she says, even if she had it would be pointless as there are not enough books for all the students. So, as far as possible, she buys the books she needs to study (sticking mostly to the 'classics') and uses the 'little account' (credit) that her sister has at a bookstore close to the clothing store where she works as a vendor. As she also likes literature, Elvira read and re-reads books that were given to her father, borrows books from friends and acquaintances and sometimes buys books 'from Avon.'

Whenever necessary, Elvira and other family members turn to her sister who, due to her regular widow's pension, has a bank credit limit higher than the others, as well as access to credit with lower interest rates through the payroll loan system. Elvira, for example, had a computer given to her as a present by her boyfriend's mother. When their relationship ended, though, her former boyfriend demand that she returned the computer. Elvira therefore

decided to buy a laptop and paid the instalments using her sister's credit.

To control her expenses, Elvira employs a system:

I don't use a spreadsheet. I've jotted down everything on bits of paper my whole life. I do as follows [while she talks, Elvira opens her purse and removes little pieces of paper]: Marisa, what I was going to pay and haven't paid. This is the place where I buy clothes on my sister's card. She has one card and had another issued for me as a dependent. NET,¹⁰ which I've just paid, and Serdil, who I was going to pay today, my dentist. [But] as the gas ran out at home, I couldn't. And this is the money from the PIS¹¹ [the second instalment which she had just received]. And Casas Bahia, for a blessed printer that I bought, 46 reais for each instalment. The school transport that I pay, which amounts to 57 reais. My commission, where I calculate how much I'm due to receive at the end of the month, about 150 reais. I do this each week. I've got everything noted. Hair is a real grief. I have to buy relaxer, dye, and buy clothes. You have to look presentable at least. I end up with various bits of paper stored in my purse. It's a way of keeping everything under control. So I open my purse and look at them every day.

Elvira had a student bank account through which she had access to credit with what she considered a 'reasonable' limit. Currently the account is frozen because her 'name is blemished.' A year ago her sister took out a bank loan for 1,500 reais so that Elvira could pay off various bills that were overdue. To pay back her sister, Elvira agreed to pay the private transport that her nephews and nieces use to go to school, something considered necessary because of the distance and the fact that the route would be very dangerous for unaccompanied children.

The payment to the transport service provider was made with ten 'pre-dated cheques'¹² of 150 reais. The problem was that six of these cheques were

10 NET: The cable company providing internet, telephone and TV services.

11 PIS: Here Elvira is referring to her receipt of a wage allowance, equivalent to one minimum wage, paid annually to all workers employed in public or private companies who receive up to two minimum wages. This allowance comes from a fund run by the State and formed by contributions from private companies through the Social Integration Program (*Programa de Integração Social*: PIS) and from federal, state and municipal governments through the Public Employee Investment Program (*Programa de Formação do Patrimônio do Servidor Público*: PASEP).

12 Although legally cheques are considered cash payment orders, in Brazil they are very often used as an informal mechanism for paying in instalments, including a secondary market of pre-dated cheques. To finance their debt, the debtor splits the total value between a series of cheques whose dates are distributed over a period previously agreed with the creditor, who promises to present the cheques at the bank only on the set dates. This practice is widely accepted and legitimized by the justice system, which considers a trader's failure to comply with the agreement a "personal injury." Over recent years the use of 'pre-dated' cheques has declined substantially

sent back by the bank due to lack of sufficient funds in Elvira's account. To regularize her situation, as well as pay the amount due to the school transport provider, Elvira needed to pay the bank a charge of 25 reais for each returned cheque in order to lift the block on her account. This is what she plans to do every month, but she "never has enough."

Without going into details, Elvira explains that the situation began three years ago and hints that the problem stemmed from the help she had given to her family members.

I had a student account at Banrisul with a very reasonable limit, not a fortune but enough to get by. Only it was the usual thing, you help one person and help the other, but people who don't honour their commitments are going to honour other people's? It was a mistake. But they needed help, so was I going to refuse? No. That's the way I am. Saying no to family is complicated, it's very difficult and I'm unable to refuse. On one hand I think it's good not to have credit because then I can't help. Not that I don't help anyone, it's just that, this way, I don't run the risk of getting myself into that situation. And I'm managing to keep myself going this way.

Comings and goings

Lia and Elvira have in common that they belong to the same generation, were born into large families with many siblings, studied in public schools and grew up in regions of the city in which the boundaries between poverty and marginality are, in their own view, dangerously tenuous. However in the school career, professional life and projects of each of the woman we can identify the impacts of the different paths taken by their families.

Children of a black, illiterate mother, raised without their father present nearby, Lia and her siblings were able to go to school but had to work since an early age. All of them abandoned their studies after finishing primary education. It was only as an adult that Lia went back to college, studying at night in the same school where he son studies in the morning. Her current partner also completed his secondary schooling recently. Lia, her mother and

due to the increased use of credit cards, which allow automatic payment of purchases in various instalments.

her sisters all are employed as domestic workers or cleaners in family homes and companies. Apart from their step-father, who is a builder, the rest of the men from Lia's family (brother, partner and brothers-in-law) are employed by freight transport companies that are concentrated in the region where the family lives, located near to the two main routes out of the city.

Despite the setbacks that meant that towards the end of her childhood Elvira's family lost its lower middle class standing, at least in terms of income level and housing, her parents undoubtedly had some cultural and educational capital. This, combined with the discipline encouraged by Evangelism, enabled their children to go through school life without too much difficulty, other than of a material kind. Except for the youngest child, who recently completed schooling via adult education, all the others finished their secondary education while teenagers without having to work. Some of them were also able to obtain technical qualifications (in electronics) while the oldest daughter even obtained a place at a private university (a degree in tourism) but was forced to abandon the course when her father became unemployed.

Today all Elvira's siblings are employed, performing professional activities such as office assistant, telemarketing operator, vendor and electronics technician. Their parents live with one of the older sisters. Health problems have prevented them from working for some years now. Their father receives a government benefit equivalent to the minimum wage¹³ and the children help them financially.

A year after the first interviews, the trajectories of Lia and Elvira experiences some twists and turns, but remained consistent with the values that guided them.

Lia's move to another city because of her partner's job did not last this entire period. Feeling very isolated, she decided to return to her own home in Porto Alegre permanently. She close to stay close to her family: the sister who lives on the same land; her mother, who at this point had already come back to live in a nearby district; and her other siblings and siblings-in-law who all live in the same region. As far as Lia is concerned, her partner will have to continue to coming back to Porto Alegre at weekends if he wants to stay with her and the children. She intends to return to night college (completing her

13 Continuous Social Welfare Payment (*Benefício de Prestação Continuada da Assistência Social: BPC-LOAS*) is a benefit paid by the Federal Government to people aged over 65 who do not have any other pension and who can prove that their per capita monthly family income is below one quarter of the current minimum wage.

secondary education and taking a technical course) and to work, this time as an attendant at a crèche located close to her home.

Elvira, for her part, left her sister's house and now lives alone in an apartment, in the same region of the city but with better access to the centre where she works. She pays the rent but the contract is not in her name. The place is small and unfurnished. Elvira does not have a TV and says that she does not mind because she has little free time to watch it. What she most missed was the washing machine. Consequently this was the purchase Elvira made immediately after moving, paid in instalments.

Elvira says that she is very happy with her new life. She adores looking after her own things, enjoying the privacy she now has and, above all, the silence that was missing when she lived in her sister's house. Now she is able to concentrate on her studies. Her plans for the future remain the same:

So my next step, which I've already mentioned to my manager in fact, is to abandon my work to do an internship [in the law area], but full-time, since I cannot graduate as a beautician. I'm going to be the first of my family to complete college. This matters to me a lot, it's a dream I've had since childhood, I knew that this would free me from poverty. I always knew.

Living with financialization policies

What we can observe in the trajectories of Lia and Elvira is that the possibilities for incorporating financial instruments into the everyday lives of people from low-income families are closely connected to the growth in the access to rights (retirement pensions, allowances and benefits) and to income distribution policies, programs for encouraging students to remain in schooling (Family Allowance) and also policies in support of higher education (PROUNI).

To ensure the maintenance of policies for granting rights, income distribution and inclusion, the State needs to ascertain the applicability and effectiveness of the same: it aims to do so not only through political arguments but also through studies that measure the economic costs and benefits of implementing these policies, as well as other studies that attempt to evaluate their social impact. Such studies are undertaken by government research centres like IPEA (Applied Economic Research Institute) in relation to the Family Allowance Program:

For the Minister of the Strategic Affairs Office (SAE) and the president of IPEA, Marcelo Neri, one of the program's main attributes is its cost-benefit ratio. Expenditure on the Family Allowance program represents just 0.4% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but each R\$ 1 spent on the program 'generates' R\$ 2.4 in family consumption and adds R\$ 1.78 to GDP. [...]

According to data from IPEA, the Family Allowance reduced extreme poverty by 28% between 2002 and 2012. (Valor Econômico¹⁴)

The Banco Central do Brasil (BCB) also looks to produce and publicize technical evaluation reports on financial inclusion policies:

The publication of this Financial Inclusion Report (RIF) Number 2 is the result of the BCB's efforts to deepen knowledge on the issue, consolidating information on financial inclusion in the country, an essential step towards the development of public policies with this aim. It is necessary to know the reality, create parameters and establish targets, indicators and results that can be compared and evaluated. (Banco Central do Brasil 2011)

The policies designed to promote 'financial inclusion' are implemented through or in partnership with the institutions making up the National Financial System. The banks participating in this policy work in a highly competitive globalized market. And even state institutions or those controlled by the state cannot relinquish the dispute for a decent share of this market. Their work needs to be justified, therefore, in terms of a rationality based on principles from the market world (Boltanski & Thévenot 1991) – that is, through formal accounting that takes into consideration pre-established targets, costs, risks, deadlines and results.

Over the last few years, the risk that the population's level of indebtedness could exceed the limits judged safe by the financial system has been a recurrent theme in the Brazilian press. Despite this fact, public and private financial agents continue to work with the clear aim of incorporating low-income sectors of the population into their clientele, especially by providing credit. Over the same period, the balance sheets of the leading banks operating in Brazil have demonstrated record results in terms of profitability.

The high interest rates charged in Brazil, even when the lines of credit involved are subject to government regulations and controls with social

¹⁴ Accessed at: <http://www.valor.com.br/brasil/3305466/ipea-cada-r-1-gasto-com-bolsa-familia-adiciona-r-178-ao-pib#ixzz2vaVPskpo> - 5/10/2013

objectives (payroll loans, microcredit) are undoubtedly an important ingredient in terms of understanding this process. However all the evidence is that the main factors responsible for particular social sectors becoming a target public for financial institutions are the growth in the income of families located at the base of the social pyramid – the so-called *new C class* (Neri 2008) – and the low-income population's increased access to permanent sources of income, which stems from the expansion of the formal work market, the amplification of income distribution policies and the increase in the access to social welfare benefits (pensions, allowances and aid).

From the viewpoint of the subjects belonging to the sectors being targeted by this double process of incorporation, though, what is at stake are, on one hand, the possibilities for them to become viable candidates for the resources and instruments being offered, and, on the other, the possibilities to acquire the resources and instruments obtained in line with their needs and wishes, which are conditioned by their ties to the family group and to the codes and values that they share.

Unemployment, the abandonment or loss of the father, husband or partner are the reasons why women frequently assume the role of rights holders (for pensions and benefits), as well as being the preferential assignees for the Family Allowance program (Pereira e Ribeiro 2013). However meagre the resources obtained may be they have the effect of increasing the stability and economic autonomy of these women. This does not mean that any absolute change is taking place in people's expectations concerning male roles. On the contrary, as we were able to see in the trajectories of Lia and Elvira, the unemployment of fathers, husbands or partners, or their abandonment of the woman and children, appear as highly significant elements that explain the principal changes occurring in family life. Moreover, when they remain linked in some form to family life, their performance in the role of providers is subject to severe evaluations, which may be positive, including public recognition, comprehension and even help, as in the case of Lia's step-father, partner and brother-in-law, or negative, taking the form of recriminations, demands and legal actions, as in the case of her former partner and some of her former brothers-in-law, as well as Elvira criticisms in relation to her own father's trajectory.

Indeed the rules that organize the operation of the mechanisms of social and financial inclusion do not include the concrete economic life of

the subjects for whom they were designed. In order to be able to use these resources and instruments, as well as learn how to act in compliance with the procedures demanded by the institutions (which demands considerable effort and persistence from them), the subjects concerned also have to learn how to manipulate rules and adapt to them as far as possible.

Through the ethnography undertaken in a low-income district in France, Perrin-Heredia (2010) identified large discrepancies between what she called 'institutional accounting,' proposed by the public policy agents, and 'domestic accounting,' which is experienced by the population. Perrin-Heredia argues that these discrepancies point to different representations of the world involving different concepts of the household unit and time.

The transposition of the questions raised by Perrin-Heredia to my own research universe allows us to perceive that defining with precision the sources and total sum of what public policy planners and implementers call 'family income' – something essential to profiling the recipients of virtually all the policies – is no easy task. This is because family ties are not necessarily formalized nor do they conform to the patterns established in legal terms (marriages, separations, adoptions, the circulation of children). The same applies to labour relations (type of contract, wages, payments for services), housing and the processes of income and property transfer (child support payments, inheritances, property and real estate transmission and ownership, income obtained through rental). All of these factors make compliance with the bureaucratic demands of public agents and their representatives more difficult (such as proof of income, residence, degree of kinship, economic dependency, and so on), at the same time as they allow applicants a more flexible and pragmatic interpretation of the requirements for their inclusion.

This is how we can interpret the fact that Lia's mother agreed to split with another woman the pension due after her husband's death, and also the fact that she never formally married her new partner, which would have led to the loss of this benefit. For Lia's family, this attitude is perfectly justified, since, given that she has her current partner as a provider, Lia's mother can use her widow's pension to meet the needs of her children and grandchildren, who are not embarrassed to turn to her when necessary.

For the formulators of public policies and their financial agents, families are conceived in nuclear terms with well-defined boundaries and a relative

long-term stability with parents and children living in the same dwelling. As we have seen in the cases of Lia and Elvira, and in the anthropological literature on the theme of the family in Brazil (Jardim 1998, Fonseca 2000, Sarti 2003, Duarte & Gomes 2008), family configurations are much more varied and dynamic: they may manifest as a group of diverse branches or generations from the same family living in the same dwelling (the ‘home’) or in various houses built on the same terrain (‘yard’) or scattered across the same neighbourhood (district, community), as shown in the article by Eugênia Motta, also included in this publication. What defines the limits of the family or domestic unit is the fact that these different configurations imply the sharing and circulation of affective, social and material resources.

Another important aspect relating to the different conceptions on which domestic accounting is constructed concerns the fact that, although they are denominated and evaluated in monetary terms, income, expenditure, credit and debt are not seen to be homogenous nor are they counted in a single and all-inclusive block, as proposed in the family budget models distributed by institutions that act as disseminators of so-called ‘financial education.’

The works of Zelizer (1994, 2008, 2009, 2010) demonstrate that in contexts involving close relationships, legitimate forms of using money are defined through negotiations that inform the character of social relations themselves. This helps explain the reason for the complexity that we encounter in the forms of organizing and sharing expenses among the members of Lia and Elvira’s families. In both cases, establishing each person’s share is not done by dividing the sum of the expenses as a whole or the input of money from each person in accordance with their monthly income, but by defining a priori what should be paid by whom (food, electricity, transport, clothing) or by taking as a criterion the immediate availability of money for the payment of something considered urgent or a priority (“whoever has money available pays the electricity bill that’s due today”).

In addition, the economic lives of Lia and Elvira involve both receiving assistance and the obligation to cover the expenses of relatives who do not necessarily live with them or contribute regularly to the household living costs. Moreover these expenses and forms of assistance are not computed among the daily incomings or outgoings of the home, but fitted into different categories depending on the meaning attached to the relationship (assistance, help, support, lending, obligation).

The works of Weber (2002 and 2009), for their part, show that the forms of recording and calculating revenue, expenses, credit and debts say much about the forms of conceiving the relations and practices that involve monetary values and how these relations and values are assessed and hierarchized.

The forms through which the two women described here organize their financial accounts provide us with an insight into how they conceive their relationship to money and time. Thus what Lia notes and sticks to her fridge door are just the expenses to be paid over the course of a set period. As the payments are made, she crosses out the notes and, when no longer able to understand them, 'starts afresh,' that is, she updates the list, which tends to happen monthly. However Lia never calculates her total income and expenditure over the entire month. What she actually records are the items still to be paid (legible) and the outgoings she no longer has to worry about (crossed out). Elvira, for her part, carries around her accounts in her purse, on small bits of paper that she checks every so often to decide which expense will be prioritized and which postponed, depending on what she considers most relevant and the immediate availability of money to make the payment.

These examples show that although they both involve individuals who belong to the formal work market and who are integrated into social systems that function in accordance with a monthly temporal cycles (wages, social benefits, rent, household bills, credit card invoices, and so on), this temporality does not dominate the entire spectrum of their economic lives.

What we see in the analysed trajectories is that money and, today, access to credit are treated as just one more of the elements capable of being incorporated into the system of gifts and counter-gifts through which family members exchange affects, forms of care, favours, services, objects and so on. As we have known since Mauss (1974), though, there is no single or final accounting in this circuit of exchange through which a narrow and global evaluation is made of the equivalence between what was exchanged, precisely because this calculation would put an end to the exchanges. Furthermore, in this circuit of reciprocal commitments that envelops the members of the families under study there is no clear demarcation between the cycles of exchanges. What we encounter instead is an elastic temporality that can traverse various generations.

These elements enable us to comprehend how a family member can become a supplier of funds and credit for the rest, even when they lack an

income compatible with this role, as in the case of Elvira's sister. They also help us understand why, even when indebted, Elvira is obliged to provide loans to relatives. And also how and why she was able to lease an apartment in someone else's name, since she would be unable to provide proof of the income needed to sign the contract.

But insofar as they restrict the plasticity of the equivalences and limit the elasticity of the cycles of reciprocity, the operational logic and rules of the financial institutions constrain the operation of the circuits of family exchange. This is the main reason why so-called financial inclusion can be conceived as a factor stimulating individualizing processes among the social segments that it affects (Duarte & Gomes 2008). This occurs, on one hand, because the named recipient of the rights and income policies is always an individual rather than the family group. This allows us to understand, for example, the Lia's attempt not to mix the money that she receives from the Family Allowance with the family income, even though she is frequently unable to meet all the household expenses. Lia conceives the resource to belong to her son, since its concession is linked to the boy's school attendance. For this reason she insists on explaining that she invests a portion of the money received in an exclusive savings account, and that she only spends the rest of the money to cover his needs, as well as providing him with monthly pocket money.

Furthermore, when the cycle of reciprocal exchanges in which credit was included is not completed in accordance with the moulds and temporality imposed by the institutions responsible for implementing the financial inclusion policies and mechanisms, it is the individual, the assignee, rather than the family network who must formally respond to the summons for any renegotiations, and who is subject to payment demands or penalized with loss of access to credit, and may ultimately be 'banned' from the financial system. This is what happens to those who end up with a 'blemished name,' as happened to Elvira when she had her bank account frozen after issuing various cheques to pay for the school transport of her nephews and nieces without sufficient funds to cover them. The event was included in the Banco Central's record system, which prevents her from using cheques and opening new accounts in other banks for a period of up to five years. This is also what could have happened to Lia when she was threatened with having her name added to the SPC (Credit Protection

Service) records for failing to pay the maintenance charges on a bank account she no longer used. Had she not settled or renegotiated the debt with the bank, Lia would have faced considerable difficulties obtaining credit from any commercial or financial establishment.

When Lia's mother defaulted on her payments, her children helped her pay off the debts. However this type of experience can lead to an individual withdrawing and starting to avoid sharing their capacity to become indebted, as appears to have happened with Elvira, who says that the freezing of her bank account provides her with a good reason to refuse to provide new loans for her relatives, thereby abstaining from taking part in some of the circuits of family exchanges.

Perhaps more important, though, is the fact that by becoming the main means of acquiring goods for the low-income population, the capacity to become indebted has become a very important resource in the performance of some family social roles (father, mother, grandparents). Blocking access to this resource may lead, therefore, to the devalorization or marginalization of these individuals within family circuits. This is what has happened with pensioners and alimony recipients who, while acquiring prestige and power within families on seeing their income rise (pensions and alimonies) and obtaining access to payroll loans,¹⁵ have become more vulnerable to pressures and to the loss of autonomy as they lose access to credit when they default on payments (see Candido 2007 and Müller 2012).

Despite what was said above, generally speaking the economic life of subjects is not finished when they default nor when they are denied credit by financial institutions and commerce. They continue to consume through the use of financial resources and instruments that remain accessible to other family members. This is perceived as a normal and legitimate practice due to the sense of obligation in relation to relatives.

Hence, as we have seen in the cases analysed here, but certainly not only in these cases, even when a project is explicitly directed towards enhancing the autonomy of the immediate nuclear family (Lia on moving city with her partner and children, leaving her mother and siblings in Porto Alegre) or

15 In 53% of households, the contribution of elderly people represents more than half the total household income, a phenomenon that is even more marked in the Northeast (63.5% of households), possibly due too to the alterations in the age limits established by LOAS (*Lei de Assistência Social: Social Welfare Law*), reflecting the importance of the contribution of elderly people in the family budget as a whole (IBGE 2008).

experienced by a single individual (Elvira on leaving her sister and nephews and nieces to live alone), the process is surrounded by many different ambivalences and has fairly precarious and provisional results, since, although the institutional framework of the inclusion policies is ever more sophisticated and comprehensive, for these subjects it remains less risky to cease paying the credit card invoice or have their bank account blocked than be excluded from family networks.

Debts and gifts

In Brazil the actions aimed towards incorporating low-income groups into the financial market comprise a permanent policy implemented by the Banco Central do Brasil with the aim of strengthening the national financial system. These actions are being stimulated by global-level policies, such as the proposals by the World Bank and by various institutions making up the international financial system, and their implementation forms part of government programs committed to an agenda that prioritizes national economic growth, reducing social inequalities and ensuring more democratic access to financial resources. None of this excludes the fact that the actions intended to promote 'financial inclusion' are implemented through banks and other public and private financial institutions whose objectives and goals are clearly defined in commercial terms.

The policy of inclusion implemented by government agents and the market in relation to Brazil's low-income populations is also directly linked to the implementation of wide-ranging rights and public policies, such as ensuring universal access to public welfare programs, minimum income policies, incentives for establishing formal labour relations and increasing the value of the minimum wage, and those policies stimulating a rise in educational levels. All these policy modalities imply to some extent the increased financialization of the economic life of the targeted social groups.

Despite acting as the main agents or intermediaries in the implementation of public policies that take the family group as their reference point, financial institutions presume that the beneficiaries are generic individuals who should manage the resources and any commitments arising from the access to the financial instruments, adhering to the same logic that supposedly informs the operation of the financial institutions themselves (strictly

rational calculations, formal accounting). The observation that, in practice, this is not the dominant model is interpreted by the financial agents as the effect of a cultural incompetence, which must be remedied by applying stricter controls and investing in educational actions that look to disseminate habits based on what are seen as financially sound values (learning how to use family finance management tools, learning how to calculate finances, valorising savings).

As we can perceive, the diversity of objectives means that public policies incorporate the population in fairly unequal form. They privilege social sectors defined by criteria such as economic condition, gender, age group, or the performance of particular social roles, and condition access to benefits on meeting specific requirements (visiting health centres, attending school, and so forth).

The effects of these policies are also diverse. For example the access to monetary resources and financial mechanisms provided by themselves can lead to an increase in autonomy for just some of the members of the family group, something that can be clearly perceived in relation to women receiving retirement pensions, alimonies and the family allowance program. This also happens more generally with elderly people and, to a lesser extent, children, when the latter are seen by members of the family as exclusive or privileged beneficiaries of the income supplement programs. The same also applies to university students when they have access to financial instruments, even when they remain economically dependent.

But even when privileged, the individuals who assume the role of recipients of the benefits provided by these public policies and by their impacts belong to family groups with whom they maintain affective ties and relations of support and dependency. This means that they also have to assume the onus of being linked to these policies in ways that vary in accordance with the social roles performed within the family, the generation to which they belong and in response to the moment of the family life cycle.

The trajectories analysed here show that in their everyday practices the people targeted by financialization policies combine various kinds of conceptions and logics. Resources obtained through credit cards, loans and bank financing are therefore included in circuits of gifts and counter-gifts within which the values and conceptions of time are based on eminently moral codes and obligations, which do not correspond to the temporality

instituted, nor to the criteria through which time is measured and valorised, in the field of finance (interest rate calculations). This is one of the reasons why greater access to instruments that should generate individual security and autonomy leads in many cases to an increased dependency of individuals on the family group, or to a limitation in their capacity to take part in family exchanges, when their capacity to become indebted is reduced or when they are expelled from the financial system (they have a 'dirty name').

Thus understanding what is involved in the everyday experiences of social groups targeted by financialization policies requires us to take into consideration the dimensions of gender and generation, family trajectories, the social roles performed in the family constellation, individual life projects – in sum, dimensions usually seen to be alien to the premises and rules governing the world of finance but that are fundamental to guiding individuals in social space, giving meaning and measure to their temporal experiences and providing parameters for judging and evaluating their debts and gifts.

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Money in the poetic universe of Pernambuco's Zona da Mata region

Simone Silva

Abstract

This article looks to present the various meanings given by people to money in the *cantoria de pé-de-parede*, a meeting organized at home or in a bar by a family head or the owner of the commercial establishment to hear verses improvised by a duo of poet-singers. Through the ethnographic material, the text examines the categories used to designate money and the situations in which these emerge, especially the categories of *trato* (deal) and *contrato* (contract), exploring what these meanings reveal about the world of the *cantoria* (singing) itself, as well as the universe of Pernambuco's Zona da Mata – a traditional sugar production region located between the Borborema plateau and the Atlantic Ocean in the northeast of Brazil. Conceived as a space of sociability for friends, neighbours and family, the *brincadeira* (play, diversion) is described here through the place occupied by money in its realization.

Keywords: *cantoria*, sociabilities, ethnography, money, Pernambuco.

Resumo

Este artigo visa a apresentar os vários sentidos que as pessoas dão ao dinheiro na cantoria de pé-de-parede, que é uma reunião organizada em casa ou em um bar por um chefe de família ou pelo dono do estabelecimento comercial para ouvir versos improvisados por uma dupla de poetas-cantadores. Através do material etnográfico, foram examinadas as categorias empregadas para designar dinheiro e as situações em que elas emergiram, especialmente, as categorias *trato* e *contrato*, buscando compreender de que modo esses

sentidos são reveladores do próprio mundo da cantoria e, também, do universo da chamada zona da mata pernambucana – território tradicional de produção açucareira, situado entre o planalto da Borborema e o Oceano Atlântico, na região nordeste do Brasil. Concebido aqui enquanto um espaço de sociabilidade de amigos, vizinhos e familiares, a brincadeira será descrita a partir do lugar que o dinheiro ocupa em sua realização.

Palavras-chave: cantoria, sociabilidades, etnografia, dinheiro, Pernambuco.

Money in the poetic universe of Pernambuco's Zona da Mata region

Simone Silva

Introduction

In the Zona da Mata region of Pernambuco, the *cantoria de pé-de-parede* – literally, ‘foot-of-the-wall singing’ – is a meeting organized at home or in a bar¹ by a family head or the owner of the commercial establishment to hear poetic verses, improvised by a duo of poet-singers. The *pé-de-parede*, called ‘foot-of-the-wall’ because the duo sing close to the wall, is held on Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoons, bringing together friends, family and neighbours, who are invited by the organizer and/or by the singer responsible for the event.

The process of holding the *cantoria*, or singing, is divided into three moments: *the opening*, in which the poets sing to thank the owner of the house/bar, in particular, for the support given to holding the event, and also to show off the duo’s skill as singers; *the praising*, which consists of verses praising the name of all the adult guests present in the ambient, who, for their part, are expected to pay the poets for the laudatory verses; and finally the moment of *the requests* when the guests are allowed to ask for particular poetic modalities and songs. These three stages are interspersed by small interludes of about 10 to 15 minutes, during which verses may continue to be performed if a professional or amateur poet is present among the guests. In the region, the *pé-de-parede*, like other meetings based around dancing,

¹ In the Zona da Mata, the bar is a commercial establishment which as well as selling drinks, supplies basic food items – rice, coffee, biscuits and sweets, for example – and sometimes cleaning products. Some smaller bars, sometimes only open at weekends or on days of *brincadeira*, just sell beer, soft drinks, sugar cane rum and sweets. In the region studied, most of the bars are annexed to the architectural structure of the proprietor’s own house.

singing or puppet theatres, for example, is considered to be a *brincadeira*, a play or diversion, which generally involves the uniting of friends and family in a ritual occasion marked by improvisation².

The proposal to hold a *cantoria* may begin with an invitation of the owner of the house/bar or at the suggestion of the singer himself. Once both parties have agreed to hold the event, the 'deal' or *trato* is struck: that is, an agreement is reached between one of the singers from the duo and the owner of the bar and/or house. The venue where the *pé-de-parede* is held is considered a 'poetic ambient,' an *ambiente de cantoria*, by the singers. Each poet has his own particular ambients, which may be located in his current neighbourhood, in the place where he was raised or where he once worked, or in a region where he has family and/or friends who like poetry – the 'singing fans' (*fãs de cantoria*) as they are called. This ownership of ambients marks the agonistic character of the event, where there is always a *local singer*, the *owner of the ambient* – the one who 'closed the deal' (*fechou o trato*) – and the other singer, the invited partner, the singer from *outside*³.

The set of ambients as a whole form the extensive and complex geography of the *cantoria* through which, among other factors, each singer is legitimized as a *professional*. This poetic geography tends to expand as the singer acquires more years *in the profession*, although as he becomes elderly, even if he has already attained his peak as a singer and thereby become a *professional of renown*, the tendency is for his territory to reduce. This reduction is in part explained by physical tiredness.

2 Ever since the work of the folklorists, the native category *brincadeira* has become widely revived and proliferated in the historiographic, sociological and anthropological literature. A careful examination is still required, however, to deepen our understanding of the category itself and especially the relations reified by it. Analyzing the term summarily through the circumstantial characteristics of the *cantoria*, the objective of this ritual action may be very similar perhaps to that of the Mianmin, as described by Gardener (1983, cited in Strathern 2006): "Mianmin so act in a context of uncertainty about outcome, which makes every performance also an improvisation. A successful outcome may be judged in the display itself, but this is only then to be judged by subsequent effects, in the long term affairs of the community" (Strathern 1987: 174). I allude to this interpretation of the Melanesian ritual primarily because of the characteristics marking this performance: improvisation and uncertainty that are similarly found at the basis of the idea of the *brincadeira*. In drawing this parallel, I obviously have no pretension of resolving the question. On the contrary, I wish to suggest that developing a general theory of the *brincadeira* may well involve the analysis of the native conception of improvisation, which marks relations, time and space in this universe.

3 The local versus outside opposition was once so central that *cantoria* in the nineteenth and early twentieth century was known as the *desafio* (challenge): the poets would duel for hours or even days for audiences of friends and family (Mota 1986). However the *desafio* is not unique to the rural world, nor exclusively Brazilian. Indigenous societies exist, for example, where women vie for their partner through forms of ritual challenge. In North Africa, quarrels at work or among neighbours are enough to mobilize men to engage in a poetic conflict.

Today in Pernambuco, *cantoria* is propagated in events like *pé-de-parede*, town festivals, private performances organized during elections, radio programs, and competitions of duos of singers at regional and state festivals, held on large stages across the state. In addition *cantoria* is present in people's lives even when the ambient is not that of the *brincadeira* or the presentation of singers: this may be through the verses sung over the working day while cutting sugar cane, for example, or while preparing manioc flour, during household chores listening to *cantoria* programs on the radio, at birthday parties, or during events organized by the union to promote the wage demands of rural workers.

In this article I propose to analyze the *cantoria* through the place occupied by money in all its dimensions. I look to show how the innumerable meanings attributed to money inform a space in which equality and difference are complementary and, above all, demonstrate how money and intimacy operate simultaneously in the constitution of relations within this universe (Maurer 2006, Hart 2007, Zelizer 2009). Given the multiplicity of meanings acquired by money over the course of organizing and realizing the *brincadeira*, the ideas of Viviana Zelizer (1994) proved essential to analyzing the material discussed here. According to the author, money assumes particular meanings according to the social relations in which it is involved. Moreover these different meanings, she argues, are able to coexist in the same space and/or the same situation. I therefore pursued her proposal that any analysis of money must pay attention to the relative weight of its distinct functions (medium of exchange, store of value, unit of account, etc.), thinking about its circulation rather than dedicating exclusive attention to exchange, thereby enabling a deeper reflection on the time, space and relations of which money forms part (Maurer 2006). It is precisely this plurality of meanings attributed to money within a specific time and place that guides the reflection on the actions and relations personified by it.

Money has always been in short supply among rural workers of the Zona da Mata, including among the poets cited here, who prior to becoming *guitar professionals* worked in sugar cane cutting. Initially taken as *ganho* (render) or *salário consentido* (agreed salary) in payment for sugar plantation work, money revealed the employee's complete subordination and dependency on the employer, a relation typical of Brazilian plantations after the abolition of

slavery. Following the conquest of *civil rights laws* back in the 1960s and thus access to the minimum wage, the rural population gained access to a range of goods in addition to basic food items, including mattresses, battery powered radios, clothing, and so on (Sigaud 1977).

“Then the governor, Doctor Miguel Arraes, came. He had been elected in 1962. Doctor Miguel Arraes gave workers the right to better wages, a higher salary and a Christmas bonus too. So it was during this period, in 1963 more or less, already a period of many struggles... the question of the Peasant Leagues already spreading through the sugar production zone... As I was working, I was able to receive a Christmas bonus. I decided to use it to buy a better guitar. So I went to the city, I went with a cousin of mine because I didn’t know the city of Recife. I went to the city and bought a guitar and threaded the strings. I also bought clothing and a suit, I ordered a jacket and tie to be made. That’s when I really began to be a singer.” (Poet Beija-Flor 2005)

Pay is the most important aspect of work in the region. It is through the idiom of pay, for example, that people speak of agricultural activity, which is directly linked to the idea of wages. The money obtained in other activities – in singing or commerce, for instance – is considered the *apurado* or surplus. Wages are dedicated exclusively to food, a complete *feira* (literally: fair, market)⁴ of which comprises the following products in order of preference: manioc flour, beans, jerked beef, coffee and sugar, vegetable and fruits. The *apurado*, though, is a kind of complement to the purchase of food items. The Christmas bonus is dedicated to purchasing domestic goods and clothing, as attested in the above citation. In the universe of the *cantoria*, the *apurado* is the income on which the family depends to supplement the pensions of older poets, or a contract with the local council or work in the local food industries in the case of younger poets.

However, the *apurado* acquires a different set of meanings when we turn to examine the social relations woven in and through the ambient of the *brincadeira*. First and foremost, it enables and demarcates what I call the ‘time of the *cantoria*,’ which is delimited by sugar cane harvesting – that is, the period from September to January. It is a time that, like the concept

4 In Pernambuco fazer feira, ‘doing a market,’ means to purchase basic food products in large quantity. This purchase may be made monthly or weekly.

itself, does not exist in any absolute form. Recalling the questions posed by Edmund Leach (1974: 204), we could say that we experience the time of *cantoria* “...but not with our senses. We don’t see it, or touch it, or smell it, or taste it, or hear it. How then?” Its materialization, if we can describe it as such, emerges from the hiatus initiated with the start of winter, that is, through what Leach called the “oscillation between opposites,” marked here by the times with and without work.

In the time of the *cantoria* emerges the *trato* (deal), which enables, as we shall see later, the *apurado* to exist as a debt, a commitment, friendship, *paga* (repayment), contribution and, in a borderline situation of conflict, even as payment. The *trato* makes explicit a relation constructed apart from money but not without it. It is the medium through which a deal is agreed *in the name of consideration and friendship*. The point is that, by itself, by analyzing the construction and dissemination of the *trato*, money acquires meanings beyond any narrowly economic definition. The use of money in the *brincadeira* is one of the elements in the production of hierarchies and differences, but at the same time it is money that reifies the solidarity between friends and family. It is the attempt to account for these various practices – which, for their part, reveal the form in which social relations are established and comprehended in the Zona da Mata region of Pernambuco – that will lead us into a detailed examination of money in the *cantoria de pé-de-parede*.

1. Participating well in the cantoria

The annual period for holding the *cantoria*, as observed earlier, is determined by the region’s agricultural calendar: that is, by the period when the population will supposedly have enough money available to take part in the *brincadeira*, obtained from temporary contract work in sugar cane harvesting. After this contract has ended – from January to August, in other words – the circulation of money in the region is sharply reduced. If we compare the calendar for realizing the event to the 1960s, there are no real changes. Since this time the second half of the year is when the *cantorias* are held. However Biu, an elderly man from a small town called Itaenga Lake who today *puts cantoria in his home*, was speaking one day about the conditions for realizing the *brincadeira* when he mentioned that “people never had money to pay the

singer.” Yet even so they turned up, unlike today when, he says, there is more money around.

“They arrived there and had to sit down and they would begin to perform the songs, verses, money appeared from nowhere” (Mrs. Iraci – Biu’s wife. Itaenga Lake, 2007).

The native explanation reiterates what we saw earlier concerning the uses of wages and the *apurado*, that is, the money set aside to take part in the *cantoria* was not taken directly from work pay. Biu, for example, during his youth in the 1960s and 70s, would work on Saturdays in the sugar mill after being invited to a *cantoria* in order “to have the money to pay the singer.” Today not only are many of these people on the urban peripheries living off odd jobs or the minimum wage, as the poet Beija-Flor told me, the opportunities for earning this ‘extra’ money have also shrunk. As a result today, even at the height of the harvest, the singer still needs to match the deal (*trato*) with the date on which people receive their fortnightly pay, that is, part of their salary.

The expectations that engender the ritual dimensions of the *brincadeira* are known by everyone who takes part in it: however, the use of the word ‘obligation’ is inadequate to the context given that everything in the *cantoria* is done in terms of the idea of ‘free will.’ The guests, for instance, say that they go to the *cantoria* because they like it, while the poets claim that the repayment of the money paid by the owner of the house/bar recognizes all the efforts made by the latter. Like the gift the *pé-de-parede* is imbued with a selfless and voluntary character.

“They don’t say because they already know; because if the singer sings, they have to pay.” (Biu explaining that nobody in the region needs to be told that the singer must be paid)

The population of the meso-region of the Pernambuco Zona da Mata has participated since childhood in the various local *brincadeiras*, which implies a broad knowledge of the commitments and expectations entailed in these events. While still young, for example, people learn that honouring the invitation to a *brincadeira* is supremely important. In turn, however, whoever issues an invitation knows that this commitment is directly dependent on the financial situation of the person at the time of being invited. Everyone

knows too that ‘without money,’ as I was told countless times, there is no way of *participating well* in the cantoria.

Participating well requires the money to purchase beer, sugar cane rum, soft drinks and sometimes snacks, as well as pay for transport, which is usually either a hired car or a motor-taxi, and, of course, provide the *paga* (repayment) during the praising and requests. All these demands, except for those with a fixed price like the car hire or motor-taxi service, become a means for the guest to display their virtues. Being generous, being a *very distinct person, an excellent person*, for example, which especially implies sharing beer or offering rum to others at your table, is seen as a positive quality. On the other hand, a mean person, someone who *drinks, but does not contribute*, or who fails to value the poet, is roundly condemned. Consequently, when an invitation is made, a series of questions come into play. This is why it is very important for those invited to assess whether they are really able to honour the invitation and take part and, if not, to tell the person who made the invitation the reason why.

Guest: Oh, I didn’t go because of the money situation.

Mrs. Baixinha: Ah, but you could have gone, it’s no problem. You should have gone. It wouldn’t have been a problem because of the money.

Guest: Next time I’ll go. (Feira Nova, February 2007)

Once the explanation has been given, the entire neighbourhood will learn the motive for the guest’s absence. Here it is worth remembering the importance of being seen by other people, since some of the elements constituting prestige and honour emerge from this sociability. The poet himself should not display an excessive concern with the question of the *apurado*, though, otherwise the guests may think that he is *in it just for the money* – that is, he is a *mercenary/self-seeking person*. Furthermore he must adhere to the proper development of the *cantoria*, which implies completing its different stages in order: opening, praising and requests. This time is not determined by a set schedule, but a timing sensed in the unfolding of the *brincadeira* and negotiated with those present. Meeting these precepts implies a relation of trust between the guests and the owner of the house, on one hand, and the poet from the duo who is the ‘owner of the deal’ (*dono do trato*) on the other, without which the *cantoria* is rendered impossible.

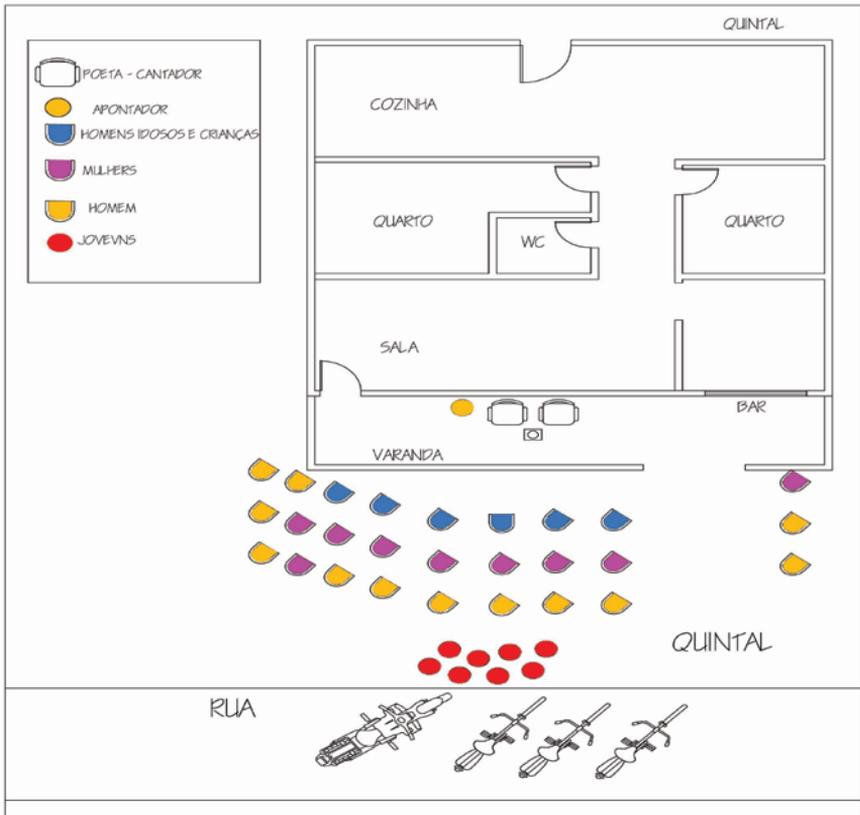
2. The organization of the ambient

The ambient of the *cantoria* is spatially organized in a way that demarcates the hierarchy of the guests in terms of their access to the poets and, above all, arranges the *cantoria* fans, including the members of the organizing family, according to their degree of knowledge of improvisation and poetic construction. However this spatial arrangement is not formal: the venues do not have a seating reservation system, for example. People know that elderly men sit in the first row and that they are the ones who pay the highest amount during the praising. In the row behind sit the older women, usually married, while the sides are occupied by younger women, and the last row of chairs by adult men and younger guests. The spatial location of a woman marks her status in the *cantoria*: economically dependent on the male figure of the father – occupying the front row – or her husband, seated in the back row.

Adult men, for their part, occupy the rear seats in accordance with their temporal familiarity with poetry. As they become older, they start being seen as specialists and thus move towards the front of the space. In many *cantorias*, the guests or even the poets themselves would point out an elderly *senhor* to me who *knew a lot about poetry*. He invariably sat on the bench closest to the duo of singers. This place in the first row was never described to me in terms of privilege, although over time one can identify its prominence in relation to the rest. It is these older men who are given preference when requests are answered, and they are the first to have their name praised during the praising phase.

The many young people present, though included in the *brincadeira*, do not even sit in the chairs: they remain standing at the back of the space. They also give the smallest amount to the plate.⁵ Children, though *their name is never sung*, are allowed and indeed encouraged to sit in the chairs placed at the front next to the older men. This is one way in which adults gradually include children in this universe. Watching from this privileged spot, the children can accompany the interaction between the duo of poets

⁵ As we shall see later, the *plate* is the object used to leave the money *given* and/or *paid* for the verses sung. Its use is essential to the realization of this type of *cantoria*, and may only be substituted with a tray. The owner of the house/bar must line it with a tea towel or a table cloth before leaving it in the ambient where the *cantoria* will be performed. As far as I could tell, the exclusive use of this object relates to the native idea that the *apurado/paga* is not a form of charity, meaning that it cannot be replaced by saucers, hats or even pots and cups, all objects used at the end of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth by blind poets who sang for alms in the streets of Brazil's Northeast. Additionally I would venture that the exclusive use of plates relates to the wider meaning of the *apurado*, i.e. as an income supplement used to purchase food items.



Floor plan of the cantoria

and the guests step-by-step. As soon as they begin to *have their name sung*, as the years pass, the boys, for example, begin the slow movement towards the front row – that is, from an initial condition of symbolic nonexistence to the privileged row.

3. The insertion of the *plate* in the *brincadeira*

The *deal* (*trato*) establishes the day when the *brincadeira* will be held, but not the time. People know that if taking place on a Saturday it will be at night, while a Sunday performance is always held in the afternoon. In the absence of an exact time for the event to start, people usually arrive gradually. The poets should not start the *cantoria* before most of the guests of the house/bar owner have arrived, although neither should they leave those already there waiting for too long. They may become distracted and lose the precise moment when

the *brincadeira* begins. At the *cantoria* of Dona Maria, for example, Manoel Domingues, *the owner of the deal*, entered into a long conversation about the Lula government and the then candidate for the Pernambuco state government, Eduardo Campos. The guests present became irritated with the delay to the start of the event and one of them shouted in exasperation: “Hey Manoel, let it rest about Lula, man. Let’s start the *cantoria*!” As soon as the complaint was voiced, the *brincadeira* began.

Just as there is a ‘sensed time’ for the start of the *brincadeira*, there is a specific way of announcing its various stages. The start of the praising, for instance – the first of the stages involving money – is mentioned in the final verses of the *opening sextilha* (*six verses*), indicating that the time of the *paga* (repayment) is approaching. At this moment, rather than referring to money or the *apurado* directly, the poets announce the subject by invoking terms like *ganha-pão* (‘bread and butter’) and *boia-minha* (‘my grub’). These categories, in my view, are not explained by a reluctance to talk about money, which would be both an ethnocentric and mistaken conclusion, or by a mercantilist conception of acquisition. By substituting the term *apurado* with *boia-minha*, the poets highlight the bond of intimacy that the *paga* can establish between fans, poets and the owner of the bar/house. It is worth emphasizing that sharing or offering food in this region of Pernambuco, as in many other parts of Brazil, is a practice that delineates affection and friendship.

The mention of the *boia-minha*, announcing the start of the praising, is accompanied by references to other elements that form part of the ritual dimension of this stage, such as the lined *plate*. This object is responsible for mediating between the poet and the guests, who, on hearing their name mentioned in the verses, should head towards it. In the same *cantoria* mentioned earlier, while the poets were busy discussing President Lula and the Pernambuco state government, the house owner fetched the lined *plate* and placed it on one of the tables, next to where I was sitting. However the *cantoria* had not yet started. It should be noted that while preparing the space, the person may place a stool or some other support for the plate, but the object itself has to appear at a very precise moment.⁶

6 And this, in Brazil, is not confined to the *cantoria*. In candomblé temple festivals, for instance, the plate where the payment to the orixá will be made is only taken to the ritual space after the first songs, clapping and dances (Baptista, José Renato, “Os deuses vendem quando dão: um estudo sobre os sentidos do dinheiro nas relações de troca no Candomblé”, MA dissertation, PPGAS Museu Nacional/UFRJ, Rio de Janeiro, 2006).

Prior to Dona Maria's cantoria, I had never seen the presentation of the plate being anticipated. On this occasion, therefore, I failed to notice that the house owner's action had been too rushed, and that she had caused an awkward situation for the poets, especially for the owner of the deal. Manoel Domingues, very embarrassed, asked me: "Oh Simone, do me a favour, hide that *plate* there. Hide it out of the way. Early like that, it will startle everyone." Had Manoel left the *plate* on show before the *cantoria* had even started, this gesture would have shaken the trust built up over a ten-year period between the poet and his *fregueses*, or 'clients,' at Dona Maria's *cantoria*. The idea of the *freguês* relates to the bond of loyalty constructed over time. A person is not simply a *freguesa de cantoria*, but the *freguesa* of the *cantoria* of Poet X, who becomes known by *honouring* the client every time that he or she attends.⁷

If the owner of the bar, for his part, forgets to bring the *plate* at the right time, the first verses of the praising are devoted to its solicitation, as can be seen in the stanza below, sung during the *cantoria* of Mr. Raimundinho:

I'm going to change my path
 My road and my way
 I began early last night
 To arrive at the first light of day
 It's time for Raimundinho
 To hand me the lined tray

Eu vou mudar de caminho
 De vereda e de estrada
 Comecei cedo na noite
 Para atender da madrugada
 É hora de Raimundinho
 Me dá a bandeja forrada

(The Portuguese version. Poet Severino Soares)

⁷ In the *cantorias* paid for by candidates during electoral campaigns, no *plates* are used during the events. In these cases the politician has sole responsibility for providing the *apurado* of the singers, which is taken as a payment, transforming the deal (*trato*) into a contract (*contrato*). In the region in question, poets often perform at birthday celebrations. There are no *plates* on such occasions either.

In most cases the *plate* is brought by the owner of the bar/house, who leaves a banknote on it already as his contribution to the poet. This contribution, like everything else involved in the *cantoria*, does not have a previously stipulated monetary value. People know that it serves as a ceiling for the *pagas* (repayments) of the guests, hence its value, people told me, should act as a *lure* or *attraction*.

Simone: Can you start the tray with R\$ 1, for example?

Biu Ambrósio (a bar owner): Ahh no, Simone. What would the others do afterwards? If he leaves one real, I'm going to leave one real too. I leave R\$ 20.00, only they [the singers] give it back to me later.

According to the poets, their handing back of the amount paid by the bar/house owner recognizes his work in organizing the event. His contribution is simultaneously a measure of value and the tie of kinship established between himself and the poet.

Throughout my 2006-07 stay accompanying the *cantorias* in the Zona da Mata, I did not see a single guest give a larger contribution than the amount offered by the owner of the *cantoria*. When the plate is started with ten reais, for example, people who have followed the singer for many years can very often be seen leaving the same amount. In the *pé-de-parede*, the more time a person has spent accompanying the singer's *brincadeira*, the higher the sum that he or she leaves is expected to be. For example, the elderly *senhor* nicknamed Cara de Gato has accompanied the *cantorias* of Heleno Fragoso for more than ten years; the singer esteems him greatly, hence it is very unlikely that he will make a contribution based on the lowest amount of the night, R\$ 2, for example. Zé Tapera, the oldest fan/client of Manoel Domingues at the *cantoria* of Mrs. Maria told me during one of our conversations that when he is ill, he finds the R\$ 5 for the singer and asks someone to go to the *brincadeira* venue to deliver it.⁸

When the guest, despite following the poet's *cantoria* for a long time, is unable to contribute an appropriate amount, he or she will explain the situation to the singer:

8 In *candomblé*, the closer the relation between the child-of-saint and mother-of-saint, for example, the lower the amount charged should be (Baptista, *op. cit.*).

Today I am vice-mayor [of the town of Paudalho], director of FETAPE, but I still sing in my municipality and my electors go there to leave a note for me in the bowl. One real. They say: “I can’t give anymore, Senhor Beija-Flor, I just don’t have it.” When the *cantoria* is over, we drink some beers and rum and the money is spent right there and then. [laughs] (Poet Beija-Flor, Carpina, 2005)

Some workers will send an apology saying that they can’t go due to a lack of money; they feel ashamed if the singer sings their name and they can’t give even one real. It’s a difficult situation, isn’t it? (Beija-Flor, Carpina, 2005)

As well as the length of time accompanying the *brincadeira* and the closeness to the poet, expectations concerning the amounts given are also determined by what is known about the guest’s financial status. The poet Sinésio Pereira, for example, once told me that he went to sing in the town of Camaragibe and the then mayor wanted to pay a very low amount for the praising made to him. The poet, very annoyed and upset, told him that he did not need to pay. The refusal was provoked not by the actual amount, but by the fact that everyone present knew that the guest was able to offer a much higher amount, hence the amount offered was seen as an insult. Even if the guest is not as famous as a mayor, everyone in this social universe is aware of everyone else’s status. On various occasions I heard guests comment in a low voice that the poets should not *sing the name of a particular person* because he or she was ‘smooth’ (*lisa*) – in other words, he or she had no money to put in the *plate*.

Although there is no fixed sum, people know that complex poetic modalities – a *decassilabo* (decasyllable) for example – require a higher *contribution*. However the amount offered for a request must always be less than the amount given for the praising. The value attributed to a verse or song varies according to the ambient, the degree of intimacy, the relation’s length of time and the expectations concerning the person invited. After various months in the field, I decided to make my first request for a verse at the *cantoria* of Mrs Brígida and Mr Baixinha, in Feira Nova. I placed the paper with the banknote on the *plate*, but I was immediately scolded by the daughter of the house owner, who told me that five reais was a very large amount. Trying to match the expectations of the singers concerning my payment, I had failed to taken into account that I would offend everyone else, since one cannot pay the same amount or more for a request as most of the guests have paid for their

praisings. A repayment equal to the praising or higher is only acceptable in those situations where the guests organize a competition among themselves – for example, married against single people.

4. The *plate*

Once the *plate* is placed on the stool in front of the duo, the praising is initiated.⁹ The guests' names are invoked one-by-one, irrespective of the number of people at the *brincadeira*. The time between the improvised verse and the arrival of the banknote is short: as soon as the guest hears his or her name called out, the person heads to the *plate* with the banknote in hand. Sometimes I noticed that people would strive to hide the R\$ 2 banknote in their hand when this was the amount they would give for their praising. Moreover, even if the *brincadeira* has many guests, which sometimes makes reaching the duo near impossible, the person whose name is sung must leave his or her banknote on the plate personally.

At one of the *cantorias* to which I went at the Melo ranch, in the town of Vitória de Santo Antão, the large number of people in the yard led to a list being compiled from which the guests *were sung*. At one point, the guest whose turn it was, finding it too difficult to reach the *plate*, had her contribution passed from hand to hand until it reached the *pointer*. Amid all the confusion it was no longer possible to identify the banknote's owner, so the *pointer*, waving the money in his hand, began to ask who had given the *paga* (repayment). The note was not placed on the plate until its owner was identified and announced out loud so that everyone could hear her name.

Through improvisation (*improviso*), the poet emphasizes certain social roles, insistently privileged in the verses, reaffirms ties of friendship and reinforces reputations. The person who emerges from this poetic contextualization is effectively placed on the plate, thus becoming part of the ambient of the *brincadeira*. Through the praising and consequently its payment, the guest is inserted into the context of the *brincadeira* and becomes authorized to intervene in the following stage. At the *cantoria* of Mrs. Maria, for example, I witnessed the moment when an elderly man, on *being sung*, was given his

⁹ During this phase, the duo receive help from a local person who performs the function of the *pointer*, that is, the person who will tell/recall the name of all the adults present at the *cantoria*.

banknote by someone next to him. However, the person passed the money to him behind the chair so that nobody else would see. The affirmation of the person sung is legitimized by going to the *plate*.¹⁰

PLATES



Photo 1: *Cantorias* at Biu Ambrósio's bar (2006)

Photo 2: *Cantoria* at the house of Mrs. Irene, at the Poço Grande ranch (2006).



Photo 3: *Cantoria* of Mr. Raimundinho. Uruba Ranch, 2007.

¹⁰ This ritualization surrounding a payment that is made to third parties and mediated by a plate is not unique to the *cantoria*. In the ritual of the *candomblé* feast, for example, an entire ritual procedure surrounds the act of placing money on the plate. The father-of-saint, prior to giving the money, which unlike the *cantoria* may also be in coins, performs a ritual through which the amount offered is passed around his body to wish health and prosperity: "...by placing the notes and coins on the plate these people believe themselves to be establishing a link with the *orishá*, which must be continually renewed, whether in other celebrations, or through offerings or *ebós*, or joining, and the obligations arising from these actions" (Baptista *op.cit.*, p.111)

Similarly to what happens in *candomblé*, for example, where the father-of-saint is prohibited from touching the payment placed on the plate by the child-of-saint or client while still in their presence, the singer only touches with the banknotes when the *brincadeira* is over. Very often when a guest, on hearing their name sung, arrived with a twenty reais note wishing to contribute five or ten, the singer would ask me to give the person the change. If I had none on me, the task would fall to the *pointer*, but under no hypothesis did I see the singer or the guest him or herself touch the money. Oblivious to the proper protocol, I would very often muddle up all the banknotes while looking to give the guest his or her change. Heleno various times told me to re-arrange the plate so that the ten reais notes, for instance, were lying on top, as shown in the photo above.

My hypothesis is that no coins are used in the *plate* because of the relative weight played by the *ambient* in the very conception of the *apurado*. The place of the *cantoria* allows the money on the plate to be qualified by the guest as a *contribution* or as an *apurado* by the singer. For the professional poet, busking for money in the street, obtained from people to whom no relation has been established or even mediated, can be understood as ‘charity.’ Perhaps for this same reason, the plate being presented must be lined with a cloth, alluding to the family origin or a domestic environment. At the same time, the fact that coins are less prestigious and, above all, that the money on the plate expresses the praising and requests of the guests, probably means that they are shunned in relation to notes.

5. *Help and Contribution*

The banknotes placed in the *plate* at the moment of the praising are called by a series of names that, as mentioned above, vary according to the enunciator. The guests and the owner of the venue usually call them a *contribution* or *help*. However when a conflict emerges between them and the duo of poets, the monetary meaning is emphasized and, thus, *help* becomes called payment. Conflict, when it happens, tends to surface in the phase subsequent to the praising: the moment of the requests.¹¹ Let’s take an example. In the *cantoria*

¹¹ A request is almost always made to honour a friend or relative present at the *brincadeira*. The poetic stanza or name of the song is written on a small piece of paper, along with the name of the honoured guest.

of Mrs. Maria, one guest, who had already asked for the song “Amor de pai” (A father’s love) decided to repeat the request, but with the demand that it was sung by the *outside singer* only. Faced with the guest’s insistence, Sinésio refused to sing. He felt offended and said: “The moment that there’s money on the *plate*, you have to sing.” Sinésio, already annoyed, then replied: “In my own ambient, I don’t repeat a song. I only repeated it here because I’m in Manoel’s ambient.” Trying to smooth over the situation, Manoel said that he would sing the song. After including the request, the duo paused for an interval during which they began to recall out loud the *good cantorias* they had performed at in the past. Sinésio mentioned one where he had earned two thousand reais. The guest who had protested earlier thought that Sinésio was comparing the ambients and argued that he should sing whatever the amount of money put on the plate. Eliane, Maria’s daughter, told me that she had actually agreed with the guest because she too thought that Sinésio had been rude with his comment. Manoel, once again trying to calm people’s nerves, asked the guest: “Lad, didn’t I sing your request for a third time? Nobody here can leave saying that they paid but the request wasn’t sung.” The guest, still highly irritated with Sinésio, said to Manoel: “That’s not how it works. If the request was paid, the singer has to sing. It’s irrelevant whether the song has already been sung once, twice or three times. And don’t explain it to me because I know what *cantoria* is.”

The *paga* (repayment) of the request, unlike the *paga* of the praising, is emphasized by neither the guests nor the poets. It is only mentioned in situations like the one described earlier – that is, at a moment of misunderstanding between the audience and the poets or even among the guests themselves. At the same *cantoria* of Maria, for example, the guest who had been handed the money to pay for his own praising began to ask in a loud voice, already drunk, the duo to sing a *décima* (a ten verse song). Manoel, as the *owner of the deal*, told him that they would sing the request after he paid. The elderly man, clearly annoyed by Manoel Domingues’s reply, began to shout: “But I already paid!” The other guests, by now fed up with all the shouting going on in the ambient, started laughing and said: “What did you pay, old goat? They gave you the money to pay for the praising. Keep quiet and don’t disrupt the *brincadeira*, lad.” The request was not sung and the discussion was closed. The detail concerning the loan of the money would not have been raised had the man not caused trouble. The guests made it clear that since the banknote

on the plate was not his own – meaning that the ritual action surrounding his praising had been invalid¹² – he was not authorized to interfere.

Returning to the guest's argument with the poet Sinésio Pereira, the man was offended by the poet's comment about the *cantoria* in which he had earned R\$ 2,000 since the realization of a *cantoria* and its later qualification are elements that determine the prestige of the local area. This qualification is made in terms of *good* and *weak*, which relate on one hand to the quantity collected by the duo and, on the other, by the quality of the public – whether they were *cantoria fans* or not. Stating that a place *always gives good cantorias* emphasizes the knowledge and taste for poetry that the local people have and, above all, reveals the economic potential of the local area concerned. Biu Ambrósio, for example whose bar is recognized in Vitória de Santo Antão as a poet hot-spot, acknowledged that poets used to earn more in the past than today, but at the same time he argues that the present-day earnings in his own establishment are far from negligible:

Today there are occasions when its very weak. There are some poets who only come under contract. But today singing isn't the same as it was in the past, the money you can earn. You know? But those who come here to sing never waste their journey. I don't enter into contact, they come. Sunday *cantigas* can earn R\$ 200.00. It's not much money but it's not nothing either. Sometimes it's less. It's all the same, two hundred, R\$ 150, R\$100. (Biu Ambrósio, Vitória, 2007)

This qualification concerning the *apurado* is not directly connected to the number of people present at the *brincadeira*. Some *cantorias* with more than 60 guests can earn less than one with 30, as Manoel Domingues observed when he was speaking about a *brincadeira* full of people where he had performed: “Talk about hard-earned money?! Can you imagine how much singing we had to do to *apurar* [render] R\$ 160,00? The whole night, without stopping, until daylight.”

12 This specific situation allows us to return to Austin's speech act theory (1962: 55) on the following point: “Besides the uttering of the words of the so-called performative, a good many other things have as a general rule to be right and to go right if we are to be said to have happily brought off our action.” The author claims that in cases of *failed utterances*, like the situation described above, it is not a question of classifying them as false, but as *unhappy*. Hence we can conclude that to utter the request for a verse means to have paid for the praising: if this does not occur then we fall into a situation in which the *utterance* is a *mistake* – that is, the procedure invoked is emptied of authority and thus the act is void and without effect.

6. Remuneration

For the poets, the amount left on the plate is interpreted as an *apurado*, and only in very precise circumstances is it expressed in monetary terms, as stated by Biu Ambrósio. Sometimes when I provoked a conversation about the income obtained from *cantorias*, the poets would describe the value in terms of what it represented in purchases. According to Manoel Domingues, for example, the best *brincadeira* earned him three *feiras* (big market purchases) and enough left to buy a new suit.

The money from the *cantoria* guarantees a lot of things. It is not easy to earn, you sing all night, fight, get criticized, but you have to do everything necessary to earn this money, which is hard work. It helps domestically, it helps with household expenses, with buying gas bottles, water, clothing, shoes, because the singer travels a lot, he has to have clothes for travelling. He has to go about well-dressed. So the money from *cantoria* helps a lot with these things. (Poet Heleno Fragoso, 2007)

Simone: When you were at your peak, how much was a good *cantiga*?

Poet Zé de Oliveira: Well, I don't remember. I remember that it was enough for a *feira*. A good *cantiga* would always be worth a *feira* with some left. But the actual amount I don't know.

But to understand the singularity of the *apurado* in relation to other kinds of money used in the region, we need to go beyond the merchandise expressed by it. Both the *apurado* and the *salary* are kinds of money described in terms of food items. However the meanings attributed to them retain important differences that need to be highlighted. The *apurado* contains the idea of difficulty, uncertainty and both frequent and situation-dependent negotiations, which to some extent diverge from the notion of *right* informing the category of salary. This allows us to return to the idea that the meanings, aside from relating to the kinds of goods purchased, contain essential properties for understanding the relations of which money forms part. Additionally it is worth remembering that although money renders everything calculable, the systems of calculation on which it depends are not always as simply numerical as we might imagine (Foster, cited in Maurer 2006).

Once the singularity of the meanings of the poet's remuneration have been identified, we still need to ask whether there is a – and if so what would

be the – relative weight of different merchandise (purchased with the *apurado* and *salary*) in social relations. I already mentioned earlier that manioc flour, for example, is the most important product in the region’s staple food basket. It is the local measure of value. Through it we can understand the native perception of their salaries, the identification of a financial crisis or even the notion of abundance. It is the indispensable product of the salary and likewise of any other supplementary income, such as the *apurado*. But there are goods – sugar can rum, for example – that are essential for the realization of a series of events, and which are bought exclusively with this additional income. Thinking about these singularities, then, I would ask what these specificities allow us to apprehend concerning the relations woven through the circulation of these goods. How may we, for example, describe the ritual of commensality in the house of a friend, emphasizing its differences when compared to the act of sharing a snack or drinking a shot of rum in the neighbour’s *brincadeira*? I would say, for now, that these questions can help us advance, less through an understanding of a given expression as the representation of a way of life and more through an identification of the forms through which social relations are constructed.

7. Final Considerations

“If I observe of bridewealth exchanges which accompany a Melanesian marriage that the bride’s parents are being paid for their feelings towards her, I am juxtaposing ideas which in the language I am using are normally antithetical. Emotion is not a commodity. Although I might try to wriggle out of the word ‘paid,’ it remains clear that I am describing as a transaction what is also an expression of relatedness...” Marilyn Strathern (2013:44)

Through the ethnographic material I have tried to show how purely economic relations exist side-by-side with the moral meanings attributed to money in the context of the relations between poet and guest, guest and guest, poet and owner of the house/bar. In this sense, we can speak neither of purely economic and selfish relations, nor, on the contrary, of purely selfless relations. The *bread-and-butter*, *apurado*, *help* or even the amount paid for a soft drink, beer or rum to be offered to the friends present, are parts of social relations and are as such hybrid, established in the *pé-de-parede* ambient. We

have also seen that the quantity collected by the duo may grant the ambient a higher status as a venue *good for singing*, but it is also the ambient that determines that the money is not seen as charity. It does not dissolve ties, it reifies them. In this ambient, money may be the “material expression of abundance,” but it may also express the taste for poetry, affection for the people present, and personal prestige. The fact that the money placed on the plate represents the guest means that, in the *pé-de-parede*, the poetic modalities, songs and contributions have no pre-set value. On the contrary they are meanings, as I have tried to show, based on relations of trust, the time of friendship, situation-based negotiations and expectations concerning the other.

To conclude, I would like to share with the reader a question underlying this text, which pervades the entire analysis and was sometimes challenging for me. This concerns the difficulty of speaking about money from an ethnographic perspective. The material studied here is part of a lengthy investment made in the field in order to think about the dynamics of sociability in rural spaces. Among the diverse aspects constituting the peasant condition – that is, its political, economic and social dimensions – my interest is in investigating their different ways of ‘being related.’ It is worth remembering that, in the Brazilian case at least, the peasant condition is informed by ways of life arising from very singular kinds of sociability. Consequently the social and moral condition of a given form of being related (sociabilities, family reproduction, kinship, neighbourhood, etc.) is linked to the production and reproduction of the peasant condition itself. This allows us to assert that its reproduction does not depend solely on political and economic reproduction, as has been emphasized for a long time by a large part of the bibliography on the topic. Hence I have tried to understand and explain questions from the Pernambuco sugar production region through the ambient spaces of poetry. This attempt is not consolidated by what we could call a supposed isolation from the spheres of social life, but by the native conception of *ambient*. *Cantoria* has proved a singular means for me to think through a series of questions – for example, its relation to the practice and meaning attributed to the exercise of local politics, the analysis of the sensory dimensions contained in the relation between the issuer and receiver of the narrative, about money, which in other domains would be less revealing about the social dynamic.

However anthropology’s specific contribution towards understanding money – a phenomenon that is both a key element in classic generalizing

interpretations and possesses widely different uses and meanings – elicited in me a series of uneasy questions. My central concern was not only to retain the native categories derived from anthropological research, but above all to avoid juxtaposing these with the ideas brought from my own universe concerning payment, help, remuneration, money, and other things. Looking back over the text, the reader may note, for example, that in many cases I have avoided using the verb and idea of ‘buying’ in preference for ‘guaranteeing,’ ‘render’ or even ‘helping.’ In native speech concerning the *cantoria* as a local event, the verb buy is used to express, for example, what is consumed in this ambient. So people use ‘buy’ to talk of beer, sweets for children, rum, etc. But in the situational narrative or even in the *ambient*, there is a significant change of idea when speaking, for example, of the *cervejada* (drinking beer with friends) or *fazer uma farra*, ‘going on a binge’ (“We went there, we drank all night, we had a binge”). The poet does not use the idea of ‘buying’ to refer to what he obtains from the remuneration of the *cantoria*. On the contrary, the *apurado accrues or guarantees food, suits, a bottle of gas*, etc. Neither does he ‘earn money,’ he collects it. The guests, meanwhile, do not pay, they *give: the repayment or the help*, or again, *they put it on the tray*. As we have seen, this ritual practice imbues the money from the *cantoria* with a state of purity, freeing it from pejorative connotations, such as the idea of charity.

As explained, the idea of payment – in the sense of the exchange of money, based on a monetary perspective – for an item or service is employed in situations of conflict and relative distance between the parties. When speaking generically of the obligations involved in taking part in the *cantoria*, people agree that “everyone should pay the singer.” However when narrating a specific situation, the person says that “he gave help,” “she made the repayment,” “their contribution.” Hence gradually discovering the way to speak of the monetary meanings of money, reconciling it with the local notion of intimacy, proved to be a task with valuable but simultaneously dangerous implications. As I have discussed, money assumes particular meanings according to the social relations in which it is involved. Furthermore, the ethnographic material presented demonstrates the coexistence of the diverse meanings that money can assume. Considering the proposal to examine in detail the relations of sociability involved in the circulation and notion of elements and objects that are intrinsic to it, we still need to reflect on the relative weight that each of the meanings imprints on them. Taking into

consideration differences of scale, therefore, I would ask what the gains and risks are of the analysis when treating, for example, a measure in terms of ‘intimacy’? How can an analysis of the relations between people and things be undertaken to identify values without jeopardizing our understanding of the forms of constructing social relations? These are the kinds of questions that we need to develop.

To conclude I wish to return to the question of the lined plate. In the part of the year without *cantoria*, the professional poets of the Pernambuco Zona da Mata refused to busk in the streets or head for the coast to sing arbitrarily. As already mentioned, the street is an impersonal space in which the money given to the poet can easily be understood as charity. In an ethnographic study that I conducted during the 2012 electoral campaign, in which one of the poets with whom I work was running for office as a local councillor, the street similarly proved to be an improper place for the elector to negotiate his or her vote with the candidate. Those who insist on approaching the candidate in the street to ask for whatever he or she wants, especially money, is seen to be ‘untrustworthy.’ The space for negotiation is the house. Consequently it is not the objects involved in a negotiation that are responsible for its state of purity or impurity, but the place where it takes place. In other words, with the exception of money, the elector may request everything from a food basket to a mattress. The latter will not make him or her seem untrustworthy. But if done in the street, everyone will certainly see the person as ‘opportunist.’ In the *cantoria*, it is the lined plate that leads to money assuming a particular dimension, distancing it from the viewpoint of pure exchange. We could say that the plate sustains a metonymic relation with the house, which, through the contiguity of meanings between them, reveals the money to be personal. Hence the lined plate, that simple and apparently utilitarian object, located in front of the audience, configures the most complex aspect of the relation: the fact that money and ties of intimacy operate simultaneously in the construction of the social relations of this universe.

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Money and Morality in the Bolsa Família

Talita Jabs Eger
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Abstract

This paper brings some findings from research on the meanings of money from Brazil's Family Grant Program (Programa Bolsa Família, PBF). The ethnography on which it is based was carried out between 2010 and 2012 in the cities of Alvorada and Porto Alegre. It shows, firstly, that even though it is received in cash, the PBF money is not just an abstract mediator. Rather, access to this kind of money, or to the PBF itself, is accompanied by a series of moral values that go beyond the legal conditionalities that characterize the program. Drawing on ethnographic instances, our discussion highlights some of the key elements of this morality: negotiations around the notion of vulnerability (a central concept for the social workers in charge of enrolling beneficiaries in the PBF), and the different meanings of the PBF money, from the beneficiaries' point of view. This diversity of meanings is presented synthetically in terms of some key domains: money *of* women and *for* women; money *of* children and *for* children; money interdicted and shameful to men.

Keywords: Bolsa Família (Family Grant), money, morality, anthropology, public policy.

Resumo

Este artigo é resultado de uma investigação acerca dos significados do dinheiro do Programa Bolsa Família (PBF). A etnografia que está na origem deste texto foi realizada entre 2010 e 2012 nas cidades de Alvorada e Porto Alegre. O objetivo mais amplo da investigação foi mostrar como o dinheiro do PBF, em que pese seja recebido em espécie, não é um dinheiro simples mediador abstrato. Pelo contrário, o acesso a este dinheiro ou, preferindo-se, ao PBF,

vem acompanhado de uma série de valores morais que extrapolam, consideravelmente, as condicionalidades legais que caracterizam o programa. A partir de casos etnográficos, destacamos os aspectos centrais atinentes a esta moralidade: a negociação em torno da noção de vulnerabilidade, um conceito central para as assistentes sociais responsáveis pela inclusão de beneficiários no PBF, e os diferentes significados do dinheiro do Bolsa segundo o ponto de vista dos beneficiários. Com a finalidade de apresentar as informações de forma sintética agrupamos a diversidade dos significados em alguns eixos principais: dinheiro *das e para* as mulheres; dinheiro *das e para* as crianças; dinheiro interdito e vergonhoso aos homens.

Palavras-chave: Bolsa Família; dinheiro; moralidade; antropologia; políticas públicas.

Money and Morality in the Bolsa Família

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On national guidelines and local implementation

The Bolsa Família Program (PBF) was launched in 2003 as the consolidation of multiple income transfer programs from the Brazilian federal government. It sought to increase the value of benefits and broaden the scope of welfare protection to low-income families – thus becoming one of Brazil’s main social policy instruments (SANT’ANA, 2007; SOARES and SÁTYRO, 2009)³. After one decade and a few changes and extensions, in 2013 the program had benefited over 13 million families, and invested around 31 billion dollars. Due to its wide scope and bold strategy of delivering cash directly to the poor (in a policy domain where the most common is to provide basic goods), the PBF is today one of the world’s largest Conditional Cash Transfer Programs (CCTP) in terms of coverage, and one of Brazil’s chief instruments of social protection (SOARES and SÁTYRO, 2009; POCHMANN, 2010). Even though it is broadly associated with the administration of former President Lula (2003-2010), the PBF is part of a longer trajectory of social protection policies in Brazil. The 1988 Constitution was a particularly salient landmark, as it established basic guidelines for building a new social protection system⁴.

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3 It only has fewer beneficiaries than Brazil’s Unified Health System (Sistema Único de Saúde, SUS), public education, and Social Security (SOARES and SÁTYRO, 2009).

4 It promoted social assistance to the same status as other social policies (for education, health, social security), for instance, by recognizing rural workers’ right to retirement without full contribution, and instituting

The first CCTPs implemented in Brazil operated at the municipal and federal levels. In 1995, the cities of Campinas, Brasília and Ribeirão Preto established programs targeting families with children, conditional on their regular school attendance. In 1996, the first federal CCTP was created: the Child Labor Eradication Program (Programa de Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil, PETI), aimed at children and adolescents at risk of being forced to work (or who already worked) in order to help provide for their families. This program was part of the State Secretariat for Social Assistance, and its purpose was to “encourage children and adolescents to quit hard labor for school” (SILVA E SILVA et al, 2009:103). In 2001, the second CCTP came about: the National Minimal Income Program. Best known as “School Grant”, it targeted children between 6 and 15 years old, and demanded from beneficiaries minimal school attendance of 85%. At about the same time, the Ministry of Health launched the Food Grant Program, which was aimed at children between 0 and 6 years old, and required from beneficiaries commitment to breastfeeding, pre-natal exams for pregnant women, and vaccination for the children. Another program was the “Gas Aid”, established in 2002 by the Ministry of Mines and Energy, and the Food Coupon launched the following year, aimed at families at risk of food insecurity earning less than half a minimum wage. In order to optimize management of all these programs – and the trend at the time was for each sector to institute its own CCTP – the *Bolsa Família* Program was established as the unification of the School Grant, Food Coupon, Food Grant, and Gas Aid (in 2005, it came to include the Child Labor Eradication Program).

Thus, before the PBF, Brazilian conditional cash transfer policies were implemented by multiple agencies, based on different information systems and funding sources. As a result, families with very similar socio-economic statuses received different kinds of transfer (SILVA et al, 2008; SILVA, 2009; SOARES, 2009), depending on the way they were framed. With the new program, managers sought, on the one hand, to “homogenize eligibility criteria, benefit values, implementing agencies, and information systems” (SOARES, 2009:7) by integrating all these programs and increasing the value of the cash benefits. On the other hand, they sought to exclude intermediary

solidarity (that is, non-contributive) income for elders and handicapped living under economic vulnerability (the Continuing Benefit Conveyance program).

politicians (mayors, first ladies, and so forth) who were common channels for resource embezzlement, since the funds coming from the federal government were transferred to local agencies before being distributed to beneficiaries.

Even after unification, municipalities have continued to play a key role in the PBF: they are in charge of identifying and registering low-income families,⁵ and keeping up to date the Unified Registry of Federal Social Programs (CadÚnico).⁶ They are also responsible for monitoring and sending data to the federal bank Caixa Econômica Federal (CEF); for providing basic services involved in the conditionalities that have to be met by the beneficiaries (schools, health clinics, Social Assistance Centers); and for producing reports on the effective compliance to the program's conditionalities⁷ – that is, the beneficiaries' returns and duties. Finally, they disseminate information on the program and on eligibility criteria for low-income families. The municipalities therefore operate as the PBF's "gateway". Therein lies the relevance of identifying local implementation strategies, understanding them as a set of actions shaping not only the provision of services to the beneficiaries, but also the paths that families must travel in order to enroll, and remain enrolled, in the program.

Conditionalities are one of the chief elements of this intervention model; they are taken up both by the beneficiary families (who must abide by them) and by state agencies at the municipal level (in charge of delivering health, education, and social assistance services). Their avowed purpose, according to the program's local implementers, is to guarantee access by these families to "basic social services". According to the program's managers, its chief objective is to enhance the beneficiaries' "human capital", thus breaking "poverty's inter-generational cycle". The implementation of the PBF is regarded as a positive step in the trajectory of Brazil's welfare policies, since its actions are focused on the family instead of its individual members (POCHMANN, 2010:15). The funds are however especially directed to the women, and the conditionalities target children, adolescents, and pregnant and/or breastfeeding women – the program's conception of the family

5 That is, those with a monthly income of less than half a minimum wage per person (around U\$150).

6 CadÚnico aims at identifying all low-income families in Brazil – besides, according to official discourse, sharpening the focus of social programs targeting the poor.

7 While some consider conditionalities as providing access to basic social rights, others regard them as a denial of those rights.

therefore leaves out the men, as if they were not part of it.

With respect to education, for instance, families must keep children between 6 and 15 years old enrolled in school, showing minimal attendance of 85% (for adolescents between 16 and 17 years old this figure is of 75%). In the domain of health, families make a commitment to keep up with the vaccination schedule, and monitor the growth and development (through weight and height) of children under 7. In contrast with the boys, girls over 7 must continue to abide by the health conditionalities. This is also the case of women of reproductive age (up to 49 years old), and when they are pregnant and/or breastfeeding, they are required to undergo regular prenatal exams and checks on the baby's health. In the realm of social welfare, it is the family's duty to refer children and adolescents under 16 (who are at risk or who have been removed from child labor by the PETI) to the PETI's Coexistence and Bonding Services (Serviços de Convivência e Fortalecimento de Vínculos, SCFV), where they should maintain an attendance rate of at least 85%. They must also take part on activities offered by the Social Assistance Reference Center (Centro de Referência de Assistência Social, CRAS) and/or a Specialized Social Assistance Reference Center (Centro de Referência Especializada de Assistência Social, CREAS), and re-register every two years (maximum) by providing all family members' full documentation.

The values in cash transferred by the BPF are based on poverty thresholds and family membership (i.e., whether there are pregnant or breastfeeding women, children and adolescents under 15, or juveniles between 16 and 17). Thus, families may receive up to three kinds of benefits, whose aggregated value may range between R\$ 32,00 (U\$13,6) and R\$ 306,00 (U\$ 130,3): the basic, the variable (depending on the number of children), and the youth variable (depending on the number of adolescents). Families considered "poor" are not eligible for the basic benefit (R\$ 70 [U\$ 29,8]), and cannot receive more than R\$ 236 (U\$ 100,5)⁸. Families considered "extremely poor", on their turn, may receive the basic as well as the variable benefits – thus often reaching the maximum possible value of R\$ 306 (U\$130,3).

During its decade-long existence, the PBF has been the subject of significant commentary both in the press (especially critical or complimentary

8 According to World Bank criteria, the Brazilian government considers as "extremely poor" families whose per capita monthly income is less than R\$70 (or U\$29.8). The World Bank considers those who survive with less than one dollar per day as indigents.

perspectives during election years)⁹ and in academia.¹⁰ In spite of the program's extraordinary breadth and controversial character, ethnography-based studies are rare. Here, we will argue that the PBF money, even if received in cash, is no simple abstract mediator. On the contrary, access to that cash (or to the PBF itself) implicates a series of moral values that extrapolate significantly the legal conditionalities on which the program is based. Based on ethnographic observation, we will underscore central aspects of this kind of morality: negotiations around the notion of vulnerability (a key concept for the social workers in charge of enrolling beneficiaries in the PBF), and the multiple meanings attributed to the Grant's cash from its recipients' point of view. In order to present our data synthetically, this diversity of meanings will be grouped as: money *of* and *for* women; money *of* and *for* children; money interdicted and shameful to men. This study is based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out between 2010 and 2012 in the town of Alvorada, in Porto Alegre's metropolitan region,¹¹ supplemented by interviews conducted among beneficiaries living in the Ilha da Pintada (Porto Alegre).¹²

The municipality of Alvorada is located around one hour drive from downtown Porto Alegre, capital city of Rio Grande do Sul. According to 2010 data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), it includes 195,718 people living in an area of 70,811 square kilometers. Its per capita Gross Domestic Product is R\$7,528 (around U\$3,206), according

9 Criticism may range from a conviction that the PBF should be stricter when enforcing conditionalities (since the legitimacy of transferring income to potentially economically active individuals is often at stake) to arguments against their relevance, given the "vulnerability" of beneficiary families. In the latter case, the issue is whether the Family Grant is indeed a right – being considered by some, including in academia (MEDEIROS, BRITTO and SOARES, 2008; COHEN, 2012), as a "quasi-right". As Cohen (2012: 10) argued, inasmuch as its budget is well defined and its character is temporary, it would constitute an "unstable" benefit, especially when compared with transfers channeled for instance through social security.

10 In this respect, it is worth remarking the interdisciplinary work of the Study Group on Poverty and Poverty-related Policies, based on the Federal University of Maranhão (GAEPP: <http://www.gaepf.ufma.br/site/>); literature found in the PBF Virtual Library; and a recent special issue on the 10 years of the PBF of the *Revista Política e Trabalho* (n.38, April 2013). In the social sciences, we would add the studies by Souza (2007), Rabelo (2011), and Ávila (2013).

11 This article is based on the M.A. thesis of Talita Jabs Eger (EGER, 2013), written under the supervision of Arlei Damo in the UFRGS's Social Anthropology Program.

12 Some adversities faced during fieldwork made it necessary to change field sites. Based on recommendations by friends and acquaintances, we ended up at Ilha da Pintada, in Porto Alegre. In this case, the aim was not to follow the social protection network as it was done in Alvorada, but to talk to families living in a different municipality – and therefore, immersed in other social configurations and relations – in order to probe into diverse understandings on the PBF cash, or, conversely, to corroborate the discourses gathered in Alvorada.

to the Economy and Statistics Foundation¹³, and its Human Development Index according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP/2010) is 0.6999 – that is, a Medium Human Development index¹⁴. According to 2013 quantitative data on the PBF (from the Federal Government’s PBF and Social Programs Unified Record¹⁵), in January that same year the municipality had 12,750 families registered in the CadÚnico, and the number of poor families¹⁶ as defined by the PBF¹⁷ was 9,324. Of these, around 7,619 were benefited by the PBF – in other words, program coverage in the municipality was of 81.7%. It should be highlighted that, until recently, the municipality (which was emancipated in 1952) did not have an organized database on its history and its residents’ ethnic and cultural make-up. Alvorada has been popularly known as a “dormitory” or “passage” town, and even though (according to its residents) this characteristic has been changing¹⁸, it does not yet have an identity beyond what is described in statewide media as “lawless land”¹⁹. This stigma, which has been continuously produced and nourished by high poverty and crime rates, somewhat influences the way the PBF is managed in Alvorada.

A special kind of money

During its ten years, the PBF has been subjected to multiple criticisms: for transferring cash directly to families; for its eligibility criteria (the chief criterion, income, is self-declared); and, most fundamentally, for its conditionalities. But in the press and among beneficiaries, none of these is as common as questions regarding the latter’s capacity to manage the funds they receive.

13 Cf. http://www.fee.tche.br/sitefee/pt/content/resumo/pg_municipios_detalhe.php?municipio=Alvorada. Last accessed, August 02, 2013.

14 Cf. http://www.atlasbrasil.org.br/2013/perfil/alvorada_rs. Last accessed, August 02, 2013.

15 The Report is available at: http://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagi/Rlv3/geral/relatorio_form.php?p_ibge=430060&tarea=0&ano_pesquisa=&mes_pesquisa=&saida=pdf&relatorio=153&mms=585,460,587,589,450,448,464,601. Last accessed, April 4, 2013.

16 Based on the 2010 Census.

17 According to the program’s guidelines, “extremely poor” families are those with a monthly per capita income below R\$70, and “poor” families are those with a monthly per capita income ranging from R\$70,01 to R\$140.

18 With the current expansion of local business, a significant share of the population is employed within the municipality.

19 Beginning in the decade of 2000, public managers and residents of Alvorada engaged in an effort to “construct” an identity for the city removed from this image of violence. They supported the publication of books reconstructing the municipality’s history based on oral accounts, doubled the number of local newspapers, (online) community radio stations, and so forth.

To a large extent, such criticism is addressed to spending on arguably superfluous items, presumed embezzlement, underestimation of income by the beneficiary families, and especially *misspending* – a notion based on certain assumptions about the appropriate ways to spend certain kinds of cash. These critiques suggest two opposite and complementary directions: the money’s origin and destination, that is, from the public purse to the pockets of the “poor”. This brings to surface judgments, tensions, and negotiations stemming less from utilitarian issues than from the moral management of these funds – or yet, to the imbrication between these two dimensions.

Another point can be made regarding the cash that is received as benefit. The program’s guidelines restrict its target population (in terms of age, poverty lines, and so forth), but make no reference as to how people should spend the money. Although the federal government has produced brochures discussing the advantages of having a bank account and the importance of appropriately managing money, the notion of appropriateness deployed is quite vague, and it is rarely discussed among the PBF agents and between them and the beneficiaries. The latter have full legal autonomy to spend the cash as they wish, as long as conditionalities are met. There are however social constraints that impose behavioral parameters on the beneficiaries more or less directly, stemming from everyday interactions with relatives, neighbors, school agents, or the local social protection network. These involve multiple discursive ways of asserting “more” or “less” appropriate ways of spending the PBF cash. Meanings attributed to this kind of money are shaped by existing social relations (for instance, gender relations), and, from our analytical perspective, they can on their turn help re-signify and remodel those relations.

The PBF is therefore a fertile terrain for thinking about a kind of money that not only comes from a government program (that is, public money), but that is directed to a particular social group (the “poor”) whose behavior, life and consumptions styles have been continuously stigmatized²⁰. Cash from the Family Grant is therefore socially different from other kinds of money, inasmuch as it is transferred by the state, is put preferably under the tutelage of (low-income)²¹ women, and, lastly, is aimed at including children

20 The social sciences literature discussing uses of money by the “poor” or “popular” groups is significant. For an updated discussion, including a review, see the studies by Muller (2009) and Wilkis (2013).

21 Nationwide, women comprise 93% of the program’s cardholders.

and adolescents in certain educational, health and welfare initiatives. It is therefore a kind of money that is loaded with class, gender and generational markers, as well as socially constructed meanings, moralities, classifications, and expectations that are being constantly tensioned.

We therefore consider the PBF cash to be a “special kind of money”, in Zelizer’s terms (1994; 2003; 2011): it is pervaded by different and sometimes controversial meanings, norms and expectations, from early discussions undergirding the program’s policies until its entrance in the beneficiaries’ home. In this scenario, marks, classifications and moralities are produced, which relate not only to that money’s source and destination, but also to the identity of its recipients. Various circuits emerge from the process of constructing the program (ZELIZER, 2005), since its framework prompt the articulation of multiple actors, and therefore continual communication and tensioning of meanings, classifications, values, emotions, moralities, and so forth. In this sense, the program’s money operates as a vector that gathers together all these elements. The assemblage of these various circuits (and their respective actors) around the program becomes important, because they function as mediators between the PBF managers and the beneficiaries. In this sense, criticisms addressing how the latter spend that money emerge most forcefully from the social, economic, and solidarity relations of which they are part.

At this point, it is useful to elaborate on some of these relations. Firstly, family relations within the household play a key part in the attribution of meaning to the PBF money. Secondly, there are those relations entertained with other groups, such as those responsible for the actions associated with the program’s conditionalities: schools, daycare, philanthropic institutions, NGOs, public health services, and so forth. Among these multiple agents and institutions, we chose to privilege the relationships between the PBF beneficiaries and the CRAS social workers. The latter have the power to decide on who is to be included or excluded from the program, besides showing a discursive repertoire on how the program’s money should be spent. As a rule, these discourses are strongly marked by moral judgments, which intersect and run in parallel with the beneficiaries’ own points of view. As much, or even more, important than the PBF monetary economy are issues pertaining to a moral economy, understood here as the management of a heterodox set of orientations tracing a sometimes faint line between what should and what

should not be done with the PBF cash. Our notion of moral economy was drawn from Fassin (2010; 2011 and 2012), and supposes that the program's beneficiaries have at their disposal a broad range of possibilities for justifying an equally broad range of uses to which the PBF money may be put. Ultimately, however, they cannot do without some justification, since this money is not viewed as belonging to the cardholder – that is, the individual who has legal access to the program's resources²².

Depending on how we look at it (or on the circuit of which it is part) the PBF money may be conceived in terms of different categories. It may be cash “for the poor”, “for women”, “of women”, “for children”, “of children” (as will be seen below), and so forth. These social (or emic) categories not only define the relationships that permeate this cash; they are themselves shaped by the social relations in which the beneficiaries are immersed, and their outlines are defined according to the moral configurations around which this money is assembled. Thus, the latter may vary depending on how they are organized and adjusted, for instance within domestic nuclei and in terms of the compositions and interactions within welfare networks. In Alvorada, these networks include state agencies providing social assistance services (the CRAS), partner entities of the Social Assistance Unified System (Sistema Único de Assistência Social, SUAS), and poorly formalized entities, organizations and agents who operate at a local level providing social protection actions and care.

On tensions and negotiations between beneficiary families and social workers

In Alvorada, access to the PBF happens through CRAS units, the program's “official gateway”. Before being entered in the CadÚnico, each family must be “enrolled in the CRAS” that has jurisdiction over its neighborhood, and then be seen by a social worker. This professional is in charge of making early assessments on the applicants' socio-economic status and their eligibility for the program. This visit is normally held after the families go to the CRAS,

22 Particularly important for our argument is Fassin's notion of “moral economy” as a non-monetary economy, that is, a way of managing the “production, distribution, circulation and consumption of emotions and values, norms and obligations in the social space” (FASSIN and EIDELIMAN, 2012: 9). On the influence of James Scott and E.P. Thompson on his formulation, see Fassin (2012:19-47). A slightly different, but equally insightful, notion of moral economy can be found in the work of Fontaine (2008).

but according to those running the program locally, in some cases, when there are doubts about the information provided to the CadÚnico, or when the record is not approved by the CEF²³ technicians, a new “household visit” is required²⁴. This visit aims at assessing living conditions and the durable goods owned by the family, in order to verify the information declared by the applicants. Even though the technicians who carry it out do not consider it to be an “investigation”, it is common for them to seek further information on the applicants among their neighbors and relatives.

The CRAS is in charge of monitoring the families enrolled in the program. These (mostly female) professionals are therefore in charge not only of offering and following up on some of the services prescribed by the conditionalities. As they carry out their task, they make judgments on how the beneficiaries should deploy the grant, and commonly draw on eligibility criteria that stray from formal program guidelines. While the PBF norms are based on delimitation by income and its categorization according to so-called “poverty lines”, social workers often act based on notions of “vulnerability” as key eligibility criterion. This notion has become current in the universe of social assistance (beyond the PBF), and is indeed a flexible category, which can be refashioned and adapted to multiple situations. The absence of men or providers is no doubt a major marker for characterizing a family or person as “vulnerable”. Since the concept may be deployed broadly, the very subjects who are the target of the intervention – the “poor” – have assimilated it, thus constructing appropriate narratives and performances in their quest to become beneficiaries. This strategy must be deployed carefully, however, because “vulnerability” in excess may end up legitimating more radical kinds of intervention by the state apparatus, such as jailing spouses (in case of violence against women) or damaging one’s status within the local community (especially in those cases where the household nucleus includes a man who is potentially able to provide for his family but fails to do so).

23 The CEF is both a payer and operator agency. The bank is in charge not only of paying the benefits; it also runs the program through the CadÚnico – more precisely, it automatically selects from its records those families that are eligible for receiving the benefits according to the program’s criteria.

24 After the preliminary registration process is successfully completed, every fifteen days the data gathered by the social workers is transferred to the CadÚnico agency in the municipality. Within two days, they are included in the system, and within 48 hours the CEF issues a Social Identification Number (NIS). The estimate for receiving the benefit ranges from 1 to 6 months, according to the agents with whom we spoke. This waiting period is attributed to the fact that the CEF runs records automatically, in such a way that those with lower income are cleared first, thus receiving their cards and payments before the others.

The composition of the household is therefore a key element in determining eligibility. On the one hand, the PBF aims at benefiting families by transferring income and supporting access to basic social rights (by articulating the domains of health, education, social assistance and complementary actions and programs). On the other hand, there is a clear focus on women, who comprise the majority of cardholders (in Alvorada, they account for 97%), and on children and adolescents, who benefit from public services through the conditionalities. The actions promoted by the PBF are therefore sharply delimited in terms of gender and generation, keeping men at a distance from welfare programs and activities. But the families also play a major role in this process: in terms of the information to be included (or not) in the CadÚnico on the one hand, and of the negotiations over (and sometimes, resistance against) their participation in the activities and actions promoted by the CRAS, on the other. These are common causes of tension between the beneficiaries and the social workers.

During fieldwork, especially when following the social workers, observations were carried out in two out of five CRAS centers located in Alvorada. During the *household visits*, we observed disputes, tensions and negotiations between the beneficiary families and the social workers. Confrontations usually stemmed from the beneficiaries' attempts at resisting some intervention caused (or promoted) by the workers. In all cases, questions regarding the moral economy pervade the actions of social workers, and may be unveiled during unsuspected circumstances – as can be seen in the episode that will be recounted as follows.

One day, one of the of the municipalities' older social workers, Daniele²⁵, talked about the history of social assistance in Alvorada, when young Manoela silently entered the room holding a baby. Daniele stood up abruptly and ran towards the door to embrace her. They held each other enthusiastically, and exchanged words of affection. Suddenly, Daniele asked harshly, "Whose baby is this?" Smiling, Manoela answered that it was hers, and that she was there to show it to Daniele. Daniele then declared to be upset with the girl, because she had not taken the "necessary precautions" for avoiding pregnancy, thus wasting an "important time" of her life and jeopardizing her "education". Faced with such scolding, Manoela just stood there,

25 In order to protect the identity of our research subjects, all names included here are fictional.

impassive. All of a sudden, for everyone's surprise, she burst into laughter. In fact, Manoela had taken part in numerous projects offered by the CRAS during her childhood and adolescence, always under Daniele's supervision. Daniele, on her turn, felt like "a mother" to the girl, and offered her personal advice besides her regular work duties – related, for instance, to avoiding early pregnancy. This *advising* had been so recurrent that Manoela thought it would be funny to give the social worker "a scare" by showing up with a baby, who turned out to be her godson. The performance would not be complete if Manoela had not in fact continued to study and work, "as always". After this *grand finale*, Daniele was visibly relieved: "Thank God!"

Even though situations such as this were routine in the CRAS, the everyday of social workers included real tensions, triggered especially during their regular "household visits". One exemplary case is that of Cigana. Although she had gone to the CRAS in order to solicit the visit as a condition for applying for a basket of basic staples, she was overtly upset about the social workers' (sometimes invasive) actions. Ultimately, her complaints got to a point of refusing the provision of a kind of food offered by the workers. During the visit, she was questioned about why she would not accept a package of frankfurters, to which she answered straightforwardly: "Never! I would never eat that. It's *egum* food!"²⁶.

Not all encounters between social workers and beneficiaries are characterized by open conflict, however. Much to the contrary: most are permeated by veiled tensions, by the unsaid, gazes that do not meet, lowered heads, and unfathomable sighs. It was interesting to observe how people negotiate their participation in the actions promoted by the workers, and the constant tension that pervades these relations. The workers justify their intervention on the grounds that continuous monitoring would help reduce the "vulnerability" of families, since they act (or should, according to their own perceptions) as mediators between the families and other public services. Families, on their turn, submit themselves to the intervention of social service when they recognize an ultimate need, or when they seek access to a particular kind of "right" or service. Normally, they approach the social workers and public service units when they are in need of punctual, immediate solutions, such as bus tickets, basic staples, documental evidence of their condition of

26 In *candomblé*, *egum* is an entity associated with the spirits of the dead.

“poverty” or “vulnerability”, submission of I.D. documentation, and so forth. The workers, on their turn, attribute this “short term” view to the way social service agents have operated in the country during the last decades (especially prior to the 1988 Constitution). Thus, in Alvorada, social workers have not had the necessary conditions for appropriately carrying out the intermediation between families and other public services, and this largely explains the former’s skepticism towards the effectiveness of their actions.

The language of suffering: from “poverty” to “vulnerability”

It is interesting to remark that, even though the PBF’s chief criterion is income (which demarcates poverty lines), in practice, when registering new beneficiaries, the social workers do not carry out “visits” in search neither for “the poor” (as defined by the program framework), nor for “the poorest among the poor” (according to the focusing principle); they go, rather, after the “vulnerable”. As we understood it, this stemmed from the principles guiding the actions of social service. The Social Assistance Organic Law (Lei Orgânica de Assistência Social, LOAS) establishes social assistance as a right for Brazilian citizens. But inasmuch as it is directly to those that, by principle, lack access to basic rights, targeted subjects are required to provide evidence of this condition before applying to social services. Social workers are well aware of debates around the PBF in the public sphere (regarding poverty, the preferential channeling of resources to women, concerns about services provided to children). But they are not passive implementers of the moral values and expectations implicated in the program. If, on the one hand, their actions unfold from the measures and controls prescribed in the program framework, on the other they align the services they provide and the relationships they build through the PBF with the moral principles orienting the circuit they constitute along with the subjects of their interventions.

In addition, the “eligible” (potential beneficiaries) show an effort to demonstrate or validate their own needs. Let us bring back Cigana, a 35-year old, unemployed mother of five, who went to the CRAS in order to request a basket of basic staples. The workers, who faced high demand for a limited amount of baskets, had to “run visits” carrying along the baskets and the addresses of those who had been identified as “priorities” after having visited the CRAS – a status to be confirmed by the visit. In this context, the

applicants had to demonstrate that their poverty was worse, truer, more intense and urgent than the poverty of others. And so it was with Cigana. The social workers' task was to find evidence of what Cigana had stated two days earlier in the CRAS: even though a recipient of the PBF benefit, she still could not provide for her family. The visit to her home aimed at double-checking the veracity of her claims. Sitting in front of her, a social worker and a psychologist inquired about her current situation: was she still married? How many children did she have? Where were they? How many lived with her? Why did she keep on having children? Did the husband work? On what? What about her, did she work? Why not? And finally, why did she seek the CRAS?

Cigana answered the questions while trying to find points of entry for reasserting the precariousness of her living conditions. Between one answer and another, she would move around the kitchen, opening and closing cabinets, showing inside the fridge and the stove, showcasing empty pans: "Come and see! Look, I have nothing here. I'm not lying! Come and see!". Faced with the workers' refusal to take part in the proposed interaction, claiming that the conversation was still ongoing, Cigana called her three-year old daughter Bianca. She then pulled the girls' pants up to the knees, pointing to her skinny legs. Cigana needed one basket of staples, and got it. As we moved towards the street in order to get the staples from the city vehicle that accompanied us, she asked what was in the basket. "Rice, beans, pasta, sweet and salty crackers, coffee, wheat flour, soybean oil, sugar and salt", the worker replied. Before we said goodbye, we heard "wow, that's great! I haven't had coffee in fifteen days". She then offered us a last piece of evidence of her "vulnerability" by immediately handing over to Bianca a package of crackers.

In another occasion, we went to a house headed by a "single mother", who had requested to be enrolled in the PBF. The social workers were doubtful about some of the information she had provided, thus deeming the visit necessary. When arriving at the gate, the agent declared, sarcastically: "This one thinks she'll deceive us. Look at her house. It's obvious that she doesn't need it!". Once inside the house, after a set of questions regarding family, professional and financial conditions, we wrapped up the visit certain that that case would be "archived". According to the social worker, besides the many questions she asked, she also observed the house, the furniture, the clothes the mother and the children were wearing – they were among those who "don't really need [the benefit], but try to take advantage of it".

Another instance revealing of relations between “poverty” and “vulnerability” – and about money and morality – was that of Maria Rosa²⁷. While her economic status made her eligible to enrollment in the PBF, other indicators undermined her case. A 46 year-old mother of three, she lived with her youngest, 13-year old daughter in a “small, simple but clean” apartment, as she used to say. After divorcing her first husband, Maria Rosa experienced sharp financial decline. While she was married, she lived in a duplex apartment in one of Porto Alegre’s most expensive neighborhoods. According to her, she had “employees, cars, properties... everything in the plural”. After divorcing, she kept the couple’s apartment; however, influenced by her new husband, she exchanged it for a house, which she ended up losing during her second divorce. Since then, Maria Rosa and her daughter have lived off of donations and the Family Grant. They received donations of clothes (including underwear – something she highlighted quite often), food, furniture, bus tickets, and medicine. The apartment where she lived, located in a middle-class neighborhood in Porto Alegre, had been donated by her father. Her family helped as best as they could: through donations, hiring her as a house cleaner every once in a while, but never directly, “through money”. In a way, Maria Rosa felt responsible for what happened, and that was why her family would never give her any cash. Since she did not have any income, she was therefore eligible according to the PBF economic criteria – and she was, indeed, a beneficiary of the program. The few times she went to the CRAS, she claimed, “people looked at me as if I was an alien. They glanced sideways. As if I was not meant to be there”. Maria Rosa was indeed an upright woman, head always up high with a firm glance, impeccable hair. Her simple, slightly faded clothes almost go unnoticed. Indeed, she did not look, behave, move, gesture, speak and dress as most CRAS “users”. She definitely did not fit the “poor” stereotype, and she was well aware of that. “People cannot believe that I have it rough. I’ve talked, explained, recounted my situation, but there’s no use”, she said. The way she found of lending a truth aura to her story was to keep a good record of all documents demonstrating the unfortunate loss of her house. Her poverty could be confirmed by the numerous documents she carried along, and exhibited regardless of her interlocutors’ will. What Maria Rosa did not know, however, is that the very lack of documents is, from

27 Different from the other beneficiaries mentioned thus far, Maria Rosa lived in the municipality of Porto Alegre.

the social workers' perspective, an eloquent demonstration of vulnerability. Based on the PBF characteristics, and the way the social workers mediate this public policy, one is led to infer that dispossession is the chief gateway to the program. The notion of "right" – which, as a rule, accompanies public policies, as Biehl (2013) has shown for patients in need of special drugs who access them through legal means – only figures very faintly in the case of the PBF. The view that the Family Grant cash is a kind of "aid" is much more common than references to it as a "right" – what suggests an interpretation of the PBF as pervaded by a moral gift economy.

When asked about how she felt about her "new" social and financial situation, she affirmed to feel "bad, sad, desolate, and hopeless". But whenever she went to the CRAS or to the church (which offers donations), she became aware that her situation was not "that bad" after all. "There's people in much worse off than me. (...) These [women] who go to the CRAS, for instance, they are always dirty, wearing filthy clothes. They are poorer than I am. (...) If I walked around as dirty as them, the social workers would believe me". In this context, the language of suffering (MELLO, 2011), triggered by the relationship between beneficiaries and social workers, is aimed not only at redressing vulnerabilities, but producing them. This is an important point since, when the social workers were not around, none of our interlocutors defined themselves as "poor" when asked about their financial condition. They always attributed that category to other people who would be "worse off", or deployed it when describing what they considered to be indicators of "poverty" – filth, for instance. The program's agents, on the other hand, worked with classifications and denominations that were part of their everyday practices and life experiences, and according to evaluations about the appropriate moment to deploy these markers. Different from most of the beneficiaries with whom we spoke, Maria Rosa did not have a family and personal history associated with "poverty", and neither did she have the skill to claim public services by performing this condition.

Mine, yours, ours: money for "what is necessary"

When asked about when and how they were led to apply for the PBF, all women referred to a moment when men – her partners or their children's father – became (deliberately or not) absent. As a rule, when informed about

the program's eligibility criteria and the equations that determined poverty line thresholds, some women mentioned strategies of omitting income earned by their partners (whenever there was one). There was always the possibility of not mentioning to the agents the existence of male providers, and of making sure that the visits did not happen at a time when they were at home – thus avoiding to be caught in case they had lied about it. Two main reasons moved these women to “conceal” men and their income. Firstly, as Letícia explained, “they [government agents] may access [her husband] Rubens’ SSN”, and from then on “see everything” – their “debts”, “wages”, “how much he has in the bank”, everything! Alternatively, it could be a strategy for obtaining the benefit without the partner’s knowledge and interference in its management.

Rose, a married 31 year-old mother of two (14 and 16 years old), had been receiving the benefit for around four years. Her husband worked as an automobile mechanic. According to her, the benefit was used to purchase clothes and food: in her words, “not the bulk”²⁸ (referring to basic staple items) but the “mixture” (“deli items” [cheese, ham], yogurt, meat, etc.). The “bulk”, as well as the rent, light and water bills, were Gilberto’s responsibility. When asked about why she did not include his name in the CadÚnico, at first she said, “I’m not sure why. I just didn’t. The woman asked if we were married or partners [stable domestic partnership]. If we were married, I’d have to hand her the documents. But we weren’t, there was no paper. So I didn’t include him”. After a while, however, she explained that Gilberto would not let her “touch his money”. He was the one who purchased the household goods, or, whenever she went along with him to the market, he made the payment and controlled her influence on what items could be bought. By not declaring her husband’s name, she therefore secured some “cash of her own”, since, as she declared, “it makes a difference that the card is under the woman’s name. If it were under his name, he wouldn’t give me anything. He doesn’t really help me”. Finally, she accused him of consuming certain products without sharing them with the rest of the family, since he only took responsibility for “bulk” items: “he eats everything, the good and the better, outside of the house”.

In this respect, it should be remarked that, since men were considered responsible for the “bulk”, the PBF money was regarded as “an aid”, normally

28 It is interesting to remark that this reference to “female money” as opposed to “male money” can be found in other income transfer programs, such as in Argentina: the *Asignación Universal por Hijo Para la Protección Social*, as described by Hornes (2012).

aimed at purchasing the “mixture” and items for the children: “better” school materials, clothes, and shoes. Another point in common among female beneficiaries living in Alvorada was the fact that they all referred to the program’s cash as money “for the children” – managed by the mothers, but aimed at catering to the children’s basic needs (food, clothing, and in some cases, medicine). According to another version, drawn from the ethnography carried out in the outskirts of Porto Alegre (but not necessarily associated with geographic factors), the PBF cash was also understood as money “for the children”. But here, these funds were re-signified according to the logic of citizenship: they were regarded as children’s rights, and a “reward” for meeting the program’s conditionalities.

Vera was a young, 29 year-old married (or “living together”, as she preferred) woman, mother of four children (15, 12, 9 and 6 years old). A resident of Ilha da Pintada (in Porto Alegre) for around ten years, she worked as a house cleaner in order to complement her husband’s income. According to her, Gustavo was the “household head”, because he “works”, “leaves home 5 [a.m.] and only returns late at night”. Since she became a beneficiary of the PBF around three years earlier, Vera dropped the cleaning service and became fully dedicated to household chores. She proudly explained that the “PBF income” allowed her “the privilege of taking the children to school”, and also of “purchasing clothes and shoes for them”. These items used to be bought only in Christmas time, but now they could buy them every month, if so they wished. Gustavo’s job was informal, and that is why she preferred not to mention his monthly income to the CadÚnico. Every month, she received around R\$150 (U\$64) from the PBF, and she believed that this money – which she defined as both “an aid from the government” and “a right of low-income citizens” – should be destined to those who do not have the privilege of a formal job or fixed income. This was precisely her family’s situation upon enrollment in the program. Vera was unaware that she “had a right to the Grant” until she was invited for a temporary job as data collector for the CadÚnico in her neighborhood. Hired by an NGO which was in charge of registering all those who remained excluded from the program, Vera found out that the chief criterion was income rather than the fact of being a “single” or “divorced mother”, as she believed to be the case up until then. This is exemplary of the gap between the PBF framework and the way it is effectively appropriated by the eligible and/or beneficiary public.

Commenting on “inappropriate” uses of the benefit, Vera listed three things that should not be done with the PBF money: buying alcohol, cigarettes, and “leaving it with the husband”. Vera managed both the program’s cash and Gustavo’s earnings, as well as gains from eventual cleaning jobs. Speaking of “appropriate” uses, she affirmed that, besides acquiring “better” clothes for the children, the PBF money provided the family with items such as better quality school materials, diversified and reliable foodstuffs (such as more meat, yogurt, and produce), an extra box of milk (12 cartons) every month, shampoo and conditioner for the girls, besides paying for one landline (social tariff), monthly cinema sessions, and, “little by little”, for the materials necessary for enlarging the family’s house²⁹. For her, even though the money was under her care, it was in fact “of the children”, since they were the ones abiding for the conditionalities by going to school “no matter what”.

Nine-year old Bernardo was a “studious, hard-working” kid. As she told us, he was the only child who “really” enjoyed studying. The two girls, 12 and 15, used to miss school every once in a while. In an attempt to motivate her children not to skip classes, she established that if, by Family Grant payday, there had been no unjustified school absences, they could all go for a stroll in downtown Porto Alegre, with the right to a movie session. Bernardo, who was hard-working and a movie lover, begun to control his sisters’ school attendance. On a piece of cardboard attached to the kitchen wall, he would draw a monthly calendar adding an “X” for each attendance and “F” for each absence, next to the names of his school-age siblings. This panel, strategically located where everyone could see it, made sure that his sisters’ school attendance was visible, thus providing the mother with a kind of control she did not have. The girls harassed and pinched him as a punishment, but according to Vera, they too began to attend school more frequently in order to avoid the penalty they all had to suffer if any one of them missed school.

Like Vera, 25-year old Valquíria stopped working when she enrolled in the PBF. Her husband worked as a fishmonger, and earned less than one minimal wage every month. When she worked as a house cleaner, she earned the same as her PBF benefit. She suffered from a series of health issues that she

29 When we met, she proudly mentioned that Family Grant funds had been invested in bricks and cement for “erecting two other rooms” in their house. They were not yet as she wished, however, because the floor was still “unfinished”; as she explained, she was “little by little” acquiring the flooring required for completing the house renovation works.

attributed to the hard job as a cleaner, and so decided to stay home in order to take care of their 6-year old son Pietro. At that time, she was determined to resume her education, which she had quit when she got married: she enrolled in evening high school, and made plans to attend college. Valquíria wished to become a nutritionist. During the day, while her son went to public preschool and her husband worked at the fish shop, she took care of household chores and sold cosmetics in order to “enhance a bit” their family income.

For Valquíria, the PBF cash was for “buying Pietro’s stuff”. She declared that, in spite of recognizing that money as “her son’s right” and an “extra income” that the government made available for him since his father’s income was not fixed, sometimes the family had to use those funds when shopping for groceries – something that she tried to avoid whenever possible. Pietro used to come along with her on paydays, and he knew “that’s his money”: he demanded toys, clothes, shoes, and candy. The month before our meeting, the boy had “forced” her to “purchase a Ben 10 [cartoon character] sweatshirt”. She agreed because she acknowledged that the family’s “make do” in fact belonged to the child. Whenever they were able to pay their bills without the need to “touch” the PBF money, they put whatever was left in a piggybank that the boy had got from his grandmother. The money saved there was used at the end of the year to supplement family funds dedicated to trips to the beach and “leisure” in general. Like her, Ivânio “does not have the guts to spend the Grant money”. Once, she recounted, the father needed R\$50 (U\$21) in order to pay a late bill. He took Pietro’s piggybank, called him to the kitchen table, explained what was going on, and “asked to borrow that amount”. Upset, Pietro threw himself on the floor, cried and showed his discontent for the proposal; but he eventually agreed, after the father guaranteed that that value would be returned by the end of the week. Unable to do so, Ivânio had to borrow from a co-worker in order to “pay back” Pietro. Even though this narrative may have been overstated in some respects, it is still significant. The PBF money may not be entirely exclusive to the child, but is at least idealized as such.

The cases presented here share a belief that the PBF cash should be managed by the women, and, provided that there is another source of income “for the bulk”, it should be spent on the children’s needs – or, depending on the family’s finances, by the children themselves. At another level, the PBF cash appears again as a kind of female money, being appropriated for

purchasing the “mixture”, the *fine* (as opposed to the “bulk”), that is, items considered superfluous but no less indispensable.

But for many other beneficiary families, the PBF is the sole (or most regular) source of income. In these cases, men/fathers are either unemployed (if not entirely absent) or unable to provide for their families. The PBF money thus becomes a kind of resource aimed at basic provisions. Men may react to this violently – by “stealing” the women’s money – or by becoming themselves its managers. In both cases, women feel abused and wronged, since they understand that those funds are directed, above all, to them.

Viviane was a 27 year-old mother of three (12 and 10 years old, and a 2-month old baby). She told us that her partner was the cardholder, and indeed this fact was the object of gossiping in the neighborhood. Jandira, her neighbor, once mentioned that Paulo César “had prevailed” because Viviane was illiterate. She believed that the cardholder should always be the woman, but the husband had taken advantage of his wife’s ignorance. When asked about the value of their benefit, Viviane guaranteed that they received around R\$40 (U\$17) – which is highly unlikely, since this amount is less than the program’s minimum. Five people lived in her four-room house: herself, the three children, and the husband, 32-year old Paulo César, with whom she had been for 14 years. He worked as a recycler, and, as she explained, the purchase of a horse for “pulling his cart” triggered a lot of “gossiping” among neighbors. For her, the Family Grant money should go to the women and the children, as her neighbors had warned her. Paulo César thought, however, that the money should be directed to the needs that he identified. Thus, when his horse died, he used the Grant money to finance the purchase of another animal. He made a deal with an acquaintance who, because of that “guaranteed money”, accepted to sell him the horse through monthly installments. As she explained, the money wasn’t always under her husband’s responsibility. Previously, she was the one who managed it; she would then buy “food and sandals for everyone. When I did it, it was a sure thing”.

This particular case brings to surface how some men appropriate the benefit. Paulo César was criticized not only because he kept the card, but especially because, when using it, he *deviated* the funds to ends that their neighbors deemed inadequate. Like other female interlocutors, Viviane and her neighbors viewed the Grant as money to be spent on “necessary” items,

but not necessarily on what they called “bulk items”. The “bulk” should be men’s responsibility. Viviane expressed her dissatisfaction with the fact that she became unable to buy sandals for the children or the “mixture” (cheese, ham, cookies and candy). According to her, Paulo César was unaware of what the children liked to eat, and how long these items would last. She used to shop for household items (including groceries) every week, while he was doing it once a month.

We met Edna through Paula, who ran Alvorada’s preschool. A 25-year old mother of two girls (9 and 7 years old), she had been facing financial difficulties since her partner was jailed. Her daughters had opposite school schedules, what made it difficult for her to have a fixed job. Sometimes Edna had permission from some of her “bosses” to bring one of them along with her, but since all her cleaning jobs were in Porto Alegre, she was always late to drop off or pick up the other in school. After Manuel was arrested, Edna’s family, and then his own relatives, moved from the neighborhood in order to avoid the shame caused by the crime (Edna never mentioned him), and due to the fact that she continued to visit him in jail. She found in Paula the much-needed support for overcoming the obstacles involved in conciliating a job and the care of her children. They negotiated a value that was fair for both of them, and Edna offered the PBF money as guarantee. As she explained, before Paula began to “take care” of her children, her “card was blocked” three times because she had failed to keep her daughters attending school regularly, or to satisfy some other conditionality. With Paula making sure that the children attended school and conditionalities were all met, Edna destined the full value of the grant to the school: “I leave it all at the school”, she said. This way, she could continue to work as a cleaner during the weekdays and on Saturdays, thus tripling her income.

Like Paulo César’s, Edna’s PBF money was therefore directed at supporting her productive activities. While she deployed it in order to make sure that her children would stay in school and meet the program’s conditionalities, thus allowing her to keep working as a house cleaner, he acquired a new horse in order to keep working as a collector of recyclables. The difference lay however in the legitimacy attributed to that spending. While Edna was praised as a “strong”, “hard-working” woman, Paulo César was accused of inappropriately taking his wife’s card (a fact that has not been confirmed) and of “not buying one carton of milk for the children”.

The relevance of different “poverty” trajectories should also be taken into account. Even though most of our interlocutors grew up and lived much of their lives under dire socio-economic conditions, as was indeed the case with most PBF beneficiaries, there were some exceptions. Maria Rosa, for instance, “had been” poor for around 13 years. Although she lived in a middle-class neighborhood in Porto Alegre, and had “everything she needs at home”, she had to manage her scarce resources very carefully. The apartment where she lived with her daughter had two bedrooms, kitchen, bathroom, and a large living room. The furniture was a relic of the “good times”, and was kept intact because most items were untouched or protected with a plastic cover. Maria Rosa had discount on her light and telephone bills, but in order to save further she used to keep the lights off (some of the rooms didn’t even have light bulbs) and only used the telephone for receiving calls. Her daughter attended public school, in accordance with the family’s “reality”. Her efforts to save went beyond the light and telephone bills: neither of them purchased clothes (including underwear). She also showed concerns about the gas stove, only cooking what was strictly necessary and privileging foods that could be eaten raw. According to her calculations, during the winter it was cheaper to heat their bath water on the stove than using the electric shower. Commenting on the fact that they only wore second-hand clothes, Maria Rosa conceded, “there are those who care, who think it’s bad [laughter]. We don’t mind. I don’t buy anything, not even panties. It’s all second-hand. What else can I do?”. And she completed, “at least we have a lot of stuff, a lot of clothes, underwear, socks... some people are worse off than us! We cannot complain”. Her daughter Gabriela’s school materials were also donations. Whenever she gained notebooks, Maria Rosa ripped off the used sheets so that the girl could use the rest of it – as she put it, “we keep on recycling”.

When we talked about the discomfort her daughter experienced at school – according to her, due to the evident economic disparity between her and the other students –, she remarked that the girl was laughed at “because of her panties”. “Last thing”, she recounted, she was bullied for not shaving – “but beauty salon is superfluous ... I don’t go to any”. Showing her hands, she explained that she painted her fingernails at home. Similarly, she removed her body hair using tweezers, and Gabriela began to do the same in order to placate the bullying at school. Just like other beneficiaries, Maria Rosa believed that the benefit should be directed to her daughter, but she still

imposed further restrictions on the way it was spent: “the PBF money is for food. I think it should be specifically for her, but in order to buy food, not superficialities”.

Of all female (or male, in the case of Paulo César) beneficiaries mentioned here, Maria Rosa was perhaps the only who strictly directed the PBF cash to expected ends. Yet, in all cases, the way the money was spent was justified based on “needs” – although the very notion of what was “necessary” seemed to have been broadened by the introduction of the PBF money into the household economy of low-income families.

Effectively, the moral configuration assembled around the PBF money may vary according to other ways of organizing and adjusting, for instance, within domestic nuclei and in the compositions and interactions that take place within the broader social protection network. With respect to domestic configurations, the cases brought here orbited not only around the absence or presence of men/fathers (always a frequent topic in discussions about the program’s target group), but around their occupations and the effective role they played in providing for their families. Similarly, the trajectory of “poor” beneficiaries significantly refracted the understandings and attributions addressing that kind of money. Families whose social and economic conditions have undergone positive changes allow themselves the privilege of acquiring goods and consuming items that did not figure among their previous priorities. On the other hand, the beneficiary who had been “rich”, who once had “all that is good and better”, came to regard the PBF money as a possibility for maintaining at least her basic dignity once she became “poor”. As we understood it, this attitude is revealing less of the benefit’s purchasing power than of the fact that it protected the beneficiary from exposure to the job market and the kind of judgment that she would likely face. To save, “prioritize”, acquire “only what’s strictly necessary” were not exclusive to Maria Rosa. The difference is that most beneficiary families found a way of extending the domain of the “necessary”: leisure, “brand” clothes, yogurt, an extra box of milk at the end of the month, a portion of meat instead of the usual pack of frankfurters, or shampoo specific for one’s hair type. These privileges, which belonged to a few, became ordinary after the PBF. In other words, once it became accessible, what used to be “superfluous” became “necessary”.

It is precisely the perspective of having a “guaranteed” income at the

end of each month that opens up, for some beneficiaries, new possibilities not only in terms of consumption but of work and production (in spite of a persistent fear of “losing the grant” – which stems not only from a view of it as not being a right, but also from the difficulties that most people face when trying to making sense of the program’s bureaucratic intricacies). Exemplary of this claim was the beneficiary who offered the full grant as payment for her two daughters’ care, therefore making viable her regular participation in the job market.

Concluding remarks

By reformulating and consolidating in the PBF the various cash-transfer programs that channeled resources to the poor, the Brazilian government implemented a bold strategy. Not only did it increase spending and the number of beneficiaries – it also monetized the benefits. To deliver money on the hands of the poor seemed too risky. If this were no more than a clientelistic strategy, it would have made more sense to maintain gifts associated with goods; the classic sociological literature tends, after all, to emphasize the impersonal character of money. The personal character of transactions, it is worth recalling, is one of the key elements in economies based on conventional gift giving. The Lula government’s public relations did succeed however in associating the PBF with that particular administration, by rendering ineffective the opposition’s attempts at highlighting the fact that most CCTPs existed previously to, and were in fact the embryo of, the PBF. Yet, the visible commotion around the program in the conservative media, where Brazilian society’s most elitist segments express their opinions, reveals class prejudices and stereotypes that transcend national borders. The conviction that the poor are incapable of managing their own lives, not the least managing cash, is so widespread as rendering meaningless any effort at retracing its spatial or temporal socio-genesis. Given that money is a universal mediator, and therefore easily reconverted, the beneficiaries’ room for maneuver is relatively broad, as the ethnographic instances brought here illustrated. Even though the benefit value lags behind the dire needs of families living below the poverty line, significant room for maneuver was found in how they accessed and effectively deployed the program’s cash benefit. This is unsettling for many, and those who do not admit the possibility of granting them that kind

of freedom have always criticized the PBF. The ethnography showed however that not many beneficiaries view the PBF from a public policy perspective, nor the money they receive as constituting a right. The notion of aid – even if from the government – is still pervasive among them, but it is even more so among the program’s critics. For the neoliberal imaginary, public policies are often regarded with suspicion, and the fact that a benefit granted by the state may be used with some degree of freedom sounds like an aberration.³⁰ But in fact, between the PBF framework and its effective implementation there are multiple mediators. These are mediators of a specific kind, engendered by the program itself. As remarked in the introduction, during the transformation of the early Brazilian cash-transfer programs into the PBF there was explicit concern with reducing bureaucratic and political mediations. Why, then, we resume this issue in order to conclude in an apparently opposite direction, suggesting that the PBF has multiple and specific kinds of mediators?

Firstly, the PBF provides cash; not a lot, but still, cash. As is well known, money is an important mediator in our society. If a woman – and here it is necessary to decline the gender, since it is one of the PBF’s chief characteristics – receives a stamp for milk or gas, her leeway for making further mediations based on these goods is much smaller than if she had received the equivalent in cash. Money obviously stretches possibilities not only for consumption but for negotiation, as was shown early on through the cases of Edna and Paulo César. Edna handed over the PBF money to the school so that her daughters would be taken care of while she worked as a cleaner and thus enhanced her income. Paulo César offered the PBF benefit as guarantee in order to purchase a horse by installments – even if this was a controversial attitude from the point of view of his neighbors.

Secondly, by offering cash, the PBF strays from conventional welfare programs for the poor towards labor protection policies, such as those that secure minimal income regardless of whether the subject is employed (minimal wage) or not (unemployment insurance, retirement, pensions,

30 As the contemporary literature has emphasized (ZELIZER, 2005; HART, 2007), the PBF grant lies, in a sense, on an ambiguous terrain between the poles of the personal and the impersonal. Many claims against the program underscore that its budget is ultimately sustained by other citizens, thus reintroducing in the debates the question of its personal character. In any case, the ethnographic experience underlying this study does not allow us to delve further into this issue. But that does prevent us from calling attention to the potential productivity of discussions on relations between the public and the private, the personal and the impersonal, the sacred and the profane, freedom and conditionality, and so forth.

and so forth). The PBF delivers money to people who are not regular, formal workers – which does not mean they do not work. This is a controversial point, and thus the need for discursive mediations. To grant an elder, a widow or a handicapped a government pension seems less liable to justification than money received through the PBF, even if these funds come from the same source. This unevenness stems largely from views regarding the moral value of work in society at large. The PBF touches that nerve, by establishing a triangular relationship between extreme poverty, money, and conditionalities.

Once again, money appears as a mediator, for which poverty is the front door and conditionalities are the living room. There is no exit door, however, and indeed the PBF has not been conceived from this perspective. Most important for our argument is the fact that the conditions for staying in the program are associated less with the conventional meaning of work than with compliance with conditionalities that are part of women's responsibilities: care of the children. Thus, there are extreme cases such as that of Cigana, where the precariousness of living conditions (among which, poverty) is such that provides little room for maneuver. In others cases, it is possible for women to use the PBF as leverage in their management of tasks that are socially considered to be their responsibility: to take care of the children and of the household budget. In certain circumstances, it is even possible to become financially independent from their partners.

As is well known, the program prioritizes women as cardholders, on the grounds that they are more apt at managing the domestic economy. It correspondingly tends to consider women as being more “vulnerable”, since they face more obstacles for entering the formal job market, and normally keep the children in case of divorce. If, on the one hand, the PBF is generous to women, on the other it reaffirms certain attributions and stereotypes. It is based on the assumption that men/fathers are absent or, when present, that they are unable to take responsibility for caring for the family in the same way as women do. By prioritizing women/mothers, children and adolescents, the program's guidelines take male absence and/or lack of responsibility for granted in the case of families considered “vulnerable”. Our female interlocutors understood this well, and played with that possibility either in order to access the benefit more easily, or in order to gain the opportunity to manage a kind of income that lies outside of their partners' reach. Men, on their turn, seemed to understand and feel the weight of moral reproach, since to receive

the PBF is to acknowledge failure to provide for one's family – thus their feeling of dishonor and uneasiness before the social workers.

The ethnographic account presented here aimed at showing, moreover, that management of the PBF benefit is not random. It was not our concern whether the money was applied or not according to the program's guidelines – a question that has been the object of curiosity both within and without academia. Rather, what moved us was a typically anthropological interest on the meanings of this kind of money, and how they were constructed through the articulation of different worlds. The “poor” definitely do not spend their money on the first thing they see – or, better said, even if they do, they do so through the mediation of symbolic lenses shaped by moral values that are being constantly tensioned. Not all spend that money appropriately, according to the PBF beneficiaries' own views, but all have a precise idea of how they should proceed, and even of the leverage for negotiation that is available to them. What seems certain is that this is a special kind of money. It is marked since its origin: while allowing for mediation, as other kinds of money do, it is charged with a moral aura. It is everywhere identified as money for women and children, and it is in relation to them that its deployment is publicly judged and labeled as “good” or “bad”.

During fieldwork, two points about the PBF became evident. First, it was a topic that caused uneasiness. People avoided talking about it, and, whenever they did, they were quite cautious. When asked about their knowledge of “misuse” (a common topic for gossiping), everyone would remember one case or another, sometimes elaborating on what exactly would this inadequate use be. But the person being talked about would never be part of the speaker's relations – when inquired further, the latter would just say that “they live down there”, “right there”, waving vaguely towards the lengthy road, thus making it difficult to double-check that kind of information. Secondly, whenever beneficiaries were asked about what they did with the amount they received every month – that is, about the benefit's purchasing power – they would normally list items that, when summed up, could exceed in up to 200% the actual value of the benefit. There are two possibilities in this respect: either they were under-declaring the value of their PBF benefit, or that money was being conflated with other kinds of money, coming from different sources. Although the first possibility cannot be ruled out, we are led to believe that in general

the PBF money ends up being conflated with other income as well as non-monetary resources coming from elsewhere. This means that the moral surveillance over expenses is not directed exclusively at the PBF benefit, but targets the ensemble of the beneficiaries' earnings and expenses, including their behavior.

In terms of the ideas that were discursively manifested, what “must not” be done with the PBF money seemed well established: alcoholic drinks, cigarettes, drugs, gambling, superfluous foodstuffs (sweets, soda, unhealthy snacks), toys (especially when the family was considered very poor), domestic appliances, telephones, lipstick, and so forth. All these items were considered inappropriate, and even though people living in the neighborhood arguably purchased them, these individuals were never identified. There is however one way of spending the Family Grant cash that, even though not regarded as the *most appropriate* by the families, was common among them. Different from the abovementioned items, this was not expressed as something that “must not” be done; it was, rather, something to be avoided but which, depending on the family's situation, *may* be done. As the women declared, they (and some of the men) believed that the PBF cash was “for the children”, and must be spent “on them” and “on their behalf”. If the program's income was deployed for covering bills from the family at large, such as gas, food (that is, the “bulk”, or basic staples), medicine, water, light, rent, etc., it was due to its dire financial condition (which was usually presented as temporary) and still, an effort was made so that at least part of it was spent directly on the children.

“It's for the children's milk” was a reference as common as “I spend it all on school materials”, or yet, “that money is all for them [the children]” – even while those same people also declared that they used the benefit in order to purchase other products (besides the ones directed to the children) or pay household bills. It is important to remark that these statements were heard in contexts where the beneficiaries were being asked about *what they considered to be appropriate ways of spending* the PBF benefit. When inquired about *what they actually made* of it, however, they would normally mention the following items: rent, light, water, food (basic staples), school materials, shoes and clothes for the children (there was no reference to clothes or shoes for themselves), and stove gas. These items were mentioned by both the female beneficiaries and by the social workers, when asked about it.

In other words, the beneficiaries knew exactly what was expected from them when spending the PBF money, even if the program itself did not specify it. Fieldwork at Ilha da Pintada (Porto Alegre) lent further credence to this hypothesis, especially since that locality enjoyed more and better public services than Alvorada. In the Ilha, there were less agents from other (non-governmental) agencies taking part in program implementation and the “monitoring” of beneficiaries – their intervention in the life of beneficiary families being therefore less forceful and frequent.

When asked about what they considered to be appropriate and inappropriate uses of the PBF money, the Ilha residents’ answers did not stray significantly from those found in Alvorada, especially with respect to the importance of children. It was there that, for the first time, we heard a PBF beneficiary affirm that she used the benefit for leisure, “brand” clothes, and even in order to “save a little”. It is curious however that all these answers were still associated with the children. The main difference was in the fact that, for the beneficiaries from Alvorada, the money was “for the children” (that is, it catered to their needs), while for those in Ilha da Pintada, the money was “of the children”, or directed to them as a kind of “reward” for appropriately complying with the program’s conditionalities. When asked however about what they effectively did with that benefit throughout the month, answers varied. It was used, for instance, to “take the children to the movies” when “they carried out the task of attending school” that month – or yet, “he [the son] knows that the [BF] money is his, and when payday comes he knows that he can ask for an item of clothing or pair of shoes because I am obligated to buy it for him”. Some have also declared to have no “guts” to spend the money on themselves, because it belonged “to the children”.

Although it dispenses with intermediaries between the cash and its final recipient, the BF grant – understood in this account as money of a “special kind” – requires the presence of agents from various modalities and spheres of intervention. Originally thought of as being primarily refracted by gender and class – money for women and of/for the poor –, this kind of money eventually appeared as traversed by multiple social relations, based on different modalities of power and hierarchy. Likewise, beyond the meanings it acquires during the establishment of program guidelines, that money is continuously re-signified during its journey to the homes of beneficiary families, as it enters the complex process of implementation. There, it receives

new meanings and hues that flow from domestic configurations and from expectations and moral ideas concerning family and gender relations. From this assemblage of relations, different moral configurations emerge which coexist and intersect with each other, thus inviting for an analysis in terms of a “moral economy” which nourishes and mobilizes emotions, values, norms, and obligations that transcend the domain of the Family Grant Program itself.

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Markets and Economic Change

Moacir Palmeira

Abstract

Based on field work in the Zona da Mata of the State of Pernambuco, Brazil, this article discusses the transformations of the sugar estates and mills of the region through an analysis of the local “*feiras*” and markets in which workers who had been expelled from the estates were able to buy the items for their subsistence. Besides signaling the growth of a rural proletariat, the expansion of rural markets (“*feiras*”) revealed the emergence of smallholders who had gained a degree of autonomy inside the sugar estates. The system for provisioning the regional rural population, which had previously been controlled through the sugar estate general stores (“*barracões*”) was thus transformed. The counterpoint between *feira* and *barracão* reveals the complexities of change in the region and demonstrated the importance of ethnography of market places for the understanding of wider processes of social transformation.

Keywords: *feira*, markets, sugar estates, sugar mills, *barracões*, rural proletariat, smallholders, social transformation

Markets and Economic Change^{1 2}

Moacir Palmeira

“I cannot understand how it is possible ... with poverty on the increase among the population, to have in Palmares a market lasting three days, where by two o'clock in the afternoon on Sunday there is nothing left to sell”. (S., former market trader, sugar estate manager and *barracão* assistant).

The process of expulsion of the “moradores”³ of the sugarcane estates in the *Zona da Mata* area of Pernambuco State, which began in the mid -1940s and increased in pace in the following decades, represented more than merely the proletarianization of rural workers. It amounted to a new division of labor which affected both the actual process of production within each agricultural unit and the distribution and consumption of subsistence products.⁴

Although, from a technical point of view there was no agricultural revolution as such, the organization of labor on the sugar estates⁵ underwent

1 Originally written for an internal seminar at the National Museum in 1971, this article has never been published. For this edition, we have incorporated the photographic register taken by the author in Palmares, 1971. The research was part of the project “Employment and social transformation in the Northeast” coordinated by Moacir Palmeira. For an overview of the context, the theoretical discussions and the unfolding of the research explained by the author, see Leite 2013:435-457.

2 [Editor’s Note] Four words compose the commercial landscape described in the text: *barracão* (general store inside the sugar estates and mills), *feira* (marketplace, fair), *mercado* (municipal market hall) and *comercio estabelecido* (established commerce controlled by the businessman of towns). The word *feira* designates an open-air market held at regular intervals, usually at the same place. It is not only a marketplace but also a particular market-time: a certain day in the week and the period that the market lasts. On the other hand, the sections of the *feira* are also called *feiras* but qualified by the product, i.e. *feira da farinha* (flour market). Then, *feira* could be a street-market, a market time and a market section.. We chose to keep the word in Portuguese to avoid misunderstandings. We have kept the word “market” for the title to underline the general discussion that the article proposes: through the ethnography of the “feiras”, to discuss the place of the market in social transformation.

3 [E.N.] In rural Northeast of Brazil, the term *morador* ‘dweller’ or ‘inhabitant’- referred to a peasant who lived in the sugar estate with their family in a *morada* (a house with a plot of land). The *morada* established obligations of the peasant towards their *patron*.

4 In this work, in the absence of any better phrase, I use the term “subsistence products” to designate those consumer goods (generally agricultural or semi-processed) defined socially in the area under consideration as essential to the maintenance of the labor force, and capable, under current conditions, of being produced locally.

5 The term “engenho”, with the disappearance of the old “bangüê” (a watermill “engenho”), continued to be used

considerable change. The practice of payment for daily work, which was widespread in the region until the end of the 1930s, was replaced by a more flexible system of payment by “*tarefa*” (task) and/or by “*conta*”,⁶ which saved the production unit the heavy costs of supervision. The demands of the labor laws that had been imposed over the owners during the 1960s encouraged them to rely on “*empreiteiros*” (contractors) – a kind of “other’s labor” entrepreneurs – as intermediaries between themselves and their workers,. Furthermore, the traditional practice of landowners – leasing plots of land to the “*moradores*” in return for labor and other services -, was eliminated over time.

In a parallel process, the presence of this “freed” labor force in the towns of the region was not only responsible for a large increase in the population of these towns, but also for a radical alteration in their social make-up. From being towns populated largely by public employees, they transformed into agglomerations of rural laborers available for work. The decrease in activity of the sugar-mills at certain times of the year and the more or less chronic financial crisis which afflicted agriculture in the state of Pernambuco encouraged part of this population to seek work, temporarily or permanently, outside the sugar cane production sector. A good part of this population, however, continued to work permanently on the estates, either legally or clandestinely (which did not stop them from seeking extra sources of income in the towns). The most important consequence, however, was that those workers now had to fend for their own means of subsistence, previously provided by the sugar mills and estates.⁷ Over time, a market was

in the region to denote the sugar cane plantations, both those belonging to suppliers and those owned by the sugar processing plants. [E.N. In the present translation, *engenho* will appear as “sugar estate” or “estate” and *usina* will be translated as “sugar mill”. In the author words, “The term *engenho* referred in the past to the plantation-sugar mill complex and, more specifically to the sugar mill itself where the processing was carried out in order to produce sugar. Today the term is used in Pernambuco, where the last actual *engenhos* stopped grinding in the 1950’s, to refer to any large property which plants sugarcane to supply a modern *usina*. The *senhor de engenho*, the property owner of an *engenho*, is also referred to as *fornecedor de cana* or sugarcane supplier. *Usina* is a sugar mill which besides receiving sugarcane from the *senhores de engenho* has also its own plantations. *Usineiro* is the owner of an *usina*.” (Palmeira 1979:90)].

6 Both “*tarefa*” and “*conta*” are methods of payment by productivity. The former, which was in fairly general use in the 1940s and 1950s, referred to an area of land measuring 25 by 25 “*braças*” (*braça* = 2.2 meters) measured out at the beginning of the week to be worked by the laborer, without further reference to time. At the end of the week, he would be paid by the number of “*tarefas*” completed, in accordance with the owner’s assessment of the value of the “*tarefa*”. The “*conta*”, which was generally adopted after the coming into force of the Rural Labor Law, referred to an area of approximately 10 by 10 “*braças*” which, in theory, was equivalent to the minimum daily wage of a worker.

7 Through the system of “*barracões*” – general stores on the estates which had a monopoly of sales within their areas – or through the letting of areas for growing “subsistence” crops for the workers. [E.N. Through the text, we use the original word to designate the social configuration that these general stores have inside the sugar estates and mills].

formed for the products of those “*moradores*” who remained on the estates. If traditionally the “*moradores*” were obliged to hand over the produce of their plots or holdings to the “*barracões*” and purchase there what they did not cultivate themselves, the new “*trabalhadores de rua*” –street laborers–⁸ were unable to make purchases in the “*barracões*”. Once the “tied system” of submission had been abolished, the country dwellers acquired an alternative means of selling their products.

In areas where development of the sugar estates had been slower and where there was an available “stock of land”,⁹ there was an incentive for small scale production, despite conditions which favored plantation expansion and the actual expansion of sugar plantations during the period. For some of the former plantation owners, the possibility of returning to sugar cane cultivation often depended on the splitting up and sale of part of their land. On the other hand, the sugar mills’ need for working capital seems to have led them to avoid tying up their capital in land. At the same time, the owners of the sugar estates, having expelled their workers, found themselves with the problem of indemnifying those concerned, which was not infrequently resolved by the grant of land. Some cases saw the paradoxical situation of “*moradores*” who had never possessed their own plot of land, but who, once “dismissed from employment” found themselves in the position of independent agriculturalists on land leased from their former employer.¹⁰ In short, it seems that there was an opening up of the land market which favored small scale cultivation.

Even though it is difficult to evaluate, the activation of the circuit of exchange of subsistence products gave rise to an appreciable growth of “*feiras*” – open-air markets – in the *Zona da Mata*. It was this change which constituted perhaps the principal support for the changes noted. They “*feiras*” provided employment opportunities for workers expelled

8 [E.N.] During the research, the expression “*trabalhadores de rua*” (street laborers) referred to the peasants living in the small towns of the countryside, who were expelled from the sugar estates or who were waiting for a new house in other sugar estate. In other words, they were “*moradores*” who were compelled to leave their *moradas* and who are living in town.

9 Cf. Genestoux, 1967.

10 In the north of the *Zona da Mata* in Pernambuco there is currently a distinction between hereditary leasing (*aforamento*) and leasing (*arrendamento*) and between hereditary tenant (*foreiro*) and lessee (*arrendatário*): the tenant lives on the land which he cultivates, while the lessee necessarily lives elsewhere. It was Vera Maria Echenique and Luis Maria Gatti who drew my attention to this distinction which they noted in their travels in the region in February 1971. When I started to process the material I had gathered in the field, I noticed how strictly these two categories are employed by the rural smallholders and laborers in the region.

from the sugar estates, and at the same time acted as a conduit for the redistribution of “wealth” among a particular section of the population, and as distribution centers for small scale rural production.

Obviously things were not so clear-cut as the above description might imply, and there were important variations depending on the particular characteristics of differing sub-areas and on the specific histories of each market which, it should be stressed, had nearly always existed prior to these developments. Above all the transformations were not so simple because the “feiras” co-existed with other forms of distribution, from the “barracões” to regular urban commercial outlets.

The changes in question did not materially alter the downward vertical direction of the flow of manufactured goods which was a feature of the “barracões” of estates and mills: the “feiras” of the *Zona da Mata* perhaps continued to be (in terms of the value of the produce) essentially suppliers of manufactured goods to the rural population. The subsistence products sent to the markets by small producers did not reach consumers in the major urban centers of the region, or, if they did, had only a marginal effect on them. What was new was the commencement or increase in the flow of agricultural subsistence products among the rural population, previously overlooked within the general flow of goods which, through the “barracão” system, reached consumers living on the sugar estates. At some point, there was a break in the system which made the sugar estates veer between periods substantially dedicated to the cultivation of cane and the development to a greater or lesser extent of “subsistence” agriculture. The products of this subsistence economy started to compete for land with sugar cane at a time of major expansion of sugar cane cultivation.

Table 1: Cultivated Areas (in Hectares) for Sugar Cane And Cassava in the *Zona Da Mata* Area of Pernambuco State, 1950-1960

	1950	1960
Sugar Cane	160,683	247,417
Cassava	15,784	31,135

Sources: Pernambuco Economic Census 1950 (IBGE 1955); Pernambuco Agricultural Census 1960 (IBGE 1969)

But whilst there was an increase in the area producing cassava, the staple diet of the poorer section of the population in the region, there was an increase in complaints that “nowadays people have to buy cassava flour in the market”.

Clearly the processes whereby agricultural subsistence products are exchanged do not function in isolation from the processes involving manufactured goods. Whether through the establishment of fixed prices for certain products, or through competition with similar products produced in other areas which arrive in the region through established commercial outlets, or simply through the role played by the latter in the whole process, these processes are ultimately linked to the national market. They do, however, retain a relative autonomy in their functioning, both as regards the procedures for sale and purchase and for the setting of prices, in terms of the composition of the intermediate parties involved.

It is also important to remember that the effective total of transactions involved is small, albeit that the lack of precise figures and the legally undefined character of the economic agents have led to the irrelevance of the value of the transactions being exaggerated. However, to ignore the social relationships involved is tantamount to overlooking a social mechanism which seems to have played a decisive role in the changes which occurred.

The “*Feiras*” and the Towns

The remarks below refer basically to two “*feiras*” in the *Zona da Mata* area of Pernambuco: Palmares and Carpina.

The town of Palmares (a self-governing municipality since 1873) is older than Carpina and has always been considered an important “commercial center”. It owes its development, according to local historians, to its position at the end of the Great Western railroad, in the second half of the last century. But, “as more stations were opened, the traffic at Palmares started to fall off”. However, “the company’s head office continued to be located here, with all its consequent traffic, together with the workshops, where locomotives were reassembled, wagons fitted out and an internal repair service maintained. And there was an additional factor of some importance: the railroad tracks from Palmares to Recife were narrow gauge, whilst those of the so-called extension were broad gauge. This meant an obligatory transfer of cargo in Palmares (...)”.¹¹

The development of Carpina (a municipality since 1928) seems also to have been linked to the growth in the number of railroad lines, being at the

11 Cia. Telefônica de Palmares, 1965.

junction of two important branches. For this and other reasons, the town was also considered, like Palmares, to be a “commercial center”.

Despite these similarities, to which one can add the fact that the two towns were of more or less equal size and the fact that economic activity in both centered on the cultivation of sugar cane,¹² the social order that prevailed in each of them seems to have been markedly different. Palmares was considered an “exclusively sugar cane” area, in which the concentration of such estates was much higher than in Carpina.

Table li: The Classification of Agricultural Properties by Area (Hectares) in the Municipality of Carpina – 1960

Band	Properties		Area	
	Number	%	Total	%
0-3	244	35.31	535	2.72
3-10	286	41.39	1,827	9.29
10-30	87	12.59	1,641	8.35
30-100	42	6.08	2,289	11.64
100-300	18	2.60	3,531	17.96
300-1000	14	2.03	9,840	50.04
1000-3000	-	-	-	-
Over 3000	-	-	-	-
Total	691	100.00	19,663	100.00

Table liii: The Classification of Agricultural Properties by Area (Hectares) in the Municipality of Palmares – 1960

Band	Properties		Area	
	Number	%	Total	%
0-3	2	1.32	3	0.07
3-10	4	2.65	40	0.10
10-30	39	25.83	796	1.96
30-100	33	21.81	1,787	4.41
100-300	31	20.53	6,508	16.10
300-1000	42	27.82	31,267	77.36
1000-3000	-	-	-	-
Over 3000	-	-	-	-
Total	151	100.00	40,401	100.00

Source: Rosa e Silvo Neto, J.M. – Subsídios para o Estudo do Problema Agrário em Pernambuco, Recife, Codepe, 1963

¹² Carpina has no sugar processing plant located within the municipality.

Whilst in Palmares certain traditional forms of landholding in the sugar plantations had disappeared by the early years of the XX century, the estates in Carpina milled sugar until relatively recent times, “*lavradores*” (peasant farmers)¹³ are figures from the recent past. Tenant farmers still form a significant group there.¹⁴

Even though, once we get away from narrow municipal divisions such differences can become quite small, they seem to have some relevance when we consider the two “*feiras*”. The shorter distance between the food producing areas and the marketplaces meant that the presence of direct producers in Carpina market was greater than in Palmares, that transport using draught animals was very important, and, perhaps, as the problem of storage was not so great as in Palmares, the established commerce was of less importance in supplying the “*feira*”.

On the other hand, and here there is a lack of material on which to base conjectures, Carpina, where the “*feira*” is on Sundays, is a town on a circuit of marketplaces. The operators who sell manufactured goods and are known as *ambulantes* (itinerant traders), are market professionals (“*professionais de feira*”) who have following schedule during the week: Monday – João Alfredo; Tuesday – Itabaiana (Paraíba State); Wednesday – Nazaré or Limoeiro; Thursday and Friday – no market; Saturday – Goiana or Paulista; Sunday – Carpina. Palmares, where the “*feiras*” runs for nearly three days, does not seem to be linked to any circuit. The sellers of manufactured items are generally residents of the town and do not operate at markets in other locations. The most that happens is that “*feirantes*” (market trader)-producers operate in two stages: on one day of the week they go to the market at the nearest locality and on Sundays they go to Palmares with the remainder of their produce and any products purchased at these small “*feiras*”, or, apparently more usually, they take their produce to Palmares on Sundays and sell the remainder at the market nearest to their home.

13 [E.N] The word “*lavradores*”, in the original, has a particular meaning in the region] The “*morador*” who grew sugar cane in partnerships.

14 [E.N] The word in the original for tenant farmer is *foreiro*, which is also a specific social relation inside the sugar estate. The *foreiro* is also a *morador* - he has a house and a plot in the sugar estate - but he has greater autonomy due to the payment of an annual rent to the estate owner.

The “Feira” and the “Feiras”

The relative self-sufficiency of the subsistence product circuit seems to be reflected in the actual division of the “feira”. The “feiras” studied appear to be divided into well-defined sectors (manufactured goods; handicrafts; meat and fish; flour and cereals, vegetables, greens and root vegetables; fruits; crockery), even though certain combinations of products tend to form their own category.¹⁵

It seems to us symptomatic that rural workers and “feirantes” (market traders), when interviewed both at the marketplace and away from it, rarely referred to the “feira” as a whole, but only to “the flour *feira*”, “the fruit *feira*” (which at a time when the most common product was the banana, was known as “the banana *feira*”), “the meat stands”, “the fish stands”, “the market”, “the market stalls”. Whilst we do not have the factual basis upon which to make a systematic examination of this classification (which is incomplete, because it consists only of expressions found in the data collected), we should like to draw attention to the fact that the sections selling regulated products - (meat, *charque* (jerked beef), sugar), are not classified as “feira”, this term being reserved for those sections where there is some variation in prices and, perhaps, a greater turnaround of sellers. Similarly, there is a clear distinction between *bancos de feira* - market stands (which are large covered stalls or canvas spread on the ground), and *barracas* (stalls - a term reserved for the stalls surrounding the Municipal Market Hall), which are permanent and controlled by wealthy traders. The latter distinction can be illustrated by the answer given by one interviewee who was talking about the sale of cabbages in response to a question from the researcher as to the lack of variation in prices between the stalls (*barracas*):

Q. Why is there only one price for everything? Why aren't the prices different on other stalls?

A. Because ... let's put it this way, these markets are ready markets. So the people who go to buy are the same people who want to sell from those little stalls, so they also buy in that Municipal Market. So you can

¹⁵ [E.N] Although cassava flour was the main product, in the “flour *feira*” and the Municipal Market Hall the flour section includes cassava, wheat and corn.

see that nowadays everybody does business so that there's no space for anyone else to come in.¹⁶

It seems that there is a concern on the part of producers not to take more than one product to the “feira”:

“I only sell one kind of merchandise at a time. We make a calculation of what's best and take it”.¹⁷

“Feirar” (to sell in the *feira*) and “fazer feira” (to buy in the *feira*) are defined socially as male activities. Or, as a Carpina smallholder said¹⁸:

“Women don't sell at the “feira”. Only when it's time of festivities and they go and sell to make a little money to buy a dress, or clothes for the children... Yet the wife of a smallholder knows the “feira”. But there are women there who don't even know Carpina. The wife of a paid laborer never goes to the “feira”. She is ashamed of not having a new dress to wear when she goes to the “feira”. She only has her old clothes. With self-employed workers, the family goes to mass and then to the “feira”. There's more freedom (...). A woman without a husband or children gets her neighbor to sell for her. She is too shy to go to the “feira” alone (...) because she normally has to go by horse, and she is ashamed of arriving in the town riding a horse”.

A woman in the “feira”, whether selling or buying, has to be “a widow, a spinster or with no husband”. But, for whatever reason, doing the “feira” is viewed as a real chore (sacrifice), as implied in the complaints of a “morador” of Palmares:

“I buy things in the “feira”, yes, every Sunday I have to suffer coming here to the Palmares “feira” (...). I don't send my husband to buy because he's already crazy. If he came, he would die (referring to the prices), if he came here, I know he would never get back home”.¹⁹

But this is not a rule that applies universally to all sections of the “feira”. In the manufactured goods section and among the stalls (*barracas*) generally,

16 A., the manager of a consumer cooperative of rural workers.

17 Carpina tenant farmer, growing cassava, maize, pineapples, potatoes and beans. Interviewed at home.

18 L., owner of 1hectare of land in Carpina. Interviewed at home in the presence of other family members.

19 T.D., a resident on a sugar estate. Interview recorded.

there seems to be an important female element. And in the sections selling subsistence products, there is room for female vendors:

“it’s the same here – said the smallholder mentioned previously and his son in unison – it’s the same here, women only sell odds and ends, herbs, earthenware - and straw. Some sell green vegetables”.

His daughter continued:

“Women don’t sell flour in the “*feira*” because it’s a very responsible job. It has to be handled by a man. Women only sell fancy little things. Flour or meat needs strength, which a woman doesn’t have. A woman can’t sell flour, because flour needs a lot of working out. It’s not easy to sell flour.”

The head of the family extended the scope of that exclusion to children, saying that it is only men who do the selling in the “*feira*”, “women and children just walk around”, but then qualified his remarks:

“There are people who buy in bulk and are homeless, they are the smartest, sometimes they set up more than one stall. The owner stays in one place and puts his son in the other”.

Direct observation suggests that the exclusion is effective. Not a single woman could be noted selling flour at the Palmares “*feira*” in November and December 1969 (the period during which sugar cane was harvested and milled) or in May and June 1970 (the period between harvests). The few women in the flour “*feira*” worked in the area next to the meat stands, assisting their husbands, generally at the same stand. The register that we compiled in February 1971 (partial in the case of flour and cereals), however, found that there were 7 women – and 33 men – selling in that section, all 7 of the women lived in the town. In Carpina, a few women were noted selling flour in these three periods, but always within the Municipal Market.

By contrast, in 1969, there were only women selling in the pottery section at the two “*feiras*”, and it was the same with spices and herbs. In 1970 and 1971, men were also noted selling pottery. This can be shown in tabular form as follows:

TABLE IV

	Carpina			Palmares		
	1969	1970	1971	1969	1970	1971
Manufactured goods	M>W	M>W	M>W	M>W	M>W	M>W
Flour and cereals	M>w	M>w	M>w	M	M>w	M> w
Meat and fish	M	M	M	M> W	M>W	M>W
Handicrafts	W>M	W>M	M>W	W>M	W>M	W>M
Vegetables and greens	M=W	M=W	M=W	M=W	M=W	M=W
Root vegetables	M	M	M	M	M	M
Fruits	M>W	M>W	M>W	M>W	M>W	M>W
Pottery	W	W>M	M>W	W	W>M	M

M – Men; W – Women; w - women within the Municipal Market Hall (or in insignificant numbers)

M>W – more men than women; W>M – more women than men; M=W – same number of men and women

Sellers and Buyers

The variations from one sector to the other with regard to market traders are so great, that generalizations become difficult. It is certainly true that there seems to be a certain homogeneity with regard to the end consumers, the large majority of whom are rural laborers in the case of Palmares, rural laborers or smallholders in the case of Carpina. However, it would be a simplification to fail to note the visible presence, well publicized by the vendors, of urban consumers in the manufactured goods, fruit and vegetables sections. In contrast to the practice in the “flour *feira*”, for example, there are women buyers (usually household employees). In the case of Carpina, it seems that the presence of consumers from Recife is of some importance (many of them own “*granjas*”²⁰ outside the city), especially for the fresh meat counters in the Municipal Market and in the fruit and

20 [E.N.] In Carpina, the word *granja* (farm) is used to designate small and medium size rural properties farmed by wage workers and owned by middle and upper class people from the cities (generally from Recife). Most of the farms are focused on raising poultry. At the time of the research, some of them were beginning to plant sugar cane, becoming sugarcane suppliers.

vegetables sections. For other products, however, it appears that these consumers prefer the city supermarkets.²¹

With regard to the vendors, although the presence of middlemen is the normal rule, the differences between these middlemen are too great for them to be considered as a whole. The register of the Palmares “*feira*” reveals not only that direct producers or middlemen appear, as one might expect, much more frequently in the sections selling food, but, not so obviously, that practically all the sellers of manufactured goods are professionals who have always been market traders or people who, having formerly worked on the land, have worked in “urban” trades before becoming market salesmen. In contrast, the great majority of those selling flour or cereals are either farm workers or rural laborers who have left the country and gone directly into business.

If that appears to be a fundamental division, there are also big differences in the sections which trade in subsistence products. The differences seem to be connected with the conditions under which each type of product is produced, the greater or lesser perishable nature of the product, and the availability of capital to the producers and middlemen.

In the “flour *feira*”, for example, where flours and cereals are sold, and where most consumers are rural laborers, there are many different situations. There are many smallholders who produce their own flour, many of them own flour mills²²; in Carpina they come from the municipality itself, in Palmares they come from the surroundings (“*agrestes*”)²³, from Agreste, or from the north of the State of Alagoas. They rarely sell only their own produce; as a rule the flour is theirs, but the maize, rice and certain kinds of beans are purchased, either directly from the wholesalers or at the municipal market. At times when there is no flour in the region for one reason or

21 “My clientele is very special. They are middle and upper class people: farmers, public employees from the National Malaria Service and from the Federal Railroad Network and landowners”. People from neighboring towns also shop at the supermarket “because there are no shops of this kind in the whole of the north *Mata*”. “Incredible though it may seem, even people from Recife come to shop here”. (S., supermarket owner).

22 Setting up a hand operated flour mill seems to be relatively simple and there are many owners of hand operated mills. There are estates where you can find 10 or more flour mills owned by local people. In the areas farmed by tenants or smallholders, they are even more numerous. Nevertheless, not all those who grow cassava have their own flour mill. Most cultivators of cassava use a neighbor’s mill to grind their own cassava, paying the owner a half bowl for each ten bowls produced or a half bowl for each pressing.

23 When rural workers in Palmares refer to the “*agrestes*”, they mean the surrounding region which supplies Palmares, the border area between Zona da Mata and Agreste. Similarly, when they talk of the “*matutos*”, it is the people living in the outback (“*agrestes*”) that they mean.

another, they operate simply as middlemen. But, in general, the flour comes from the “*matutos*”(peasants). Selling directly in the “*feiras*” is not seen as an easy option. There are problems with the expenses of transport and storage:

“I don’t sell at the “*feira*” because it’s very expensive to take my produce there. I have to pay two thousand cruzeiros per sack for transport and I still have to pay for the pitch at the “*feira*”. If I don’t sell everything, I have to take it back home. I don’t make any profit.”²⁴

There are those who buy flour from the peasants and sometimes from “the trade” (a category which includes both the wholesaler and the Municipal Market Hall). These are the small middlemen or retail dealers. In Carpina, these small middlemen spend Saturday nights at the entrance to the town, “by the cemetery gates”, awaiting the smallholders:

“When you go out at night, you see everybody discussing prices. ‘I’ll pay so much’, says one, and the other says, ‘I’ll pay so much’. Some people (producers) don’t even get off their horse. They sell their produce there and then and go away.”

These middlemen, according to the same interviewee, are small operators. Sometimes they borrow money, and pay a high rate of interest so that they can buy a load.

“When the buyer is a small dealer, he is allowed to pay later. When he returns he cries and begs a reduction in the price because business was bad at the *feira*”.²⁵

These small middlemen who deal in flour generally have “a little room” where they store their stock and it is difficult for them to sell in more than one market.

Finally, there are a large number of sellers who depend on wholesalers or shopkeepers in the municipal market. They have virtually no capital, no storage facilities, and are little more than employees of the dealers. They generally buy in consignment and only operate with produce purchased from a single shopkeeper who obliges them to set up their “stalls” in front of the shop.

24 Owner of 2 hectares in Carpina, dependent on the owner of a hand-operated flour mill, in return for which he supplies not only a part of his produce but also his labor when required.

25 L., owner of 1 hectare in Carpina.

In the green vegetables sector²⁶, the position is very different. There is no interference from established commerce. It is a relatively “open” sector. According to a green vegetable seller in Carpina, “green vegetables are the cheapest kind of produce, you don’t need capital”. This means a larger presence of direct producers, though it seems, however, that this is counterbalanced by greater opportunities open to poor middlemen – also that the rule is to sell the product as quickly as possible. As a producer of green vegetables in Palmares says²⁷:

We put it on the ground to sell it, it stays there until the afternoon. Kale is not something that can stay out all the time in the sun. If it was fruit, cucumbers, *maxixe*, okra, they can tolerate sun, but kale we pick in the afternoon, douse it in water, tie it in bunches, put it back in water, it spends the night in water, and early in the morning we put it in baskets or in bags and bring it to sell. Our motto is to sell quickly, because if it wilts it loses its value. If it’s wilted, it’s lost its value. This lady here (indicating a green vegetable seller) buys and puts those bunches of kale in the street. She buys cheaper (...). She’ll sell them there for 200, or maybe she won’t sell, but the loss is hers to bear, isn’t it? Now if it was fruit, bananas or oranges, no. I’d put my little load there in a corner, or my basket, and say: ‘20 cruzeiros here, 20 cruzeiros’. They don’t wilt in the sun, they’re good in the afternoon. But, you know, green vegetables are a different thing altogether, aren’t they?.”

“*Moradores*” of the sugar estates, who want to supplement their wages with a little extra earnings from selling the produce of the “*matutos*” (peasants) are also attracted to this sector as middlemen.

Prices and Customers

The methods for establishing the prices of goods also seem to vary between the different sections. There are sections where prices are regulated by law and there are also sections, such as manufactured goods, where there is a fixed lower limit beyond which prices cannot go. In these sections the price is the same from the start to the end of the “*feira*”.

²⁶ The category “green vegetables” is quite wide. A middleman who sells only green vegetables lists his stock as follows: “parsley, onions, green peppers, okra, lettuce and tomatoes”.

²⁷ J.A., a resident on a sugar estate. Interview recorded.

In contrast, where fruit and, above all, vegetables and greens are concerned, the difference in prices, both between different stalls and on the same stall during the course of the “*feira*”, seems to have no limits:

“I lower the price and I sell everything. I have never had to go home with some produce”,²⁸ says one small producer. “Now the price here is bad because there are many pineapples coming from Paraiba (...)”.

He goes to Carpina on Saturday nights ‘to get the prices’. He tries to sell as much as possible in the early hours of the morning, because from 9.00 o’clock onwards the trucks arrive from Paraiba and the price falls. When there are a lot of pineapples, he charges “200 for a large one and 100 for a small one”. When they’re scarce, he charges “300 for a large one and 200 for a small one.”

The same is true for the small middleman, who has tied up a little capital, it is preferable to sell at any price and recover some of what he has disbursed, rather than keep products without anywhere to store them.

The flour “*feira*” is a special case. The middlemen, who only deal with goods on a sale or return basis, have extremely limited room for manoeuvre when fixing prices:

“We buy a sack of 70 kilos and afterwards we calculate how much can we ask for a liter”.²⁹

The middlemen, who buy from the peasants, make the same calculation with regard to their product:

“The peasants bring along their goods and start selling to anyone they meet (...)”

They pay a thousand cruzeiros to the town hall for the market pitch and another 500 per sack, which they may or may not sell. They then fix the price in line with what they have paid for the product. But when the “*feira*” is very weak, they end up selling for the price they paid.³⁰ Even though the peasants can sell to a retailer more cheaply than commercial outlets, the fixing of sale prices seems basically to depend on the wholesalers:

28 Carpina tenant, already quoted.

29 Information supplied by a member of a group of traders from Agreste, selling flour purchased in the shops.

30 Small middleman, selling flour bought from the “*matutos*”.

“Wholesalers sell in the *“feira”*. When they have plenty of flour, they place it on a number of stands. When they have little, they close ranks to guarantee the price.”³¹

There is almost no haggling in the flour *“feira”*. Competition between sellers seems to revolve basically around the quality of the product, which is handled by nearly all potential buyers and in some cases tasted. Sometimes the customers complain about the price, but they never ask for a discount. The only attempt at haggling that we witnessed was by a “rich” woman in Palmares, who, in attempting to make excuses to us for buying at 11.00 o’clock on a Sunday morning, tried to persuade a group of producer-traders from Agreste to sell to her at a lower price. She was treated sarcastically by the traders and abruptly withdrew from her purchase. The comments which followed were even more aggressive and ironical. One of the traders said:

“Poor people are much better buyers. It seems that in the case of the rich, we must sell at a lower price than we paid”.

We did, however, meet an old man who had been a market trader in Caruarú and had been selling for a year in Palmares, who complained bitterly about price disputes:

“Look: isn’t it strange that in a place of this size we don’t have any customers. But it’s true. Why? When I arrive, I mark my flour at 1,400. My friend here (indicating the neighboring trader), who has maybe bought more cheaply, marks his at 1,300. OK. The other one in front, who paid the same price or perhaps a bit more than I did, marks his flour at a sale price of 1,200. So everybody else has to lower their price so they can sell. What’s bad is this lack of cordiality between the traders. How can we get customers like this?”³²

It seems that the old man was using the term customer (*‘freguês’*) as a synonym for buyer (he subsequently complained that up until that time he had not sold a single bowl of flour), whilst in Palmares the term *‘freguês’* seems to denote a very specific relationship:

³¹ L., already quoted.

³² Old man from Paraíba, a market seller for 25 years. He had been in Palmares for one year. Earlier he had traded in Gravatá dos Bezerras and Caruarú (Agreste).

“What they call a customer (*freguês*) here is a person who buys on eight days credit, he buys on a Sunday and pays the next Sunday. It works as follows: you have a stall where you sell flour ... Someone comes and buys two or three times in cash. The fourth time he buys, he starts a conversation with the seller. As he is leaving, the seller says: ‘Take more’. The person says: ‘Look, man, I can’t take more because I don’t have the money’. The trader says: ‘Do the whole “*feira*” and pay me next Sunday’. So he becomes a customer (*freguês*). The following Sunday, he pays his account from the previous market and makes a new purchase, which he will pay for in eight days’ time.”³³

According to another respondent, this is the so-called “eight day customer” (*freguês de oito dias*), who is to be found in retail sales. But there is also, or at least there was at the time this respondent traded in the “*feira*”, the “market customer” or “*ribirista*”, “a middleman to whom the peasant always sells his produce”.³⁴

Whatever may be the case, to judge by what the traders say and by what we were able to perceive from direct observation, this type of customer relationship does not seem to be particularly widespread in the case of retail sales. According to an old market inspector, buying in the “*feira*”

“is completely free. People buy from whom they wish. If it’s very expensive, leave it for later ... (...) There was never this business of regular customers. It’s not possible. People sell to anyone. It’s like that. (...) Surfeit is what makes the price go down.”

Some traders say they have regular customers (*freguêses*), but they add:

“but there’s only one price”.

There also do not seem to be any special privileges attached to the quantity of goods purchased. The buyer always receives a small extra portion of flour, irrespective of whether or not he is a “customer”. On the other hand, we only noted instances of there being ‘eight day customers’ when the

33 T., former inhabitant, and employee of the Federal Railroad Network . Comments made when we were interviewing a market trader in the “*favela*” (shanty town), who was answering our questions regarding customers in an apparently vague manner – “sometimes yes, sometimes no”.

34 S., an official of the rural workers union, who had formerly been a manager, a shed owner’s assistant and a market trader.

transaction was between market traders (and the traders themselves seem to constitute an important group of consumers) or between rural laborers and the owners of market stalls.

In sectors such as fruits, green vegetables and root vegetables, while there may be customer relationships between producers and middlemen, they do not exist in retail sales and the actual concept of “eight day customer” seems to have no relevance. Phrases such as

“I do have regular clients but they are not very defined” or “I have regular customers (*freguês*) when there are not many sellers, when there are a lot I don’t have them”

suggest that here the term customer (*freguês*) is simply a synonym for consumer. The reply given by a producer-trader seems to be more explicit:

“I don’t have regular customers. I sell to anyone (...). I don’t sell on credit. Here no-one sells on credit... We sell to friends on credit, but only when they are well known to us”.³⁵

This variation between sectors as regards the fixing of prices, from sectors where the laws of supply and demand operate freely or where “a surfeit is what makes the price go down” to sectors where the prices are regulated on a national basis, from sectors where the “eight day customer” can be found to sectors where no such thing exists, must be relativized. Firstly because we do not have a complete picture of the bargaining power of the different groups of producers in their relations with the middlemen, or of the logic which governs their economic decisions. Secondly, and more importantly for the purposes of the present work, because the “*feira*” is not a level playing field. The various sections of the market differ not only because of the various products sold or because of any other substantive features. They form a hierarchy.³⁶ And this hierarchy, which seems to reflect the actual socially determined “pattern of consumption” of rural laborers

35 Carpina tenant, already quoted.

36 The importance of flour in the local diet is reflected in throwaway remarks by the interviewees, such as: “... the proper *feira*, the one of cereals...”, “... flour which is what we eat...”, or “... on Sundays I go out. I wake up in the morning, grab the bag and go out. At home we go through 2bowls of flour per week. Only for eating the flour...” (T.D., resident on a sugar estate. Interview recorded).

and smallholders,³⁷ is present in the decisions that are made in each sector:

“Today I brought in 61 bunches of kale. I got there and I told her [a retailer of green vegetables]: ‘Did you know that the price of my produce has gone up?’ She said: ‘Why? Because it rained?’ I said: ‘No. Because everything’s very expensive. So my goods are also now more expensive (...)’.”³⁸

Commerce, *Feira*, Municipal Market, “*Barracão*”

If the key sector of the market is flour and cereals, as has been suggested, and if, as is probable, the control of this sector is in the hands of the wholesalers and the traders of the Municipal Market, everything leads us to believe that the “price of the *feira*” (*preço de feira*) and the “stores’ price” (*preço do comércio*) are one and the same thing. This, however, is problematic, because it pre-supposes an identity, at least of interests, between established commerce and the owners of stalls of the Municipal Market. Now, even though there is a lack of data to support definitive claims, these two groups not only appear to have very different social origins – “established commerce” always forms part of the local elites, its members are generally the offspring of businessmen, and their businesses often have branches in a number of different towns, while the owners of market stalls are from a humble background, very often ex-peddlers who have established themselves but who never operate in more than one marketplace. Their commercial interests and their attitudes to the market appear to be different. While the established commerce maintains that it is going through a crisis, as evidenced by the number of bankruptcies that have occurred in recent years and by the increasing presence of businesses from Recife operating in the interior, as in the case of Palmares, or by stagnating sales, as in the case of Carpina, market traders seem to be, if not in the process of a rapid expansion, at least in a financial position to operate a number of stalls and to muster dozens of vendors for the Sunday “*feira*”. While stall owners seek to operate by manipulating the prices at the “*feira*”, established shop owners complain that the “*feira*” is a problem because

37 Cf. the publications by the Joaquim Nabuco Institute in Recife: Maciel 1964 and Gonçalves 1966.

38 L., trader in Palmares.

“a market trader from the “*feira*” comes into the shop, buys goods without requiring an invoice and later sells the goods in the street without paying any tax, thereby acting in competition with established commerce” or “the biggest problem for business is the Sunday market”.³⁹

Whatever the nature of the relationship between established commerce and market traders, however, the Municipal Market seems to operate as a “cereals exchange” and the prices established there appear to be valid far beyond “the hall” and “the Sunday *feira*”, reaching areas previously unaffected by business practices, such as the actual production process at the manioc mills.⁴⁰ Even the “*barracão*” (general store) has been affected.

Traditionally, the “*barracão*” belonged to the estate owner who, even where he employed a front man, would make all the decisions with regard to prices and the purchase of goods. At sugar mills, in addition to the general stores of the estates (*barracão de engenho*) there was the general store of the mill (*barracão de usina*) which, as well as supplying the workers in the industrial sector of the mill, was also the exclusive supplier to the stores of each estate. There were mills which set up supply companies, which grew to be powerful, with branches in several places, and which had a complete monopoly over the distribution of subsistence products within their agricultural production units, either directly or through a tight system of inspection. At the beginning of the 1940s, a sugar plant in the south of Pernambuco announced that it had achieved the “abolition of “*barracões*” in private hands ..., where the workers were subject to every kind of exploitation”.⁴¹

“The company goes even further. It maintains on each agricultural estate a store for the sale of basic goods to the inhabitants and workers, housed

39 Statement by a trader at a meeting we attended of the Carpina Trade Association. There was a conflict among tradespeople in the town with regard to market day. The major traders thought that the day should be changed to Saturday. The older tradespeople and small traders (retailers) preferred the “*feira*” to be on a Sunday. The split between them was so pronounced that the local Trade Association, in order to take a position with regard to the problem, carried out a kind of opinion poll among all the traders of the town. The small traders’ view prevailed.

40 Payment in money to the owner of the flour mill is becoming more frequent with the introduction of the motorized flour mill, operated by the owner himself. However, irrespective of the type of flour mill, the relationship between the cassava producer and the mill owner as middleman seems to be dependent on “the market”. Thus, a smallholder whom we interviewed (see note 16) told us that he sold his produce to the mill owner for less than the market price: “Because he’s got to make a bit of a profit, hasn’t he? For example, when the price of flour in the shops is 30, I sell to him for 25. This flour that I’m making here is already his”.

41 Usina Catende S.A. 1941:36.

in its own building, which is leased rent-free to a concessionaire, along with all the fixtures and fittings – shelves, scales, sales counter – without any rent or commission being charged. The only obligation imposed on these concessionaires is that of selling their goods at previously fixed prices, so as to avoid the exploitation of the country folk. The mill follows a strict policy of checking prices, quality and weights. The company also supplies free transport on its trains for the goods, so that they can be delivered to the most outlying properties, at prices corresponding to those applied in town. These sales outlets replaced the old “*barracões*” which were, up until then and in most cases, exploited by the owner or lessee of the estate or which were assigned to other operators in exchange for the payment of rent or a share in profits. In contrast to these “*barracões*”, which represented a source of income for the owner or lessee of the estates, the sales outlets which exist on the estates of Usina Catende S.A. are an expense and a charge to the company, which seeks to protect the workers and inhabitants and ensure that they have better and cheaper food”.⁴²

It mattered little whether it was called a “*barracão*” or a “*store*” (*venda*), whether it belonged to the state owner or to a “modernizing” company, the institution ensured that the inhabitants were kept isolated from the mainstream economy.

Today, however, the situation is totally different:

“Today there are no fixed prices like in those days. The fixed price list came from the mill. There were inspections twice a week, they went to the “*barracões*” to see if they were selling. So the worker provided information to the inspector. Not today. They decided the prices, there aren’t any fixed prices nowadays. That one over there, he buys flour, let’s say, in the shops, he buys in bulk, he buys at a basic price of 3 thousand cruzeiros, let’s say. Then he sells it in the “*barracão*” for 6 thousand, 6 thousand 500, 5,500, and so it goes on. The worker, poor thing, can’t go to the shops, either he’s stuck with paying the mark up, or he misses three days’ work. The worker is over (...)”.⁴³

42 Idem, pp. 109-110.

43 A., resident of a sugar estate in the Palmares region. Interview recorded.

With the end of “*morador*” and the generalization of contract work, the “*barracão*” has taken on a new guise.⁴⁴ It is less and less a business run by the owner of the estate or the mill. Increasingly, the norm is a “*barracão*” leased to a third party. The operator is no longer “the capable lad trusted by the boss” of earlier times, but increasingly a businessman, often running a number of “*barracões*” and belongings of one or more owners, frequently living in town where he may or may not have other businesses. He no longer buys at places chosen by the boss, but at places where the prices are lower:

“In the “*barracões*” they sell everything. They sell flour, beans, sugar, kerosene, matches, salt, rice, cornflour, milk, sardines, potatoes, salted cod, *charque* (jerked beef), poor quality fish that you see in the “*feira*” which I think not even the *tatu* (armadillo) wants. Because they buy the stuff cheaply and sell at a higher price, so as to make a profit. And there are “*barracões*” which sell everything. The only things they don’t sell are clothes and shoes, this kind of thing. But there are some which even sell these. But they are expensive (...).”⁴⁵

And the prices in the “*barracões*”, even if they are not shop prices, are related to them:

“Here’s a case in point: the price of flour in the shops now, the cheapest is 5 thousand, isn’t it? On Sunday it was 4 thousand, but the price now is 5 thousand, that’s the cheapest. He [the “*barracão*” operator] buys that cheapest flour, at 5 thousand, 2 or 3 or 4 sacks, whatever he can, whatever the “*barracão*” uses. But he’s going to sell at market prices, isn’t he? If good flour is being sold in the market at 10 thousand, he sells at 10 thousand”.⁴⁶

But it is not only the “*barracão*” operator’s purchases of goods from shops which are regulated by market prices. His dealings with local people who supply him with products such as cassava flour are also governed by such prices:

44 The contractor, however, is going to change the town sales outlet into a kind of “*barracão*”. His workers buy on credit, and the cost is deducted from their wages at the end of the week.

45 A., resident already quoted.

46 J.A., already quoted.

“They [the “barracão” operator] buy top quality flour [at the cheapest shop prices] and sell at commercial prices, the market prices being charged during the course of the week. It’s like this: if it costs 10 thousand on the market, they increase that price of 10 thousand”.⁴⁷

This, however, does not prevent rural laborers and smallholders from continuing to look on “the shops” in general as an alternative to the “barracão”:

“Buying at the “barracão”? I’m scared of the “barracão”, you understand? It’s not even worse for my family because God is good. Thanks to God and to men who are prepared to bargain. Because there in Palmares there is someone who has a stall ... he’s not my boss, he’s my father (...).⁴⁸

Conclusion

About ten years ago a local historian in Pernambuco could say, without fear of contradiction, with regard to the towns and villages in the wettest part of the *Agreste* region:

“These villages, being the nearest settlements to the (swamps) outback, hold large “feiras”, because the lower concentration of large estates allows a wider division of wealth: there are fewer rich or poor people and more people of average means. For this reason, “feiras” such as those at Camocim de São Felix, Cupira, Cachoeirinha and Capoeiras, despite their small populations, are much more important than those in the large towns of the *Zona da Mata* region, such as Goiana, Nazaré or Palmares”.⁴⁹

A study of the markets in the *Zona da Mata* region suggests that this is no longer the case and that the “feiras” and the market are present even in the transactions that represent their negation, like the commercial practices of the “barracão” operator. The growth of the “feiras” in the sugar producing zone seems to cast a broader transformation, reversing the relationship between the “feiras” of the *Agreste* and the *Zona da Mata*.

47 Idem.

48 T.D., already quoted.

49 Correa de Andrade 1964: 159.

“Of the “feiras” round here, Palmares is the best. The “feiras” in the Agreste are small.”⁵⁰ “It’s not only in Palmares, there’s been growth in all these little places, like Batateira”.⁵¹

The producers of Cupira, São Felix, Cachoeirinha, are bringing their produce to the *Zona da Mata* and many of those marketplaces are taking the leftovers from Palmares or are being transformed into “women’s feiras”.⁵²

This growth in the “feiras” has not been continuous. Market traders and customers often refer to a recent past in which “things were better”, “when the worker had money to spend in his pocket”, or to a golden age when “produce was thrown out because there was so much of it”. Not even the growth of the “feiras” seems to represent any increase in the purchasing power of the rural workers and smallholders. On the contrary, such growth seems to mirror closely the twists and turns in the history of the region.

August, 1971

Translated from the Portuguese by Jonathan Roberts.

Translator’s notes by Fernando Rabossi

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50 Group of producer traders from the Agreste selling flour.

51 S., already quoted.

52 Some traders from the outback say that they only sell in the Palmares “feira”, leaving the job of selling in their local markets to the women.

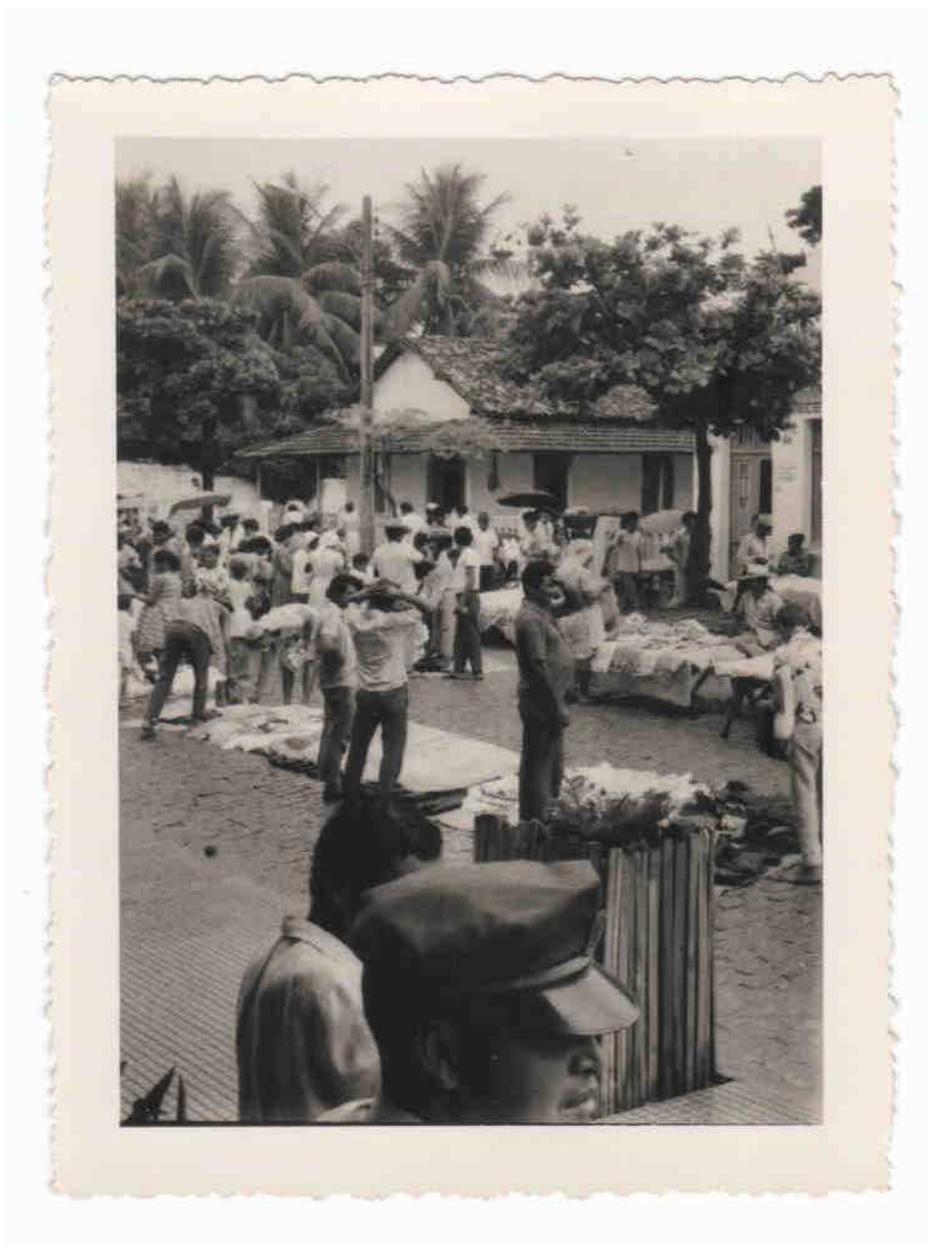
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Photographic Appendix – Palmares, 1971

Photos by Moacir Palmeira











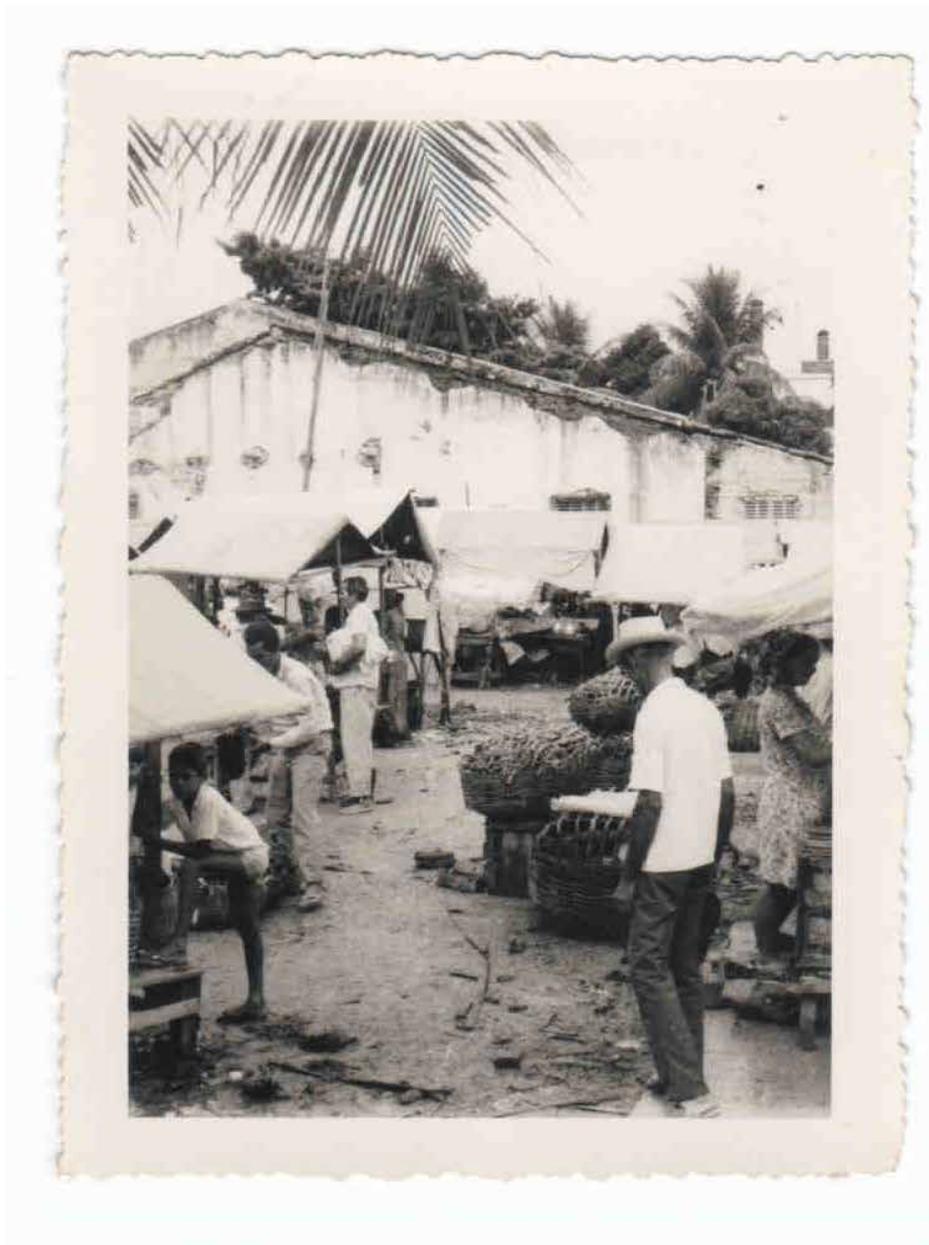


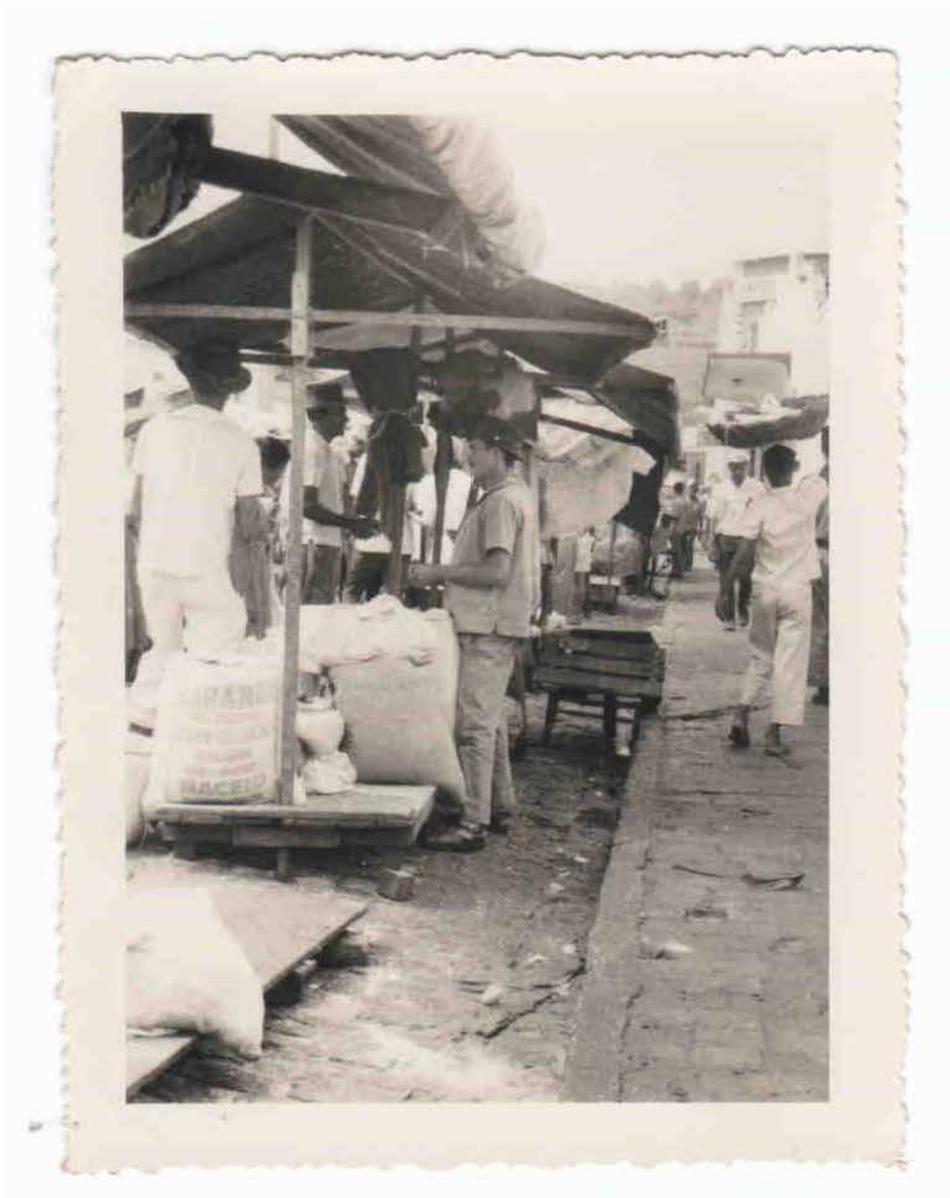












Feira e Mudança Econômica¹

Moacir Palmeira

Baseado nos dados do trabalho de campo realizado na região da Zona da Mata de Pernambuco, o texto analisa as transformações no universo dos engenhos e das usinas à luz dos circuitos de produção e de abastecimento das feiras livres onde antigos moradores expulsos desse universo passaram a se abastecer. Indicadora do crescimento desse proletariado rural, a expansão das feiras na Zona da Mata também ilumina a emergência de pequenos produtores com alguma autonomia dentro dos engenhos que produzem para vender nas feiras, reconfigurando assim o sistema de provisão da população rural da região, anteriormente sujeita ao sistema de distribuição interno dos engenhos, o *barracão*. O contraponto entre feiras e *barracão* permite observar a complexidade das mudanças em curso na região, e mostrar a produtividade da etnografia dos mercados (ou dos locais de mercado) para a compreensão de amplos processos de transformação social.

Palavras chave: Feiras, engenhos, usinas, *barracões*, proletariado rural, transformação social

“Eu não consigo entender como é possível, com a pobreza cada vez maior do povo, haver em Palmares uma feira de três dias, onde às duas horas da tarde do domingo não tem mais nada para vender” (S., ex-feirante, ex-administrador de engenho e ex-ajudante de barraqueiro).

O processo de expulsão dos moradores do engenho, na Zona da Mata de Pernambuco, desencadeado a partir de meados da década de 40 e acelerado nos últimos anos, representou mais do que a simples proletarianização de

1 Originalmente escrito para um seminário interno no Museu Nacional apresentado em 1971, este artigo nunca foi publicado. Para esta edição, incorporamos o registro fotográfico feito pelo autor em Palmares em 1971. A pesquisa fazia parte do projeto “Emprego e Mudança Social no Nordeste” coordenado por Moacir Palmeira. Para uma visão geral do contexto, as discussões teóricas e os desdobramentos da pesquisa explicados pelo próprio autor, ver Leite 2013:435-457.

trabalhadores rurais. Representou uma nova divisão de trabalho que atingiu tanto o próprio processo produtivo dentro das unidades agrícolas quanto à circulação e o consumo de bens de subsistência.²

Sem que tenha havido, do ponto de vista técnico, qualquer revolução agrícola, a organização do trabalho nos engenhos³ sofreu alterações consideráveis. O pagamento por diária, prevalecente na área até fins dos anos 30, foi substituído pelo mais flexível sistema de trabalho por “tarefa” e/ou “conta”,⁴ que livrava as unidades produtivas de pesados custos de fiscalização. As exigências trabalhistas que se impuseram aos proprietários na década de 60 estimularam estes últimos a intercalarem entre eles e os seus trabalhadores a figura de empreiteiro, uma espécie de empresário do trabalho alheio. Finalmente, com os moradores, foi sendo eliminada a prática de concessão de sítios e as obrigações que dela eram solidárias.

Por outro lado, a localização dessa mão de obra “liberada” nas cidades da área, não apenas aumentou grandemente a população destas cidades, como alterou radicalmente sua composição social. De cidades de funcionários, transformaram-se em aglomerações de trabalhadores rurais em disponibilidade. A diminuição de atividades das usinas durante certos períodos do ano e a crise financeira mais ou menos crônica que atinge a agroindústria pernambucana estimularam parte dessa população a buscar, permanentemente ou não, ocupação fora da agricultura da cana. Uma boa parte dessa população, entretanto, continua a trabalhar permanentemente (o que não exclui a procura de fontes de renda suplementar na cidade) nos engenhos, legal ou clandestinamente.

O mais importante, todavia, é que aqueles trabalhadores passam a ter de buscar por conta própria seus meios de subsistência, antes assegurados pelas próprias usinas e engenhos.⁵

2 Usarei neste trabalho a expressão “bens de subsistência”, na falta de outra melhor, para designar os bens de consumo (em geral agrícolas ou semi-elaborados) definidos socialmente na área estudada como indispensáveis à manutenção de força de trabalho e passíveis de, nas condições atuais de produção, serem produzidos localmente.

3 O termo “engenho”, com a liquidação dos antigos banguês, continuou sendo usado na área ara designar as propriedades plantadoras de cana, tanto de fornecedores quanto das próprias usinas.

4 Tanto a “tarefa” quanto a “conta” são modalidades de pagamento por produção. A primeira, de uso mais ou menos generalizado nos anos 40 e 50, consistia numa área de terra de 25 por 25 braças demarcadas no início da semana e entregue ao trabalhador para ser trabalhada, sem maiores considerações de tempo. No fim da semana recebia ele pelo número de tarefas trabalhadas, segundo avaliação do patrão de quanto valia o seu serviço. A “conta”, generalizada a partir da implementação do Estatuto do Trabalhador Rural, consiste numa área de aproximadamente 10 braças por 10, que, teoricamente, equivale ao salário mínimo diário de um trabalhador.

5 Através dos “barracões” – armazéns de propriedade a que tinham exclusividade de venda dentro dos seus limites – ou através da concessão de áreas para plantio de lavouras “de subsistência” a trabalhadores.

Abriu-se assim um mercado para os produtos dos “moradores” que permaneceram nos engenhos. Se o morador tradicional era obrigado “de direito” ou de fato (pela falta de alternativas) a entregar a produção de seu sítio ou de seu roçado aos “barracões” e aí comprar o que não produzia, o trabalhador da rua⁶ não tem como comprar no barracão e o “morador”, uma vez ilegalizada (ilegitimidade) a “sujeição”, ganha uma alternativa para a colocação de seus produtos.

Nas áreas em que o desenvolvimento de usinas foi mais tardio e em que havia um “estoque de terra” disponível⁷ a pequena produção foi estimulada, apesar das condições favoráveis à expansão canavieira e da expansão efetiva dos canaviais no período. O preço da retomada da exploração da cana por alguns antigos senhores de engenho foi, muitas vezes, o retalhamento e venda de parte de suas propriedades. Por outro lado, as necessidades de capital de giro das usinas parecem tê-las levado a não imobilizarem capitais em terra. Os senhores de engenho, por sua vez, num segundo momento, expulsaram seus trabalhadores, viram-se a par com problemas de indenização que resolveram, frequentes vezes, com pagamento em terra. Em alguns casos surgiu a situação paradoxal de moradores, que nunca haviam tido sítio, uma vez na “rua”, tornarem-se agricultores por conta própria em terra arrendada a senhor de engenho.⁸ Em suma, parece ter havido uma abertura de mercado de terras que favoreceu a pequena exploração.

A ativação do circuito de trocas de bens de subsistência traduz-se num crescimento sensível, embora de difícil avaliação, das feiras da Zona da Mata que, ao mesmo tempo que se modificam, fornecem talvez o principal suporte às mudanças apontadas, como fontes de emprego, nem sempre “improdutivo”, para os trabalhadores expulsos dos engenhos, atuando ao mesmo tempo como elemento de redistribuição de “riquezas” dentro de um determinado setor da população; e como centros de distribuição da pequena produção rural.

6 [Nota do Editor. Tal como o define o autor em uma entrevista, “o *trabalhador da rua*, era o trabalhador expulso ou o morador entre uma morada e outra, residindo naquelas pequenas cidades do interior.” (Palmeira, em Leite 2013:443).]

7 cf. Patrick Celema rd DU GENESTOUX, *Le Nordeste du Sucre*, thèse 3^e Cycle, Université de Paris, Paris, 1967.

8 No norte da Zona da Mata de Pernambuco faz-se, atualmente, uma distinção entre aforamento e arrendamento e entre foreiro e arrendatário: o foreiro mora na terra em que trabalha; enquanto o arrendatário deve morar necessariamente fora da terra. Foram Vera Maria Echenique e Luis Maria Gatti que me chamaram atenção para essa distinção que eles observaram em sua ida à área em Fevereiro de 1971. Voltando a manipular meu material de campo pude então constatar o rigor com que aquelas duas categorias são empregadas pelos sítiantes e trabalhadores rurais da área.

É claro que as coisas não são tão simples e que variações importantes ocorrem de acordo com as características particulares de diferentes subáreas e com a história específica das feiras que, assinala-se, quase sempre pré-existem aqueles processos. Mas sobretudo não são tão simples porque as feiras coexistem com outras formas de distribuição que vão do barracão ao “comércio estabelecido”.

As mudanças em questão não alteram seguramente o sentido vertical descendente de fluxo de bens manufaturados que caracterizava os barracões de usina e engenho: as feiras da Zona da Mata talvez continuem sendo basicamente (em termos de valor da produção) fornecedores de manufaturados à população rural. Os bens de subsistência colocados pelos pequenos produtores nas feiras não atingem os consumidores dos grandes centros urbanos regionais, ou os atingem marginalmente. O que há de novo é fluxo que se inaugurou ou que se acentuou de bens de subsistência no seio mesmo da população rural, antes indiferenciado dentro do fluxo geral de bens, que através dos barracões, atingiam os consumidores morando dentro dos engenhos. A partir de determinado momento, rompe-se o equilíbrio que fazia os engenhos oscilarem entre períodos mais ou menos dedicados ao cultivo de cana e menor ou maior desenvolvimento da agricultura de “subsistência”. Os produtos de subsistência passam a disputar terra com a cana num momento de grande expansão deste produto.

Quadro i: área cultivada (em hectares) com cana de açúcar e mandioca na Zona da Mata de Pernambuco – 1950-1960

	1950	1960
Cana	160.683	247.417
Mandioca	15.784	31.135

Fontes: Censos Econômicos de Pernambuco – 1950 (IBGE 1955)

Censo Agrícola – Pernambuco – 1960 (IBGE 1969)

Mas ao mesmo tempo que aumenta a área cultivada com mandioca, base do principal alimento das populações pobres da área, multiplicam-se as queixas de que “hoje o povo tem de comprar farinha no mercado”.

Esse circuito de trocas de bens da subsistência agrícola não está, é claro, isolado em seu funcionamento, do circuito de bens manufaturados. Seja através

do tabelamento de preço de certos produtos, seja através da concorrência com produtos similares produzidos em outras áreas e que chegam à área através do comércio estabelecido, ou simplesmente da intromissão deste último naquele circuito, ele está, em última análise, vinculado ao mercado nacional. No entanto, ele guarda uma relativa autonomia no seu funcionamento, tanto no que diz respeito aos procedimentos de compra e venda e ao processo de formação dos preços, quanto à própria composição do grupo de intermediários envolvidos.

É importante lembrar também que o montante efetivo de transações envolvidas é pequeno, apesar da não contabilização e o caráter e o caráter não definido juridicamente dos agentes econômicos contribuírem para que seja exagerada a pouca importância em valor das transações. Ignorar, entretanto, as relações sociais que aí estão em jogo é excluir ao conhecimento um mecanismo social que parece ter tido papel decisivo nas mudanças ocorridas na área.

Feiras e Cidades

As observações que faremos a seguir referem-se fundamentalmente a duas feiras da Zona da Mata de Pernambuco: Palmares e Carpina.

A cidade de Palmares, (sede do município autônomo desde 1873) é mais antiga do que a de Carpina e sempre foi considerada um “centro comercial” importante. O seu desenvolvimento, segundo historiadores locais, deveu-se a sua posição de ponto final da estrada de ferro Great Merten, na segunda metade do século passado. Mas, à medida que estações se iam inaugurando o movimento do Palmares ia decrescendo. No entanto, a sede da Empresa continuava a ser aqui localizada, com toda a sua movimentação e o trabalho das oficinas, onde eram reconstruídas locomotivas, confeccionados vagões e mantido o serviço interno de reparos de material. E uma circunstância interessante ocorria também: a bitola dos trilhos ferroviários de Palmares ao Recife era estreita, enquanto a do chamado prolongamento era larga. Isto dava lugar a uma “baldeação” obrigatória em palmares (...).”⁹

Carpina (sede de município em 1928) também parece ter tido seu desenvolvimento ligado ao crescimento das linhas de estrada de ferro, tornando-se ponto de entroncamento de dois ramais importantes. Por esse ou por outro

9 “Palmares: dados históricos, geográficos e econômicos”, in Palmares 1965 – Lista Telefônica Oficial. Cia Telefônica de Palmares.

motivo, a cidade também foi considerada, a exemplo de Palmares, como um “centro comercial”.

A despeito dessas similitudes, a que se poderia acrescentar o tamanho mais ou menos equivalente das duas cidades, e do fato que a atividade econômica dos dois municípios repousa sobre a agricultura de cana¹⁰, os arranjos sociais prevaletentes em uma e outra área parecem ser bastante diferentes. Além de Palmares ser considerada uma Zona “exclusivamente canavieira”, apresenta uma concentração fundiária muito maior do que Carpina.

Quadro II: distribuição das propriedades agrícolas por grupos de área (ha) no município de Carpina – 1960

Classe	Propriedades		Área	
	Quant.	%	Total	%
0-3	244	35,31	535	2,72
3-10	286	41,39	1 827	9,29
10-30	87	12,59	1 641	8,35
30-100	42	6,08	2 289	11,64
100-300	18	2,60	3 531	17,96
300-1000	14	2,03	9 840	50,04
1000-3000	-	-	-	-
Mais de 3000	-	-	-	-
Total	691	100,00	19 663	100,00

Quadro III: distribuição das propriedades agrícolas por grupos de área (ha) no município de Palmares – 1960

Classe	Propriedades		Área	
	Quant.	%	Total	%
0-3	2	1,32	3	0,07
3-10	4	2,65	40	0,10
10-30	39	25,83	796	1,96
30-100	33	21,81	1 787	4,41
100-300	31	20,53	6 508	16,10
300-1000	42	27,82	31 267	77,36
1000-3000	-	-	-	-
Mais de 3000	-	-	-	-
Total	151	100,00	40 401	100,00

Fonte : Rosa e Silva Neto, J.M. – Subsídios para o estudo do problema agrário em Pernambuco. Recife, Codepe, 1963.

¹⁰ Carpina não possui nenhuma usina sediada no município.

Enquanto em Palmares certas formas tradicionais de posse de terra na zona canavieira foram eliminadas desde o começo do século, em Carpina não só os engenhos moeram até período relativamente recente, como os “lavradores”¹¹ são figuras de um passado próximo e os foreiros ainda representam um grupo significativo.¹²

Ainda que, se sairmos dos limites das estreitas divisões municipais, essas diferenças possam ser minimizadas, elas parecem ter alguma consistência quando se consideram as duas feiras. A menor distância entre os centros produtores de alimentos e as feiras fazem com que a presença de produtores diretos na feira de Carpina seja maior do que em Palmares, com que o transporte animal tenha uma importância grande e talvez, não sendo tão grande o problema de estocagem quanto em Palmares, que o grande comércio tenha uma menor importância no abastecimento das feiras.

Por outro lado, e aqui nos faltam elementos para qualquer conjectura, Carpina, cuja feira se restringe ao domingo, é uma cidade em um circuito de feiras. Os intermediários que vendem bens manufaturados, conhecidos como “ambulantes”, são profissionais de feira que fazem durante a semana o seguinte trajeto: segunda-feira, João Alfredo; terça-feira, Itabaiana (Paraíba); quarta-feira, Nazaré ou Limoeiro; quinta-feira e sexta-feira, parada; sábado, Goiana ou Paulista; domingo, Carpina. Palmares, cuja feira dura quase três dias, parece estar desligada de qualquer ciclo. Os vendedores de manufaturados são em geral pessoas residentes na cidade e que não feiram em outros locais. O máximo que acontece é feirantes-produtores feirarem em duas etapas: um dia na semana feiram na localidade mais próxima e domingo vão a Palmares levando o que sobrou da sua produção e alguma produção comprada nessas pequenas feiras ou, o que parece se mais comum, levando sua produção para Palmares no domingo e vendendo as sobras na feira mais próxima de sua residência.

A Feira e as Feiras

A relativa autonomia do circuito dos bens de subsistência parece revelar-se na própria divisão da feira. As feiras estudadas apresentam-se ao observador

11 Moradores que plantavam cana em parceria.

12 [Nota do Editor. Tal como o define o autor em uma entrevista, “Dentro dos engenhos, ao lado do *morador* comum, havia a figura do *morador foreiro*, que explorava o seu sítio com alguma autonomia, pagando um foro anual.” (Palmeira, em Leite 2013:443).]

distribuídas por setores bem delimitados (manufaturados; “mangaios”; carnes e peixes; farinha e cereais; legumes, verduras e tubérculos; frutas; cerâmica) ainda que certas combinações de produtos fujam ao seu próprio modo de classificar.

Parece-nos ser sintomático que os trabalhadores rurais e feirantes entrevistados fora e dentro da feira raramente se refiram à feira como um todo, mas à “feira da farinha”, à “feira das frutas” (que numa época em que o produto mais vendido era a banana era designada como “feira da banana”), aos “bancos de carne”, aos “bancos de peixe”; ao “mercado”, às “barracas do mercado”. Conquanto não tenhamos elementos para explorar de modo sistemático essa classificação (incompleta, pois trata-se apenas de expressões inventariadas no material colhido) gostaríamos de apontar para o fato de que os setores que vendem produtos tabelados (carne, charque, açúcar) não são classificados como “feira”, o termo sendo reservado para aqueles setores em que há alguma flutuação de preço e, talvez, maior circulação de vendedores. Igualmente, é nítida a distinção entre bancos de feira (que se trata de barracos grandes e cobertos ou lonas no chão) e barracas, (termo reservado às barracas em torno do mercado), permanentes e controladas por dois feirantes ricos. Essa última distinção pode ser ilustrada pela resposta dada por um entrevistado que falava da venda de couve à pergunta do pesquisador sobre a não variação de preço entre as barracas (bancos):

P: Por que é tudo um preço só? Por que nas outras barracas não tem diferentes preços?

R: Porque...vamos dizer assim,esses mercados já são tudo mercado pronto. Então quem vai comprar é o pessoal mesmo que quer vender naquelas barracuinhas, então compra naquele mercado. Então a gente vê: se aqui, hoje em dia, todo mundo já vive no negócio prá ninguém ter uma brecha de entrar...”¹³

Dessa compartimentação parece ser solidária a preocupação do produtor em não levar mais de um produto à feira:

“Só vendo uma mercadoria de cada vez. A gente faz o cálculo do que tá melhor e leva.”¹⁴

13 A., dirigente de uma cooperativa de consumo de trabalhadores rurais.

14 Foreiro de Carpina, plantando mandioca, milho, abacaxi, batata e feijão. Entrevistado em sua casa.

Tanto feirar (vender na feira) como fazer feira (comprar na feira) são definidos socialmente como atividades masculinas. Ou, como disse um pequeno proprietário de Carpina¹⁵:

“As mulheres não vendem na feira. Só quando é tempo de festa é que vão vender para apurar uma coisinha para comprar um vestido, uma roupa pros meninos...A mulher do pequeno proprietário ainda conhece a feira. Mas tem mulher aí que nem conhece Carpina. A mulher do assalariado nunca vai à feira. Tem vergonha de não ter um vestido novo para ir à feira. Só tem uma roupa. Em caso de autônomo, a família vai à missa e depois à feira. É mais livre (...). mulher que não tem marido nem filho, manda o vizinho vender. Ela se acanha de ir sozinha à feira. (...) Porque geralmente tem de ir a cavalo e elas tem vergonha de chegar na cidade montada num cavalo”.

Mulher na feira, vendendo ou comprando, deve ser “viúva, solteira ou sem marido”. Mas, por que razão seja, fazer feira é vivido como um verdadeiro sacrifício, como sugerem as queixas de uma moradora de Palmares:

“Compro (na feira) sim senhora, quando sempre todo domingo eu tenho a penitencia de vir aqui para a feira de Palmares. (...) Já não mando meu esposo fazer compras porque já foi doido. Se ele vir, ele morre (referência aos preços), se ele vier aqui eu sei que ele não chega em casa.”¹⁶

Mas aquela não é uma regra que se aplique indiferentemente a todos os setores da feira. No setor de manufaturados e nas barracas em geral parece haver um comparecimento feminino importante. Mas também dentro dos setores operando com bens de subsistência, há lugar para vendedoras mulheres.

“Aqui também é assim – disseram em coro o pequeno proprietário mencionado e seu filho – aqui também é assim mulher só vende miudeza, cheiro e barro. E palha também. Tem umas que vendem verdura”.

A filha completou:

“A mulher não vende farinha na feira porque é uma coisa de muita responsabilidade. Tem que ser pro homem. Mulher só vende uma coisinha maneira.

15 L., proprietário de 1 ha. de terra em Carpina. Entrevista realizada em sua casa, na presença dos demais membros de sua família.

16 T.D., moradora em engenho de usina. Entrevista gravada.

Mulher não dá para vender farinha que farinha exige muito cálculo. Não é fácil vender farinha”. O chefe de família estendeu o alcance daquela exclusão aos filhos dizendo que na feira só homem é que vende, “a mulher e os filhos ficam passeando”, mas também relativizou-a:” Os que compram em grosso e moram na rua, e são mais espertos, às vezes botam mais de um banco. O dono fica num lugar e bota o filho no outro.”

A observação direta sugere que se trata de uma exclusão efetiva. Não pude constatar a presença de uma única mulher vendendo farinha na feira de Palmares em novembro e dezembro de 1969 (período da safra de cana e moagem das usinas de açúcar) e em maio e junho de 1970 (entressafra) as poucas mulheres na feira da farinha trabalhavam na área contígua aos bancos de carne e como auxiliares dos maridos, em geral no mesmo banco. O cadastramento (parcial no caso da farinha e cereais) de fevereiro de 1971 assinalou, entretanto, a presença de 7 mulheres contra 33 homens vendendo naquele setor, todas 7 morando na cidade. Em Carpina foram assinaladas umas poucas mulheres vendendo farinha nos três períodos, mas sempre dentro do mercado.

Ao contrário, em 1969, apenas mulheres vendiam no setor da cerâmica das duas feiras, o mesmo ocorrendo com comidas e temperos e cheiros. Em 1970 e 1971 foram encontrados homens vendendo cerâmica também. Isto pode ser visto de maneira sintética no seguinte quadro:

Quadro IV

	Carpina			Palmares		
	1969	1970	1971	1969	1970	1971
Manufaturados	H>M	H>M	H>M	H>M	H>M	H>M
Farinha e cereais	H>M	H>M	H>M	H	H>M	H>M
Carnes e peixes	H	H	H	H>M	H>M	H>M
“Mangaios”	M>H	M>H	H>M	M>H	M>H	M>H
Legumes e verduras	H=M	H=M	H=M	H=M	H=M	H=M
Tubérculos	H	H	H	H	H	H
Frutas	H>M	H>M	H>M	H>M	H>M	H>M
Cerâmica	M	M>H	H>M	M	M>H	H

H – Homem; M – Mulher; m - mulher dentro do mercado ou em número insignificante; H>M – mais homens que mulheres; M>H – mais mulheres que homens; H=M – número igual de homens e mulheres

Vendedores e compradores

São tão grandes as variações de um setor para o outro no que diz respeito aos agentes de troca na feira, que se tornam difíceis as generalizações.

É bem verdade que parece haver uma certa homogeneidade no que diz respeito aos consumidores finais, trabalhadores rurais e sítiantes no caso de Carpina. No entanto, seria uma simplificação deixar de assinalar a presença visível, e proclamada pelos vendedores, de consumidores urbanos nos setores de manufaturados, frutas, verduras e legumes. Ao contrário do que ocorre na “feira de farinha”, por exemplo, há mulheres comprando (em geral empregadas domésticas). No caso de Carpina, parece ter alguma importância a presença de consumidores de Recife (muitos dos quais são proprietários de “granjas” nas imediações da cidade),¹⁷ especialmente nos boxes de carne verde no mercado municipal e nos setores de frutas e “verduras”. Para outros produtos, entretanto, esses consumidores parecem dar preferência ao supermercado da cidade.¹⁸

Quanto aos vendedores, só a presença de intermediários é a regra, as diferenças entre esses intermediários são muito grandes para que possamos considerá-las em conjunto. O cadastramento da feira de Palmares revelou que não apenas o comparecimento de produtores diretos ou de intermediários é, como se poderia esperar, muito maior nos setores onde se vendem alimentos, como, o que é menos óbvio, praticamente a totalidade de vendedores de manufaturados são profissionais que sempre foram feirantes ou, já tendo exercido atividades agrícolas, passaram, antes de se tornarem vendedores na feira, por uma qualquer ocupação “urbana”. Em contrapartida, a grande maioria dos vendedores de farinha e cereais ou são agricultores ou são agricultores (ou trabalhadores rurais) que, saindo do campo, ingressaram diretamente no comércio.

No entanto, se aquela parece ser uma clivagem fundamental, as diferenças também são grandes entre os setores que transacionam com bens de

17 [Nota do Autor. O termo “granja” é usado em carpina para designar pequenas ou médias propriedades rurais de pessoas de classe média ou alta das cidades (em geral, de Recife), utilizando trabalhadores assalariados. Na sua maioria, as granjas estão voltadas para a criação de aves. No momento da pesquisa, algumas delas estavam começando a plantar cana-de-açúcar, seus proprietários transformando-se em fornecedores de cana.]

18 “Minha clientela é especial. São pessoas de nível médio e alto: são granjeiros, funcionários da Malária e da Rede, além dos proprietários”. Também se abastecem no supermercado pessoas das cidades vizinhas “pois não existe nenhuma loja no gênero em toda mata norte.” “Por incrível que pareça, até pessoas de Recife vêm comprar comigo.” (S., proprietário de supermercado)

subsistência. Elas parecem remeter às condições de produção de cada tipo de produto, ao próprio caráter mais ou menos perecível do produto e às disponibilidades de capital de produtores intermediários.

Na “feira da farinha”, por exemplo, onde são vendidos farinha e cereais, e onde o grosso dos consumidores são trabalhadores rurais, há um número variadíssimo de arranjos. Há um número grande de sitiantes que produziram sua própria farinha, muitos dos quais proprietários de casas de farinha¹⁹, em Carpina, vindos do próprio município, em Palmares vindos dos “agrestes”²⁰, do Agreste ou do norte de Alagoas. Raramente vendem apenas a sua própria produção. Via de regra, a farinha é deles, mas o milho, o arroz, certos tipos de feijão são comprados ou diretamente aos grossistas ou no mercado municipal. Em épocas em que não há farinha, por um motivo ou por outro, na área, atuam como simples intermediários. Mas, em geral, a farinha é dos “matutos”. Vender diretamente na feira não é visto como uma coisa fácil. Há problemas de gastos de transporte e estocagem:

“Não vendo na feira porque sai caro levar a produção. Tenho de pagar 2 contos por saco no transporte e ainda tenho de pagar o chão. Depois, se não vender tudo, ainda tenho de trazer para casa. Não lucro nada.”²¹

Comprando farinha aos matutos e eventualmente ao “comércio” (categoria que inclui tanto os grossistas quanto o mercado), estão os pequenos intermediários ou “retalheiros”. Em Carpina, esses pequenos intermediários pernoitam de sábado para domingo na entrada da cidade, na “porta do cemitério”, esperando os sitiantes:

“É só ir de madrugada que se vê o pessoal discutindo preço. ‘Dou tanto’. O outro: ‘Dou tanto.’ Tem uns [produtores] que nem saltam do cavalo. Vendem a produção lá mesmo e voltam.”

19 A montagem de uma casa de farinha movida a braço, “pau-nas – costas” parece ser relativamente fácil e é grande o número de proprietários de casas de farinha. Há engenhos dentro dos quais se encontram 10 ou mais casas de farinha de propriedade dos moradores. Nas áreas de foreiros e pequenos proprietários, elas são ainda mais numerosas. Apesar disso, nem todos que plantam mandioca têm sua própria casa de farinha. A maioria dos plantadores de mandioca usa a casa de farinha de um vizinho para moerem (eles próprios) sua mandioca, dando em pagamento ao dono meia cuia em cada dez produzidas ou meia cuia por cada prensa.

20 Quando os trabalhadores rurais de Palmares se referem aos “agrestes” eles visam a região próxima que abastece Palmares, limítrofe entre a Zona da Mata e o Agreste. Igualmente, quando falam dos “matutos”, é o “povo dos agrestes” que eles pretendem designar.

21 Proprietários de 2 ha. em Carpina dependente de um dono de casa de farinha, a quem fornece, além da parte do seu produto, a sua força de trabalho quando é solicitado.

Esses intermediários, segundo o mesmo entrevistado, “são pequenos”. Às vezes tomam dinheiro emprestado, pagando juro alto para poder comprar a carga.

“Quando é pequeno que compra na porta, fica de pagar depois. Aí na volta, chega com um choro... e pede para abater o preço porque a feira foi ruim”.²²

Geralmente, esses pequenos intermediários da farinha dispõem de um “quartinho” onde estocam sua mercadoria e dificilmente feiram em mais de um lugar.

Finalmente, há um número grande de vendedores dependentes dos grossistas ou dos comerciantes do mercado. Dispondo de quase nenhum capital, sem condições de estocagem, são pouco mais que empregados dos comerciantes. Compram geralmente em consignação e só operam com o produto comprado de um comerciante que os obriga a colocarem seus “bancos” em frente aos armazéns.

No setor de “verdura”²³, a situação é bem diferente. Não há interferência do comércio estabelecido. É um setor relativamente “aberto”. Segundo um verdureiro de Carpina, “verdura” é o mais barato que tem, não precisa de “capital”. Isso significa uma maior presença de produtores diretos que, no entanto, ao que parece, é contrabalanceada pelas possibilidades maiores que abre aos intermediários pobres. Ainda mais que a regra é vender o produto o mais rápido possível. Como diz um produtor de verduras em Palmares²⁴:

“É. A gente bota no chão pra vender, passa até tarde. Couve não é coisa de passar a vida todinha no sol. Se fosse fruta, pepino, maxixe, o quiabo, aquilo aguenta o sol, mas couve a gente tira à tarde, banha ele com água, amarra os molhos, banha com água, ele passa a noite com água, de manhã cedo, a gente bota num balaio, numa sacola e traz pra vender. O nosso lema é vender logo, porque se ele murchar, perdeu o valor, né? Murchou, perdeu o valor. E essa aí [referência à verdureira] compra e bota na rua aqueles molhos de couve. Compra mais barato. (...) Ela vai vender lá por 200, ou que não venda, mas prejuízo quem tem é ela, não é? Agora se fosse fruta, banana, laranja, não. Eu

22 L., proprietário de 1 ha. em Carpina.

23 A categoria “verdura” é extremamente ampla. Um intermediário que vende apenas verdura enumera assim as suas mercadorias: “salsa, cebola, pimentão, quiabo, alface e tomate.”

24 J.A., morador de engenho. Entrevista gravada.

encostava minha carguinha lá num canto, ou meu balaio, dizia: ‘É 20 cruzeiros ali, é 20 cruzeiros!’. Aquilo ali não murcha com o sol não. Só saía de tarde. Mas sabe, a verdura é sempre mais diferente, não é?”

Também são atraídos como intermediários para esse setor “moradores” de engenhos interessados em suplementar seu salário com um “ganho” extra, vendendo os produtos dos matutos.

Preços e Freguesia

Também as modalidades de fixação de preços das mercadorias parecem variar entre diferentes setores. Não apenas há setores em que os preços são tabelados, como há setores em que, como os manufaturados, há um certo limite além do qual os preços não podem cair. Nesses setores o preço é um só do início ao fim da feira. Em contrapartida, quando se trata de frutas e, sobretudo, de legumes e verduras, a variação de preços, tanto entre bancos, quanto num mesmo banco no correr da feira, parece não ter limite: “baixo o preço e vendo tudo. Nunca aconteceu de ter que voltar com a produção”²⁵, diz um pequeno produtor.

“Agora o preço aqui é ruim porque vem muito abacaxi da Paraíba (...).”

Por isso vai para Carpina no sábado à noite “para pegar preço”. Procura vender o máximo nas primeiras horas da manhã porque a partir das 9 horas chegam os caminhões da Paraíba e o preço cai. Quando tem muito abacaxi, cobra “200 o grande e 100 o pequeno”. Quando tem pouco, cobra “300 o grande e 200 o pequeno”.

Mas também para o pequeno intermediário, que imobilizou um pequeno capital, é preferível vender a qualquer preço e recuperar parte do que gastou, do que ficar com aqueles produtos que ele não tem como guardar.

Na feira da farinha a situação é muito especial. Os intermediários, que vendem apenas mercadorias em consignação têm uma faixa de manobra extremamente restrita na fixação dos preços:

“A gente sempre compra o saco de 70 quilos e depois calcula quanto dá para fazer o litro”.²⁶

25 Foreiro de Carpina, citado.

26 Informação dada por integrante de um grupo de feirantes do Agreste, vendedor de farinha comprada no

Os intermediários, que compram dos matutos, fazem o mesmo cálculo em relação ao produto deles:

“os matutos trazem a mercadoria e vão vendendo a quem encontrar...”.

Pegam mil cruzeiros do chão à Prefeitura e mais 500 por saco, que vendam ou que não vendam. Fixam então o preço conforme o que pagaram pelo produto. Mas, quando a feira está muito fraca chegam a vender pelo preço que compraram.²⁷ Ainda que os matutos possam vender ao retalhista mais barato que no comércio, a determinação dos grupos de venda parece depender basicamente dos grossistas:

“Os grossistas vendem na feira. Quanto tem farinha, eles botam várias barracas. Quanto tem pouco, eles amarram para garantir o preço”.²⁸

Na feira da farinha quase não há regateio em torno de preços. A concorrência entre vendedores parece se dar basicamente em torno da qualidade do produto, que é manuseado por quase todos os compradores potenciais e em alguns casos provado. Algumas vezes os consumidores reclamam do preço, mas nunca pedem para baixá-lo. A única tentativa, que pudemos presenciar de resgatar preços, foi empreendida por uma mulher “rica” em Palmares, que, justificando-se diante de nós, por estar comprando às 11 horas da manhã do domingo, tentou convencer um grupo de feirantes-produtores do Agreste a lhe venderem mais barato. Foi ironizada pelos feirantes e desistiu bruscamente da compra. Os comentários que seguiram foram ainda mais agressivos e irônicos. Um desses feirantes disse então que:

“quem ainda compra melhor são os pobrezinhos. Pelos ricos venderíamos mais barato do que tínhamos comprado”.

No entanto, encontramos um velho, ex-feirante, em Caruaru, vendendo havia um ano em Palmares, que se queixou amargamente das disputas de preço:

“Veja o senhor: não é estranho que num lugar deste tamanho a gente não tenha um freguês? Mas é assim. Por quê? Chego eu, boto a minha farinha a 1.400. O amigo aqui ao lado – apontando para o feirante vizinho –, que talvez tenha comprado mais barato, bota a dele a 1.300. Tá certo. Aí, o outro ali em frente, que

comércio.

27 Pequeno intermediário vendendo farinha dos matutos.

28 L., citado.

compro pelo mesmo preço ou talvez mais caro do que eu, pra vender, bota a farinha a 1.200. Aí os outros tem que baixar o preço para também poderem vender. O mal é essa falta de amizade entre os feirantes. Como é que vai ter freguês assim?”²⁹

Ao que parece, o velho empregava o termo freguês como sinônimo de comprador (queixou-se em seguida de não ter vendido até àquela hora uma cuia de farinha), enquanto que em Palmares o termo parece denotar uma relação muito específica:

“O que chamam aqui de freguês é aquele que compra fiado de oito dias. Compra num domingo para pagar no outro. O negócio é assim: o senhor tem uma barraca onde vende farinha ... Aí, vem uma pessoa que compra uma vez, duas, três a dinheiro. Lá pela quarta vez que está comprando já está conversando com o vendedor. Na hora de ir embora o vendedor diz: «leve mais». A pessoa diz: «homem levar eu não posso porque dinheiro eu não tenho». O feirante: «faça uma feira toda e pague domingo que vem». Aí começa a ser freguês. No domingo que vêm paga a feira anterior e faz uma nova compra para pagamento de oito dias».³⁰

Segundo um outro informante, esse é o “freguês de oito dias”, que existe na venda a retalho. Mas há também, ou pelo menos houve no tempo em que ele próprio feirara, o “freguês de feira” ou “ribirista”, “aquele intermediário a quem o matuto sempre vende o seu produto”.³¹

Seja como for, a julgar pelo que afirmam os feirantes e pelo que podemos ver através da observação direta, a freguesia não parece ser uma prática muito difundida na venda a retalho. Segundo um velho fiscal, comprar na feira

“é coisa livre. A pessoa compra onde quer. Está muito caro, deixa para de tarde... (...) Negócio de freguês nunca houve. Não pode haver mesmo. Pessoal vende a um e a outro ... essas coisas assim (...) Fatura é que faz diminuir o preço.”

Alguns feirantes declararam ter fregueses, no entanto, acrescentam:

“mas o preço é um só”.

29 Velho paraibano, feirando há 25 anos. Em Palmares há um ano. Antes feirou em Gravaté dos Bezerras e Caruaru (Agreste).

30 T., ex-morador, funcionário da Rede. Intervenção feita quando entrevistava feirante na “favela” que respondia nossas perguntas sobre freguesia de maneira aparentemente vaga – “às vezes sim, às vezes não.”

31 S., funcionário do sindicato de trabalhadores rurais, ex-administrador, ex-ajudante de barraqueiro, ex-feirante.

Também não parece haver privilégios especiais com respeito à quantidade do produto. Sempre o comprador recebe mais um pouco de farinha, mas isso independentemente de ser ou não “freguês”. Por outro lado, só constatamos casos de freguesia de oito dias entre feirantes (e os feirantes ELES próprios parecem constituir um grupo importante de consumidores) ou entre trabalhadores rurais e donos de barracas no mercado.

Em setores tais como frutas, “verduras” e tubérculos, só existem relações de freguesia entre produtores e intermediários, elas inexistem na venda a retalho e o próprio conceito de “freguês de oito dias” parece não ter vigência. Frases como

“tenho freguesia sim, mas não é muito certo” ou “eu tenho fregueses quando são poucos vendendo, quando são muitos eu não tenho não”

sugerem que freguês é pura e simplesmente sinônimo de consumidor. Mais explícito parece ser a resposta do feirante-produtor:

“Não tenho freguês, não. Vendo voluntário (...). Não vendo fiado aqui. Aqui não se vende fiado... Entre amigos a gente vende, mas só quando é muito conhecido.”³²

Essa variação entre setores, no que diz respeito à fixação de preços, desde autores onde opera o livre jogo da oferta e da procura ou onde “a fartura é que faz baixar o preço” até setores onde os preços são tabelados nacionalmente, desde setores onde existe a “freguesia de oito dias” até setores onde inexistente qualquer coisa no gênero, deve ser relativizada. Primeiramente, porque nos faltam elementos sobre o poder de barganha dos diferentes grupos de produtores nas suas relações com intermediários e sobre a lógica que preside as suas decisões econômicas. Em segundo lugar, o que é mais importante para o presente trabalho, porque a feira não é um espaço plano. Os diferentes setores da feira não são diferentes apenas pelos diferentes produtos que vendem ou por quaisquer outras características substantivas. Eles são hierarquizados.³³ E essa hierarquia, que parece um pouco refletir a própria “estrutura do

32 Foreiro de Carpina, citado.

33 A importância da farinha na dieta local reflete-se em frases ditas de passagem pelos entrevistados do tipo “... feira mesmo, de cereais ...”, “... farinha que é o de comer...” ou: “No domingo eu venho para rua. Me acordo de manhã, bota de mão o saquinho e venho para rua. Lá em casa nós gastamos por semana 2 cuias de farinha. Somente pra comer farinha.” (T.D., moradora de engenho. Entrevista gravada).

consumo” socialmente determinada de trabalhadores rurais e sitiantes³⁴, se faz presente nas decisões que são tomadas em cada setor:

“Eu hoje mesmo trouxe 61 molhos de couve. Cheguei lá e disse a ela [retalhadeira de verdura]: ‘a senhora sabe que o preço da minha mercadoria subiu?’ Ela me disse: ‘Por que? Por que choveu?’ Eu disse: ‘Não. Por que tudo tá caro. Então minha mercadoria tá mais cara hoje também’ (...)”³⁵

Comércio, Feira, Mercado e Barracão

Se o setor chave da feira é o de farinha e cereais, como foi sugerido, e se, como é provável, o controle desse setor está nas mãos dos grossistas e dos “comerciantes do mercado”, tudo nos leva a crer que o “preço da feira” e o “preço do comércio” sejam uma só e mesma coisa. Isso, no entanto, é problemático, porque supõe uma identidade, pelo menos de interesses, entre o comércio estabelecido e os “donos de barracas no mercado”. Ora, ainda que faltem dados para afirmações definitivas, não só aqueles dois grupos parecem ter origens sociais bem diferentes – os “comerciantes estabelecidos” sempre integraram as “elites locais”, geralmente são filhos de comerciantes, suas firmas muitas vezes têm filiais em vários municípios, enquanto os donos de barracas são de origem humilde, muitas vezes ex-mascates que se estabeleceram, nunca operam em mais de uma praça – como seus interesses comerciais e suas atitudes diante da feira parecem divergir. Enquanto o comércio estabelecido proclama seu estado de crise, atestado pelo número de falências ocorridas nos últimos anos e pela presença crescente de firmas do Recife operando no interior, como no caso de Palmares, ou pela estagnação das vendas, como no caso de Carpiana, os comerciantes do mercado parecer estar, se não expandindo seus negócios com rapidez, pelo menos em condições financeiras de sustentarem várias barracas e de colocarem dezenas de vendedores na feira de domingo. Enquanto os donos de barracas procuraram operar manipulando as vendas na feria, os comerciantes estabelecidos se queixam de que a feira é um problema porque

34 Cf. as publicações do Instituto Joaquim Nabuco de Recife: Telmo Frederico do Rego MACIEL, *Nível da vida do trabalhador rural da Zona da Mata-1961*, (1964) e Fernando Antônio GONÇALVES, *Condição de vida do trabalhador rural na Zona da Mata de Pernambuco – 1964* (1966).

35 L., comerciante em Palmares.

“o feirante entra na loja, compra mercadoria sem nota fiscal e depois vende na rua sem pagar imposto, fazendo concorrência ao comércio estabelecido” ou de que “a maior desgraça do comércio é a feira de domingo”.³⁶

Porém seja qual for a natureza das relações entre comércio estabelecido e comerciantes no mercado, o mercado municipal parece estar operando como uma “bolsa de cereais” e os preços aí estabelecidos parece estar tendo vigência muito além do “pavilhão” e da “feira de domingo”, alcançando área até então não atingidas pelo comércio, como se as próprias operações de partilha do produto nas casas de farinha.³⁷ O próprio barracão de engenho está sendo atingido.

Tradicionalmente, os barracões pertenciam ao proprietário de engenho que, ainda que pusesse a sua frente um preposto, tomadas todas as decisões relativas a preços e compras de mercadoria. No caso de usinas, além do barracão de engenho, havia o barracão de usina que, ao mesmo tempo que abastecia os trabalhadores da parte industrial da usina, fornecia, com exclusividade, para os barracões de cada engenho uma usina. Houve usinas que organizaram companhia de abastecimento, firmas que chegaram a ser poderosas e ter filiais em várias praças, que monopolizavam totalmente a distribuição de bens de subsistência dentro de suas unidades produtivas agrícolas, diretamente ou através de um cerrado sistema de fiscalização. No início da década dos 40, uma usina do sul de Pernambuco proclamava ter promovido “a extinção do ‘barracão’ em mãos particulares, ... nos quais os operários estavam sujeitos a toda ordem de explorações”.³⁸

“Ainda mais longe a empresa. Mantém (sic), em cada propriedade agrícola, uma venda para distribuição de gêneros de primeira necessidade aos

36 Declaração de um comerciante numa reunião que assistimos da Associação Comercial de Carpina. Há uma grande luta entre os comerciantes da cidade a propósito do dia da feira. O grande comércio acha que a feira deve passar para o sábado. os comerciantes mais velhos da cidade e os pequenos comerciantes (retalhistas) preferem a feira no domingo. A divisão entre eles é tão grande que a Associação Comercial local, para poder tomar uma posição diante do problema, realizou uma espécie de pesquisa de opinião entre todos os comerciantes da cidade. Prevaleceu a posição do pequeno comércio.

37 Esta se tornando mais frequente o pagamento em dinheiro ao dono da casa de farinha com a introdução da casa de farinha a motor, operada pelo próprio dono. No entanto, independentemente do tipo de casa de farinha, as relações entre o produtor de mandioca e o dono da casa de farinha enquanto intermediária já parecem estar subordinadas ao “mercado”. Assim, um pequeno proprietário que entrevistamos (ver nota 16) nos disse que vendia sua produção ao dono da casa de farinha por um preço inferior ao comércio: “Porque ele tem que lucrar uma coisinha, não é? Por exemplo, quando a farinha ao comércio é 30, eu vendo a ele por 25. Essa mesma que eu estou fazendo aqui já é dele.”

38 O homem e a terra na Uísa Catende, 1941, p. 36.

respectivos moradores e trabalhadores, instalada em prédio apropriado que é cedido gratuitamente a um concessionário com todos os apetrechos – prateleira (sic), balanças, balcão – sem que lhes seja cobrada qualquer renda ou contribuição. Apenas, lhes é imposta, a esses concessionários, a obrigação de vender gêneros pelos preços previamente tabelados de modo a evitar a exploração do homem do campo. E a usina adota rigoroso serviço de fiscalização dos preços, da qualidade de do peso dos gêneros. Fornece, ainda, a empresa transporte gratuito, nos seus trens, para aqueles gêneros de modo que eles possam ser distribuídos, nas propriedades mais afastadas, por preços em correspondência com os da cidade. Essas vendas substituíram os antigos barracões que eram, até então e na maioria dos casos, explorados pelos proprietário ou arrendatário dos engenhos ou que eles cediam a determinadas pessoas, mediante o pagamento de renda ou participação nos lucros. Bem ao contrário desses barracões, constituindo uma fonte de renda para o proprietário ou arrendatário dos engenhos, as vendas existentes nas propriedades da Usina Catende S.A. representam uma fonte de despesa e de encargos para a empresa, na defesa dos seus trabalhares e moradores, para lhes assegurar alimentação melhor e mais barata”.³⁹

“Barracão” ou “venda” o nome importa pouco, de senhor de engenho ou de uma usina “modernizante”, aquela instituição de qualquer forma mantinha o morador afastado do mundo econômico. Hoje, entretanto, mesmo naquela usina a situação é outra:

“Hoje não existe uma tabela de barracão nem antigamente eles exigiam uma tabela. Aquilo vinha discriminado da usina. Tinha fiscalização das vezes por semana, andando naqueles barracão, olhando se o barraqueiro estava vendendo. Então o trabalhador levava a informação para aquele fiscal. Hoje não. É por conta deles, não tem mais tabela. Aquilo ali ele compra a farinha, digamos, no comércio, compra um grosso, compra na base de 3 mil cruzeiros, vamos dizer. Aí ele vende no barracão por 6 mil, 6 mil e 500, 5 mil e 500, e aí já continua aquele caso. O trabalhador, coitado, não pode ir ao comércio que já vem acabado com aquele ganho, ou disso ou aquilo outro, e semana faltou trabalho três dias. O trabalhador acabou-se. (...)”⁴⁰

39 Idem, pp. 109-110.

40 A., morador de engenho de usina na área de Palmares. Entrevista gravada.

Com a liquidação do morador e com a generalização do trabalho por empreitada, o barracão assume feição nova.⁴¹ Cada vez menos é um negócio do proprietário ou de usina. Cada vez mais a regra é o barracão arrendado e terceiros. O barraqueiro está deixando de ser o “rapaz jeitoso de confiança do patrão” do “tempo antigo” para ser cada vez mais um “comerciante”, geralmente controlando vários barracões, em propriedades de um ou diferentes donos, morando muitas vezes na rua, onde pode ter ou não outros negócios. Ele não compra mais onde o patrão quer, mas onde lhe custe menos:

“No barracão vende tudo. Vende, vende farinha, feijão, açúcar, querosene, fósforo, sal, arrozina, maisena, leite, sardinha, a batata, bacalhau, charque, peixe brabo, desse peixe que tem aí no meio da feira que acho que nem os tatus quer. Porque eles compra a mercadoria mais barata para vender mais caro, ganhar dinheiro. E tem os que vende tudo. Nos barracões só não vende roupa nem calçado, essas coisinhas assim. Mas tem uns que ainda vende isso. Agora, vende caro. (...)”⁴²

E os preços do barracão, se não são os preços do comércio, são regulados por esses últimos:

“Hipótese: o preço da farinha agora no comércio, a mais barata que tem é 5 mil, não é? Até no domingo deu 4 mil, mas o preço atual é 5 mil, a mais barata. Ele – o barraqueiro – compra daquela mais barata, dos 5 mil, 2 sacos ou 3 sacos ou 4, o que ele puder, né? – conforme o barracão, conforme o consumo do barracão, né? Mas que ele vai mudar no preço do mercado. Se no mercado estiver farinha boa no mercado por 10 mil, ele vende por 10 mil.”⁴³

Mas não é apenas a especulação do barraqueiro com produtos do comércio que vai ser regulada pelos preços de mercado. Também as suas transações com “moradores” que lhe fornecem produtos como a farinha de mandioca serão regidas por aqueles preços:

“Eles [os barraqueiros] compra aquela farinha da boa, matéria prima – pelo preço da mais barata no comércio – e vendo ao preço do comércio, que está lá

41 O empreiteiro, entretanto, vai transformar a venda na cidade em uma espécie de barracão. Seus trabalhadores compram fiado na venda e são descontados no fim de semana.

42 A., morados, citado.

43 J.A., citado.

custando no mercado, no correr da semana. É assim: se ela estiver custando 10 mil no mercado, eles aumentam aqueles 10 mil.”⁴⁴

Isso, entretanto, não impede os trabalhadores rurais e sitiante de continuarem vendo o “comércio” em geral como uma alternativa ao barracão:

“[Comprar] No barracão? Eu tenho o maior medo do barracão, tá vendo a senhora? Eu já não acabei mais a família por causa que Deus é muito bom. E viva Deus e os homens, os homens que negoceia. Por aí mesmo dentro de Palmares tem aí um cidadão que possui a barraca que ele não é meu patrão, ele é meu pai. (...)”⁴⁵

Conclusão

Há mais ou menos 10 anos atrás um historiador pernambucano dizia, sem medo de errar, a propósito das vilas e cidades das partes mais úmidas do Agreste:

“Estas vilas, como as cidades agrestinas próximas aos brejos, tem grandes feiras, uma vez que a menor concentração fundiária permite maior divisão do dinheiro: diminui o número de ricos e pobres e aumenta o de intermediários. Por isto feiras como as de Camocim de São Felix, Cupira, Cachoeirinha e Capoeiras, apesar da pequena população do aglomerado, são muito mais importantes do que as cidades grandes da Zona da Mata, como Goiana, Nazaré ou Palmares.”⁴⁶

O estudo das feiras da Zona da Mata sugere que as coisas não são mais assim e que a feira e o mercado estão presentes hoje até nas transações de que elas são a própria negação, de que o melhor exemplo é a prática comercial do barraqueiro. E o crescimento da feira na zona canavieira parece projetar-se mais longe ainda e inverter as próprias relações entre feiras do Agreste e da Mata.

“Destas feiras daqui de perto, Palmares é a melhor. No Agreste a feira é

44 Idem.

45 T.D., citada.

46 Manuel CORREA DE ANDRADE, *A terra e o homem no nordeste*. Brasiliense, São Paulo, 1964 (2ª ed.), p. 159.

fraquinha.”⁴⁷ “E não é só em Palmares, é em todos esses lugarezinhos pequenos, como Batateira, que tem havido crescimento.”⁴⁸

Os produtores de Curupira, São Félix, Cachoeirinha, estão trazendo os seus produtos para a Mata e muitas daquelas feiras estão consumindo “sobras” de Palmares ou estão sendo transformadas em “feira de mulher”.⁴⁹

Esse crescimento das feiras não é linear. Feirantes e consumidores mencionam sempre um passado próximo em que “as coisas eram melhores”, “quando o trabalhador tinha dinheiro na mão para comprar”, ou um passado de ouro quando “se jogava fora as mercadorias porque a fartura era muito grande.” Nem o crescimento da feira parece representar qualquer aumento do poder aquisitivo dos trabalhadores rurais e dos sitiantes. Ao contrário, seu crescimento parece acompanhar muito de perto as vicissitudes da própria história da área.

Agosto de 1971

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47 Grupo de feirantes produtores do Agreste vendendo farinha.

48 S., citado.

49 Alguns feirantes dos “agrestes” afirmaram só feirar em Palmares, deixando o encargo de vender nas suas localidades às mulheres.

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Appendíce Fotográfico – Palmares, 1971

Photos by Moacir Palmeira

