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THE DECOLONIAL DEBATE: EXPRESSIONS

O DEBATE DECOLONIAL: EXPRESSÕES

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Certainly, it is not by chance that a decolonial worldview has been gaining strength at a time when an increasing number of countries in the global South are standing up against centuries-old mechanisms of domination imposed by North Atlantic nations. We have chosen the theme of decoloniality for issues 26 and 27 of the V!RUS journal, recognizing that the current controversies expressed in the academic sphere, questioning the validity of this thinking in its theoretical-conceptual or methodological aspects, present an opportunity for research and debate within Architecture, Urbanism, and related fields. However, our motivation is equally driven by agreement with some of its assumptions. As an example, the entire argumentation of authors such as Aníbal Quijano, Catherine Walsh, Enrique Dussel, María Lugones, Ramón Grosfoguel, and Walter Mignolo regarding the foundational and tragic role of the colonization of the Americas in shaping the European idea of Modernity and its planetary imposition as a hegemonic perspective cannot be overlooked. It seems essential to examine the historical and socio-political origins of such a domination process, the impacts of its perpetuation on how societies are organized, and its implications for the modes of knowledge production and dissemination across various domains.

The numerous submissions we have received, along with the feedback and observations from dozens of external reviewers on the ideas and experiences shared in these writings, highlight several important issues. One of them is the recognition, within this body of work, of a genuine interest from various fields in the theme. This is particularly notable because many researchers had already been addressing related topics — such as identity struggles, socio-spatial inequalities in the cities of the continent, the limitations of educational programs directed at populations with non-Eurocentric cultural backgrounds, among others — even if not always directly linking them to the decolonial discourse. Furthermore, the submissions come from institutions across Brazil and various countries in Latin America, presenting diverse readings and applications of the ideas initially formulated by the Modernity/Coloniality group (M/C): Some focus and deepen reflections on very local and specific situations, while others seek to establish dialogues with classical authors in the fields of Art, Architecture, Urban Studies, Design, Education, Literature, among others. In doing so, they consistently enrich, nuance, and problematize issues initially addressed by M/C thinkers.

The works published in these two editions, carefully selected through a rigorous process of close collaboration among authors, reviewers, and the editorial committee of the journal, constitute two sets of sub-themes: reflections related to Territory, its conceptualization, analysis, production, and modes of intervention — gathered in V!26 — and works on Expressions, encompassing artistic, literary, gender, and intersectionality themes — compiled in V!27.

The ten texts comprising the Agora section of this edition delve into political, artistic, literary, linguistic, and racial expressions across various fields. *Silvia Valiente*'s text, Reversing the Load: Thinking from our Exteriority, invites us to construct epistemes specific to the Global South to undertake a **critique of modernity**.

Four works ground their **reflections in the field of Art**. *Igor Guatelli* discusses processes of erasure of subalternized subjects in his text Aesthetic-Political Thresholds of a Latin Schibboleth at Tate Modern. *Jose Arispe* reflects on the confinement of the **concept of aesthetics** by Eurocentric thoughts in the article The Gaze of other Worlds and their Contradictions.

The decolonial visual forms of resistance by **Afro-descendant peoples** are examined by *Fagner Fernandes*, focusing on the work of Ayrson Heráclito, in Art-Axé: The Decolonial Poetry of the Visual Orikis. Similarly, *Cândida de Oliveira* and *Muriel Amaral* focus on the issue through the **photographic expression** of Walter Firmo in Decoloniality in the photographic work of Walter Firmo.

The **political expression** and knowledge of Colombian **indigenous peoples** are the subject of two works. *María Campiño* and *Carlos Díaz*, in Quillasinga indigenous women: Following footsteps, weaving the territory, highlight the role of women in the process of cultural rescue and transmission, while *María Hoyos* and *Jaime Parra* analyze reactions to the stigmatization and erasure of these peoples in From silence to outburst: Indigenous communities and social protest in Colombia.

A **literary exploration** of Germán Espinosa's work on Latin American identity is developed by *Manuel Santiago Arango Rojas* in his article The Decolonial, Transcultural and Neocultural Proposal in Germán Espinosa's Los Cortejos del Diablo. In the **field of linguistics**, *Gabriel Gruber* reflects on the deprovincialization of language from **indigenous languages** in the article Sabiás divine: pathways from the Global South in linguistic anthropology.

Finally, two works help us to think about the **conception of spaces** from a decolonial perspective. The **representation of nature** referenced in the thought of Arturo Escobar is the subject of *Domingo Rafael Castañeda*'s article Analysis of Representation Regimes of Nature and the Design of the Pluriverse. In the Project section, *Giselly Rodrigues* and *Tainã Dorea* explore, in the work Afrocentered Project: Rescuing Black Memory in the Vila Matilde district, Sao Paulo, the process of recording and materializing black **memory in the urban landscape** as a form of resistance against its erasure in cities.

We hope that these two editions of V!RUS contribute to the decolonial debate, adding references that emerge from the thinking of Southern researchers and encouraging the strengthening of South-South dialogues.

REVERSING THE LOAD: THINKING FROM OUR EXTERIORITY

INVERTIR LA CARGA: PENSAR DESDE NUESTRA EXTERIORIDAD

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Abstract

This writing aims to draw attention to the epistemological and ethical-political surveillance that is our duty to avoid migrating to other philosophies as a mechanism to experience what is identified as the other side of modernity and globalization of our time. In this sense, it invites us to think about everyday life from the heterogeneity, fluidity, antagonisms, and hybridity that constitute us as urban-modern subjects, based on the certainty that the decolonial experience is not exclusive to certain groups and territorialities. Of course, this assertion stems from a non-probabilistic sampling. It arises from the observation of colleagues, students, co-workers, to name a few, who express the need to be connected to the history and ways of being in the world/living in an alternative way, as the Andean world inhabitants do. They thus search to feel as part of the history of Abya Yala. Far from attempting to provide an answer as a result, this work invites us to reverse the loading, that is, to stop thinking from the other's exteriority to look from our own, understanding that we come into harmony, affinity and trust with the exteriority of the other from ours. Thus, reversing the load means establishing a non-hierarchical relationship of knowledge based on the recognition of common problems with other people due to having been and continuing to be colonized, even though we live in different places and have dissimilar trajectories. This is how it will be feasible to know and generate another thought and our own from our place of enunciation and habitation, without migrating to epistemes that do not belong to us. Only in this way will we stop seeing the other as different, running the risk of subalternizing it and imposing our agendas and concerns on it.

Keywords: Decolonial thought, Other thought, Place of enunciation and habitation

1 Introduction

On March 21, 2022 I was invited to the first session of a seminar entitled "Modernity, decoloniality and geopolitics of knowledge[1]" to discuss the passage from decolonial thinking to decolonial doing. This late concern for the methodological aspect of decolonial thinking resonated with me, which motivated me to give a postgraduate seminar the following year (August 2022) focused on decolonial thinking. This is a debt among decolonials, or at least, an issue that has not been worked on yet, except for a few references. The Colombian pedagogue and researcher Alexander Ortiz Ocaña has been developing a concrete proposal he presented in session 3, "Altersofía y hacer decolonial", of the Encuentro Conversatorios de Saberes, organized by the MAD AFRICA Association, held in Seville, Spain, on June 28, 2023.

Although some referents of decolonial thinking resolved the methodological issue from militant research, and others did it from the field of pedagogy and educational research, the question of decolonial doing was overlooked in these investigations. This is why Ortíz Ocaña was taken as a reference, since for him decolonial doing has a pragmatic sense and unfolds in three concrete actions: communal contemplation, alternative conversation and configurative reflection[2]. Beyond this contribution, it is clear that decolonial work is under construction and seeks to broaden voices and different types of registers to access this other knowledge.

The aforementioned discussion is brought to this paper because it placed at the center of the stage the question of the concealment of the other, a theme often discussed and exposed in Dussel's work "1492: The concealment of the Other". This work is still thought-provoking and still relevant. Remembering this work motivates us to make an introspective work to realize that many times we think and write from that so called exteriority of the other, that is to say, placing the other as an alien to me, as someone who is located beyond the abysmal line still, overlooking the interscalarity, interactoriality and multidimensionality that characterizes our time.

From these concerns, we raise questions to think about what it means to invert the load. How to think the decolonial in our days for those of us who live in urban-hybrid contexts, more modern than colonial according to the rhetoric of modernity? How to think the other from our space, time and daily life without migrating to other epistemes, to other locations or ways of inhabiting linked to a

1 At the Universidade de La Salle, in Canoas-Porto Alegre, Brazil.
2 See Ortíz, A., & Arias, M. I. (2018, 2019) and Ortíz, A., Arias, M. I., & Pedrozo, Z. (2018).

relational ontology that has little to do with the urbanity of our daily life? Is it possible to ascribe to another ontology, such as the relational, erasing the more than 200 years of intrusion of modernity and instrumental rationality that have shaped a subjectivity and way of relating between humans and non-humans?

Of course, these questions exceed this article's response capacity, but in its development, we will try to construct a sense of the expression "to invert the load", the argumentative core of this writing, together with its pair, to stop thinking from the exteriority of the other. In this search for abandoning the desire of coupling ourselves to the other, of migrating towards the indigenous, peasant or dissidences, it is from where we build our own knowledge known as others. But for this to happen, we must recognize what is this exteriority that inhabits us, and how the other is constructed in us, inhabitants of urban-hybrid spaces. In short, it is from these concerns that this article is elaborated. Throughout the article, we will retrace this idea/proposal of inverting the burden and thinking from our exteriority the production of other knowledge.

2 Some considerations on decolonial thinking and other knowledges

Without pretending to make a genealogy of decolonial thinking, on which much has already been published, and considering Escobar's article (2003) an obligatory reference material for those who wish to delve into the subject, I will only refer to why the questions posed above are inscribed in the decolonial debate. The first mention is because the decolonial is concerned with other ways of knowing and producing knowledge concealed by the rhetoric of modernity, which, unlike postcolonial thought that has focused on marking discontinuities with the colonial order; the decolonial has examined its continuity through colonial legacies.

Subscribing to the idea that there are different ways of valuing the present, and that pluriverse we are all (Cuestas-Caza, 2019), it is necessary to promote other models of existence created by us and not to migrate to ways of being and inhabiting distant from our everyday. Although we demand the need to create "other" ways of thinking, feeling and existing, and this requires the configuration of new types of knowledge and science, moving away from the epistemology that privileges the subject-object relationship to migrate towards other models of existence (Albán, 2019), it is also true that these should be inhabited naturally and not from a rationality that requires constant vigilance to maintain its coherence. Accessing other knowledge requires real listening, rehearsing ways of reasoning that escape the frames of modern epistemologies, recovering ways of thinking proper to the territory, where the scientific and the everyday interpellate each other (Albán, 2019).

By saying "other knowledge" we recover this notion of the Moroccan thinker Khatibi from the beginning of this millennium, for whom it will be understood not as an addition to the hegemonic project "but as an interpretation or disruption from locus of enunciation different from the hegemonic project" (Albán, 2012, p. 25). It is often homologated to other thought "(...) it can be understood as a set of interpretative and comprehensive procedures of the world in its cultural and natural dimensions, put into action within a given culture (...) they differ and distance themselves from the logocentric logic" (Rosero, 2020, p. 14). This allows us to elucidate that "the other", apparently, would be linked to beliefs and practices, knowledge and liberating knowledge of oppressive relations that are carried out daily, symbolically disputing the control of meanings.

It is appropriate to make a distinction between knowledge and knowledges, which are sometimes taken as synonyms in this type of writings. Mignolo offers us this differentiation:

> The philosophical-scientific notion of "knowledge" began to replace the philosophical-rhetorical idea of "knowing." While knowledge was conceived as an activity linked to reading and books, "knowing" began to be conceived as the confluence of experience and reason (Mignolo, 2015, pp. 79-80).

It is also often associated with other thought to another paradigm, associated with orality as the scenario of diverse constructions and infinite knowledge. Paradigm other or thinking of another was the argument in the work in Escobar (2003). In this opportunity, we recover from Mignolo this definition:

> "paradigm other" means "the diversity (and diversality) of critical forms of analytical thought and future projects seated on the histories and experiences marked by coloniality rather than by those, dominant until now, seated on the histories and

> experiences of modernity" (Mignolo 2003: 20) and conceives it as "diverse"; and that considered in its utopian dimension has to build a "hegemony of diversality". (Albán, 2015, p. 29, own underlining).

The elements underlined above relate this notion to that of border thinking, alluding to that experience of dwelling on the edges, on the borders, in the interstices, sharing the need to decolonize, to liberate oneself. "The germination of a border epistemology that goes beyond the binary constructions of Westernism" (Mignolo, 2015, p. 195). We will only add that quote since it is not the object of this communication to introduce this thematic here. Returning to the expression "other knowledge", it possibly appears as one of the most widespread in the last two decades among humanities and social sciences writings. Other knowledge, other thought, other paradigm appear as expressions that come to refer to a thought and knowledge that wants to stop being colonized, inferiorized, and is rethought from the very subjects that have experienced these processes of subalternity.

These issues, as we know, are a concern of decolonial thinking because they derive from the continuity of a colonial order or pattern, and may result in an abstraction and repetition of ideas if we fail to articulate these categories of thought to concrete spatial and temporal experiences where they are configured. In a broader sense, under the umbrella of critiques of modernity, some authors recognize three perspectives around which they are grouped: the decolonial option, the epistemologies of the South, and border, liminal or margin thinking (Medina-Melgarejo et al., 2022). These distinctions do not seem to be so clear in practice. Rather, we are witnessing a multiplicity of positions occupied by thinkers, whose limits are labile. Similarly occurs with the other thought or paradigm, finding affiliation or anchorage in liminal, border or frontier thought, because in those particular contexts (border, marginality, subalternity) there emerged ways of being and inhabiting configured in praxis, in the doing of groups to cope with life, which the academy called other knowledge.

It may seem in the reading that decolonial, edge/border or liminal thinking are synonyms because they are positions that configure decolonizing thinking, where the main references are the Modernity/coloniality Group, the Epistemologies of the South and the so-called border authors (Medina-Melgarejo et al. ob. cit). In general terms, the way of problematizing throughout these years has been supported by what Escobar (2014, as cited in Sandoval, 2016) defined as one of the five emerging areas of research for another modern/colonial post-episteme social theory, and within it, the decolonial theory from situated studies. To conclude this section, it is a good synthesis to say that the decolonial option is not a theoretical framework, nor a methodology, but a way of thinking (as expressed in each Preface of the texts of the Detachment Series of El Signo editions) that questions the imperial, universal order that ends up covering up the other.

3 To trace a path from the exteriority of the other to one's own exteriority

In point 2 we constructed the notion of the other/other knowledge/other thinking as that which does not belong or has not entered the hegemonic modern project. The expression "thinking from the exteriority of the other" was taken from Salinas Paz (2021, p. 18) for whom the constructive task of philosophy is to renounce the philosophical modernity that starts from the ego and announces the foundation of its thinking from the exteriority of the other. To dismantle the philosophy that covers up oppression is the call made by this author. From this idea I began to recognize that in my thinking this modern ego had always prevailed and the leap to take would consist in registering the exteriority that inhabits me, recognizing that this room is not a geographical location, but a political, cultural, epistemological one, to cite some dimensions. This first step would be necessary in order to be able to reverse the burden and avoid swelling the exteriority of the other. Without this effort, we would continue to think that there are ways of being that belong to some groups because they are marked by certain conditions and locations (racial, territorial, ethnic, etc.), where the work of the researcher would be to make visible, unveil or denounce how these characteristics define the other and make it susceptible to processes of subalternization.

Grosso alerts us to thinkers such as Derrida or Benjamin who reacted against this closure of modern thought, opening spaces for the experiences of otherness. He will tell us, "that otherness is exteriority" (Grosso 2019, p. 235). Indeed, one of the debates in contemporary thought is the question of exteriority, given that it closed all alternatives and located alterity as exteriority in the face of the totality of the world-system. World-system is the work of Wallerstein (1994) and "refers to the two hundred years spanning the period between 1460 and 1650. That is the period of the formation of a new historical system called by Wallerstein modern world-

system or European world-economy or capitalist world-economy" (Grosfoguel, 2013, p. 33). Husserl, Sartre, Levinas have developed the concept of otherness as the presence of the other necessary for the construction of the self and intersubjectivity. Levinas never thought that the other could be an Indian, an African, an Asian. The other is exteriority; while in Dussel it is the poor and oppressed Latin American people with respect to the dominating oligarchies.

The other is America with respect to the European totality. That other, reduced to otherness, and explained how Latin America at the beginning of modernity was outside that totality, outside world history (Dussel, 1994). Latin America was the periphery of Europe, the first periphery of the modern-colonial capitalist world system. "Habermas, for his part, did not consider the discovery of Latin America to have any relevance for his argument; it does not actually enter into history (Dussel, 1994, p. 35) [3]. It enters into history, says Gonzalez Gonzalez (2007) in order for the ethics of liberation to become concrete. Although I will not dwell on the postulates of these thinkers because it exceeds the objectives of this work, and because I do not come from the field of philosophy, I take up again the idea of the other as exteriority linked to that of otherness that can be concealed, because in a synthetic way it is what Salinas Paz claimed above.

Many investigations undertaken from the decolonial perspective - edge/liminal/border thinking- have been designed from that exteriority of the other, that is, from the experience of colonial wound with the pretension of making visible the concealment/marginalization/subjugation of certain groups and ended up achieving the opposite. In this attention paid to the way in which people produce knowledge in the spaces-temporalities they inhabit, and in the desire to communicate how the inhabitants mitigate and/or counteract the epistemic and memory dispossession of their vital spaces that has annulled/silenced/subdued their own knowledge, this was not done from the historical consciousness and discomfort of its inhabitants, but from a place of enunciation and academic habitation, not corresponding to the reality of those who suffer the colonial wounds. Thus a representation of the other was nurtured, of marginalized groups seen as outside history, as an exteriority.

Thus a path was traced that resulted in approaches to the problems of the other from that exteriority, thought from an argumentative-rational rationality that recreated the rational ontologies-relational ontologies dichotomy, in which epistemic dispossession went unnoticed by Western ontologies, as expressed by Gandarilla (2016). That non-attention to the situation of the colonized has been an obstacle, as Escobar (as cited in Duque, 2019) points out for the development of a modern dualist epistemology, but it has also been a great stimulus for its subsequent recognition in academia in recent decades.

If thinking in a decolonial key should avoid reproducing hierarchies, dualisms, and recognize that there are different ways of inhabiting and ways of valuing the environment, why in practice are some differences exaggerated or a theory extrapolated that ends up essentializing groups and placing them as the other of modernity, generating the opposite of what is proclaimed? I mean, in this path traced in pursuit of recognition and restitution of the denied, how many times do we end up migrating towards the indigenous, towards a relational epistemology that has little to do with the development of their daily lives of those who are making that record?

Cuestas-Caza (2019) is very clear in saying that the construction of alternatives does not consist of idealizing the world of the original peoples, since we are all pluriverse, not only indigenous people. This means that we must all strive to "live between worlds," says the author, that is, to live and think in the middle, with and from multiple worlds, as we attempt the (re)communalization of our daily existence, because the West is itself plural, inhabited by dissident voices and plural modernities. In a similar vein, Mendez Reyes and Mendoza (2017) warn about naïve yearnings for a lost identity, where the land and the return to the past are mythologized as a place of refuge. In contrast, the Latin American subject must be able to formulate an identity project, with an open dialectical attitude, without losing the perspective of utopia.

Tracing a path from one's own exteriority may be the path chosen by those who, not being indigenous, choose to recreate their lives from that inspiration, not as an imitation, but as an alternative. Here the option of locating oneself close to the other from one's own history and breaking with idealizations that can be made from the relational ontology that emphasizes the harmony of complements, multiple relationships between subjects and objects, or the demonization that fits from the rational ontology due to its instrumental

[3] He is referring to intra-European Modernity.

character, is deliberate. In this scenario, I agree with Castro-Gómez when he states that we must not create an ontological dualism (as cited in Oviedo Freire, 2021), but that each must complete what is lacking in the other.

This is the idea of tracing a path from the other's exteriority to one's own, of inverting the burden and being able to recognize the production of other knowledge/own knowledge from the memories of the territory, whichever it may be, in order to face dememory and epistemic dispossession. What seems to be a theoretical postulate is supported by concrete research experiences when inquiring about knowledge related to food, to other ways of eating, less industrialized and more linked to the habitat in which one lives. This choice for another way of living/consuming, nowadays both rural and urban, also takes care of the health/disease relationship in another way, to cite some manifestations.

This attention to the production of other knowledge/local knowledge (not free from domination) requires combining intuition and rationality, and the experience of living and learning with and from others, without competing or speculating.

4 Thinking from our exteriority

As we have been constructing in this article, thinking from our exteriority implies placing ourselves as subjects also traversed by the persistence of coloniality, just like the populations treated as passive receivers of a way of inhabiting based on the capitalist experience that organized space-time and legitimized knowledge in accordance with the civilizing mission of the West. This mission produced modes of valuation and forms of universal-exclusionary inhabitation marked by the rhythms of capital, the voracity of new technologies that contribute to increase the experience of being part of a relative exteriority of the world-system, today of the global economy, not only from the economic point of view, but also for being increasingly outside the universally constructed normality and normativity.

So, recognizing this exteriority in ourselves does not mean having a way of life and becoming peasants, or imitating indigenous practices or people of color; rather, the call of this writing is to perform a reflective exercise of recognizing the heritages that are recreated and make us part of that exteriority, but from our place of enunciation and habitation, without imposturing the voice, without inhabiting false places, without migrating to what we are not, because as Urrego (2018, p. 216) expresses, "we are not indigenous, we cannot pretend to work from epistemic traditions that do not correspond to us". Having said this and returning to the question that motivates this reflection, what does it imply to think from our exteriority? What is it that connects our saying and doing with that of liminal groups, even when the point of departure is very dissimilar? Because if border or edge thinking arises in that relative exteriority of modernity, of populations living in spaces-times that were denied/invisibilized for being considered backward, how does this connect with the history of urban, modern subjects, descendants of Europeans who do not recognize themselves as part of the history of Abya Yala?

One of the conclusions drawn in this paper is that we recognize ourselves as part of an exteriority. This is not only experienced by certain groups. Thinking from our exteriority, personally led me to look at my work in retrospect, and to realize that exteriority is not something alien to us; we also inhabit it and therefore we enter into affinity and trust with those others so different from our history. Globalization has brought us closer, living on the edges, in discomfort. Hence the need to reverse the burden in the light of a critical self-reflexivity to recognize what liminal experiences constitute us in this disturbing, unstable, but always utopian present, recognizing ourselves as part of this exteriority is the first step to stop seeing it as something that belongs to others.

Lander's (2000) contribution is essential to understand how the organization of time and space given by the European experience legitimized a civilizing mission that resulted in the invisibility of territories and the consideration of their inhabitants as passive receivers of the dynamics taking place in the place. From the conviction that there are no passive receivers, this text distances itself from romantic visions that think that traditional communities organize their daily life guided by love, consensus and solidarity, following De la Garza's criticism (2020). From this general foundation and recovering Escobar's (2019) affirmation about Latin American Critical Thought (PCL) not being in crisis, since a multiplicity of perspectives converge in it (from the most theoretical to the most communal perspectives; from the Modernity/Coloniality program to the perspectives of relationality and communality, and new spiritualities), I insist that it is necessary to broaden the horizon of research in territory to nurture the PCL, and in it, to recognize the importance of place by claiming other places of enunciation, other histories from the varied material conditions of life.

These multiple exteriorities make possible the encounter between the traditional and the modern, the us and the others, the urban-hybrid world marked by the neoliberal model and other ways of living. Hence the importance of recovering other sources, other histories to reduce epistemic and memory dispossession, and to destabilize unique visions fed by the development of capital that seek to install a single possible way of inhabiting and valuing the habitat, where characters, memories, events and feelings linked to the spatial and temporal framework of the place tend to be annulled, marginalized, devalued. In this sense, the invitation to invert the burden consists in getting out of a logic where the other is seen as that exteriority of the world-system, lacking autonomy in multiple senses, in order to rethink it as constitutive of our existence. To recognize ourselves as part of the exteriority is to invert the burden, or as Rosero (2020) expresses, it is to stop denying that other that constitutes us and to overcome the hermeneutics of the invader.

Personally, at times in my trajectory the question of relationality appeared and the recurring question was how to take into account that relationality or that indigenous inspiration in our urban-modern-hybrid contexts marked by a liberal model of life. Although my life did not correspond to relational ontology, nor did it address the indigenous question, the interest in thinking the other from an inspiration that does not emanate only from rationality was maintained. Again agreeing with Urrego (2018) in the starting point: "we are not indigenous", I held the idea that this did not imply that we could not claim subjectivities that were left out, and agree with some perspectives that denounce that the academy prioritized the knowledge of remote receptors, such as sight and hearing (Restrepo, 2010) underestimating the other senses and the role of affectivity, privileging the written word (Rosero, 2020).

In this thinking from our exteriority, personally, there appeared as a constant concern to recover the indigenous inspiration for the non-indigenous, and I found in the so-called "small stories starred by concrete subjects" a different way of saying and another way of facing the everyday, from the reality of each one; because as Restrepo (2010, p. 93) says "knowledge is neither here nor there, neither in the subject nor in the object, but in an intermediate place, a place of interaction and joint construction"; in other words, in the joint interaction between the self and the other, in that intersectionality. However, most of my contributions were concerned with denouncing the concealment of the other in contexts of dispossession promoted by the development of extractive-mining activities, but again, I spoke of an other, the one who lives in those contexts. And although I tried to account for the persistence of coloniality and how colonial legacies are intertwined in everyday life allowing the continuity of a colonial pattern of being (ontological dimension), knowledge (epistemic dimension) and power (economic-political dimension) that prevent the movement towards other possible modes of existence, I did so without reversing the burden, as if the problem only affected those groups.

Somehow reversing the burden and thinking from our exteriority forces us to situate ourselves in the concrete circumstances of our lives and pay attention to the dialectical movement of presence-absence (Vazquez-Melkén, 2014). While the former tends to accentuate a neoliberal capitalist way of life, doing everything possible to not let other ways of life emerge marking the absence of alternatives, that presence, in the same act, emphasizes the absence of possibilities and with it the configuration of alternative subjectivities

5 Conclusions

We are approaching the end of this paper and we are still thinking about the expression contained in its title. A few lines above I asked myself: of what exteriority am I a part, what makes me be in tune with those other protagonists of my research, if many times there is no shared history, nor location, nor generational proximity?

Little by little I came to understand that with my interlocutors we shared the feeling of being outside the dominant logic, totally or partially, or as if against the interests of the spheres that contain us or the fashions of the moment. Idealism and passion for what we do placed us on the margin, with autonomy and authority, and that made us indomitable. Being on the margin was accompanied by estrangement and loneliness. Even in the recognition and respect of others, this feeling remained. Our exteriority was to inhabit those edges. We were comfortable on the margin, but from the inside. Then finally, that Other was not so different from me. I could enter into dialogue, in tune with their saying and doing. We felt part of an exteriority that sought to differentiate itself from a dominant logic in the institutions, whose ways of doing were tinged with hierarchy, classification and differentiation. Somehow we shared a different way of thinking. Thus, I try a response to this concern to reverse the burden to stop thinking from the other's exteriority and to think from my own, developing an other thought from my place of enunciation and habitation.

Not as certainty but as suspicion, by inverting the load we would let out those experiences linked to the multiple violences to detach ourselves from it, and from giving place to the generation of other knowledge, not as a beautiful expression empty of meaning, but from that exteriority that we occupy. Continuing with the promotion of situated research, from this exteriority in which our daily life unfolds, there is room for concerns, desires, wishes, fears, memories and knowledge, which are also situated, because together with them a research praxis is being configured where the experiences of individuals and collectives gain relevance, with their stories and testimonies of life, making possible other ways of living life with dignity.

As a bet, in a broad sense, this paper intended to contribute to the corpus of works that problematize decolonial thinking, playing with the notions of exteriority, the other and other thought. Although this reflection was incipient, and it raised more questions than answers, it starts from an exercise of critical self-reflexivity. We have pointed out the importance of denaturalizing-desromanticizing situations of everyday life in order not to exoticize the other, or to load him with attributes that do not correspond to his reality. The challenge to reverse the burden is to recognize that stories are crossed by a multiplicity of actors and interests, that they are plural and heterogeneous, and that this apparent exteriority is also part of us. To exoticize the other would be to vindicate modern subjectivities that were left out of the world built by political and economic technology, but was anyone left out? For the time being, we must be attentive not to cover up the other, but not ourselves either. Recovering Ortíz Ocaña's words from the aforementioned conversation, it is up to us to self-decolonize, or in the words of Rosero (2020), to overcome the logic of the invader. That is what reversing the burden is all about, to divest ourselves of the modern ego that constitutes us. This is the openness and detachment that decolonial thinking invites us to realize.

I leave for the end some expressions of Palermo (2017, p. 14) in his restless search for answers, an attitude with which many may feel identified. Something similar happens to me in my sleepless nights: "to devote our sleepless nights to know a little more the place that inhabits us and we inhabit".

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AESTHETIC-POLITICAL THRESHOLDS OF A LATIN SCHIBBOLETH AT TATE MODERN

LIMIARES ESTÉTICO-POLÍTICOS DE UM SCHIBBOLETH LATINO NA TATE MODERN

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Abstract

Many are the *Schibboleths* of our modernity: ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious traits that should ensure the uniqueness of peoples and regions become traces of identification of the undesirable other. *Schibboleths* that could serve as a denunciation of an urgent need for hospitality become obstacles to its practice. Doris Salcedo, a Colombian artist invited by the Tate Modern in London in 2007, creates her *Schibboleth* to denounce historical processes of erasure of this other, especially the colonized, subalternized, exploited, expelled, exterminated other. The artist creates an installation that dives into the bowels of the institution, appropriating it through the indelible mark of denunciation of the historical violence produced by and across borders. The work is a trail of pasts, but also of possible futures, a fissure that separates and unites at the same time. It will be through this clash of civilizations united by the fissure that we will begin, alluding to Jacques Derrida's thinking as a methodology, especially his philosophy of traces, in a critical dialogue with the work and becomings.

Keywords: *Schibboleth*, Doris Salcedo, Traces, Fissures, Derrida

1 Introductory epigraph

"In the case of *Schibboleth*, I was very interested in the traditional perspective, which is the European triumphalism. They were allowed to build 'triumphal arches,' columns commemorating the successes of their battles, etc. For us, in the Third World, ruins remained. It is a work where you analyze the position of Third World people within the First World — we are always the vectors that carry drugs, diseases, crimes, everything negative. I was a Third World artist, the first to be invited to exhibit in that space [Tate Modern]. I had to take that look with me, I had to be negative there" (Salcedo, interview to Folha de São Paulo, 2008, our translation).

For some time now, museums have become temples through which certain imperatives of incessant capitalist modernization materialize and reproduce themselves — market, of historical reifications, of the circulation of capital through the culture industry — preserving logics while seeming to surpass or overcome them, or inserting themselves as gears of renewed strategies, of an updated microphysics of power, to paraphrase the title of Michel Foucault's work of the same name. However, it is through the active action of transgression of the limits imposed, made available or suggested by these places that are set up to receive any artistic manifestations, or what would be allowed for an installation inside one of the most renowned temples of our time, that the Colombian artist will go beyond certain limits by "ruining" it. Limits become thresholds when they reach a point of no return. Salcedo seems to have reached this threshold in order to denounce the borders that still persist between global metropolitan centers and the ruined peripheries they produce.

From inside one of these metropolitan globalized temples, the artist confirms it by corroding it. Perhaps she is telling that the decolonizing processes will only be possible through strange fusions and corrosive alliances. No longer from the outside or from below, from afar, but from the outside-in, from something that arrives from the outside, merging with what keeps it as an outsider. In *Schibboleth*, Doris Salcedo, a renowned Colombian artist[1] with exhibitions at the Guggenheim and MOMA in New York, creates an installation that dissonates from the languages most familiar and adjusted to this temple, indelibly cracking it; a work willing to speak and denounce politically, in a silently forceful way, a past that cannot be erased, attenuated, but torn apart to the point of becoming a trace of a cosmopolitical trail to come. A cosmopolitanism that preserves its borders and past marks as memories towards a future capable of showing them as a political problem. Borders are not insurmountable limits, but necessary thresholds for overcoming them. Thinking on the margins, of thresholds, shifting borders, spectral traces and remainders, as methodology for discussion, concepts from Derrida's philosophy have helped us to think critically about Salcedo's work.

[1] Salcedo was the first Latin American artist to exhibit at Tate Modern. The installation, exhibited from October 2007 to April 2008, was part of the Unilever Series.

2 Considerations on the title of the installation

Schibboleth is a word borrowed from Judaism. The title of Salcedo's installation/sculpture is probably related to the biblical episode of the crossing of the river Jordan, a crossing controlled by the Gileadites, a rival group to the Ephraimites, who created a test word to verify, according to its pronunciation, who was requesting passage, whether a Gileadite or an Ephraimite. According to Redfield (2021),

> As a feminine noun it appears five times in the Hebrew Bible, three times to mean something like " howling flow" or "Aood" (Psalm 6g:2; Psalm 69:15; Isaiah 27:12); once to mean "ears of grain" (Job 24: 24); once, in the passage in Judges 12, which made it famous and which we will examine, possibly to mean stream, possibly ears of grain, but more immediately, in the context of the text, no big deal, since there it was used only as a pronunciation test by the Gileadites to identify their defeated enemy, the Ephraimites. (p. 2)

The biblical passage in Judges 12 stands out:

> And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; then said they unto him, Say now *Shibboleth*: and he said *Sibboleth*: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.

Redfield continues (2021),

> In times, cultures, and languages far removed from those of ancient Israel, the word *schibboleth* has come to mean the kind of test which was supposedly used to define: a test in which hard-to-fake signs separate identities and establish and confirm boundaries. Secondary meanings developed to a greater or lesser degree in different languages. The French usage is relatively close to the biblical history: Hachette defines *Schibboleth* as "test, épreuve décisive"; Le Grand Robert defines it as "épreuve décisive qui fait juger de la capacité d'une personne" (a decisive test that tests a person's abilities). German usage, on the other hand, is broader, like Duden's succinct entry for Schibboleth: "Erkennungszeichen; Losungswort; Merkmal" (identification mark; password, watchword, slogan; distinguishing mark). English is unique in having developed meanings for schibboleth that have gone beyond and displaced the biblical sense of the test-word or identifying trait. Extending beyond the German extension of the word for "slogan", modern English gives *schibboleth* a range of meanings distributed between the poles of test-word and formulaic speech. The entry for *schibboleth* in the online resource Dictionary.com works like this: 1. a peculiarity of pronunciation, behavior, manner of dress, etc., which distinguishes a certain class or set of people, 2. a slogan; watchword; 3. a common saying or belief with little actual meaning or truth". (pp. 2-3)

Salcedo's work, or its two versions [the before and the after which became during] of the installation, merge with the museum, merge with the support, the support and the work, the work and the support become inseparable. If the *parergon*[2] is the inside-outside of the work, an inscription made on the work, but which seems to already be part of the work, something beyond the work in the work, the work[s] by Salcedo are sequential ergonal *parergons*. The first work, the crack, merges with the museum, altering it; the crack, an invagination, a cut, is inscribed in the *ergon* — if we consider the museum as the *ergon*, now — to make it into another of itself, a supplement to itself (Fig. 1). In removing, extracting matter from the museum, Salcedo, following Derrida's proposal for the notion of supplement, makes the museum less of a museum. Therefore, it becomes more of a museum, another of itself, therefore, beyond itself, a *parergon* of what it was, or has been, or continues to be, but, already, as another one, a trace of itself.

[2] According to Derrida, (1978, p. 63, our translation) "a parergon comes against, beside and beyond the ergon, or work done, the fact, the work, but it does not fall on the side, it touches and cooperates, from somewhere outside, inside the operation. Neither simply outside nor simply inside. Like an accessory that one is obliged to welcome on the border, on board, above all on (the) bo(a)rd(er)". From the original in French: "un parergon vient contre, à côté et en plus de l'ergon, du travail fait, du fait, de l'œuvre mais il ne tombe pas à côté, il touche et coopere, depuis un certain dehors, au-dedans de l'opération. Ni simplement dehors, ni simplement dedans. Comme un accessoire qu'on est oblige d'accueillir au bord, à bord, il est d'abord l'à-bord"

Fig.1: *Schibboleth,* Doris Salcedo. Turbine Hall, 2007. Source: Igor Guatelli, 2007

What remains of the work, the "work" of the work, the remainder[3] of the work, when the crack is sealed, filled with matter, restores the level of the previous, "original" floor (Fig. 2). But, it is no longer the same floor. The floor becomes another floor when it is restored, restituted to its original level. Its discreet restitution, a mere filling of the crack, inaugurates the second work of art, which can be considered a trace of the first, turned gray by being filled. Unlike fire, extractivist actions, genocides, massacres, segregations, followed by acts of concealment, which have always marked the history of the erasures imposed onto Latin America — constituting true *parergons* of its history — from outside but inscribed as intrinsic traces of its constitution as a continent supportive of external marks — thus Salcedo's second work, the mark on the floor, made ashes of the first, that is, it almost erased it by filling it in, by covering it up.

[3] At first, Restance would be something like the *fait de rester*, that which remains, remaining as a residue, like *différance* would be the *fait de différer*. Nevertheless, it plays an important role in Derrida's discussion with Searle [this discussion appears in his work Limited Inc., and later reappears in Papier Machine] based on the concept of iterability. Contrary to what the term suggests, Derrida prefers to use restance instead of permanence. It can be understood as a kind of permanence, but it goes further. For Derrida, restance is something that remains within the forms of communication — oral, written, artistic — over time, being able, at the same time, to show what belongs to it, but, at the same time, what already belongs to another context. It is about a cleaved identity of the object, differential, reproducible, and no longer the same thing; it would thus be an altered permanence.

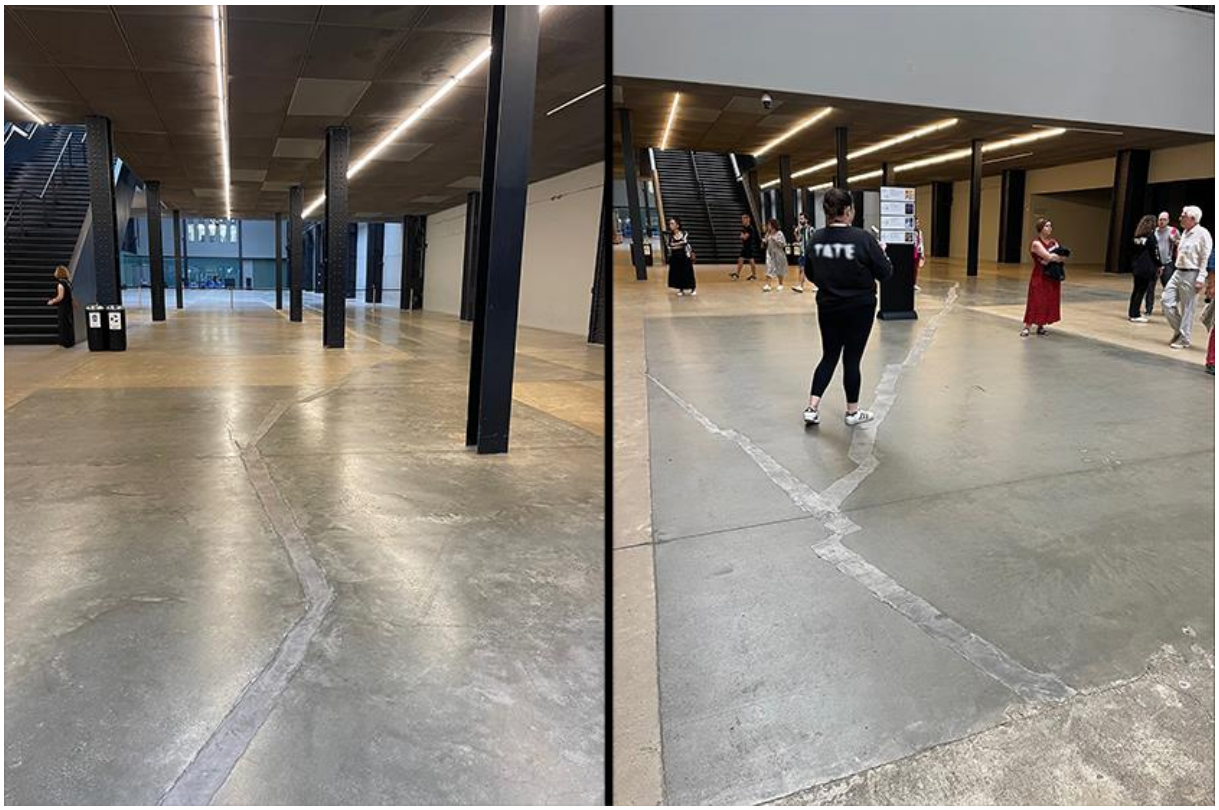

Fig.2: Trace of *Schibboleth*, Doris Salcedo. Turbine Hall, 2022. Source: Giovana Giosa, 2022

However, can we really talk about a colonial past? The colonial past may never have been passed, when it passed, but only transmuted, like in Salcedo's work. Latin American colonialism persists as another, always transmuting when being overcome, apparently. Its erasure only reveals that it still exists, just under different guises, other forms, other procedures. The erasure of indigenous peoples, the widespread fires in the Amazon and the Pantanal, brutal actions against black people, women and vulnerable populations on the continent confirm the persistence of the fire that never stops burning and producing ashes, as a reinvigorated realization of colonialist processes; ceaseless subtractions, just like *Schibboleth*.

The artist's work does not embellish the monumental, vast (another *parergon*) exhibition hall of the Tate Modern[4], it assaults it, perhaps as an allusion to the centuries-old atrocities suffered by Latin Americans. Nor does it sentimentalize, mystify, or instrumentalize this suffering. As a crack, a wound or, later on, as a scar, it remains in a discreet intermediate position at first, between an abstract, polysemic denouncement, (let's consider it as the first work) and the mourning, a "living-dead" work of art that remains there as a spectral register of it-self and of history. It mourns itself and the atrocious history of Latin American continent, haunting the English and, thus, the Europeans. Installation or sculpture, the work is a sculpted sculpture, opened in the floor, a negative installation that abysses, that puts assumptions of what installation or sculpture is into abyss. An installation-sculpture, a sculpture-installation, the work arises from the excavation, from an abyss in the center of the great void, a work that abysses not just the Turbine Hall or the Tate Modern, but London and the United Kingdom, as well as Europe altogether. Salcedo excavates in order to expose, exposing the bowels of the museum, the continent (or is it of colonialism?).

The work exposes itself as it positioned itself between sculpture and installation, as it cracks one of the temples of contemporary art. The work ex-poses what it had posed by posing itself in another form, with another "accent," another stress — *S[ch]ibboleth* —, as it is erased. It remains exposed when posed in another position, now as cinders of itself. The wound heals, but the discomfort remains. It remains as an indelible stain on the history of the place, or the continent. It is interesting to note that the work, from its origin, sets itself as a possible "*avenir*," by assuming that the fissure created would be filled in again. If Derrida thinks of the oppressed of the

[4] *Tate Modern*, a museum housed in an old power station built between 1947 and 1963. Decommissioned in 1981, the building was renovated by Herzog & De Meuron. Salcedo's installation, measuring 167 meters, occupied the former "Turbine Hall" of the power station, a space measuring 155x23x35 meters.

world with compassion and friendship, the artist rapes and violates the white cloak of the Turbine Hall to denounce oppressions of all kinds. Salcedo's work is not just to be seen, but experienced. It is also an invitation to interaction; the public can touch, penetrate, demean it — as it was, in a way, when the patch is filled.

Still, it is an invitation to another, to any other who interferes and transforms it into another of itself, a sign of contamination, the desire for contamination, for exchange, miscegenation, and transmutation. Fused to the floor of the Turbine Hall, the work is mixed-race since its inception. Perhaps this is a discreet sign of a democracy to come, as advocated by Derrida. The [in]discreet restitution repair made to the floor after the work had been on display became the becoming of the work, a work in the process of becoming since its "birth." Erased, or almost erased, it hasn't disappeared, it persists with an aura that enlivens the place, desacralizing the idea of an authorial architecture, an object that must maintain its integrity and inviolability hovering above its "mundanity." Salcedo's work, and its trace, democratize the place by impregnating it with traces of others.

Persistent colonial traces in Latin America have been, at the same time, erased and promoted, both leading to tragic processes and scenarios, but also to the denunciation of their specters, their persistent cinders, cinders resulting from the history impregnated into it, allowing them to be insistently retold, immemorial remains of a memory that cannot be erased. Cinders that contain genetic material that must remain alive in memory. Cinders are what remains of history, but also what must be kept, guarded, so that this history always returns as a memory trace, as mourning, as vigil, as, perhaps, the beginning of another story, just like the immense crack and its quasi-erasure.

> Cinder remains, cinder there is, which we can translate: the cinder is not, is not what is. It remains *from* what is not, in order to recall at the delicate, charred bottom of itself only nonbeing or nonpresence. Being without presence has not been and will no longer be there where there is cinder and where this other memory would speak. There, where cinder means the difference between what remains and what is, will she ever reach it, there? (Derrida, 1987, p. 230, our translation [5])

Cinder is *différance*, something between what was and what is, and perhaps what can still be from this remainder. By being what remains, but already being another, through the cinders we can [re]think its history and imagine its future. Because it is no longer what was, the cinders are the maintenance of a before that must be thought of from the now, of what it is and what it can be in the light of that past. Cinder "remain beyond everything that is, remain beyond what was, unpronounceable in order to make saying possible although it is nothing" (Derrida, 1987, p. 57, our translation [6]).

No longer the given entity that they were, cinders are another (of that entity), another *ergon*, making it possible to [re]think what the entity was, or what history was, a history re-opened by what remained and remains of it, and which therefore makes it possible to rethink it, and not just being retold, informed, and reproduced. The "work" of the work by Salcedo, the patch, cinder of the "original" entity, remains as a remainder of the first installation. It remains as another, but retains traces of what it was. Through it, we can think about what it is now in the light of what it was; and what it was from what it remains and has become, more silent than what it was, from where it originated, but perhaps, for this reason, more intriguing. [Re]thinking history from what is almost invisible, silent, residual, remaining, in short, remainder, becomes even more challenging and disturbing.

At the moment when the thing no longer speaks, or just whispers, sighs, like a stain and faint mark of its own self, cinder of its violent expression, the possibility of constructing a thought that has not yet been thought opens up. From cinders, through cinders, history is [re]assembled from what remains of it in order to think about the future. The cinder is another of the entity, perhaps an in-between, an intermediate moment, as the patch on the floor seems to be. But as an in-between of what was and what will be [full restitution?], this uncertain, dissonant, conflicting, "unfinished" moment, of discreet and modest restitution, seems to be the most fecund for generative thought.

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[5] From the French original: "Reste la cendre. Il y a là cendre, traduis, la cendre n'est pas, ele n'est pas ce qui est. Elle reste de ce qui n'est pas, pour ne rappeler au fond friable d'elle que non-être ou imprésence. L'être sans présence n'a pas été et ne sera pas plus là où il y a cendre et parlerait cette autre mémoite. Là, où cendre veut dire la différence entre ce qui reste et ce qui est, y arrive-t-elle, là?"

[6] From the French original: "reste imprononçable pour rendre possible le dire alors qu'il n'est rien."

Remainder is the supplement of the entity, keeping traces of what it was, but already being another, simultaneously. Thinking about this temporality of the entity is thinking beyond what it is and has been as a given representation and meaning, as a figure of identity. Perhaps cinders are figures of otherness, through which a thought beyond what has already been thought can unfold. The patching of the floor of the great hall is the *intermezzo* between what was and what would be if the floor were completely redone, which would erase the traces, this disjointed instant of the work, remaining only between what was and what has become. The stain that remains is the specter of the crack, the fissure opened by the artist, there is no totalizing return. The stain that tarnishes the integrity of the floor is the lava that cinders the fissure by filling it. Or perhaps a gush, a joy, a Latin *jouissance* as blemished vein, to be kept as a historical trace of the veins of blood caused by colonizing violence.

As time passes, Salcedo's intervention gradually becomes the specter of what remains of it. We could suppose an inversion: the repair made to the floor has become Salcedo's other work, the becoming, a discreet stain, permanent jouissance. The stain/jouissance that remains in the *Turbine Hall* allows us to keep looking back towards a future, almost like the allegorical figure of the *Angelus Novus*[7] [from Paul Klee's canvas], created by Walter Benjamin (2013) to discuss the concept of history, especially to illustrate the storm of modernity, and the destructions, erasures, ruptures promoted by the "progress" it engenders.

Perhaps a little carelessly, but speculatively, with a certain amount of caution, this legacy of the work *Schibboleth* could be considered as a revenant of the work itself, a union of specter and event, a phantom of the work that appears in an un-predictable way, a surprise, something unexpected re-appearing as a second work, a transfigured *Schibboleth*, at the limit, inverted. It's not an *ergon*, it's not the work, although it retains traces of the work. Perhaps we can think of what came from and remained of the work, of the *ergon*, as another ergonal parergon, nameless, unpronounceable, a nearly nothing, present as non-presence, as non-work, trace that differs from the "original" work, at the same time deferring to it as a memory of it, as what remains of it already being another. No longer *Schibboleth*, that discreet figure of differentiation, the identifying feature of differences capable of revealing the other from what they are incapable of being the same, but perhaps a *s[ch]ibboleth*, a differentiation not from their insufficiency, but from their irreducible otherness, with an inverted destiny, to remain.

3 A work from the political *mi-lieu*

Iterating, Salcedo's *Schibboleth* produces a crack, a border, to then remains as *dissemence*, a hybrid concept invented by Derrida and found in Glas (1974). *Dissemence* is the combination of *Semence* [seed, semen] and *Dissémination* [dissemination]. The stain that remains after the floor has been repaired resembles a jouissance, a gush that, rather than fertilizing something, remains the dissemination of a denunciation, of a violent act necessary for a future that overcomes what remains of Eurocentrism. Salcedo's installation remains a *différance* of itself, *jouissance* as a *différance* of the fissure. As already mentioned, even "undone", it remains as trace, mark, remainder, margin, as dissemination without fecundation, a splurge, a stray postscript, which can be seen as a preface to something yet to come, without a name, which only gives way even though it resembles a border mark. A work that disappears by refusing to disappear and in this way produces itself as another of it-self, which goes beyond itself and impregnates itself in the place, preserving and altering both the place and it-self [Hegelian *Aufhebung*].

The term milieu, medium, but also ambiance, takes on another meaning in Derridean thought. A play with "*hymen*" and "between", the term gives rise to a series of undecidable announcements in *La Dissémination* (Derrida, 1972). If we're talking about *jouissance*, about gushing, we mustn't forget that the violence with which the crack tears through the large exhibition space disappears with the

[7] Aphorism IX, in "On the Concept of History": "There is a painting by Klee called Angelus Novus. An angel is depicted there who looks as though he were about to distance himself from something which he is staring at. His eyes are opened wide, his mouth stands open and his wings are outstretched. The Angel of History must look just so. His face is turned towards the past. Where we see the appearance of a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet. He would like to pause for a moment so fair, to awaken the dead and to piece together what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise, it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. That which we call progress, is this storm. " (Benjamin, 2012, p. 14). It can be seen that, with his back to the future, the " the rubble-heap before him" is already the past. The ruin that announces itself as the future ahead is the ruin of the past. Salcedo's work, ruin as an allegory of ruin, which also denounces the "civilizing" cultural ruin by [literally] ruining a cultural institution, remains as a memory of past and future in the Tate Modern, without interruption, without restitution, an indelible mark. "[...] There has never been a document of culture which is not simultaneously one of barbarism[...] (ibid, manuscript 447, p. 187), says Benjamin, and he continues, "[...] But from what can we save what is already gone? [...]" (ibid, manuscript 473, p.188).

recomposition of the floor. This recomposition, much discussed here, produces the effect of a *milieu*, an in-between, a highlighted strip, with another tone, another color, in the middle of that huge slab. This *milieu* appears as a *hymen*, a between-times, between the present and the past, between the present and a former future, a ghost. The hymen occurs between, the between is the hymen, a necessary condition for a new political dissemination to begin. The hymen, one of the Derridean supplements, like a parergon, is an inside-out of the "work", an in-between, an intermediate state, something that exists to announce the future, something like a latent becoming.

It takes an action, in a certain sense a "violent" action, for this becoming to set in motion and give way to a transformed other. This mark that remains of the work, preserved on the floor fifteen years after the work was exhibited, is the inaugural gesture of a possible renewed hospitality. Through a work that speaks to humanity, without internalizing it, Salcedo makes a violent incision that opens up an in-between time, a supplementary spacing [separation-union/wound-scar] within that place, without closing in on itself, surviving its own end by disseminating like a trace without a *télos*. Close to Derrida, "the mimed operation does not, however, sum up the outside inside the inside; it does not plant the theater inside the enclosure of a mental hideaway nor reduce space itself to the imaginary. On the contrary, in inserting a sort of spacing into interiority, it no longer allows the inside to close upon itself or be identified with itself"[8] (1972, p. 286, our translation).

Even if we strip the work, for a moment, of some of its *parergons* and *schibboleths* — the artist's signature, her origin, nationality, and dates — there remains the violence of the act in the other's house, which, despite this, for this reason, welcomes it, hosts it for a while and, without failing to cause a certain strangeness, hosts its traces, apparently, for an indefinite period, making it part of the place, but keeping it disjointed. If, when it was "inaugurated," the work had a signature attached to the object, now it has acquired, as a trace, an unsure wandering, just a "probable trace" of what it was and what it might become.

In his work "*Mémoires d'aveugles*," Derrida (1990, p. 6, our translation) suggests "dissociating the signatory from the subject of the self-portrait."[9] In this way, the author's identification with the work "*reste probable*," that is, it would remain uncertain, removed from any internal reading, the object of inferences and not of perception, retaining a hypothetical character. What remains of the work *Schibboleth* wanders in that space, part of the place and at the same time out-of-place, a stain assimilated by the place that still retains traces of its otherness; *ethos* of another aesthetic hospitality.

No homogenizing unity, but disjunctive, dissonant, conflicting integration. Salcedo takes the place to a *mise-en-abyme*[10] by creating borders and edges where totality and unity prevail. Like a *khôra* (Derrida, 1993), the crack establishes the experience of vertigo and chaos in the serenity and uniformity of the enormous emptiness of the *Turbine Hall*. If, in principle, it was a hospitality of visitation, conditioned to a length of stay, the permanence of its traces altered the condition of hospitality, making it apparently unconditional. As well as allowing a violent action — a crack equivalent to an earthquake — to be consummated inside, it kept the marks generated by this act as an inheritance, if not permanent, at least lasting. From a hospitality of passage, we have thus migrated to a hospitality of permanence.

Place of perpetrations and their memories, the *Turbine Hall* itself has become a *milieu* over the course of time. Accumulating marks from past interventions, it appears like a temporal palimpsest, a support for inscriptions from different times. The floor seems to exist as a support for prints, a kind of stencil, or an immense limestone similar to the old stones used in lithographs. The floor of the Turbine Hall resembles a large lithography. Or, by creasing the floor, was the artist's *Schibboleth* a support for a woodcut to come? Salcedo's sculpture/installation became a painting on the Turbine Hall floor, muralist art. Once again, like a *khôra*, a place "that receives, so as to give place to them, all the determinations, but it possesses none of them as its property" (Derrida, 1993, p. 25, our translation), the floor of the enormous area seems to receive everything without allowing itself to be subtracted to the domain of meaning of any of the inscriptions.

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[8] From the French original: "l'óperation mimée ne résume pas le dehors dans le dedans, ele n'installe pas la scène dans la clôture d'um réduit mental, e ne réduit pas dans l'intériorité, ele ne laisse plus celle-ci se refermer sur ele-même, s'identifier à ele-même"

[9] From the French original: "dissocier le signataire et le sujet de l'autoportrait"

[10] "narrative in abyss": first used by André Gide when talking about narratives that contain other narratives within themselves.

A *milieu* generated by the fissure and its filling, which is permanently realized through the exercise of an épochè, the radicality of an épochè of history (Derridean thought, as a game of the trace, as différance, in a sense needs an épochè), whose task is to remain in suspension and suspend any and all primordial meaning, opening itself up to unprefigured registers and transmutations. The "violent" and "radical" *Schibboleth* (yes, a feminine word in the Bible) is an active example of *épochè*, a political phenomenon in suspension and therefore capable of making us think about the persistent brutality that permeates our history and constitutes it; that remains as an unerasable, unforgettable force, a camouflaged, almost hidden expressiveness, but adherent enough to the interrogation of the constituted historical field, a half-place, a *mi-lieu* between what was and what becomes.

The end of Salcedo's installation is the beginning of its transmutation as a deviant memory, au-delà (beyond, for beyond) of what it was, an au-delà in suspension; a fissured structure that becomes a prosthesis of connection (*strictire*), life as death, death as another life, without addresses, without [an] end, or perhaps with an apparently unmotivated end. In his work *Circumfession* (Derrida, 1991), on his return from Moscow, he (a) noted the end of the revolution. The "end of the revolution," for him, did not refer to a specific date, a specific episode, but probably to a historical flow, a duration comprising countless revolutions in Europe from the 1917 revolution, through the "Velvet Revolution" from November to December of 1989, in Czechoslovakia, to the fall of the Berlin Wall in November of 1989, narrated like a diary, in short sentences. History, for him, must be seen and discussed not from or through its most visible episodes, but from its events, from its in-between, from what cannot be immediately appropriated and given full understanding, a self-evident context, but, on the contrary, from what suspends it. A problematization of the issues that shape history, of the story of the issue, rather than an exposition of the essence of history.

If, for Salcedo, in the same interview given to the Folha de São Paulo newspaper, in a scathing critique of the world, "we live well with horror," her work was (or is, and continues to be) an experience of looking through the in-between, through the medium, through the traces of the object and of history, through what survives of it and from it, through its life and death and in-between them — its *revenant*. It is still a chance to look beyond its pure presence or mere reconstitution; the work lives its death without exhausting itself, to re-appear as a ghost that cannot die. Perhaps this is not a genealogy of the work or the artist, an extensive biography with dates and information about the artist's production and life, but a reflection based on her traces, her marks, her blurred context, present and absent, inside and outside the European, Latin American context, in between them, on her history ex-appropriated by the place, expropriating it.

In his first published work, "Penser c'est dire non," Derrida says:

> The *now* is always a tension between, on the one hand, the already past, which has just passed and is retained, since if it hadn't been retained, we wouldn't be able to perceive the originality of the now and its actuality in relation to the past; and, on the other hand, between the *now* that announces itself and is anticipated in resistance.[11] (Derrida, 2022, p. 78, our translation).

4 Final considerations

A scar, the scar of a wound that refuses to be forgotten, erased, the work of the work by Salcedo remains (*maintenance*) as a rature, an erasure, but also as a flaw (*rater*) and a wound (*blessure*), simultaneously. An indelible mark — like the ancestral and current marks of Latin America, which cannot be erased — that establishes a present that refuses to go, that refuses to be a trace of the past, remaining (*maintenance*) a now (*maintenant*) that announces itself as a retention of the past, supplanting its pre-seen qualitative being, foreseen to have a duration. Salcedo challenges the very notion of duration, a duration that denies its own duration, its foreseen temporality. The artist seems to refuse to leave, she seems to deny the proper temporality of an installation, she seems to deny the time of the hospitality offered. The non-being of the work, which becomes a being-another, asserts the negativity needed for us to reflect on the eternal now (*maintenant*) of a past that still remains, which is renewed through actualizations, and substitutions. Latin specters remain in the Tate, the past cannot be reified, reconciliation seems impossible. *Revenants*.

[11] From the French original: "Le maintenant est toujours une tension entre d'une part le maintenant passé, qui vient juste de passer et qui est retenu, car s'il n'était pas retenu nous ne pourrions pas percevoir l'originalité du maintenant, son actualité par rapport au passé; et d'autre part entre le maintenant qui s'annonce, qui s'anticipe dans une protention."

In different ways, with, through, and alongside a presumably ephemeral art installation, the possibility of other temporalities-territories was addressed. Through it, we speak of a ghost, of ghosts — the logos of the absent according to Derrida — that haunts the work itself, the place and which carries the reverse of eschatology through the indelible stain of a past present and a future present at the same time. We speak of an ethos of the residue generated by the intruder and resulting from it, the graft, an intrusion that, beyond that particular location is the chance of turning something foreign to oneself into a "metatechnique, art of combinations, supplementations, substitutions, permutations, prostheses, regenerations, inscriptions, transfers, transpositions, transactions"[12] (Nancy, 2017, p. 60, our translation).

Schibboleth, by Salcedo, is a metatechnique, an inscription, a prosthesis that emulates semantic supplementation by splitting the territory and suggesting other transpositions — historical, political and geographical trans-positions. Topological, the work splits to suggest other proximities. And, even from what remains of it, it joins in order to remain disjointed. As Derrida says, "proximity does not suppress distance, it is not the opposite of distance, it reconciles the distant, but as distant, it keeps it as distant"[13] (Derrida, 2021, p. 101, our translation).

We are talking about a spacing that opens up another time by breaking with the unity, uniformity, and banality of the historical space and time. May the stigma — the re-mark — left on the *Turbine Hall* not be a condemnation, but an opening to another world; a world where the colonizer is marked by the colonized as a denunciation of an unpostponable and urgent decolonization. An aesthetic, political in-between, a *mi-lieu* between what has been and what will be, already being, between "the corpse and the breath", as Cioran would say, a quasi-place that, while separating, unites, a place-medium of interpenetrations, interpenetrations between the outside and the inside, between the exploiter and the exploited. Between an out-side that enters, ingresses, and merges, while keeping itself as a singularized trace of another, an embodied grief of something that must remain, imprinted as a mark of a colonizing historical violence that [still] remains.

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[12] From the French original: "métatechnique, l'art des combinaisons, supplémentations, substitutions, permutations, prothèses, régénérations, inscriptions, transfers, transpositions, transactions..."
[13] From the French original: "la proximité ne suprime pas l'éloignement, elle n'est pas le contraire de l'éloignement, elle rapproche le lointain mais comme lointain, elle le garde comme lointain..."

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THE GAZE OF OTHER WORLDS AND THEIR CONTRADICTIONS

LA MIRADA DE LOS OTROS MUNDOS Y SUS CONTRADICCIONES

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Abstract

In this article, we will address the discussion of the coloniality of the senses, through a case study on the curatorial exhibition *Sin Sección* (Without District) presented at the National Museum of Art of Bolivia, in which stone carvings made by three prisoners from San Pedro's prison were exhibited. We will approach the discussion of the coloniality of the senses from the concepts by Rivera, Brandão, Mignolo, and Vazquez. We reflect on the confinement of the aesthetic concept by Eurocentric thoughts, which prevail over other ways of feeling and are replicated in the art system in Bolivia. Our goal is to focus on decoloniality in the visual arts and how the works presented affect the museum space, questioning its legitimizing role. We propose four concepts for a decolonizing practice within exhibition spaces in cultural centers. This viewpoint generates contradictory issues, which will also be argued from the perspective of Bolivian Ch'ixi thought.

Keywords: Aiesthesis, Objects, Ch'ixi, Museum, Senses

1 Introduction and context

In 2017 we held the curatorial exhibition called *Sin Sección* (Without District) at the National Museum of Art of Bolivia, where we presented seventy stone carvings made by three prisoners from the San Pedro prison, known as Picapiedra, Simón Bolivar, and Tavo. Through this experience, we asked ourselves several questions about the journey these pieces of art made. They were born in the most abandoned place in the San Pedro prison, called *Sin Sección*, and landed in the most important cultural center of the country. The people who live in *Sin Sección* are indigent, in poor conditions, and unable to afford or rent any cell within this prison. The conditions in which they live are extremely precarious — this situation generates complications in organizing an activity such as an artistic exhibition that operates as a self-representation —, the living conditions are delicate and risky.

On this occasion, the museum opened its doors to pieces made in prison by people who did not consider themselves artists due to their status as prisoners. The curator was the main channel of communication between the prison and the museum, conceptualizing the exhibition — which was not conceived by the institution —, and presenting it as an independent project that had the objective of making visible, through art, an underground reality of Bolivian society. All their pieces were exhibited, as well as the tools that they built themselves. The exhibition was accompanied by photographs of the area where they live, and by a video with interviews with the three artists. The main opening took place with the presence of the president of the Cultural Foundation of the Central Bank and authorities of the museum. Television and the press conducted interviews and articles to promote the exhibition. Furthermore, a small catalog featuring color photographs of the exhibition was made. We want to emphasize that it was a traditional art event in the art system to legitimize the strange objects as works of art, coming from the prison to the museum space. After this exhibition, questions arose about the moment when these objects went from stones being carved within the prison to being designated as works of art in the museum. What were the processes that occurred in this transit between two such distant places that had transformed the meaning of the objects? Did the stones were elevated in status or did the museum descend from its hegemonic pedestal in the art world? Can we assert that this exhibition was a decolonizing event of art?[1]

The objective of this article is to present four decolonial concepts that are manifested in the exhibition *Sin Sección*: the relationship with others, the construction of the self, the liberation of the senses, and the re-existence.

[1] The present article is a fragment of the master's thesis entitled "The Journey of Objects: From Prison to the Museum" written by the same author, in the post-graduation program in Contemporary Culture Studies (PPGECCO-UFMT) at the Federal University of Mato Grosso, thanks to the OEA 2017-19 scholarship under the guidance of PhD. Ludmila Brandão, in which more characteristics of the prison context, exhibition organization, methodology, and thoughts on the etymology of the word curation are expanded.

Fig.1: Overview of the photography room at the National Art Museum. Source: The author, 2017.

Fig.2: Installation of the stone carvings at the National Art Museum. Source: The author, 2017.

Fig.3: Exhibition catalog. Source: The author, 2017.

Fig.4: Installation of the stone carvings at the National Art Museum. Source: The author, 2017.

Fig.5: Technical sheet, invitation, and curatorial text of the exhibition "Sin Sección" (Without District) in the assembly hall of the National Museum of Art". Source: The author. 2017.

2 Coloniality is an enclosure.

The *Sin Sección* (Without District) exhibition allows us to get to know an ignored world of Bolivian society: the precarious prison forgotten by the state, by citizenship, and even by justice. This is a familiar reality in several places in Latin American countries, which we can easily associate and refer to. It is a condition resulting from current policies in which power employs these punitive forms against crime, justifying that prison is not a place to be but to suffer, "[...] ironically, prisoners must listen to the voice of officials repeatedly saying that such suffering is part of the process of social amendment and rehabilitation." (Pinto, 2008, p. 599).

What historical moment can we compare to this type of dehumanization in prison? The colonization of American communities was subjected to similar humiliation, violence, and annulment to strip them form their identity and sow in the indigenous minds that they were inferior to the colonizers, and their intellectual heritage as well: knowledge, language, myths, and rituals. Thus, they established that the oppressors were superior and the colonized were subordinated, solely based on their geographical location and skin color. They relocated their history, perhaps to the point of wanting to make it disappear. What was our "crime"? What was the cause for such subjugation? Simply being different. Coloniality is like an enclosure in time. Although colonization ended centuries ago, what it left behind was a colonization rooted in thought and subjectivities, at the core of our societies, affecting our consumption, beliefs, education, knowledge, and senses. Coloniality continues in our collective subjectivities as a thought left by foreign colonies, which imposed on our peoples that "their history is universal history, that their science is the privileged form of knowledge, and their art the art par excellence." (Brandão, 2014, p. 175, our translation).

European knowledge gained significant superiority over other forms of everyday and scientific knowledge. Knowledge that was not part of European regions was considered subaltern and therefore excluded. They were seen at a lower level, as myths belonging to the past. Everything produced in terms of science by the European elite, including philosophy, was considered legitimate. The way art was perceived and felt, as well as its aesthetics, was formed by thinkers who enclosed the senses in a concept of greater value above other forms of expression and sensation. These thoughts were qualified as ideals, as models to see, follow, and disseminate. And it is in this prison of coloniality that everything moves by hierarchies, from socioeconomic to racial classes. In this confinement, these considerations of power are not given only by external agents but are rooted in the interior of the experience of societies. A clear example is the neglect by the art system of expressions made within a prison, as seen in this case study.

3 What color do you see things as?

I want to describe a scene from a recent Bolivian movie that I believe is important to introduce the questions about subjectivities and the coloniality of ways of sensing: Ivy Maraey - Land without Evil (Valdivia, 2013), a feature film directed by Juan Carlos Valdivia. It tells the story of a film director who is influenced by the archives found in Sweden of explorer Erland Nordenskiöld's travels in the Bolivian Chaco. The archives contain images of *Guarani* and *Ayoreo* indigenous people from the early 20th century, showing natives hunting and climbing trees while wearing loincloths. The archives also show their tools and objects. This director decides to embark on a journey to these lands to search for the original image of the natives who once inhabited Bolivia. It should be noted that the character of the director in this film is the stereotypical white man: tall and blue-eyed — mestizo, but with more prominent Western features than local ones. In short, the film is about a white man looking for pure indigenous people. The first scene of this film begins with the protagonist having a short dialogue with an *Ayoreo* indigenous girl (Figure 6 and Figure 7). They are both looking at each other. The camera zooms in on a close-up of the protagonist's eyes, clear green-blue in color, gazing directly into the camera. In the reverse shot, the deep black eyes of the girl are shown looking at him with curiosity about the color of his eyes. She breaks the silence and asks him a question.

Fig.6: Frame of the white man's eyes in dialogue with the indigenous girl in the movie Ivy Maraey. Source: Trailer of the film.

Fig.7: Frame showing the eyes of the white man in dialogue with the indigenous girl in the movie Ivy Maraey. Source: Trailer of the film.

Girl: What color do you see things as?
White man: The same color you see them.
Girl: How do you know what color I see things as?

This question opens up paths for analysis and reflection on how we perceive things through our senses. This encounter with the "other", the stranger, the peripheral, leads us to the need to think about how our senses have been educated to judge objects, as in the case of the stone carvings of the San Pedro prison.

4 The aestheticizations

According to the book *The Aesthetization of the World* (2015) by Gilles Lipovetsky and Jean Serroy, there are four ages of the aesthetization of the world: ritual artistization, aristocratic aesthetization, modern aesthetization, and the transesthetic era. It is necessary to pay attention to the first two eras which present a wide contrast. The era of ritual artistization deals with the sensory experiences of primitive peoples specifically linked to their rituals. They are not at all linked to consumption or art for art's sake. Objects were simply created not to represent "beauty", but to grant practical powers specific to Shamans such as healing ailments, opening doors to the spiritual world, provoking rain, and relating in some way to the dead. There were no pretensions of innovation or reflection, but simply knowledge transfer as an inheritance from ancestors or gods. The aesthetic phenomenon existed from the beginning of humanity.

The second era, aristocratic aestheticization, explains in more detail the moment when the perception of the sensation of beauty is invented and disseminated. Initiated in the Middle Ages and developed during the Renaissance, it is the product of all this humanistic thinking about the genius of the artist, moving away from the church and royalty to satisfy another public that demonstrated its power with its wealth and education: the bourgeoisie. With the displacement of former patrons, artists gain autonomy to apply them in the form and content of their works. They further explore life outside the palace, life in the countryside, as well as turning their gaze to Greek influences in proportions and beauty. The arts are going to change in meaning during these centuries, in how we will understand, perceive, feel, and know them. "The application of this sense to the arts, such as the works and practices that represent and support the general process of human development, is predominant from the 20th century." (Cevasco, 2003, p. 10, our translation).

The arts are no longer just mimesis, representations of nature, adornments, power, or beauty, but they have become a support for human progress. The art that was produced, practiced, and thought in these European capitals reflected the thinking of those societies, their economic movement, their differentiation of classes, their type of devotion to religion, their position in front of others, and their self-understanding of being the center of the world. The concept of Fine Arts will start being camouflaged as universal art in the modern era.

5 The Western legitimator system

Art in the Western world is understood through a system. Developed since Modernity, it opened its avenues, stopping points, and transit. Since the end of the Middle Ages, it created rules on how to drive in creative fields, and hierarchized the expressions of the European bourgeoisie, affirming them in society with aristocratic aesthetization. In this journey of art, objects created by individuals went through many stopping points aiming for the most important one: artistic consecration, which grants symbolic value and also generates economic value. This system mandates a strict selection of objects. Many are left behind and taken as minor arts because they don't follow certain aesthetic patterns and are subordinated by geopolitical regionalisms. Thus, the stopping points where objects are transformed into "legitimate art" in this Western art system are museums, academies, private collections, auctions, salons, theaters, galleries, editorials (books, magazines, newspapers), and critiques. If an object never reaches these places, it is very difficult for it to gain credibility in society as a work of art. These places of consecration of an object as art are ideally operated by a group of people who are interested in scientific research, including anthropologists, ethnologists, educators, sociologists, curators, historians, and artists, who are dedicated to the anatomy and autopsy of the object.

Therefore, it is in the exhibition *Sin Sección* that more questions arise about this displacement of objects. The names of the artists and curators were identified in the catalog and invitations for the exhibition. Until that moment, the roles of each participant in this experience had not been thought at all. First, the three prisoners were going to acquire the status of artists. For most people, this title is obtained with lots of effort, practice, and time dedicated to their profession. Furthermore, there is the weight that the word artist has in the definition of early Modernism, where the artist was the prophet, sorcerer, eccentric, and magician. However, the same modern era that brought democratic equality opens the great window of "the sovereign freedom of artists to qualify as art everything they create and exhibit." (Lipovestky & Serroy, 2015, p. 17, our translation).

According to José Bedoya, director of the National Museum of Art (J. Bedoya, personal communication, Jan. 2018), this project was important because it proposed two disturbing conflicts: To what extent is the curator the artist? And, to what extent can incarcerated artists, who do not consider themselves artists, be presented as artists? In other words, someone who knows or is part of the "Western art system" went to a peripheral place in Bolivian society and picked some stone carvings, which presented interesting characteristics due to their recurring themes and quantity, alongside a strong presence in their forms, thereby transforming them into vestiges of creative existence in the most dehumanizing place in society. This involves the legitimizing game of Western art: selecting objects, moving them to a white room, and legitimizing them as works of art.

We enter here another interesting issue of this project specifically. Stone carvings were consecrated thanks to this Western art system of validating objects in a museum. We have used the system we criticized to give them visibility and validity. The questions are, is there a "decolonizing" way to validate objects? Could it have been done differently without needing an institution like a museum? The traditional European model is so well-established in our societies that it is difficult to quit these spaces of legitimation. Is it our role to fight against these hegemonic models? We are at a huge disadvantage. Colonization left its way of thinking deeply rooted in our society.

Validating objects as art, is it not an inherently colonizing practice? Is it not yielding to a system invented in the West? Art becomes an exclusive entity because what is not art is segregated by the same word. The separation becomes clear, for example, when the concept of art in Europe or the United States places the art of "others" in different categories, such as Latin American art, indigenous art, or popular art. There is a hierarchy in the art world in which we are subordinated only because of our geographical conditions. In addition to this separation, there is the power of the word. Naming things in a certain way is a double-edged tool, since according to Rivera, the colonizer's word does not designate, but rather conceals (Rivera, 2010, p. 19). By calling an object art, are we camouflaging

it? It needs to be covered by this word to be part of this Western art system. However, the story and context of the stone carvings, in particular, mean that they are only tainted by this title, as they come from a separate and forgotten, peripheral place. Therefore, it will always be an art that ignores the entire process of Western legitimation, that does not create to consecrate itself, but with the sole purpose of existing.

6 Ideas about an aesthetic decolonial option

Through “decolonial aiesthesis”, a union of words proposed by Walter Mignolo (2010), we are going to differentiate aiesthesis from aesthetics, since the second term is already taken to represent what is beautiful or what is art in the Western world. Epistemologically, aiesthesis is closest to the encounter with the senses, perception processes, and sensations. This experience of the senses is a reaction that every human being has towards agents external to them. From the philosophical movement that existed in Europe in the 18th century, aiesthesis was studied to pigeonhole it into a single meaning, which was the sensation of beauty, originating concepts and theories of aesthetics. Walter Mignolo interprets this conceptualization as the colonization of aiesthesis by aesthetics. So, it is important to continue to make such differentiation. We are more interested in what we can find and propose from aiesthesis than in re-interpreting aesthetics.

Another reason why this differentiation is important is that through the universalization of history and the stages of globalization, the Western world has attempted and successfully achieved the regulation of the senses, control of subjectivities and perception of the world, thanks to the foundations of European aesthetics used as tools for this general order. Aesthetics emerged and was influential in the same period as the construction of Europe. For this reason, we must separate ourselves from this term, so as not to fall into the same visions and sensibilities that were developed throughout European history. Wars, agreements, reigns, and lawsuits are events and experiences foreign to Latin America, a history that does not approach our people not even across borders, only through conquest.

A great vast sea separates us from what that history was. It is in that same sea of time and distance, deep and divisive, in which we have to submerge dominant ideas and thoughts to dilute them, sift them, and thus be able to propose another approach to the senses. It is in aiesthesis where we can find a space to take off the weight of the control of Western subjectivities and open ourselves to plural and diverse expressions of perceiving the world. It is in the discussions about decoloniality that we can start to counteract Modernity/Coloniality and the domains over the representation of the world. For this reason, we bring the two words together: Decolonial Aiesthesis.

7 Characteristics of Decolonial Aiesthesis

7.1 The relationships with others

The analysis of the exhibition *Sin Sección* is a proposal that gives us an example to visualize and have moments of reflection on what a decolonial aiesthesis is. First of all, the exhibition was never about an innovation or abstract provocation like what characterizes contemporary art exhibitions. The stone carvings do show, in their small dimensions, a profound presence and detailed work. The pieces show religious and everyday motifs that are nothing new, they do not aim to incite art for art's sake. Their main characteristic is that they were created within a prison. They emerge from the quicksand of contemporary art to seek, to relate to “others.” It’s not about an individualistic creative artist who proposes objects that are abstracted for infinite interpretations. The exhibition is about wanting to relate to plurality. In this case, the curatorship has tried (by intuition) to propose an aperture to other types of relationships. During the exhibition, an imaginary link was created between the art of the museum and the art of the prison. Two questions arise from this link: did the pieces become high art when they arrived at the museum? Or, did the museum decide to dialogue at the same level as an underground space in society? Relationships are fundamental principles of decolonial aiesthesis. Relationships that we can open, create, and extend towards expressions denied/silenced by systems of domination.

7.2 The construction of the self

As we previously said, aesthetics develops along with the history of the Western world, building concepts from Europe as the center. They managed to build an “own”, but without realizing that it was a way of feeling that dismissed the “other own” by labeling them as

retrogrades and inferior. They created an opposition that devalued any product of sensation that did not come from its center. They erected a wall to separate and isolate their way of thinking and feeling. Thus, continuing our exploration of the senses from the decolonial standpoint, we find in the development of Europe an important principle: the construction of the self. "The self is not an essence but a construction..." (Gómez & Mignolo, 2012, p. 10), it is then a task of decolonial aiesthesis to work for this construction of the non-Western self. In this case, I prefer to name it the Bolivian self or the Latin American self.

In the exhibition *Sin Seccion*, the proposal for the construction of the self begins when the National Museum of Art accepts the entry of these pieces into its exhibition rooms. The dividing wall between popular and Academic Art is torn down. It was not an exposition of the re-appropriation of a popular expression or common hybridisms of contemporary art. Rather, it was an exhibition expressly for the stone carvings of three prisoners from the San Pedro prison, in which we entitled them as artists, ceasing to be just artisans. It is not about overshadowing one job and exalting another, it is not about those at the top now being subordinates. We do not have to execute the same exclusions as modernity does. On the contrary, the proposal of decolonial Aiesthesis leads us to be able to build spaces of coexistence between diverse art forms, dialogues between disciplines that previously didn't have the opportunity to speak with each other at the same time and level, and an acceptance of the plurality of expressions without classifying them below or above others.

7.3 The liberation of the senses

Since the carvings are objects made in a prison, one could say that they need a release or a ransom. However, these objects do the opposite: they rescue us. Through the exhibition, these stone carvings come to the museum to free our senses from the modern/colonial regulation that dominates current art spaces. Redeeming these expressions, not from a physical place but from the prison that exists in our subjectivities is another characteristic of decolonial aiesthesis. The exhibition is a door to debates about how to escape the control of the ways of perceiving the world so that from now on we can represent it in a more plural and balanced way. Entering the museum with this exhibition is giving rise to a blow against the traditional art system, it is provoking a fight against the way of seeing and legitimizing art by these institutions, which are directly controlled or influenced by the norms of "Eurocentric aesthetics".

7.4 Re-existence

"The decolonial character is not inherent to an object, a work, a practice, a person or a group; but rather a way of being, feeling, thinking, and doing in a given situation; facing the colonial matrix of power in some of its faces or dimensions." (Gómez & Mignolo, 2012, p. 17, our translation). One of the main goals of bringing the stone carvings to the museum was to make visible a hidden reality of society. Through this visibility, a door was opened so that others could approach a type of art that would be difficult to access otherwise, revealing that some inmates at the San Pedro prison dedicate their time to manual labor to earn a few coins for their benefit. However, beyond this motivation, we discovered that this practice of making stone carvings helps in restoring their humanity, and their value of existence. Taking these stones to the museum was to alert and re-educate our senses that we can find art in objects made in a prison by people who live pitifully in a miserable way. We learned that art is about the existence of these "others." Decolonial aiesthesis is not only about resisting colonial normativity but fundamentally about the re-existence of expressions that were silenced.

During the three weeks of the exhibition, the stone carvings of the San Pedro prisoners shared a room in the same building where there are works of art made by established Bolivian artists with traditional academic art studies. These prisoners received the title of artists without having studied art or had any official training. To consider them artists through the thought of Joseph Beuys and his famous and iconic phrase: "every man is an artist", would be to introduce them again under the hood of modern/contemporary art of approval. Our goal is to distance ourselves as much as possible from every tentacle of thought of Western art and dare to propose another type of artistic legitimation. Calling them artists through decolonial proposals about aiesthesis is already an encouraging step in our search for the liberation of subjectivities. Maybe we should even question the term "artist." We may find it quite outdated, but we prefer to leave the hypothesis for further research.

8 Art made by contradictory beings

The exhibition *Sin Sección* caused a contradiction in itself. We want to legitimize objects as art by exhibiting them in a museum, even though we criticize the legitimator model of Western art, questioning whether there may be other more appropriate ways of consecrating art. We celebrate the exhibition in a museum, but we condemn the system in which these institutions operate. We want to open doors so that these pieces are legitimized outside the Western standard, however, we approach a museum seeking validation. It is in this contradiction that we feel stained. We are colonized and colonizers at the same time.

We are going to try to associate our experience in *Sin Sección* with the concept proposed by the Bolivian sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui of what she considers Mundo *Ch'ixi* (Ch'ixi World) (Rivera, 2010), precisely because its meaning refers to contradictions. *Ch'ixi* means stained, dirty, and imprisoned. Attributed to our Latin nature as mestizos (half-blood), this concept can be an interesting common thread to talk about these mixtures, stains, and contradictions with which we live and create art in Latin America. Being and not being at the same time could be poetic, but it is important to reflect on it in this field of study.

A visual way to explain the word *Ch'ixi* is through animals whose skin has different colors. Lizards, snakes, and toads have these characteristics, and through their skin and textures, we can perceive a variety of combinations of colors that form patterns that never mix. These animals have another important characteristic that contributes a lot to the *Ch'ixi* concept, they have the ability to live in two worlds, below ground and above ground, underwater and out of water. This characteristic is fundamental in explaining the concept of stained beings, and in our research, we can attribute it to a type of art that can inhabit different worlds.

Another characteristic of *Ch'ixi* is that it has nothing to do with miscegenation. Miscegenation is a mixture, hybridity, a third-party producer, the result of a mixture of two. According to Silvia Rivera (Alice Ces, 2014), miscegenation is based on forgetting, that is, leaving the past behind, to be able to “climb” on a social scale to a level of whitening. In our society, it is better to be a white *mestizo* than an Indian *mestizo*. To be a white *mestizo*, the family forgets the original language of the elders, forces their children to learn Spanish and dress according to the middle class of the city. The clothing and traditions of the elders remain in the past, like the "others", worthless and distant. *Ch'ixi* proposes decolonization through the recovery of this past, beginning with recognizing the contradictory being in oneself. *Ch'ixi* is a being with juxtaposed antagonistic identities that never merge (Alice Ces, 2014).

9 Conclusion

In the case of *Sin Sección*, we reach the point of contradiction. Through this exhibition, the prison stone carvings stain the museum, and the museum stains the stones. They do not merge into a hybrid product. The stones remain in the Museum as works of art only during the exhibition. After the exhibition is over, the stones are taken out of the museum., and they are currently in the curator/collector's house.

An interesting exercise would be to think about what would have happened if the Museum had inserted these carvings into its museographic archive, to form part of the museum's permanent collection. Would the stones have been considered art permanently? The temporary nature of the exhibition accentuates the *Ch'ixi* shock because the stones were considered art only for the time the museum exhibited these carvings in its consecrating rooms. During the exhibition time the *Ch'ixi* phenomenon occurred: like schizophrenia, the exhibition disconnected the concept of art itself. This phenomenon disarranged the classifications of art, not knowing whether the carvings should be considered popular art, fine arts, contemporary art, naïve art, social art, or kitsch art. Finally, they were associated with “popular art”, because the classifications influenced by the Eurocentric aesthetics of modernity/coloniality are rooted in our subjectivities. These classifications are used not to underscore their aesthetic or formal properties, as are all the “isms” that identify movements in the history of art: e.g. minimalism, expressionism, futurism, cubism, surrealism, naturalism, impressionism, etc. Unlike these, when terms such as “popular art, naive art, indigenous art” are mentioned, it is specifically related to their sociocultural condition; points out where it comes from: "from its popular origin, from the absence or incipience of school and artistic training, from its supposed "simplicity", term that is usually used to describe the ways of living, thinking and being of people from the poorer classes." (Brandão & Guimarães, 2012, p. 311, our translation).

Once again the subordinations imposed by the coloniality of our subjectivities come to light when we want to designate these expressions as art, as if we needed special permission, placing them on the margins of the art circuit as an act of generosity. Furthermore, it makes us consider their nature of expression as simple, spontaneous, naive, and made by intuition as if they were uncomplex and lower-status characteristics. Thus, to associate it with this classification of the art system is to stay in the same place, to settle down, to adapt to this system, and even worse, it is to confirm the domination of the Eurocentric vision of aesthetics over our cultural expressions. However, it is different if we consider the Sin Seccion exhibition as a conflictive exhibition in a museum space, an event that provokes the confrontation and clashes between aesthetics and ideas of art. Sin Sección begins in the hands of men deprived of liberty who live as homeless people in a prison with very few resources. It proposes to reflect on resisting the bad image and concept of dehumanization that society built on those deprived of liberty within a prison. Through this activity of carving stones, they enhance greater differentiated sensitivities, producing greater re-existence. We can come to think of Sin Sección as a decolonizing proposal of our forgotten local expressions.

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ANALYSIS OF THE REGIMES OF REPRESENTATION OF NATURE AND THE DESIGN OF THE PLURIVERSE

ANÁLISIS DE LOS REGÍMENES DE REPRESENTACIÓN DE LA NATURALEZA Y EL DISEÑO DEL PLURIVERSO

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Abstract

The debate about the different discursive representations of nature has gained strength in recent years due, among other factors, to the deepening of environmental problems on a global scale, as well as the emergence of alternatives for development. The main objective of this work is to provide an analysis of Arturo Escobar's proposal for representations of nature, a proposal framed within the Latin American decolonial perspective, essentially his notion on Regimes of nature, as well as his theoretical proposal regarding Designs for the Pluriverse. Methodologically, we carry out an essentially theoretical approach, seeking to join the debate on discursive representations about nature, the discourse of development, and the voices that propose alternative visions.

Keywords: Development, Regimes of nature, Decoloniality, Discourse analysis, Sustainable Development

1 Introduction

Unlike decolonial authors such as Aníbal Quijano, Walter Mignolo, and Enrique Dussel, who situate themselves as heirs of a tradition of thought located in the terrains of the Marxist, Philosophy of Liberation, and Latin American critical thought, the position of Arturo Escobar is anchored in the post-structuralist perspective, which generates a divergent theoretical and methodological decolonial analysis in comparison with these authors.

Escobar's thought does not start from the analysis of a power world pattern that has dominated the world since the 15th and 16th centuries, like Aníbal Quijano (2014); neither does he seek to name modernity defined by a single will to dominate, as Enrique Dussel does (2020); nor does he speak of a series of secret codes configured from the West that governs all the production of knowledge in the world-system, like Walter Mignolo (2010). Escobar avoids speaking of totalities and focuses his analysis on historical phenomena delimited and explored in their singularity, as is the case of the development discourse.

In this sense, development is examined by Escobar not as an epiphenomenon of capitalism, but as a regime of representation directly linked to historically limited power devices, which belong to a modern order of knowledge with claims of universality. For this author, therefore, development does not appear as a modernity founding myth, but rather as a space of thought and action with a historically anchored starting point, which has served to configure a complex reality we witness today and which, according to the diagnosis made in its most recent works, has been showing clear signs of exhaustion (Escobar, 2018).

Thus, from Escobar's decolonial perspective, the rules that govern the development discourse were not invented in the 15th and 16th centuries; nor are they part of an all-encompassing system typical of modernity. They were formed from the second half of the 20th century, anchored in the Post-war period, a historical stage where, for him, the contemporary world was geopolitically reconfigured. Unlike other decolonial thinkers, Escobar is not guided by the search for secret modernity founding codes, but rather by the idea of showing the politics of truth behind the development discourse in the years after World War II, a discourse framed under globalization and neocolonialism logic (Escobar, 2007).

It is through the critical analysis of the development discourse that Escobar discusses precisely on how this discourse has become hegemonic, a hegemony that, for the purposes of this work, has allowed him to construct a notion about nature. It is a hegemonic discourse that claims universality that, like every discourse, coexists with others and competes with them. Like any other, it does not possess neutrality or objectivity; on the contrary, it follows hegemonic interests and, in that sense, creates imaginaries, notions, and particular configurations.

In this sense, Escobar asserts that this discursive game around what nature means symbolically and the definitions of both the environment and the natural system have generated what he calls Regimes of Representation of Nature. For this thinker, the discursive conformation has managed to design symbolic imaginaries around nature, as well as a series of discourses that have configured the

relationship that human beings in modernity have with it (Escobar, 1999). In addition to this, his most recent proposal on what he calls the techno-nature discourse is widely analyzed in his most recent work, Designs for the Pluriverse (Escobar, 2018).

We have proposed as the central objective of this work to analyze the notion of regimes of nature. To this end, we begin our reflection focusing on the analysis of the development discourse from post-structuralism, which will serve as a starting point for our reflection on the notion of nature regimes. Based on this, we will close our analysis by providing some reflections on the proposal of hybrid discourses present in his most recent work. We close our work by venturing some conclusions. This is an essentially theoretical work that seeks to provide and presente elements for the debate on the discursive representations that, in the field of the search for solutions and alternatives to the complex contemporary environmental problem from a decolonial perspective.

2 The development discourse as a source of colonial discourse

Various voices agree that the development discourse has as its starting point the call that former North American president Harry S. Truman made to the U.S. Congress in 1947, after the end of World War II. Geopolitics was entering one of the most ideologically and discursively complex processes, with unprecedented political polarization, with more than half of the world's population living in poverty and misery conditions, poorly fed, prone to diseases related to these living conditions, and with very limited possibilities of joining what would be called global economic development (Tovar, 2011).

Truman proposed to the Congress of his country, also calling on the world's hegemonic nations, to undertake a sum of efforts to, based on the technical knowledge they possessed, help increase the standard of living of the impoverished population of the so-called undeveloped countries. Truman argued that the backwardness of some nations would generate counterproductive effects in the then-emerging globalized economy, which is why technical action by hegemonic countries and supranational organizations was necessary.

Because of this, not only begin a stage characterized by a series of international economic policies commanded by specialized organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the World Bank (WB) or the International Monetary Fund (IMF), among others, but also gave rise to the creation of notions that served as pillars of the emerging hegemonic discourse whose goal was unremitting progress and unquestionable development: “(…) producing more is the key to peace and prosperity”, said the former North American president, who started the ideology commonly known as Truman Doctrine. Thus, the discourse on development creates notions to name realities, such as underdevelopment, third world, developing nations, emerging economies, etc., compared to other definitions such as developed countries, first world, industrialized countries, etc.

Beyond its ethnocentric and universalist pretension (Edwards, 2017), the discourse configured around the idea of development managed to be quickly introduced and imposed in many government plans of the time, as well as in all economic policies of both hegemonic nations and nations classified as underdeveloped. The development discourse focused, then, on the strategies that had to be generated so that, under the tutelage of multinational institutions such as the WB, the IMF, and the UN, this block of non-industrialized countries would overcome their socioeconomic conditions and reach basic standards of living, placing development as a global aspirational notion, as a “(…) certainty in the social imaginary” (Escobar, 1999, p. 35, our translation).

The reality, Escobar affirms, was colonized by the discourse of development, limiting all action to the margins that this same discourse allowed, turning it into an unquestionable reality with a universal character. In this sense, studies on the discourse of development began to emerge from different coordinates; from the analysis of Edward Said regarding the discourses elaborated on the East (Said, 1997) and those of the philosopher V.Y. Mudimbe about Africa (Mudimbe, 1988) to Latin American critical currents, the Philosophy of Liberation and Chandra Mohanty’s work about the role of women in third world countries (Mohanty, 2003).

The structuring of these discourses under conditions of power inequality generated what was called the “colonialist move”, a notion that seeks to explain how, through the imposition of a discourse, the colonial subject is constructed, in specific ways, as colonial/third world subject. This “colonialist move” creates a power device that, as Escobar affirms, ensured geopolitical control based on racialized, patriarchalized, scientific, economistic, etc. structures and imaginaries over the subalternized subject. It became a discourse that not only configured expressions such as first and third world but also those of Center/Periphery, Global North and South, among others (Escobar, 2007).

The analysis of the development discourse forced this notion to be problematized and, in doing so, generated a scenario of dispute, since "(…) analyzing development as a discourse means suspending its apparent naturalness" (Escobar, 1999, p. 25, our translation). From this starting point, development and concepts that arrange the first, such as planning and management, are put up for discussion as they are paradigmatic notions of modernity and its rationality.

For Escobar, discourses are not mere objective descriptions of reality, but rather the reflection of the dispute to define what reality is; or rather, what is the meaning of reality (Escobar, 2012). That is, it is anchored in the recognition of the importance of the dynamics of discourse and power as a possibility of creating social reality. This position is heir to the Foucauldian premise, in which discourses are always linked to power (Foucault, 2007). Therefore, development discourse does not name an existing prelinguistic reality (the developed world and the underdeveloped world as things in themselves), but rather it linguistically creates those realities, shapes conceptions of reality, and, with this, also shapes the social action of those who inhabit that reality.

As we have already pointed out, unlike some decolonial thinkers faithful to dependency theory or Marxist theory, where language names an existing reality, Escobar does not presuppose such an affirmation, since, from his post-structuralist position, the recognition of the importance of discursive rules within the development discourse, as well as the power in the creation of the social reality that it possesses (Escobar, 2007, p. 14).

At the same time, this starting point that denotes Escobar's interest in exoticizing development, in demonstrating its historical peculiarity, in rebelling against the discursive rules it obeys, places him in the field of the decolonial turn, since it denaturalizes modernity and makes visible its desire for universality, emphasizing its historical, classist, local, patriarchal, etc. To this end, Escobar returns to the aforementioned theories of Edward Said on the Middle East and V. Y. Murimbe on the European invention of Africa, although he also names the works of decolonial thinkers such as Homi Bhabba and Gayatri Spivak.

That is, Escobar invites us to stop seeing development as an objective and universalist reality and now see it as an invention, as a singular experience that is the product of specific power relations formed from a discourse of power, a discourse emanating from predominant political and economic forces in the modern Western world (Escobar, 2007). To do this, it is necessary to map the discursive route of development, trying to identify its techniques of power, the institutions that support it, and the forms of knowledge that it mobilizes.

Hence the emphasis on the sphere of discourse that Escobar proposes, which occurs not in its subjective vertex, but rather in the investigation of the linguistic and meaning reasons that become a constitutive part of reality. The fundamental premise is that, through language, particularly discourse, reality acquires meaning for the individual. The philosopher Félix Guattari (2022), in this sense, made it clear that this linguistic perspective does not deny the existence of a pre-discursive reality but rather emphasizes that it is only through language that we appropriate it, but this only happens through power mediation.

Therefore, a constant discursive struggle is established for the control of meaning, so that the discourse immanently acquires a political dimension. For the same reason, the modification of the preponderance of a discourse, as Escobar states, is a matter of politics, it is part of the theory of politics (Escobar, 2012). Accordingly, a change in the discourse structure and in the order of discourse does not simply imply the introduction of new ideas, but, more profoundly, means the transformation of practice, since these two changes are structured on certain linguistic conventions, a certain way of relating, paraphrasing Foucault, words to things (Foucault, 1998). The order of discourse is linked to certain rules that govern the meaning of practice. Therefore, changing the order of discourse is not a fact that only occurs at the level of thought, but must also happen at the level of historical practices. If these must be modified, one must first intervene in the rules that support them to transform them or open new possibilities of action.

Following Foucault's thought, Escobar then understands development as a specific type of governmentality, as the creation of a field of government intervention that operates under certain logics, rules, and discourses. For the author, these rules cannot be derived from any colonial pattern or matrix of power.

> Development was and remains largely a top-down, ethnocentric, and technocratic approach, treating people and cultures as abstract concepts, as statistical figures that could be moved back and forth on graphs of progress. Development was never

> conceived as cultural development, but rather as a system of technical interventions universally applicable with the objective of bringing some essential goods to a target population. (Escobar, 2007, p. 94, our translation).

It is, in Foucauldian terms, a biopolitical device that seeks to regulate the population's life, beyond sovereign power. Such interventions are configured under the technocratic operation in certain regions then called third world, following indicators such as literacy and industrialization as fundamental premises of development, conditions that would be guaranteed through the intervention of capital in key areas of the economy, as well as in education, combating poverty, and habitat preservation, among others (Escobar, 2007). Thus, the ideal scenario is created for systematic interventions, under the discourse that populations had to be modernized, that is, integrated into global economic dynamics, incorporated into the global train through technical intervention mechanisms orchestrated by the international organizations and with the support of local government networks that will guarantee their compliance and perpetuation, legitimizing them. In that sense, Escobar says, life itself begins to be seen as a technical problem, in charge of a group of experts and development professionals (Escobar, 2014).

This complex discursive apparatus tied to institutionalized control mechanisms has, however, lost cohesion, giving rise to a framework where other discourses confront it (Escobar, 2018). The emanation of these new discourses does not fit with the aforementioned control mechanisms; that is to say, for Escobar, they do not appear only as development alternative discourses, but as diametrically different discursive forces, which in reality seek alternatives to development. Thus, they place themselves on a different terrain, which he calls post-development.

This is not the space to discuss the notion of post-development, but we are interested in mentioning that Escobar, with this notion, aims to demonstrate how the discursive crisis of development has made possible the opening of spaces that give room to other discourses, to other thoughts, to see other things from different narratives, from subalternity, which generates the writing and understanding of history from other languages (Escobar, 2007). It is important to clarify that Escobar does not suggest a possible stage after development with the post-development concept, as his notion has sometimes been read, but rather he defines it as a discourse that opens new paths where alternative visions have made their way; it is, therefore, a concept that allows us to understand development from a different perspective.

Like Walter Mignolo, Escobar proposes an epistemological change as a necessary condition for a radically different world and, in that sense, anchored in an alternative discourse. This epistemic change is only possible through the emergence of discourses and subalternized knowledge of subjugated knowledge, organized through social movements and their discursive political practices. It is, in this logic, that the notion of regimes of representation of nature arises.

3 Regimes of representation of nature

Nature, Escobar affirms, has not escaped the efforts of systematization of modern science, its narrative, and its desire for universality. In this sense, its characterization responds to the scientific discourse, its methods of knowledge, and the desire for submission typical of the modern civilizational project. It is in this impulse of systematization that nature is reduced to a mere stage where life happens, not where life takes shape. As a result of this process, it is worthy mentioning the definitions *of natural system or environment*, notions that allow us to glimpse the role that, for the modern individual, nature occupies.

From a decolonial analysis, the binary thinking that characterizes modern science has generated an explanation under scientific standards of the diversity of planetary natural phenomena, and it has sought to explain and understand the laws that allow the reproduction of the fabric of life as well as the biodiversity that characterizes it, reducing, however, highly complex relationships to indissoluble pairs: body/mind, society/nature, animal kingdom/plant kingdom, environment/human environment, among others. In this way, the discourse of modernity has given meaning to what nature represents for the discourse of development in its universality eagerness.

That is why, for Escobar, what we call nature is not a neutral and independent notion, nor alien to hegemonic discourses and, therefore, to human symbolization. In that sense, he states, what we understand by nature is an invention that does not obey objective laws, but

is a response to certain regimes of representation, a fact that then places us in an epistemic and cultural relativism, from where nature acquires a particular representation according to each cultural sphere (Escobar, 2010).

Therefore, the meaning of nature, from a discursive point of view, does not appear as given, but is the product of a discursive struggle to shape it, a struggle that occurs in the political field, thus maintaining a close relationship with power. From this point of view and from a decolonial perspective, Escobar affirms that there are three regimes of representation of nature that are not only simultaneous but, as discursive realities, compete: organic, capitalist, and techno nature. They are, in Foucauldian terms, three epistemes, whose logic of operation is different in each case, but which, for Escobar, are not incommensurable, but quite the opposite: as discourses, they compete, intertwine, and coexist with each other (Escobar, 1999). We will give some conceptual details of each of them.

The organic regime is situated in that terrain that is defined by shapes that are not strictly modern; that is, this regime is made up of representations where there is a "…relative inseparability of the biophysical, human and spiritual worlds", where "…vernacular economic relations, (the) non-modern circuits of knowledge, and (the) forms of use prevail, and meaning of nature that does not imply its systematic destruction" (Escobar, 1999, p. 229, our translation). This regime is represented by those discourses whose central goal is not to generate alternative developments, but alternatives to development. Thus, from the good lives of the Indo-American communities, where development is tied to the forms of local production and the consolidation of the biocultural heritage of the communities (Rist, 2002), proposals such as *sumak kawsay*, *suma qamaña, mandar obedeciendo*, and *commonwealth*. They are proposals with ancestral visions whose philosophical principles are anchored in a profound rescue of communal lifestyles, both of indigenous and Afro peoples, where nature acquires a level of sacredness that prevents dissociating the biophysical from the spiritual, guided by principles such as parity, linkage, that of the included third party, community service, hand/return, etc. (Mignolo, 2002). It is the notion of nature that the People of the earth possess (Leff, 1994), the people-territory (Escobar, 2014).

For its part, capitalized nature is based on the separation of the human and natural world, where it is mediated by capitalist and patriarchal social relations and appears as produced by the mediation of work (Escobar, 1999). It is this discourse, says Escobar, that characterized the aggressive process of global industrialization that began at the end of the 19th century with an expansive and highly exfoliating nature of natural resources. It is a stage of exploitation of nature that was based on the idea of progress as every society's final stage, having as an ally the increasingly efficient techno-scientific apparatus, a fact that generated a discourse around the idea of nature as a system, the natural system, whose purpose was to provide capitalism and the market with sufficient natural resources, as well as provide environmental services (Escobar, 2014).

Finally, the discourse of techno nature was based on the idea of a kind of nature produced by technoscience new forms, "…particularly those based on molecular technologies" (Escobar, 1999, p. 229, our translation). We will focus our analysis on this point, since, following theorists such as Félix Guattari and Donna Haraway, Escobar affirms that we have entered an era that is beyond organic nature and that it is impossible to return to it.

Escobar's proposal expressed in Designs for the Pluriverse (2018) affirms that the limits between the organic and the artificial have faded, or at least have shifted depending on the techno-scientific currents with the greatest influence worldwide. It is impossible to think that what we call nature remains alien to the interventions of human beings; In fact, those who place themselves in this field, Escobar says, create what he calls "nature ideology".

This statement underpins an unprecedented logical, ontological, and epistemological transformation that, he assures, we are just beginning to understand. For this author, it is now impossible to think about that great return to a non-capitalized nature, as organic discourses advocate, seeking again to concatenate the biophysical and the spiritual. Rather, it is about promoting an alliance between organic nature and techno nature, about understanding its pluriverse. For this author, we witness the decline of those essentialist discourses that support the idea of a pristine nature, outside of history and the human context, as a pure and independent entity. It is a discourse that, Escobar assures, has been exhausted and that is giving way to a new one where nature is seen as artificially produced by humans.

In that sense, he continues with what he had already started years before, where:

> (…) the discourses of biodiversity and biotechnology can be in the scheme of what Donna Haraway calls the postmodern reinvention of nature, a reinvention promoted by sciences such as molecular biology, genetics, and immunology, or by currents of research such as human genome projects, artificial intelligence, and biotechnology. We could be moving from a regime of organic and capitalized nature towards a regime of techno nature carried out by new forms of science and technology (Escobar, 1999, p. 387, our translation).

When Escobar states that the limits between the natural and the artificial have faded based on the role of biotechnologies, it is impossible for humanity to remain oblivious to the multiple ways in which the techno-scientific apparatus intervenes in nature, contributing to the discursive construction. Nature has already been a technical product, he assures. It has become an entity that generates "artifactual" products, with bioartifacts of a hybrid nature, what Donna Haraway calls the notion of the cyborg[1]. Escobar affirms that techno-natural discourse implies knowledge of a reality where humans, animals, and machines find themselves intertwined and articulated. It is no longer possible to oppose the organic to the technological, nor to think of a romantic return to a reality where the organic discourse manages to impose its hegemony over the techno-natural.

The bet would be to assume an imbrication to configure new ways of managing nature and human communities' relationships. We are therefore faced with the challenge of a political reinvention of nature, of the pluriverse, that separates it from the discourses of development, especially those that support the possibility of sustainable development, discourses typical of the episteme of capitalized nature. From this perspective, the role of social movements is fundamental, since they create alternative discourses where environmental problems such as energy production, resource exploitation, and even those that are indirectly related such as gender and poverty issues, are not reduced "…to another problem of development, to another chapter in the history of economic culture" (Escobar, 1999, p. 396, our translation).

Opposite to other analytical perspectives, and even thinkers within the same decolonial perspective, Escobar does not romanticize the idea of subalternity in his analytical proposal, nor does he support an organic discourse as it would contribute to the solution of the complex environmental contemporary problems. According to him, social movements, as political actors, activists, and, to a certain extent, academia, must (should) move in a regime of hybrid natures, halfway between the organic and the cybernetic, with anti-essentialist approaches.

In this sense, it is close to what Félix Guattari's notion of ecosophy (1996), by proposing alternative uses of new technologies; we delve into discourses that do not aim to join the market (such as the liberal position) or the State (such as the Marxist position), but rather social movements that are committed to the defense of their territories, their biocultural heritage (Toledo et al., 2019), in what Escobar calls a political ecology of virtuality, which challenges the techno-capitalist valorization of nature. They are, in this sense, movements whose discourses are anchored both the defense of identity in the name of essentialist visions, and the articulation of the three areas of experiences indicated by Guattari: environmental ecology, social ecology, and mental ecology, experiences that, for this author, far from being separated, are closely articulated in Latin American societies.

The articulation of these three areas indicated by Guattari appears in Escobar's work as insurmountable experiences for the configuration of a discourse that manages to bring together the demands of the discursive representations that sustain the social movements anchored to the territory, movements in which this author deposits the last hopes in the search for alternatives to the complex contemporary environmental problems.

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[1] With the notion of cyborg, Haraway (2020) brings into play one of the essential characteristics of his work: the juxtaposition of notions, practices, and knowledge that are, apparently, incompatible. From biology, psychoanalysis, robotics, and zoology, Haraway proposes the notion of cyborg: a metaphorical concept that defines a hybrid between a machine and a living organism, it is a creature that tramples, on the one hand, social reality and, on the other, that of fiction, trying to exemplify the way in which it is currently impossible to think (think ourselves) apart from the role that technology has in the life of contemporary human beings, whether we are modern or not. This is not the space to analyze Haraway's provocative proposal, but it seems pertinent to point out the reflection he makes on the patriarchy operating in the organization of the American Museum of Natural History, which reveals a discourse behind the way of presenting nature. In *The Teddy Bear Patriarchy. Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden*, Haraway (2019) debates the way of articulating the masculinist, racist, economic stories, etc., after the layout and the route in said Museum, an articulation that, in discourse, is presented as objective, without being so, states the author.

4 Conclusions

While it is true that Arturo Escobar's position can be read as part of the decolonial analytical perspective, both his initial conceptual apparatuses (Foucauldian post-structuralism) and the most recent ones reflected in his proposal in Designs for the Pluriverse (design theories, the theories of complexity and good living), his analysis has not failed to incorporate other perspectives that have nourished both his conceptual apparatus and his analytical perspective.

In that sense, it seems essential to highlight the way in which this author asserts that modern technology has generated a certain way of being in the world, an ontology in which the human being has lost his premodern links with nature, which some call eco-connection. This modern uprooting has made him lose his compass in the world of entities and objects. It is a technology that has designed a certain world, a certain way of understanding our life projects, our relationship with other living beings, and, in that sense, our future on the planet. A dualistic vision persists that contrasts the natural with the human, the social with the natural, the mental with the physical, the subject with the object, etc.

The organic vision of the world, the one that linked the human lifestyle with planetary physicochemical cycles, has disappeared. With the emergence of techno-natural discourse, an irreversible process of despiritualization of nature began, guided largely by the techno-scientific apparatus. The discourse on nature changed from one that named it the mother earth, as the giver of life, and with a spirituality that united man with other living beings to another that saw it as a system that provided resources to beings human, as a large analyzable organism, with measurable, conceptualizable, codifiable, and measurable life cycles, with practical purposes and whose environmental services provide the resources to sustain rationalizable human lifestyles.

From this perspective, the present and the future are technically designed, based on abstract axioms that no longer depend on ancestral abstract knowledge but on modern scientific knowledge. The consequence of this, Escobar would say, is that knowledge has been unanchored from life, becoming an ally of capitalism and a tool to manipulate the world. In this sense, the value of the social movements that defend their territory increases, since, Escobar believes, the emerging global politics is anchored in them since they face what he calls conditions of ontological occupation, a notion with which this author provides a light of hope in the face of the complex reality of modern environmental problems. The discourse of grassroots social movements, those anchored to their territories, represents a complex rationality that can be contrasted with techno-natural discourse. Like Walter Mignolo, Escobar closes his analysis by asserting that these movements are like “islets” spread throughout the planet surrounded by the technical and predatory rationality that surrounds the techno-natural discourse of the West. Each of these islets is the bearer of a peculiar form of design, Escobar asserts, which, although located in an ontological exteriority in the face of modern/Western thought, also interacts autopoietically with the techno-naturalized discourse.

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FROM SILENCE TO OUTBURST: INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND SOCIAL PROTEST IN COLOMBIA

DEL SILENCIO AL ESTALLIDO: COMUNIDADES INDÍGENAS Y PROTESTA SOCIAL EN COLOMBIA

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Abstract

This article analyzes from a decolonial perspective two events that occurred in the framework of the National Strike of the year 2021 in Colombia: the demolition of the statue of the Founder of the city of Cali, Sebastian de Belalcazar, by members of the Misak indigenous people, and the attack carried out against the indigenous Minga in this same city. Methodologically, twenty documents were analyzed, including press articles, communiqués, reports by non-governmental organizations related to these events and information obtained in autobiographical form by the authors. It is concluded that the events analyzed show situations of stigmatization, discrimination and violence, based on a colonial logic that underpins the power structure of the Colombian State. It recognizes the social impact of the actions analyzed, by questioning the official version of history, proposing alternative ways of organizing and occupying public space and claiming their right to dignity and recognition as a people. It highlights the articulation between the indigenous struggle and popular movements, especially of the impoverished sectors of the big cities that share a colonial history and of armed conflict, traversed by logics of racial, capitalist and patriarchal oppression. For the analysis of the facts mentioned, it is assumed the decolonial perspective derived from the approaches of the so-called Latin American group modernity/coloniality.

Keywords: Coloniality, National Strike, Social Protest, Colombia, Indigenous Communities

1 Introduction

To situate this proposal, we must begin by acknowledging the colonial heritage that the Colombian State shares with other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, inheriting a form of social organization derived from the colonial era, from which land, wealth and political and economic power continue to be concentrated in the hands of a few families. This results in a marked inequality and social stratification that structurally impoverishes, especially, the country's indigenous, black and peasant communities. This inequality is exacerbated when it is linked to a corrupt governmental organization and an internal armed conflict that is now more than half a century old. According to the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE, 2018), Colombia has about 48 million inhabitants, of which, 1.9 million self-identify as indigenous, corresponding to 4.4% of the population. According to the report of FAO, IFAD, PAHO, WFP and UNICEF (2021), in 2020 there were 3.5 million people in severe food insecurity situation. According to the DANE (2021), income poverty of the population as a whole was 42.5% and extreme income poverty was 15.1%. For indigenous groups, the latter reached 34.7% for women and 32.7% for men, double the national DANE (2022), which indicates the difference in structural inequality which these communities suffer.

In addition to these indicators of poverty in the country, we add the assassination of 145 social leaders and human rights defenders, including indigenous, environmental, civic and community leaders, and an obvious upsurge in crime, drug trafficking and terrorist actions, all of which within a period of global crisis unleashed by the Covid-19 pandemic, which exacerbated the conditions of inequity, inequality, exclusion and poverty in the country. It is in this context of political, economic and social crisis that the Colombian National Strike of 2021 emerged and developed, the object of analysis of this article. The strike began on April 28, 2021 and lasted for more than two months, during which time there were massive protests in different cities and municipalities of the country, and violent clashes between groups of demonstrators and members of the police, particularly the so-called Mobile Anti-Riot Squadron (ESMAD), which was trying to regain control of the cities and disperse the protests. This social event was preceded by the National Strike of 2019, with similar demands: the right to health, education, decent work, upholding of the peace agreements, protection of the lives of leaders and the right to protest, which were interrupted by quarantines and mobility restrictions imposed during the pandemic.

On April 28, 2021, despite the fear generated by the media in the face of the so-called “second peak” of contagion, and against the background of the massive protests in Chile, called to reform its Constitution, thousands of Colombians took to the streets to protest against a tax reform proposed by then-Minister of Finance Alberto Carrasquilla, which affected the country’s middle and impoverished classes, unleashing what the media called a “social outburst.” During the months of protest, groups already known, or in the process of being made visible (trade unions, workers, peasants, transport workers, teachers, students, women's movements, LGBT

communities, environmentalists, among others), mobilized in the streets of 75% of the country's municipalities. The indigenous communities organized around the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC), an organization founded in 1971, which today brings together 90% of the indigenous communities of this department (CRIC, s. f.).

It is noteworthy that the Department of Cauca, located in the southwest of Colombia, houses the largest percentage of indigenous population in the country, grouping 8 ethnic groups, settled in 26 of the 39 municipalities of this department (CIDH, 2021, p. 18). These communities, including the Misak community, stand out for their autonomy and organizational capacity based on traditional principles such as: the defense of the territory, the preservation of their uses and customs, and the constant denunciation of the structural violence to which they have been subjected as a people since colonial times. (CRIC, sf, 2021b). During the 2021 strike, the indigenous communities of Cauca stood out for their alternative forms of participation, such as the demolition of colonial monuments and the mobilization outside their territories of the so-called “National, Social, Popular and Community Minga, for the defense and care of life” (hereinafter referred to as the Indigenous Minga). It should be noted that the indigenous Minga is a movement that was created by the indigenous communities of southern Colombia at the end of the twentieth century to protest against the violation of their rights as a people. It has been characterized by forceful actions such as the blockade of the Pan-American Highway, or the movement, by caravan, of thousands of its members, who gather from different peoples to go to cities such as Bogotá, where they settle for several days, developing an agenda that includes meetings, marches, spiritual ceremonies, music and dance gatherings and other symbolic activities, which are decided in assembly, as a way of calling the attention of the State and citizens to their historically unmet demands. (CRIC, 2021a, 2021b).

One of the characteristics of this period of mobilization was the high level of violence deployed by the Armed Forces of the State; this attracted the attention of the media and international organizations, culminating in the visit of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH) to the country, which was able to verify the systematic violation of rights evidenced in the data recorded by non-governmental organizations such as the NGO Temblores, Indepaz and the Program of Action for Equality and Social Inclusion of the University of the Andes (2021) These organizations documented and systematized 4852 cases of police violence related to excesses by the security forces within the frame of these protests (eye injuries, arbitrary arrests, direct shooting with tear gas, assault with stun bombs, rubber bullets, pellets, reduced lethal grenades and marbles, among others). It should be noted that in the report resulting from its visit, the CIDH (2021) highlights that indigenous communities have been directly attacked and have been victims of different situations of stigmatization, discrimination and racism, which account for particular forms of violence based on the ethnic and racial classification of the population.

Considering this context, this article analyzes two events that occurred during this strike: the demolition of the monument to the founder of the City of Cali, and the attack against the indigenous Minga in this city by armed citizens from privileged sectors, with the support of the security forces. A description and analysis of these events is carried out, supported by an analysis of twenty documents that include press articles published in El Tiempo, the best-selling newspaper in the country, reports from the CIDH, the NGO Temblores, and communiqués from the CRIC collected in autobiographical form during the days of protest. This documental analysis was based on the stages proposed by Sandoval (2002): documents that directly related to some of the facts analyzed were tracked and catalogued; they were subsequently selected and classified, considering that they directly alluded to the participation of indigenous communities, and that they had been written during the period of the protests; finally, their contents were read in depth, units of analysis were extracted that were organized into analytical matrices, and a comprehensive synthesis was prepared that guided the description and discussion presented below.

For the analysis of these facts, a decolonial perspective was assumed, used in the sense of the decolonial turn proposed by the so-called Latin American group modernity/coloniality. From this perspective, it is maintained, mainly following the propositions of Quijano (2014), that colonialism as a pattern of power based on the ethnic and racial difference of the population persists despite the fact that colonialism as a historical moment is supposed to be over, and it denounces the economic, epistemic and ontological implications of continuing to place Europe at the center of history and capitalism as the only model of development, thus denying the multiple forms of life that have been subordinated since the colony, being labeled as primitive, barbaric or underdeveloped. (Dusel, 2015). According to Castró-Gómez & Grosfoguel (2007, p. 21, our translation) the decolonial perspective “demands the emergence of new institutional

and non-institutional places from which subordinates can speak and be heard", and in this sense, the facts analyzed below allow us to recognize the practical power of this perspective.

2 The knockdown

The inaugural act of the protests, took place in the early morning of April 28, 2021 in the city of Cali and was in charge of members of the indigenous Misak community of the Department of Cauca, who in a surprising but planned way, on the day decreed for the beginning of the mobilizations, carried out the demolition of the statue of Sebastián de Belalcazar, founder of this city. As Carranza (2021) points out, it should be borne in mind that in 2020, this community conducted a "historic trial" against the Spanish conquistador Sebastián de Belalcazar, "accusing him of genocide, dispossession and land grabbing, mass rape of women and physical and cultural disappearance of indigenous peoples" (Carranza, 2021, para. 6, our translation). As stated by the Movement of Indigenous Authorities of the South West (AISO) via Twitter (2021, as quoted in Carranza, 2021, para. 4, our translation): The knockdown of the statue of Sebastián de Belalcázar was carried out "in memory of our cacique Petecuy, who fought against the Spanish Crown, so that today his grandsons and granddaughters may continue to fight to change this system of criminal government that does not respect the rights of Mother Earth." At the same time, as Misak Didier Chirimuskay (2021, as cited in Murillo, 2021, p. 1. 13, our translation), says, it must be taken into account that

> This wave of knockdown is part of a symbolic strategy to decolonize the country and shake off a history of violence in which its ancestors put their blood. . . It is a call to the country to reflect on our vital and sacred spaces and to open up to these cultures, if today a certain population has given us a historical script in the country, this is the demand of the indigenous peoples, opening up stages so that they have the space they deserve.

This act of demolition and similar demolitions that followed this event, such as the one that occurred on May 7 in the capital of the country against the Monument to Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, Founder of Bogotá, are presented within the framework of a collective process that has been going on for many years, seeking to recover the memory and dignity of a people and to appeal to the state and its citizens to recognize different versions of history other than the official one; reflections in the face of which a symbolic act like the one performed, evidence to be effective, considering the centuries of silence, impunity, violence and dispossession against the country's indigenous communities. It is evidently a question of settling accounts with history "a wake-up call to a society in arrears to discuss its inequalities" (El destino de las estatuas, 2021, p. 1. 12, our translation). However, this event triggered a great polarization in the media and social networks, one of the consequences of this event being the hate speech promoted by various sectors, who described the indigenous participants as vandals, to which were added adjectives such as ignorant, barbaric and violent. This speech has been promoted for several years by powerful sectors who fear the struggle of the communities to recover their territory and was becoming a major source of unrest that eventually led to the attack against the Indigenous Minga in the city of Cali.

3 The attack to the Minga.

One of the collective actors that achieved high recognition during the protests was the indigenous Minga, a community organization led by CRIC. Faced with the serious human rights violations that were taking place against the demonstrators in the city of Cali, the Minga decided to go to this city with more than 2000 members of its organization, to provide them with support, which generated the support of a wide sector of protesters, but also attacks and expressions of racism, contempt, stigmatization and rejection in the media and social networks, being the most significant event that accounts for these attitudes, the event that happened on May 9, 2021, when, while moving through the south of the city, the Minga is attacked with firearms by some inhabitants of this privileged area of the city, leaving as a result eight indigenous people and two other citizens injured. Two versions of this situation were presented: that of the inhabitants of the area who, as reported in the newspaper El Tiempo, "denounced that their homes had been looted and that at least four people who confronted the horde were attacked with knives and sticks" (Al menos 10. . . 2021, p. 1. 3, our translation) and, on the other hand, that of the indigenous people who, in a CRIC communiqué (2021, as cited in At least 10. . . 2021, p. 1. 3, our translation) stated that "The Mingueros were attacked by a mob together with the force. at the foot of the road". In response to the events, the CRIC (2021), denounced to the public that:

> On the occasion of the national strike, racism has been appealed to disqualify the presence of indigenous people in the city of Cali, and the strategy has been used to generate fear and panic among the population with videos and fake news in which we have been used as the ones who have come to cause harm, when in fact we came 7 days ago to show solidarity with the most impoverished population, who were already being massacred and victimized for participating in the national strike. (CRIC 2021, para. 3, our translation).

It is noteworthy that the situations of stigmatization and racism evidenced after this event, were motivated by hate speech promoted from the beginning of the protests by different sectors of economic and political power in the country on their social networks; an example of this were the statements of the then Vice President Martha Lucía Ramírez (quoted by Vladdo, 2021, s. p, our translation) who wrote on her Twitter account: “They tell me that it costs approximately $1 billion a day to hold the minga that arrived in Cali. Who is behind their financing? What profitable activity allows for such liberal spending?” Evidently, the tone of this type of comment promotes a negative perception towards the Minga in particular and towards indigenous communities in general, which seeks to generate fear and encourages violent reactions based on fear. As Jorge Iván Ospina, Mayor of Cali, mentioned at the time (2021, cited in Cuatro Preguntas. . . 2021, p. 1. 5, our translation), “people imprisoned by insulting comments on social networks, where they pointed out that the minga had been committing acts of vandalism, had an absolutely criminal reaction. . . and this has broken a relationship that must be healed.” One of the most worrying aspects of this fact is that the Minga was attacked by armed civilians from privileged sectors. As noted in Miranda (2021, para. 3, our translation), there is evidence that this attack was premeditated.

> With white shirts and vans, groups presented themselves that called on the neighbors of different neighborhoods of southern Cali on Sunday to defend their properties against the advance of an indigenous caravan known as the Minga. . . the mayor of Cali, Jorge Iván Ospina, said that he does not know who the people who shot. . . 'We know that they were armed men, with high-value vans and dressed in white.’

The seriousness of this fact led the Minga to leave the city of Cali a few days later; however, as stated by Aida Quilcué, (2021, as cited in Indígenas abandonan Cali. . . 2021, p. 1. 5, our translation), then national coordinator of the CRIC, leaving the city did not mean the withdrawal of the indigenous people from the strike but rather their repositioning “In a territory that allows us to stay longer”, situation that reveals the difficulties faced by indigenous communities to have their needs recognized by a State that shows clear manifestations of ethnic and racial violence, violence that, considering what was stated in the report submitted by the CIDH (2021) to the Colombian State, refers to “any action or behavior based on ethnic and racial origin that causes stigmatization, exclusion, or any type of violence, directly or indirectly” (CIDH, 2021, p. 17, our translation). In this regard, within the framework of the protests, the CIDH:

> received with concern testimonies from members of indigenous peoples in the department of Valle del Cauca about the serious effects on their communities, both by the death of their traditional authorities or leaders, and by the attacks against them. . . it also received information about attacks, acts of intimidation, harassment and stigmatization committed by civilians, linking these peoples to the demonstrations recorded in Cali. (CIDH, 2021, p. 18, our translation).

According to information provided to this commission by various ethnic organizations, during the protests there were 50 cases of attacks against members of the Minga, two deaths, three physical attacks, 159 harassments and 21 alleged victims of attacks against members of their communities. For this reason, in its report, “The Commission reiterates its concern at public expressions stigmatizing ethnic demonstrators and recalls the duty of the State to prevent and combat practices of direct and indirect racial discrimination, as well as to make comprehensive reparation. to victims” (CIDH, 2021, p. 18, our translation).

4 Discussion

The recognition of the indigenous Minga and its impact during the days of protest by proposing alternative forms of organization, dialogue and authority, by questioning and reversing, even temporarily, the symbols of power, by renouncing the silencing and segregation to which the indigenous communities in the country have been relegated, and by putting themselves at the center and

playing a leading role, showing other forms of mobilization, protest, occupation of public space and the construction of collective memory and identity, make possible multiple sides of the discussion. decolonial theory to the understanding of these events.

For Aníbal Quijano (2014), a referent of the so-called decolonial turn, the patterns of colonial domination are based on an ethnic and racial classification of the world population, a classification that continues to operate in many areas of the material and subjective existence of peoples both in social and daily life, despite the fact that the stage of colonialism is supposed to end after the end of colonial administrations and the creation of nation states. According to the author, “in America, the idea of race was a way of granting legitimacy to the relations of domination imposed by conquest” (Quijano, 2000, p. 123, our translation). The imposition of this idea as an instrument of domination led to the fact that the conquered peoples were placed in an inferior position, not only with regard to their phenotypic features, but also mental and cultural, which includes their knowledge and ways of life (Quijano, 2000, p. 123, our translation). This situation persists to the present day and can be seen in situations of violence, discrimination and stigmatization, such as those referred to above, including the differential indicators of poverty and inequality of the country’s indigenous communities, as an expression of structural violence dating back more than five centuries. Coloniality is based on the mythical metarelate of modernity, a Eurocentric construction that “thinks and organizes the totality of time and space, the whole of humanity, based on its own experience, placing its historical/cultural specificity as a superior and universal reference pattern” (Lander, 2000, p. 23, our translation). From this point of view

> The other forms of being, the other forms of organization of society, the other forms of knowledge, are transformed not only into different, but into deficient, archaic, primitive, traditional, pre-modern. They are located at an earlier moment in the historical development of humanity, which within the imaginary of progress emphasizes its inferiority. (Lander, 2000, p. 10, our translation).

In this regard, it is possible to understand the origin of the attitudes of violence and intolerance on the part of certain citizens of privileged sectors against members of indigenous groups who claim to exercise some kind of authority in a territory other than their own, who dare to remove their icons, or who question the official history which portrays as heroes and saviors those peoples recognized as genocides and executioners, which clearly shows that history is different if it is told by the victors, or if it is told by the vanquished (Santos, 2019), and that therefore, there is a hegemony of history and memory that can be disputed from acts like those analyzed, which respond to long processes of reflection and popular and community organization.

4.1 Demonumentization

The knockdown of statues during the strike prompts us to reflect on the place occupied in Colombian public spaces by figures considered heroic, directly linked to colonialism and independence, and particularly reflects the social prestige enjoyed by male, military and warrior figures in our society. Torsos and busts of conquerors, founders and heroes of independence, generally recognized as the “fathers of the homeland”, abound in the public squares of the country, accompanied by their swords and horses. The strength of these references lies precisely in the fact that they go unnoticed by a large part of the population. In this sense, symbolic acts such as their overthrow are very significant, since they make them visible and open up processes of collective reflection on our past and our present.

However, this is not a phenomenon exclusive to the protests in Colombia, but a political trend that has been unleashed at a global level in recent years. As Badawi (2022, p. 12, our translation) points out, statues are mobile organisms, in the sense that “they are placed in a place in accordance with the dominant ideology. For the author, being mobile, the statues are usually moved, stored and even removed by government order without this generating the indignation unleashed at the knockdowns to which reference has been made. According to the author, this happens because in the first case “the same power that erected, the executive, is the same power that removed. The real problem seems to be when the erective power does not coincide with the removing power. ” (Badawi, 2022, p. 11, our translation) that is, when these same acts are carried out by a social movement and not by the state, it is when violent repression is unleashed.

The fact that the demolitions of monuments during the protest later spread to other cities and included figures such as Antonio Nariño, Francisco de Paula Santander or Simón Bolívar of republican and libertarian spirit, indicates “the boredom in the face of monumentalization itself, that which places on a pedestal as a milestone or urban reference – which is also moral in the end – to any person above others” (Badawi, 2022. p. 15, our translation). From this perspective, we are witnessing a historical moment of demonumentization that demands new referents, that intervenes and appropriates public space in different, diverse, ephemeral ways, where manifestations such as graffiti, performance, dance, music, noise and even silence show other ways of recognizing ourselves as political subjects and protagonists of our own history.

4.2 Colonialism and Patriarchy

The attacks against the indigenous Minga, which are mainly carried out by white men from privileged backgrounds, with a conservative tradition, with broad economic power, who claim to be defenders of their territories, mobilize the military forces of the State at their convenience and resort to actions that can be described as paramilitary in defense of their economic interests allow to show, as Constain states (2021, para. 2, our translation), that since independence, Colombian society has been struggling between “its republican and liberal institutions, based on the ideal of equality, and political, economic and cultural structures inherited from the Colony and marked by exclusion, privileges and the Creole myth of blood cleansing”. In this regard, as Silva states, (2021, para. 3, our translation):

> [...] since before Independence there was a violent insistence on a “stain of the earth” worn by all who were born in this plot. It has been worthy of study and unbelievable that, once the empire was banished, these armed elites were given up and installed with their airs of masters, colonialists, Aryans, predestined, escorted. They are macro-Colombians, yes, they have lived and resurrected with a sixth sense to shred all the urgent reforms that have been made in search of the political recognition of Colombians, who they have looked at with fear, with disgust, with sneer, and with disdain, and have prevented it from being clear that Colombia is not a practical problem, but a historical one.

The male protagonist related to the use of violence during protests points to the close relationship between colonialism and patriarchy. For Segato (2018, p. 19, our translation) it is fundamental to recognize that “the history of the State is the history of patriarchy,” as the author puts it. The heroic position of the Creole founder of the republican states, recognized as a subject of the homeland, “does not allow us to see that this is an insecure subject and therefore perfidious, cruel, violent and domineering [...] In his whitewashed role of patriarch, the criollo will punish everything that he perceives in contempt of his patriarchal law” (Segato, 2018, p. 42, our translation). In this line of thought, those who create disorder, disobey, who do not stand in their place, who speak, who denounce, who shout, who burst into complaints and renounce silence, produce great fear in those who benefit from the established order, and as a result, a disproportionate reaction of repression and violence is unleashed against them, all the more so when they are stigmatized as vandals, lazy, barbarian, backward, a mob, when they are not even recognized as fully human. In this regard, it is worth highlighting what Fanon (2015), for whom the experience of the Colony allowed us to establish what metaphorically calls a line of the human. On this line would be placed the white, Christian, heterosexual man and the other men and women who are meeting these conditions, especially whiteness. Below it, would be the black men, Native Americans, black, and the rest of the women.

> People who are above the human line are socially recognized in their humanity as human beings with the right and access to subjectivity, human/citizen/civil/labour rights. People below the human line are considered subhuman or nonhuman, that is, their humanity is questioned and therefore denied. (Fanon, 2010, as cited in Grosfoguel, 2018, p. 98, our translation).

It is therefore essential to consider that colonialism is, to the same extent as patriarchy, “one of the two modern Eurocentric modes of domination based on ontological deprivation, that is, on the refusal to recognize the integral humanity of the other” (Santos, 2019, p. 162, our translation). And in this sense, as proposed by Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel (2007), it is necessary to recognize, as proposed by the decolonial perspective, that the structures formed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries based on epistemic, racial and gender hierarchies, deployed by modernity as devices of domination, continue to play an important role in the present. The idea of inferiority based on race or ethnicity that assimilates the white with civilization and the non-white with underdevelopment and barbarism (Dusel, 2015), continues to justify the use of violence against those peoples who do not assimilate to the idea of

development based on the accumulation of capital, being that it is these same people who, from their multiple forms of resistance, offer alternatives to the dominant model of social organization, based on war, expropriation, dispossession and death.

5 Concluding remarks: by way of closure

The violent, clearly discriminatory and racist reactions by some sectors against members of indigenous communities in response to their participation in the National Strike are closely linked to the hate speech promoted by the ruling classes. This is not new, however, and it highlights the strong colonial imprint that sustains the Colombian social order, organized around the myth of racial superiority, from which indigenous peoples and their ways of living and perceiving the territory continue to be considered a threat to these power structures.

By proposing alternative forms of organization, authority, mobilization and memory, indigenous communities have managed to occupy a leading place in this “social outburst” resulting from the abandonment and silencing to which they have been subjected for centuries. With visible and forceful actions, the product of the collective reflection and action of several centuries of resistance, these communities compete for public space and question the hegemonic colonial structures, becoming political subjects with a high social impact, whose example, read from a decolonial perspective, invites the rest of the citizens, mainly from impoverished and subaltern sectors, to raise their voice and claim their dignity as subjects and as people, denouncing and making visible the conditions of oppression, discrimination, inferiorization, exclusion and violence to which they have been victims since the beginning of the Second World War. to this day.

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QUILLASINGA INDIGENOUS WOMEN: FOLLOWING FOOTSTEPS, WEAVING THE TERRITORY

MUJER INDÍGENA QUILLASINGA: SIGUIENDO HUELLAS, TEJIENDO TERRITORIO

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Abstract

This article highlights the role of the Quillasinga indigenous women in the recovery and transmission of their own knowledge, as practices of survival and cultural vindication of the Quillasinga[1] indigenous community in the Obonuco district of the municipality of Pasto (Nariño-Colombia). This visibility corresponds to the epistemological perspective adopted in the decolonial feminist debate, which posits the epistemic possibilities of female collectives based on the experiences of women as a place of resonance, interpellation and resistance against the culturally established mechanisms of oppresion in bodies, territories and epistemes. Through autoethnography, the article proposes the recognition of a disruptive way of articulating a counter-hegemonic bet, appealing to the discourse and knowledge of the Quillasinga indigenous community, that has historically been invisible, highlighting the role of leadership played by women and their capacity for empowerment, in the search for better ways of organizing themselves as an indigenous collective to protect their rights, traditions and territory.

Keywords: Decolonial Feminism, Community and Indigenous Feminism, Community Organization, Own Knowledge

1 Introduction

From the perspective of feminist epistemologies, and specifically Latin American feminisms, we propose to review the decolonial, community and indigenous feminist epistemologies theoretical contributions in relation to the categories of gender, race, power and knowledge, in order to relate them to the realities and concrete experiences of indigenous women of the Quillasinga people. Therefore, it is important to review the above, in the light of the recognition and validation of “others” epistemological, theoretical and methodological perspectives in the construction of knowledge, which enable the relational exchange between the knowledge of communities and the knowledge of academia. In this sense, Carvalho (2019) proposes the relevance of the traditional teachers’s knowledge, or those knowledgeable, to decolonize the thinking and open up to plurality and epistemic, ethnic and racial inclusion in academic practice within higher education and research, through the inclusion of those who are knowledgeable of indigenous, Afro-Brazilian, cimarrones, urban folk and other traditional peoples’ cultures, as teachers in universities to teach regular subjects.

From these theoretical-methodological approaches it is possible to establish binding dialogues between scientific knowledge and one's own, localized and contextualized knowledge, which historically have been invisible or subordinated by the Western hegemonic logic. Nevertheless, the debate surrounding the questioning of modern sciences also involves questioning the demand for universality and neutrality of the knowledge produced within academia. Thus, there arises a need to enable the incorporation of non-hegemonic indigenous knowledge and wisdom in academia, contributing, in this way, to the openness towards other possible worlds, in the encounter with the culturally diverse Other, and giving rise to shifts of thought and multiple reflections, which not only come from traditional epistemic fields, but also from critical thinking produced from the margins, global souths and feminist critical thinking. Key elements are the theoretical contributions of decolonial, community and indigenous feminist epistemologies, to approach the knowledge and understanding of the counterhegemonic stakes led by indigenous women. In this sense, it is possible to enunciate different places of decoloniality, from the voices of women historically silenced by the logic of patriarchal power and Eurocentric thought.

In the particular case of the context of the Quillasinga indigenous community of Obonuco, the counter-hegemonic bet is instituted from the practice and strengthening of one's own knowledge, as a device for the construction of situated knowledge, with respect to the vindication of the indigenous and reconfiguration of the feminine in the face of patriarchy and hegemonic knowledge. This implies that the original peoples cannot be taken as objects of knowledge, but as subjects of knowledge. Hence, the approach of Carvalho (2019) is significant when he states that the processes of transmission of knowledge of traditional peoples are generally based on orality,

[1] Native people belonging to Nariño, one of the 32 departments of Colombia and which is located in the southwest of this country. The Quillasinga indigenous community has mainly settled in the municipality of Pasto, the capital of Nariño. The district or territorial division of Obonuco is formed by the partialities of Obonuco, Gualmatán and Jongovito. According to the population census (2022), carried out by the Colombian Ministry of the Interior, there are approximately 57 communes and 20 families in Gualmatán, 198 communes and 82 families in Jongovito, and 2,569 communes and 469 families in Obonuco. Its main economic activities include small-scale farming, handicrafts and the breeding of minor species.

listening and continuous daily practice, which enables the conception of the individual as an active subject of knowledge. Based on this theoretical approach, we propose the application of the basic category of otherness to the Latin American reality, where the otherness of knowledge emerges from a geopolitics of knowledge with global reach (Dussel, 1991).

In short, the bet for otherness proposed by Dussel aims to articulate a situational hermeneutics of otherness with the situation of the Other from the knowledge base, an otherness respectful of the other and committed to the recognition of the need to build a socially responsible knowledge. In accordance with the foregoing, the aim of the study is to highlight the role of indigenous Quillasinga women in the rescue and transmission of their own knowledge, as practices of survival and cultural vindication of the Quillasinga community of Obonuco. To achieve this, the autoethnographic method was used, as a methodological option of working in the territory, which transcends the personal narrative to anchor it to a context and a history, and which, for the purposes of this study, is configured in a bet to "(re)know ourselves and have a strategic point of view to focus on the re-construction of our experience as women and the re-appropriation of our territories (. . .)" (Marchese, 2020, pp. 292-293).

In this sense, an auto-ethnographic exercise was proposed based on the methodological paths that have been developed under the premise of "let oneself be affected" proposed by Favret-Saada (2012, p. 437), who argues that, in order to know and understand how people create and recreate the world they inhabit, it is necessary to transform oneself by the logic of the interlocutors, as a methodological tool of fieldwork and as a central dimension that goes through the research process. Although as a researcher I was part of this world and was affected by gestures, sensations, emotions, looks, dialogues of knowledge, feelings and thoughts —which give meaning to the events of everyday life — it is necessary to mention that I was, but inhabiting it from a particular place, assuming myself as a Colombian researcher, of mixed race with indigenous ancestral roots, who develops her research process of doctoral training in indigenous feminism, that is, from my place of inquiry as a woman who researches with other women. not to other women.

2 Decolonial Feminism

From the epistemologies of the South reference frame, the perspective of decolonial feminisms in Latin America is founded, which has, as its starting point, the recognition of the life experiences of the "Others" subordinated to the hegemonic Eurocentric feminism (Bidaseca, 2010). In the same vein, Bidaseca & Jingting (2020) enunciate the "Other" marginalized voices that express experiences in the context of Third World countries and experiences of colonialism and patriarchy. According to Bidaseca (2022, p. 44) "feminist epistemologies showed the strong idea that knowledge is incorporated, embodied, we can say, embedded". This is how the discussion about patriarchy and its imposition on women's bodies, nature and feminized bodies emerges, which is configured into a possibility to use it as a tool of struggle, dispute and confrontation of the discourse of academia. In addition to the above, Carvalho (2019) proposes that the mechanisms of knowledge transmission of indigenous peoples integrate reason, emotion, intuition and sensation, as opposed to Eurocentric thinking that focuses on the function of thinking, which can be instituted as a bridge of knowledge.

And it is precisely the notion of feeling-thought from the interstice proposed by María Lugones, which underlies this category as a "modality of situational thinking of localized bodies" (Bidaseca, 2021b, p. 9), with the conviction to undo and unlearn the grammars of power in order to replace them with an "erotic poetics of relationship". In a complementary way, Bidaseca, Aragão & Costa (2020) proposes the concept of ecofeminisms, to approach the body-territory interaction from the perspective of situated knowledge, and suggest that these are constructed as political collectives, creators of new knowledge and action strategies to advance the environmental struggles from a situated feminist perspective. Within the process of decolonizing the knowledge, we highlight the work of Argentine activists such as María Lugones (2021) and her valuable contributions to feminist struggles and searches from colonialism and gender, highlighting her metaphor of pilgrimages, which theorizes the poetics of feminist political coalitions from the South against multiple oppressions.

Also it is from these feminist epistemologies of the South that it is possible to rethink positions in relation to possible worlds that can be created in the knowledge-power relationship and build on this situated knowledge. Therefore, the current rise of women's empowerment has been instituted as a response to the power relations of the patriarchal order, and as a bet on the actions of the subjects, in the face of the structures that generate and maintain gender discrimination and social inequality (León, 1997). Therefore,

it is essential to adopt the contributions of community and indigenous feminism, which are instituted as new forms of social coexistence, based on the ancestral principles of the indigenous worldview to dismantle the capitalist economy (Gutiérrez, 2011).

3 Communitarian and Indigenous Feminism

Communitarian feminism is configured as an epistemic alternative that takes up the concept of community as a transforming political body, to get out of the hierarchical dichotomous relationship between men and women (Paredes, 2017). In this sense, the author considers it necessary to establish the horizon from which the struggle is situated, that is, an analysis that allows the recovery of the bodies, the stories and the proposals of the future (Paredes, 2013). According to Paredes (2015) and Cabnal (2010b), communitarian feminism rescues the body-territory metaphor of the indigenous feminist community women of Abya Yala. In this sense, it is possible to experience the body as a field of resistance, of the body and its powers. Hence, it is important to investigate the forms of resistance of women in the past, to enable political participation in the present with transformative potential (Paredes, 2006).

Related to the above, indigenous feminism is instituted in an epistemic bet that promotes the defense and recovery of the land-body territory (Cabnal, 2010a). From this category, the body is established in the first place of enunciation, the place to be healed, emancipated, liberated (Cabnal, 2010, as mentioned in Gargallo, 2012, p. 150). Together with the place of enunciation of the body, Lugones (2008) states that understanding the place of enunciation of gender in the original peoples denotes the importance and magnitude of gender in the disintegration of communal and egalitarian relations, of ritual thinking, of authority, the collective decision-making process, and of the economy. In this regard, this author argues that indigenous women resist the dichotomy and distortion of the concept of complementarity by the colony, but indigenous women also recognize that complementary duality is the most important use and custom. Nevertheless, they express their resistance to questioning such an important notion of origin, through the sense of empowerment they have built, in the face of gender inequalities in the community organization of their contexts.

4 Community Organization: Good Living Practices

Related to the above, Walsh (2009) proposes the approach of practices of survival and cultural vindication, implies the construction of knowledge from the various manifestations that institute these practices and the different ways in which they are constructed, highlighting the horizon proposed in the Manifesto for Good Living (2021), which affirms that there can be no good living without justice, which calls to listen to the voices of those who live in the territories, especially indigenous women who have historically been silenced by the logics of colonial power. Good Living is a historical concept of the ancestral wisdom of the original peoples, which denotes, organizes and builds a system of knowledge and systems of life, based on the common harmonious interaction between human beings and nature. This notion is part of the worldview and cosmology or philosophy of the indigenous peoples of Abya Yala.

Following this line of thought, the concept of Good Living — incorporated in the 2019 Obonuco village of Life Plan — is understood as “a multidimensional way of organizing and living life by local communities, taking into account their histories, identities, heterogeneities, autonomy, rights and collective commitments for social transformation” (Alcaldía Municipal de Pasto, 2019, p. 10, our translation). Based on this reference framework, the life plan (Alcaldía Municipal de Pasto, 2019) establishes the processes of community organization of the Quillasinga people of Obonuco. Consequently, through assemblies, cultural workshops, meetings and exchanges of knowledge, thoughts and words, tours of the territory, community pots, ecological days, cultural and sports events, among other collective spaces, the aim is to recover collective memories, social appropriation of knowledge, social cohesion, dialogue of knowledge and community empowerment.

From this context of enunciation, personal and collective empowerment has been configured, such as those spaces of encounter, recognition, dialogue and collective construction (Carmona, Govela & Velásquez, 2017). In this regard, it is pertinent to approach the concept of empowerment from the perspective of Durston (2000), who conceives it as the process that develops or enhances the authority and decision-making ability of the group itself that is the protagonist of its empowerment, and not in a higher entity that confers power over others. That being so, the concept of the empowerment of indigenous Quillasinga women is based on a commitment to reclaim the ancestral legacy of indigenous women and to build a place for their enunciations in the collective arena. This calls for a broader view of inter-ethnic, intercultural and territorial feminisms, with the thought-provoking spaces for promoting and continuing the community processes that have been developed.

5 Mingas of Thought: Walking on the Minga

Thought mingas are collective spaces conducive to otherness, by allowing encounter, listening and negotiated communication with the Other, as well as being recognized as spaces for co-reflection, co-construction and discursive vindication, which enable the mobilization, empowerment and experiential interaction of the community. Thus, the thought mingas are established as the preferred setting for having a diversity of versions on a given topic of reflection and seeks to refresh thought, starting from the different experiences and capacities of those who participate in them (Guambia Indigenous Reserve, 2008). In the dynamics of the Quillasinga indigenous community of the Obonuco district, these spaces to mingle, that is, to reflect and share knowledge and experiences, have focused on the approach of their own knowledge, essentially related to fabric, oral, ancestral medicine and festivities, as a form of reorganization, resistance and struggle for the defense of the territory and the preservation of its cultural identity (Cabildo Obonuco from the People Quillasinga, s. f.).

6 Own Knowledge: Surviving the Quillasinga Thought

The frame of reference for practices of survival and cultural vindication is self-education, which is defined as a comprehensive teaching-learning process that is constructed and validated by each indigenous people, is concretized in their respective life plan and is promoted by the family nucleus, the educated and the elderly in general (Sistema de Educación Indígena Propio, 2013). In this regard, it should be noted that the Quillasinga indigenous community of Obonuco has created community spaces for self-education, which have been important in raising awareness of the role played by women in the practice of their own knowledge, such as arts and crafts workshops, cultural festivals and, in particular, thought mingas, which have been instituted as part of the community strategy for the recovery of cultural identity, aimed at teaching and learning about customs, indigenous thought and ancestral memory, among others. As a general characteristic of the community, it should be mentioned that there is an interest in rescuing its cultural identity and respect for the multicultural richness of this territory. In this way, this community has continued the process of recovering and strengthening its cultural identity through tissue, oral practice, ancestral medicine and traditional festivities, among other cultural elements.

6.1 Knitting: from the Guanga[2]

Bidaseca (2022, p. 35, our translation) states that:

> Writing, cinema, singing and weaving as artistic manifestations are the reiteration of an action that allows us to heal from colonial trauma. The action materializes in the warp of social identity creating a new narrative (third space) that contradicts the Western narrative.

Thus, when referring to one's own knowledge, it is essential to emphasize the importance of the fabric in decolonization processes, especially in community processes. In this sense, the fabric evokes the ancestral memories transmitted by the male elders and female elders[3] from generation to generation, highlighting the place that women occupy in this process, since this work is linked to their feelings and knowledge, for the transmission of this knowledge to men and women on equal terms, in accordance with the Andean principle of complementarity (Figure 1).

[2] Ancestral loom through which the elders weave clothing items, accessories, among others, according to needs and context. Woven fabrics can be made from sheep's wool or yarn.
[3] Men and women who represent the pillars of the survival of culture, as they possess ancestral knowledge and transmit it through oral tradition.

Fig. 1: Weaving meeting of the leaders and elders of the Quillasinga of Obonuco. Taken during a Weaving meeting of the leaders and elders of the Quillasinga of Obonuco [Photograph]. Source: Rosero, 2023. Own elaboration.

Through the knitting using the guanga, the role of women leaders in collective meetings is highlighted, highlighting the role of Quillasinga women in the preservation of cultural identity as Quillasinga and the defense of the territory. Referring to this last aspect, Bidaseca et al. (2020) state that this process incorporates a number of non-human entities and forces of nature, with whom the indigenous peoples establish relations of exchange, communication and reciprocity. Hence the direct relationship between indigenous women and the guanga fabric, since the fabric draws on the memory of older women, who are responsible for transmitting this knowledge intergenerational. In addition, the guanga fabric symbolizes the empowerment of indigenous Quillasinga women, who are present in all organizational processes at the levels of administration, education, justice, culture and political participation, among others. In addition, it is an ancestral practice that also represents the social fabric, with women being responsible for sharing this knowledge in the community.

6.2 Orality: In the Footsteps of Taitas and Mamas[4]

Orality is creation from the word, it is a dynamic intersubjective process of symbolic production from the sensible. In the words of Morin (1986) he mobilizes his own symbolic imaginary, which allows the individual to create or recreate it from the concept of mythopoiesis or the capacity to create myths. From mythopoetic thought, symbols are woven to construct stories or narratives, being this the context from which the social fabric is constructed and the knowledge that is born of the territory is transmitted, through myths, legends, tales and stories. Hence, oral transmission is immersed in the fabric and practices of daily life, which enable the intergenerational transfer of knowledge in the territory, which necessarily implies the rescue and survival of the knowledge of the elders, that is, it is a strategy to preserve ancestral memory, disseminate one's own knowledge, keep the word, strengthen the generational bond, listen to the learned (Cabildo Obonuco del Pueblo de Quillasinga, s. f.). In the cultural process of rescuing historical memory, through the oral narration of the elders, the participation of women in the practices of their own knowledge becomes vitally important, since their role as caretaker of the family allows them to be in charge of the oral transmission of the ancestral inheritance in the tulpa[5]. In the same way, its place of enunciation as transmitter of knowledge, extends to collective spaces such as the mingas of knowledge, the community assemblies, the tours of the territory, the chagra[6], among others (Figure 2).

[4] Knowers who possess the knowledge of the power of nature and make use of it through the properties of medicinal plants. They're the community counselors.

[5] Space of the home that is considered sacred to the original peoples. It is a stove composed of three rectangular stones fixed on the ground, which serves to cook food and create a space for sharing thoughts and words around the fire.

[6] Space of land or home garden in which the older ones grow food, in different varieties and times. In addition, it is the place where the plants used in traditional medicine are grown. Orchard (Translator addition).

Fig. 2: Community meeting for the oral transmission of knowledge. Taken during a Community meeting for the oral transmission of knowledge [Photograph]. Source: Rosero, 2023. Own elaboration.

6.3 Ancestral Medicine: Harmonizing the Soul, Harmonizing the Body

Traditional medicine is an ancestral practice and the transmission of their own knowledge, widely recognized by the indigenous peoples, which is practiced by the taitas or greater experts through the use of medicinal plants, whose healing power comes from the good practices and good use made by the taitas. In this connection, indigenous women play an important role in this healing process through ancestral medicine, since they are the caretakers of medicinal plants and those responsible for transmitting their knowledge about plants to the communities (Cabildo Obonuco del Pueblo de Quillasinga, s. f.). There is a direct relationship between the land and traditional medicine, and women are given priority as caretakers of the land and contact with the land and medicinal plants. This is consistent with the approach of Agarwal (1991) when he states that the bond some women feel with nature stems from their gender responsibilities within the family economy, such as gardening, firewood gathering and other activities related to the territory (figura 3).

Fig. 3: Community meeting for the practice of ancestral medicine. Taken during a Community meeting for the practice of ancestral medicine [Photograph]. Source: Rosero, 2023. Own elaboration.

6.4 Traditional Festivities: Payment to Mother Earth, Mojigangas and Ancestral Heritage

The traditional festivities of the indigenous communities today correspond to a set of practices of religious and cultural syncretism, since originally these festivities were held as part of the indigenous uses, customs and worldview; however, with the Spanish conquest and the process of evangelization, these festivities were merged with the Patronal Festivals of San Juan, San Pedro and San Pablo (Cabildo Obonuco from the People Quillasinga & Walter Malte, 1846-1985). Within the process of cultural resistance, the Festival of Offering and Payment to Mother Earth stands out because it contains cultural elements of great symbolic importance in the worldview of this indigenous people, such as the mojigangas dance, which represents the connection between human beings and Mother Earth (Figure 4). Historically, this dance has been performed exclusively by men, who dress in women's costumes and masks to make payment to mother earth, symbolically fertilizing her through their dancing, to the rhythm of traditional music with their own instruments such as the quena (a flute made of wood), the bass bombo (a type of drum) and the drum (Cabildo Obonuco from People Quillasinga & Walter Malte, 1846-1985).

Fig. 4: Dance of the mojigangas at the Feast of the Offering and Payment to Mother Earth of the year 2023 in the Village of Obonuco. Taken during a Dance of the mojigangas at the Feast of the Offering and Payment to Mother Earth of the year 2023 in the Village of Obonuco [Photograph]. Source: Rosero, 2023. Own elaboration.

7 Concluding remarks

In reflecting on the importance of openness towards other theoretical, epistemological and epistemic perspectives that enable the recognition of cultural diversity, emphasis is placed on the theoretical contributions of the perspective of feminism, which is configured as a valid place of enunciation — where the decolonization of feminism emerges in order to decolonize academia — in contrast to which Lugones (2012) proposes the intersectionality of racism and patriarchy, in order to consider the marginalized experiences of women who have not been represented by the discourses of feminism or the anti-racism. And it is precisely from this perspective of decolonial feminism that the construction of situated knowledge is possible, being powerful the approach of Haraway (1991) in suggesting the permanent revision of the place where knowledge is produced and making the reading of reality and of women from themselves, as a fabric of central care to build knowledge. In this way, an epistemic bet is set up, by providing spaces for reflection from the academic stage — as a stage of resistance — and by enunciating different places of decoloniality, from the voices of the subjects of feminism who have historically been silenced in the face of capitalism, territorial ordering, racism, sexism and other manifestations and effects of colonialism and power.

In enunciating other places from which the situated knowledge can be built, it is essential to make visible and validate the own knowledge that is reproduced from the ancestral, traditional, every day, local, collective and the dialogue that may be established between this knowledge and academic-scientific knowledge, in order to generate a relationship of mutual enrichment that enables epistemic inclusion. An interconnection of knowledge that points towards an intercultural relationship inspired by cultural diversity, cultural identity and good living as a philosophy of life in the Andean traditions, assumed as the harmonious and balanced relationship between human beings and nature and materialized in the Quillasinga community of Obonuco, in its community organization for the defense of its rights, traditions and territory. From this frame of reference and in the context of enunciating the practices of survival and cultural vindication of the Quillasinga people, the leading role of indigenous women in their territory was revealed, given the leadership role and empowerment capacity of the Quillasinga indigenous women in the context of the rescue of their own knowledge and the recovery of ancestral memories. This encourages the promotion of collective action practices, linked to their languages, communication practices and worldviews, which take the form of counter-hegemonic bets or alternative ways of constructing epistemic and methodically the recognition of diversity in the settings of cultural expression of indigenous communities.

The practices of the Quillasinga indigenous women are not only associated with the rescue and transmission of knowledge in the family environment, but also emerge from collective spaces such as the thought mingas, where epistemic, ontological decoloniality and cultural resistance emerge as mechanisms for the dynamic intersection of knowledge, for cultural exchange and enrichment from a critical perspective. From this place, languages emerge to weave, resist, transform and transform the relations of oppression, domination, exploitation, subordination of the Other and the devices that have been established culturally to reproduce the logic of domination over bodies, territories and epistemes, which is still valid given the asymmetrical relations that are presented in the dynamism of power and knowledge in everyday life. This approach is congruent with the decolonial critique or questioning put forward by thinkers such as Carvalho and Dussel, in their bets on an epistemology that is configured in the order of political, academic, ethical, social and cultural praxis, which makes it possible to restore the conditions of responsibility or ethics of knowledge, starting from the applicability of otherness and the question of thought situated from history, politics, ethics, which contributes to tensioning the hegemonic race-gender-power-knowledge equation.

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SABIÁS DIVINE: PATHWAYS FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH IN LINGUISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY

OS SABIÁS DIVINAM: VIAS DO SUL GLOBAL NA ANTROPOLOGIA LINGUÍSTICA

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Abstract

The poet Manoel de Barros dedicated a great part of his work pointing out the limits of rationalism and, through poetry, proposed insurgencies. Therefore, the first topic of this article intends to theorize about the intrinsic coloniality of classical/hegemonic studies of language arising from the Western and European tradition, with its imperialist and anthropocentric principles embedded and consubstantial with linguistics. The second and third topic deals with some of the proposals of insurgency approaches throughout the history of linguistic theory through linguistic anthropology in contact with indigenous languages. Addressing the deprovincialization of language from its eurocentric bias highlights the ontological axes of differentiation between linguistic natures in the Global South. Thus, this article aims to rethink and deepen anthropological and linguistic discussions across the Global South, using the qualitative analysis of bibliographies as its main met.

Keywords: Decoloniality, Theoretical linguistics, Linguistic anthropology, Global South

1 Introduction

When the Brazilian poet Manoel de Barros (1916-2014), a *boy from the woods*, wrote, he knew nothing, and only through the blessing of his ignorances was he able to achieve full *knowledge of the expository grammar of the land*[1].

> Science can classify and name all the organs of thrush but cannot measure its charms.
>
> Science cannot calculate how much horsepower there is in a mockingbird's charms.
>
> Anyone who accumulates a lot of information loses the ability to guess: divine.
>
> The sabiás divine.
>
> (BARROS, 1996, p. 53, our translation).

I reclaim that his poetic work serves as a call for linguistic reconsiderations of decolonization by the reality of the Global South, taking their knowledge and beings into language studies. Thus, seeking space in science for sabiás to divine, not tearing up old and rubbery practices, but renewing the sciences, just as Barros wrote: “I think of renewing man using butterflies” (Barros, 2022, p. 24, our translation). To enable the paths of poetic absurdity in scientific practice or as mentioned by Barros: “Unlearning eight hours a day teaches the principles” (2016, p. 15, our translation). All to contemplate “some words that do not yet have a language.” (Barros, 2016, p. 15, our translation), seeking to understand what Barros uses as the axis and articulator of a re-enchantment of words, “the delirium of the verb” (2016, p. 17, our translation). Thus, reiterating that linguistic science needs to have a cosmic openness to contemplate the fullness of the power of language outside of eurocentric parameters, I affirm with Manoel that: “only creeping things celestialize me” (1996, p. 31, our translation).

The methodology used in the development of this article consists of the qualitative analysis of bibliographies relating to linguistic anthropology in the Global South, as well as transversal themes, philosophy, linguistics, epistemic decolonization, indigenous languages, and the poetry of Manoel de Barros. In this regard, we bring epistemic approaches to be articulated, these being the deprovincialization of language, the axes of ontological differentiation, and ethnosyntax.

2 The coloniality of the being

How much of the prefiguration of what a human is and can be has affected and affects our conceptions of the language's power? Joana Pinto (2013) discusses the almost imperceptible dependencies that the prescription generates in the linguistic description within our Brazilian Portuguese and the consequences of colonial naturalization. The linguist writes that “[t]he boundaries between

[1] The italicized excerpts in the first paragraph refer to published books by the poet.

descriptivism and prescriptivism are blurred when hegemonic discourses about the Portuguese language are left untouched and the social categories used to support the alleged criteria of scientificity are not subjected to criticism." (Pinto, 2013, p.129, our translation).

According to Harris (1981), these undefined limits are due to the constant maintenance of myths about (and in) language by European colonial traditions through "two great instruments of European education, the grammar book and the dictionary" (Harris, 1981, p. 12, our translation). Such metalinguistic resources, according to Pinto (2013), have created and recreated "language effects" that legitimize themselves and propose to regulate linguistic delimitations. Both in the languages of the colonized people of the Global South and in the languages of the colonizers of the Global North (Errington, 2001; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Mignolo, 2003; Quijano, 2005).

Makoni and Mashiri claim that "Dictionaries, during the colonial era, were part of a process that encouraged Africans to internalize European epistemology about themselves, creating a new vision of their current affairs and superimposing new values on their past." (2007, p. 77, our translation). Going even deeper, Makoni points out that "[t]he very notion of languages as distinct units, or 'boxes', is a product of European positivism reinforced by literacy and standardization" (2003, p. 141, our translation). However, the consolidation of human sciences, like linguistics, occurred concomitantly with the increase of invasions and cultural rapes of colonization, and together with the internal geopolitical movements in Europe of heterogenization of its nations (Errington, 2001; Mignolo, 2003; Camacho, 2010; Amorim Filho, 2023).

It is not, however, exclusively within the scope of establishing and defending a prescriptive norm that the ideological process tends to interfere in the domain of language. The theory of language can itself be based on certain fundamental values, which rely on the limits of ideological content and present, in this case, a curiously normative character, even if it rejects it at first. If, in fact, we try to evaluate the contribution that linguistics made to changing this conception, the results do not go beyond the line of the alleged criterion of scientificity, through which it is common to oppose linguistics to normative grammar based on the descriptivism/prescriptivism dichotomy. (Camacho, 2010, p. 143, our translation).

Michel Foucault, in his famous debate with linguist Noam Chomsky (2015), spends much of his rhetoric demonstrating that there was an archetypal necessity imposed by the metaphysical conditions of rationalism in "scientific conditions". However, going beyond this philosophical current, such self-imposed need went below the radars of several later philosophical criticisms, as well as much earlier philosophies, when the formal study of grammar also took place, a proto-linguistics, whose study of "should be" or "ideal" as stated by Marcos Bagno (2016) and Bárbara Weedwood (2002) were the core that everything else orbited. According to Foucault, it was in the bourgeois model that the symbol of the proletarian utopia of communism was projected (2015, pp. 54-55), just as the symbol of decolonial utopia can be projected in the colonial model. There lies the danger. Using colonial instruments, colonial data, colonial metalinguistic resources, even with decolonial intentions, the specter of what fostered the formal organization of the study of grammar in the Hellenic world is constantly hanging over science.

In his work *On the Way to Language* (2003), the German philosopher Martin Heidegger deals with the ontology of language, indicating that it is intertwined with the most essential part of human ontology. For him, "language itself is language" (Heidegger, 2003, p. 8, our translation) and this is not a tautology, but the fact of the singularity that its nature presented. Language, for the philosopher, is neither about "expression" nor about human "activity", but about the very conduit of the realization of reality and, therefore, "language speaks" (Heidegger, 2003, p. 14, our translation).

In short, "if the only way to talk about language is through language, wouldn't it, therefore, have some interference in the understanding of itself and its essence?" (Gruber, 2023, p. 28, our translation). In this struggle to seek the essence of language, Heidegger declares himself incapable of finding a conclusion, but, therefore, aims for a path towards it. So, by postulating that "it is the word that grants being to things", he coins his famous sentence: "language is the house of being" (Heidegger, 2003, pp. 126-127, our translation). That is, what touches us "in the most intimate articulation of our presence", since, for Heidegger (2003, p. 121, our translation), even any theorization, expression, implementation, and affection about the living experience of being human, its essence or pragmatic, depends on language and its essence.

However, in the third chapter of his work, the European philosopher recounts a crossroads he encountered when entering into a deep dialogue with a scholar and native speaker of the Japanese language about the concept of the "house of being" and the translatability of ethos and cultural essences. One can easily see the limits and abysses between their languages, their "houses" of heterogeneous natures. It is said that "if, through language, man lives in the claim of being, then we Europeans, apparently, live in a totally different house" (Heidegger, 2003, p. 73, our translation). But just mentioning this is not enough, there is a laconic discussion throughout Heidegger's work and life that compromises him. Their lack of perception and interest in the coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Mignolo, 2003) presupposes a universe of beings that are structurally asymmetric in their powers, cultures, knowledge, and bodies.

Frantz Fanon (2008) states: "to speak is to exist absolutely for the other" (Fanon, 2008, p. 33, our translation), and a tremor occurs, as the tectonic plate from which ontological certainties about language were raised is greatly displaced. A new axis is revealed. When Molefi Kete Asanti (1988) says that "All language is epistemic" (*as cited in* Gonzalez, 2018 [1988], p. 78, our translation), Linguistic Anthropology awakens a new way of thinking about these sciences. Fanon explains that:

> The black Antillean will be whiter, that is, he will get closer to the real man, to the extent that he adopts the French language. We don't disregard that this is one of man's attitudes towards Being. A man who possesses language possesses, in return, the world that this language expresses and that is implicit to him. (Fanon, 2008, p. 34, our translation).

If language is the home of being, colonization would enable the invasion and occupation of these homes and even their destruction. The need to appropriate the language of the colonizer while serving as a white mask over the black skin of the colonized reiterated and reiterates its place in the zone of non-being of racialized people in the Global South, as stated by Gabriel Nascimento dos Santos (2023). This is reminiscent of the powerful discussion that bell hooks (2008) raises based on a poem by Adrienne Rich who writes: "This is the language of the oppressor, yet I need it to speak to you", which leads hooks to reply: "Like desire, language breaks, refuses to be enclosed in borders" (hooks, 2008, p. 857, our translation). And in what seems to agree with the intimate relationship between the ontology of language and being, she continues, "it itself speaks against our will in words and thoughts that intrude, even violate the most secret spaces of the mind and body" (hooks, 2008, p. 857, our translation).

For Maldonado-Torres (2008), the visceral hamartia that led Heidegger's ontological philosophy to endorse the epistemic racism of Nazism was the oblivion of the geopolitics of knowledge, the topology of beings and the coloniality of powers, all intertwined. Likewise, the Puerto Rican philosopher mentions that not even among his greatest opponents of the time, such as the Jew Lévinas, was imperialist logic transcended. According to Hardt and Negri, the Empire "is fundamentally characterized by the absence of borders", always aiming for "a regime that effectively encompasses the entirety of space" (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 14, our translation). Thus, when thinking about a single homogeneous plane extended to all beings, known or not, it becomes impossible not to have a decantation process that establishes vertical hierarchies between beings, thus enabling projects of selective sacrifice of the most irrelevant layers. However, as we saw in Fanon (2008), there is an awakening in academic dens. Mignolo summarizes:

> Science (knowledge and wisdom) cannot be separated from language; languages are not just 'cultural' phenomena in which people find their 'identity'; they are also the place where knowledge is inscribed. And since languages are not something that human beings have, but something that human beings are, the coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge engender the coloniality of being. (Mignolo, 2004, p. 633 *as cited in* Maldonado-Torres, 2008, p. 89, our translation).

3 The deprovincialization of language

For Jan David Hauck (2023), the ontological turn (Holbraad & Pedersen, 2017) "challenges Western conceptual foundations, such as nature, culture, humanity or the notion of person, in the face of ethnographic realities from other places" (Hauck, 2023, p. 42, our translation) little was heard in Linguistic Anthropology. This fact is, at the very least, dangerous when recalling the epistemic weight that conceptions of language have in the formation of other concepts and sciences (Bauman & Briggs, 2003, p. 257).

Ethnographies have roused increasingly distinct ontological notions about language that challenge the postulates of classical linguistics and cause shivers in the hegemonic Intellectual Academy for disrupting centuries of colonial tradition (Hauck, 2023, p. 42).

To implement these data, Bauman and Briggs suggest the “deprovincialization of language” (Bauman & Briggs, 2003, p. 68), that is, ceasing the dependence on European assumptions, theories, and proposals in the representation of non-European experiences and concepts in academic practice (Chakrabarty, 2000; Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Pinto, 2013).

For Chakrabarty, such an understanding of what language is, or can be, has functioned as the “silent referent” upon which linguistic practices are evaluated, allowing amputated views of their integrality (Chakrabarty, 2000, p. 28). In line with this, Bauman and Briggs (2003) point out a form of consecration of structural and institutional inequalities through the twin processes of the ideological purification of language (where language is seen as autonomous in its representations and indexical traits with conceptions of humanity, nature and, social set). Added to all this is indexical hybridization, which makes language increasingly understood as the ways of speaking of “ideal” figures, that is, in the various elitist conceptions.

What Jan David Hauck (2023) proposes with great caution and humility is the condition that the decolonial proposals of the Global South are neither projections nor even antitheses, of the scientific-ideological theses of the Global North. The ontological dependence of the antithesis resides in the thesis it opposes. Strictly speaking, this points not to a denial of Northern science, nor to using its weapons to fight against it, but to the method of deprovincialization of language, in the face of the provincialization of Europe.

The efforts of various indigenous communities to fight to revitalize their languages at risk of extinction through forms of standardization and institutionalization based on concepts and conceptions of European language; several other communities that strived and continue to strive bravely to adopt the colonizer's language; Would this be a misrecognition, a mere “colonization of your consciousness”? Hauck (2023, pp. 47-49) escapes this naivety and states that there is a great difference in survival and resistance practices of communities that demand the life of the entire forest they are part of and the surrender to the Global North, the need and the imperial attack do not share the same foundation.

Makoni and Pennycook (2020) also reiterate that seeking an alternative vision of language also depends on constantly, and exhaustively, explaining what they are alternatives to, always bringing along the ghost of the Global North to every new path, making it almost always an internal debate from the North to the North. His exhortation culminates in the Global South “seek alternative forms of knowledge for renewal” of Anthropology (and) Linguistics (Makoni & Pennycook, 2020, p. 58, our translation).

4 The axes of ontological differentiation

Now, how to deal with indigenous languages in the Global South and Brazil, knowing their ontological weight as houses of being, the heterogeneity and coloniality of being(s), and the paths of language deprovincialization?

Thinking about ontological differences must be “first and foremost an invitation to pause” in linguistic anthropology, it is an invitation to “Abandon our a priori assumptions about what language is and remain open to language in another way”, taking into account that the assumptions “about the agency, subjectivity or materiality of the linguistic and human 'resources' involved” are provincial (Hauck, 2023, p. 63, our translation). What we point out here as being fully open to the experience of the absurdities and manoelesque[2] charms of the non-dissection of the charms of sabiás.

We don't propose a typology of language ontologies, but, recognizing the multiple ontologies, it is necessary to think about axes of linguistic ontological differentiation (Gal & Irvine, 2019; Hauck, 2023), paying attention not to the myriad but to the torsion point between the discussed ontologies. Some examples of how this can happen were also collected by Hauck (2023).

In the south of Chile, the *Mapuche* people are bilingual, usually speaking Spanish and *Mas cited inungun*, which have an asymmetrical relationship between them, making it a lack of respect to use Spanish in contexts such as rituals. This is because the *Mas cited inungun* language is, for the Mapuche people, coextensive with the newen, constitutive force of all beings (Course, 2011, 2018). The axes of ontological difference can be seen in its nomenclature, while Spanish is called *winkadungun* (*winka* refers to the invading

[2] Neologism to name what derives from Manoel de Barros and his poetics.

white people), *mas cited inungun* is not classified as the language of a group of humans, but the language/speech (*dungun*) of *mapu*, which is the land itself.

To say that language has its own “force” is not to personify it or deny that it can serve the speaker's intentions, but rather suggest that its excess or potentiality is of the same kind as, or continuous with, the essential force of which all things are manifestations. (Course, 2011, p. 796, our translation).

Course reflects that this asymmetry should categorize Spanish and Mas cited inungun as “fundamentally different types of things”, since the first is seen as a system of representation in signs of an arbitrary overview of the world, while the second is a constituent part of the world, going beyond human agencies and intentions (Course, 2018, p. 12). Therefore, “[the] two ‘languages’ do not come together at a higher level as different specimens of the same type (language), but must be understood as having different linguistic natures” (Hauck, 2023, p. 59, our translation), just like, Heidegger (2003) pointed out between German and Japanese.

Studying the Sakhas, people of Siberia, Ferguson reports that the words of their language are considered to have “a very real agentive power in the world” (2019, p. 22, our translation), as they are endowed with a type of guardian spirit called ichchi, which would be a spiritual essence such as exists in the lake, in the tree, in the fire, there would be the tyl ichchite (guardian spirit of language).

> This lively, or soulful, character of language, in turn, implies a certain relationship with the speaker; For the Sakha who hold this belief, language has both its own intrinsic power and the power that has been imbued in it by the speaker of the words; Acting in the world through language thus assumes certain agentive qualities. (Ferguson, 2019, p. 28, our translation).

In this way, for the Sakha nation, language is not just a technique used for and by human beings in talking about things and their states, but language itself is a being endowed with agentive interventions. Thus, it would be part of a “broader ontology that configures land, language, ancestors, and creatures that would understand such language as parts of an integral system” (Ferguson, 2019, p. 99, our translation).

> We may thus be faced with two axes of ontological contrast that intersect. On the one hand, the linguistic nature of language in general in these communities differs considerably from that in the West; on the other hand, different languages used in these communities may also be of different linguistic nature. I suspect that most often we will find multiple axes of differentiation within a given community, and elucidating their relationships requires careful analysis. (Hauck, 2023, p. 60, our translation).

Other cases that greatly contribute to the understanding of the plurality of axes of ontological differentiation are linked to the understanding of language as a substance, such as the Dogon nation, located in Mali, who understand words as one of the bodily fluids, which is located in the clavicle, and to be spoken they are heated in the liver, evaporated into the lungs, and expelled through the larynx and mouth. Meanwhile, in the interlocutor's ears, they are absorbed and re-condensed (Calame-Griaule, 1965, pp. 58-74).

Emanuele Fabiano (2015) researches people whose speech, in the format of songs, is also considered a type of fluid. Walker (2018), based on this research, comments on baau, a type of healing song for children victims of magic from spirits and other non-humans, among the Urarina people of the Peruvian Amazon. For healing to occur, Walker (2018) describes that someone experienced in baau must whisper into a bowl of liquid, such as breast milk, and when the words enter the body they “dye” the child's blood, thus relieving their symptoms. Thus, “words are considered subject to direct absorption by the body, rather than interpretation by the mind” (Walker, 2018, p. 16, our translation). Here there is a very relevant point: with both the Dogons and the Urarinas, words are not only endowed with fluid substantiality, but they have agentivity, strength, and a certain degree of soul autonomy (Calame-Griaule, 1965, p. 32; Walker, 2018, p. 16).

Something fundamental that the ontological turn needs to convey concomitantly with its epistemic turn (or as called by Maldonado-Torres (2008), decolonial turn), is to start from the perception of the maximum completeness of the reality studied, which inevitably implies realizing that the conception of ontology of language enter into larger “assemblies” of other internal ontologies, with their own dynamics (Kroskrity, 2018, p. 134), because linguistic understandings are inseparable from other understandings. Hauck (2023)

summarizes: “We cannot simply try to discover multiple ontologies of language while leaving the rest of our metaphysics intact.” (Hauck, 2023, p. 61, our translation).

In this regard, we can mention the work carried out by Durazzo and Bonfim (2023), where it is argued that areas of great multilingual contact are considered cultural areas by Amerindian Ethnolinguistics, where there is a typical wealth of linguistic exchanges between different trunks, such as the Upper of Rio Negro and Alto Xingu, have not taken into account areas where linguistic vitality has been maintained thanks to non-human beings, such as the Northeast. There, “enchanted masters” not only show their knowledge of indigenous languages, but have guaranteed its continuity (Durazzo & Bonfim, 2023, p. 130). Such languages are called enchanted languages, a category that brings the “ethnolinguistic recognition of different dynamics and native categories observed among the original people of the region, namely, their socio-ritual and cosmopolitical processes” (Durazzo & Bonfim, 2023, p. 131, our translation).

In Bruce Albert's famous ethnographic record of Yanomami cosmology through the voice of shaman Davi Kopenawa (2019), something constantly discussed is the highly divergent feature of the *Napë's* people language (white people) and *Teosi* (primordial ancestor who rejects the forest), as this is linked to Omama (primordial hero ancestor) and the *xapiris* (protective spirits of the forest).

For Kopenawa (2019), the language of the Napë is portrayed as the “word of goods”, which guide the mind and ethos of the invading people who have caused endless genocides against their people, while their language is constantly seen as consubstantial with the forest in which they live: “The white people might think that we would stop defending our forest if they gave us mountains of their goods. They are mistaken. (...). We would lose our own words and that would lead to our death.” (Albert & Kopenawa, 2019, p. 354, our translation). Discussing the effects of language, whether invasive or endemic, means always discussing the vitality of the Yanomami people.

The “phantom language” of the *napë* obstructs and dries up thoughts, which prohibits full existence (Albert & Kopenawa, 2019, pp. 226, 227, 353, 355). It is noted that the *Yanomam* language in connection with the forest, its spirits, and its Ancestor allows the full presence of its people and nation, and in an axis of ontological differentiation the language of its executioners “fails” such presence, which makes it a non-present presence, therefore, “ghost” (Albert & Kopenawa, 2019, pp. 227, 353, 354). Much could still be discussed about the xapiris language, which is also ontologically distinct from the *Yanomam* language.

What has been proposed so far is the possibility of accessing poetic experience through a decolonial turn in linguistics in coherence with the ontological turn. That is the permission that cosmopolitics brings to make everything participatory and dynamic in the cosmos. This poetic experience does not reside in processing several figures of speech simultaneously, but in experiencing them or at least allowing them to exist denotatively, thus breaking the scientific/poetic dichotomy. We have, as the poet Manoel de Barros says: made Nature “Get sick of us”, putting “affliction on the stones (As Rodin did).” (2016, p. 18). “*Things* no longer want to be seen by reasonable people: They want to be looked at in blue — Like a child that you look at from a bird.” (Barros, 2016, p. 18, emphasis added by the author, our translation).

Regarding this argument, Amorim Filho (2023, p. 107) writes that “[the] capitalocene is a consequence of the establishment of a regime of total objectification of the world. “Things” are understood as phenomena that persist and have static images.” Disseminating the conflicts of the dichotomy mentioned before (scientific/poetic), an even deeper point from which this root is summarized in what the author calls the “dictatorship of things” (Amorim Filho, 2023, pp. 107, 108, 111, our translation). The “thing” is a substantial part of the Cartesian program of science where reality is seen mechanically in axes of thing and movement, which unfold even in space and time, and in our grammar as a noun/subject and verb/predicate. However, when discussing polyrhythmic policies, it is argued that what differentiates the thing from the being in its static nature is nothing more than a fallacy that has found constant maintenance by the market power that governs geopolitics and social contracts.

Things are perfectly capable of becoming commodities. Buildings and mountains are things, they can be bought and sold. You can buy a bag of ice, but when it turns into a puddle, its market value disappears. In capitalism, the degradation of things serves the purpose of creating new things. Long duration is discarded in the name of manufacturing novelties, a logic that, ultimately, turns everything into profit or waste. (Amorim Filho, 2023, p. 108, our translation).

Something ironic arises when stating that the emergence of humanist theories takes place precisely in societies with the greatest power of slave regimes, which left an endless legacy of structural racism (Amorim Filho 2023, p. 108), which awakens Krenak's question (2019, p. 13) if it is worth fighting to be part of the club of what is called humanity. To say that the geological collapse of the planet is due to the human category, when referring to humanity only a tiny portion of capitalists with immeasurable destructive power can represent it, is hypocritical, to say the least. If, for Amorim Filho, the freedom of the "current scientific episteme" that disregards "the ethical equivalence of beings" must occur in the dissolution of the dictatorship of things by the "democracy of beings" that must be "widening the scope of the category of beings to diverse phenomena considered as things, recognizing their agencies and relativizing the supposed power of humans" (Amorim Filho, 2023, p. 108, our translation).

Krenak reiterates this principle when commenting: "When we depersonalize the river, the mountain, when we take away their senses, considering that this is an exclusive attribute of humans, we free these places to become residues of industrial and extractive activity" (Krenak, 2019, p. 49, our translation). In his work *Futuro Ancestral* (2022) it is said:

We have always been close to water, but it seems that we learn very little from the words of rivers. This exercise of listening to what water courses communicate produced in me a kind of critical observation of cities, especially large ones, spreading over river bodies in such an irreverent way that we no longer have almost any respect for them. [...] This grandfather-river of ours, called Rio Doce by white people, whose waters flow less than a kilometer from my house's backyard, sings. On silent nights, we hear his voice and speak with our river-music [...] We feel so deeply immersed in these beings that we allow ourselves to leave our bodies, this monotony of anthropomorphy, and experience other ways of existing. For example, being water and experiencing this incredible power that it has to take different paths [...] respect water and learn its language. Let's listen to the voices of rivers because they speak. (Krenak, 2022, pp. 9-16, our translation).

Buzato and Severo, commenting on this passage, write that "In this context, the status of what counts as language and communication is conferred on all entities that are validated as members of common life" (Buzato & Severo, 2023, p. 21, our translation). However, it is essential to note that the "democracy of beings" can fall into tremendous naivety if any attempt is made to establish any equalizing scale parameter.

> The serious implication of temporalities, occurrences, durations, and rhythms, in short, causes a different and even more comprehensive equalization between things, beings, and events of all nature. All things and beings are subject to transformations over time, but the understanding of this fact escapes us in everyday perception because we are immersed in our own temporal scale. If we consider the different scales, it is possible to conceive, for example, (on the geological scale) the "birth" of a mountain at the moment of its formation. (Amorim Filho, 2023, p. 109, our translation).

Possibly, the most relevant implication of the cosmopolitics that polyrhythms imply is to propose these "ethical-aesthetic alliances with other beings/events on different existential scales" (Amorim Filho, 2023, p. 111, our translation) to the point of shaking the Cartesian structure of perenniality static. But how can we now proceed when we notice that our own most basic categories of grammar reproduce and maintain Cartesian ideologies that relegate the category of things and movements, nouns, and verbal phrases to the described universe? How would it be possible in the process of theoretical linguistics to encompass such developments? How to operate in the face of the cosmos of indigenous languages that do not participate in the limitations and commitments that have shaped our conceptions of language, its ontology, and its naturally humanist, racist, and speciesist scientific organization?

5 The role of ethnosyntax/semantics of grammar for Brazilian indigenous languages

In his book *Memórias Inventadas*, Manoel de Barros (2009) writes a prose poem called *Gramática do Povo Guató*, where he recounts his encounter with the indigenous Rogaciano who teaches him the founding aspect of grammar "poorer in length and richer in essence", based on a single idea "[the] verbs serve to amend nouns".

And he gave examples: Bentevi spat on the ground. The verb spit connects bentevi with the ground. And more: The dog ate the bone. The verb eat spliced the dog into the bone. This is what Rogaciano explained to me about the Grammar of his people. He gave two more examples: Mariano asked: – Do you know how to make a canoe? – Danger Albano does. He responded. Rogaciano himself

didn't know anything, but he taught this speech without connectors, without a cane, without props to the kids. I think I liked listening to Rogaciano's nothings didn't know. And that not knowing made me curious to study linguistics. In the end, the Shaman of Guatós seemed to me to be as wise as Sapir. (Barros, 2009, p. 105, our translation).

Both Sapir (1956) and his student, Whorf (1979), marrying ethnography with linguistics, announced that “the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built upon the language habits of the group”, because “The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached”, thus “We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation”. (Sapir, 1956, p. 69)

When Barros (2009), also in his provocative poetics of the absurd, explains the function of verbs that amend names, he invites us to think about the limitation that our terminologies have in representing the whole of the Guató language, which projects in its translations poetic experiences that inspire him in his, self-styled, agrammatic that seeks to dethrone regency.

In the article *Pre-establish categories don't exist: consequences for language description and typology Haspelmath* (2007) invites theoretical linguists to realize that bringing pre-made conceptual boxes from one culture to analyze another compromises the data, as these boxes already included diverse assumptions and concepts.

Instead of fitting observed phenomena into the mold of currently popular categories, the linguist’s job is to describe the phenomena in as much detail as possible. A consequence of the non-existence of pre-established categories for typology is that comparison cannot be category-based, but must be substance-based, because substance (unlike categories) is universal. (Haspelmath, 2007, p. 119).

That is, proposing that language must have given grammatical categories of its language for it to be validated as a language is highly problematic. Enfield (2002) mentions that the culture of grammarians is constantly projected onto the languages described because the idea of language as a method of expression is still permeated rather than a way of ontological and epistemic connection to reality (Whorf, 1979; Mignolo, 2003; Gonzalez, 2018 [1988]). In such a context Anna Wierzbicka (1979, 1997) and Ken Hale (1966, 1986) began to formulate what was called ethnosyntax or semantics of grammar. Which would seek to extend itself to a “theoretical perspective that addresses the study of linguistic phenomena intrinsically linked to aspects of different societies”, which “revisits the postulates of Sapir and Whorf', stating that “without linguistic knowledge, the ethnographer would fail to understand of a culture” (De Paula, 2014, p. 107, our translation).

Such developments had an important impact on studies of Brazilian indigenous languages, and here I mention three works: the dissertation *Uma floresta de universos além: a decolonialidade e a etnossintaxe como dever para com as línguas indígenas* by Gruber (2023), where ethnosyntax is applied for analyzing Mehinaku descriptions. The book *A língua apyãwa (Tapirapé) na perspectiva da etnossintaxe* by Eunice Dias de Paula (2014), with one of the most detailed descriptions of the analysis process.

In her article *Os xerente akwén, os animais e as plantas: uma revisita aos inalienáveis com a semântica da gramática*, Silvia Lucia B. Braggio analyzes the relations of intrinsic inherence grammatically marked in various descriptions, this is customary in indigenous languages regarding body lexicon and kinship, however in a more funneled way for the akwén xerentes they reach perceptions about voice, sounds and feelings (Braggio, 2011, pp. 445-446).

The morphological marking of inalienation, treated in the three works, is in complete connection with his ethnography of life, thus creating a “grammatical semantic” class, with the participation of plants and animals in morphosyntactic constructions that index voices and feelings, which we do not infer metonymic, metaphorical or prosopopeic value. This implies that talking about the tree's pain (*wde=sɛki*), or that the petal would be the lip of the flower (*rɔm=nîrnã=sdawahɨ*) are not approximations, nor poetic borrowings of human characteristics.

Added to this factor, the semantic-social relationship of inalienation needs to be highlighted. The ontology of entities is established or manifested in their linguistic functionality when the use of inalienable categorization is noted. Such a word indicates the non-existence of what is referred to independently of belonging, something very defined. [...] In this, we affirm that *Imiehünaku* understands, feels,

thinks, and lives his home, his body, his social interactions, and with inalienable entities in a different way from the researcher who speaks a language capitalized by hegemonic science. The proposal to use body terminology for housing must go beyond mere prosopopoeia understanding, just as several people have expressed their desire for understanding beyond figures of speech. Considering the possibility of merging the language of animate entities with inanimate entities as a poetic or metonymic resource has led to a merely folklorized or primitivized understanding of indigenous realities. (Gruber, 2023, pp. 128-129).

This triggers an understanding that when describing *pãi talalaka-pi* as the ribs of the house (walls), *pãi-ʧa'na-ti* as the mouth of the house (door), *pãi-ʦewe* as the teeth of the house (beams), it is not about a connotative contribution, to the point of perceiving the relationship of the uterine idea in *pãi-jãku* which indicates a seclusion room that is culturally used as an environment where there is a form of gestation (seclusion) until birth for a new social function after the period (Gruber, 2023, p. 128). What can be proposed when analyzing morpho-semantic-syntactic elements is that they should indicate ontological characteristics of the nature of what they describe, having a profound relationship between how the ontology of the language expands or suppresses aspects of its axis of differentiation.

6 Conclusion

There is a primordial need to understand that the eurocentric metalinguistic apparatuses of grammar and dictionaries were ideological weapons on the prefiguration of linguistic ontology, and for the Global South to bring new proposals for epistemologies that go beyond the prisons that these can impose, we depend on a contribution that goes beyond the applied to theoretical linguistics, including linguistic anthropology. To reverberate the limits that science imposes on poetry, and that poetry imposes on science. It is not about measuring the charms of the thrush, as Barros (1996) warned, but rather allowing the sabiás to divine.

This article articulated an attempt to mend the colonial fracture between art and science by questioning the delimitation that the object of study of linguistics has had. To do so, we recover the intrinsically ontological and epistemic potential that any practice of/in language has and what its role has been in the dispute over the coloniality of knowledge and beings.

From this, we proposed to rethink language outside of the European provincialism that has epistemically monopolized the sciences, seeking the non-invasion of one ethnographic language ontology to another, we seek to move towards what Hauck (2023) named the search for axes of ontological differentiation to expand the realities of what language is in different cultures of the Global South such as the Mapuche, Sakha, Dongo, Urarina and Yanomami.

Finally, we propose methodological paths to deal with the description and analysis of languages from the Global South seeking a linguistic ethnography, and thus briefly present Ethnosyntax and its contributions to new linguistics.

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THE DECOLONIAL, TRANSCULTURAL AND NEOCULTURAL PROPOSAL IN GERMÁN ESPINOSA'S *LOS CORTEJOS DEL DIABLO*

LA PROPUESTA DECOLONIAL, TRANSCULTURAL Y NEOCULTURAL EN *LOS CORTEJOS DEL DIABLO* DE GERMÁN ESPINOSA

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Abstract

Historical novels have played a pivotal role in much of 20th and 21st-century Latin American literature. The issue of grappling with the past, its reconstruction, and transformation into narrative is a central element of *Los cortejos del diablo* (1970) by Germán Espinosa. This research focuses on demonstrating how the Colombian writer, through various technical and thematic processes, utilizes the colonial past as a space to generate knowledge about Latin American identity. This concern for identity extends to how colonial processes deeply impact the ethical and spiritual dimensions of colonized subjects. Consequently, we propose a methodology centered on decolonial theory, shedding light on traditions through concepts such as transculturation and neoculturation, which serve as a theoretical framework for analyzing the new ought to be.

Keywords: Literature, Colony, Colombia, Decolonial, Historical Novel

1 Introduction

Among the numerous literary representations of the colonial period in Latin America, Germán Espinosa's *Los cortejos del diablo* stands out as one of the most intriguing. Set in the 17th century, the Colombian work delves into the portrayal of colonial Cartagena amidst the early libertarian uprisings led by the Maroons. This context serves as a canvas where various characters interact: Juan de Mañozga, Catalina de Alcántara, Bishop Cristobal Pérez de Lazarraga, "the advanced one" Heredia, Pedro Claver, Rosaura García, and Luis Andrea. All accompanied by the choral apparatus hidden beneath the *us* representing the people of Cartagena.

Espinosa leverages the historical moment when different worldviews clash in the pluralistic Cartagena of the Colony, constructing a reflection on the implications of axiological confrontation. The methodology of this research focuses on contemplating different elements: culture, tradition, and the creation of identities. Above all, the unique dynamics in which the intersection of epistemologies aids in the rigorous analysis of complex social concepts: transculturation and neoculturation (Fernando Ortiz; Ángel Rama); and also in the literary realm: History and historiography (Hyden White). Thus, this research aims to answer the question: How does *Los cortejos del diablo* reflect on the processes of transculturation and neoculturation in the context of the Colony?

2 The New Historical Novel and the Decolonial Perspective

In *Los cortejos del diablo*, the relationship between the past, the narration, and the author is marked by the awareness that the past is a problematic space that needs to be revisited and retold. This revision is primarily driven by the understanding that History "It has been constructed as a narrative that was primarily biographical and political at the beginning", later evolving into "The narrative of the past, a treasure of the nation, [was] also tasked with sketching that future and consequently closing the time" (Blanco, 2017, p. 24). In this scenario, the historical novel faces a dilemma: "A historical discourse that narrates[1] and a discourse that narrativeizes, between a discours that openly adopts a perspective that observes the world and recounts it, and a discourse that pretends to make the world speak for itself and speak as a narrative" (White, 1992, p. 18). Both possibilities represent a particular way of understanding History. The discourse that narrates often views the past as a space for the detailed account of specific events, using a logic of links where each point in the chain is important because it has worked to solidify the present, enabling the arrival of a future of splendor. Such stance, following Moreno Blanco, is called teleological history.

On the other hand, the discourse that narrativizes opposes directly the construction of a chained, institutional, and progressive history, preferring a historiographical perspective in which the past is necessarily an open space ready for multiple revisions and semantic reinvention based on a polyphonic approach. We are not witnessing reproduction but the possibility; the apparent fidelity of teleological reconstruction is contrasted with the verisimilitude of the possible world. This specific way of narrating the past can be called literary historiography. Now, does *Los cortejos del diablo* fall into teleological history or literary historiography? In Espinosa's words: "It

[1]The verb narrates is chosen as the translation for the concept of "narrar", as it establishes the discursive vocation of recounting an event. On the other hand, narrativeizes implies narrative choices that determine how the fact is told.

happens that, through literary creation, the historical vision tends to, because that's how art is, become deeper, perhaps truer than that of the historians themselves" (Arango, 2006, p. 2). This is the process that takes place in works like *Memoirs of Hadrian* by Marguerite Yourcenar.

> The novelist does nothing more than interpret, through the techniques of their era, a certain number of past events [...] historical fiction, or what can be called so by chance, must unfold in a regained time, the taking possession of an inner world. (Yourcenar, 1982, p. 179)

To inscribe *Los cortejos del diablo* in literary historiography means that the past is a problematic place; it is necessary to revisit it through narration to give it new meaning. Thus, a direct opposition is built to institutional discourse, which, under the slogan of our history, plural and generalizing, hides complex processes of invisibility and exclusion. In contrast, the proposal of the inner world, apparently intimate and unitary, opens up the spectrum to a polyphony in which it is possible to coincide with the *us*.

What was mentioned in the previous paragraph becomes more explicit when we emphasize the historical period of the work: 1640, the military conquest of America has long been established, however, its institutions, politics, religion, education, justice, etc., in the New World fail to consolidate their power indisputably. The novel emerges as an intentional aesthetic quest towards the re-narration of colonial past, allowing the reevaluation of the discursive construction that Spain has built about its presence in America. According to Hyden White, such purposes are common in works like Espinosa's, in which this is

> Historical self-awareness, the kind of consciousness capable of imagining the necessity to represent reality as history, can only be conceived in terms of its interest in law, legality, legitimacy, etc. [...] every historical narrative has as its latent or manifest purpose the desire to moralize about the events it deals with. (White, 1992, pp. 28-29).

The moralizing vocation expressed by White is presented in the work at hand through the decolonial proposal.

In *Los cortejos del diablo*, we find the manifestation of a historical revision focused on how the processes of coloniality unfolded in America, placing special emphasis on which values are being represented, transmitted, and perpetuated. In this regard, Edward Said, in Orientalism, proposes that the processes of coloniality in the East occur through "A mode of discourse that relies on institutions, a vocabulary, teachings, images, doctrines, and even bureaucracies" (Said, 2002, p. 20). The representation of these aspects is Espinosa's ethical concern, who line by line constructs a revisionist narrative about how the dynamics of the colonizer-colonized relationship underpin what we call us. In this new narrative, the past does not function as an element for the establishment of a common tradition; on the contrary, it is observed as a discursive construction that needs to be problematized. Therefore, part of Espinosa's intention is also the commitment to the decolonization of history through literary work. Both topics, of course, appear as complementary in the way they serve as a vehicle to understand which society is being represented in the work and what the perlocutionary goals are regarding the proposal of a new ought to be[2] for the colonized.

3 The Shadow of the Colonizers

Decolonial processes imply breaking free from the condition of being colonized, a subversion in power roles allowing the subjugated to liberate themselves from oppression. However, it's crucial to understand that these modifications to the status quo don't always manifest as insurrections; they also appear as a gradual event summarized in the internal decline of the representatives of the institutions tasked with sustaining coloniality in its material and epistemic aspects. The case of *Los cortejos del diablo* is an illustration of this representation, where individuals, seen from a symbolic dimension, are perceived as the embodiment of their supposed roles. Thus, the purpose of this second section is to analyze how Espinosa encapsulates a reflection of the general decline of the colonizing discourse, specifically in the decline of Juan de Mañozga, Pedro de Heredia, Fernandez de Amaya, and Cristobal Pérez de Lazárraga.

[2] In *Nicomachean Ethics* (1985), Aristotle introduces the concepts of being in the world and being well in the world (p. 28-29). These concepts determine the distance between one's own way of living and the correct way of living in society. In this context, being well in the world implies ethically integrating oneself into society. Throughout the rest of the text, we will refer to this condition as the ought to be.

In the work titled *Epistemologías del Sur*, Boaventura de Sousa Santos compiles the practices through which the West imposed its power on the colonies:

> The production of inferiority is crucial to sustain imperial discovery, and therefore, it is necessary to resort to multiple strategies of inferiorization [...] war, slavery, genocide, racism, disqualification, the transformation of the other into an object or natural resource, and a vast succession of mechanisms of economic imposition (tributes, colonialism, neocolonialism [...] political imposition (crusades, empire, colonial state, dictatorship, and finally democracy) and cultural imposition (epistemicide, missions, assimilation, and finally cultural industries and mass culture). (Santos, 1984, p. 214).

Two types of coloniality are presented: one that constrains material possibilities and another that shapes epistemic horizons. Both operate aiming the construction in the other the condition of inferiority that enables the exercise of the colonizer's power. To demonstrate what has been stated, we bring up some excerpts from the text known as *El requerimiento*, written by Juan López de Palacios Rubios under the order of King Philip II of Aragon and used as an ultimatum for non-converted indigenous people from 1513:

> If you were to do so [accept the dominion of Spain], you would do well, and that which you are held to and obligated, and Their Highnesses and we in their name, will receive you with all love and charity, and we will leave your wives and children and properties free and without servitude. (Rubio, 1513, p. 6, emphasis added).

A clear patronage is established, a power relationship in which Spain accepts that the indigenous people remain in the lands that the Pope "As lord of the world, he made a donation of these islands and mainland in the Ocean Sea to the said King and Queen" (Rubio, 1513, p. 4). In case of non-compliance: "I certify to you that with the help of God, we will enter powerfully against you, and we will make war on you in every way and manner that we can, and we will subject you to the yoke and obedience of the Church and of their Majesties" (Rubio, 1513, p. 7). What Sousa Santos presents is fully applicable.

Are these dynamics present in *Los cortejos del diablo*? Yes, in each of its dimensions. Does this mean that Espinosa's work is reduced to the mere representation of the political circumstances of an already studied historical event? The historical sensitivity of the Cartagenian seems to build the decolonial proposal under the awareness of this process of inferiorization but takes a turn that distances itself from the historical certainty of Sousa Santos and launches it into the literary question: Were the Spaniards representatives of physical, intellectual, moral, or religious superiority? Espinosa constructs a decadent representation of colonial power. To achieve this, he focuses on the Church as a representative, depository, and sustainer of Spanish power, applying a logic of synecdoche in which the whole is defined by its parts; in other words, the institution is defined by the material and symbolic dimensions of those who embody it. In this construct, Juan de Mañozga, Fernández de Amaya, and Cristobal Pérez de Lazárraga become allegorical representations of specific conditions that reverse the process of inferiorization of the colonized: the dying body, the corrupted mind, and the criminal past.

Following the above, the treatment of the body is a constant that goes from the first lines to the last ones, in which the clear relationship between Mañozga's dying body and the agonizing social role of the Church seems evident; a description that contrasts with the vitality, strength, and beauty with which the Buziráquico rites are presented. On the other hand, the excessive sexual appetite of the warden Amaya is the gesturing of thought systems corrupted by hypocrisy, where there is no coherence between saying and doing. This construction concludes with Bishop Pérez, with whom the need to bring up the criminal past that the institution tries to hide in the shadows is observed. Thus, the three characters are a representation of the evident semantic and axiological inconsistencies that will enable the processes of dethronement.

From a second perspective, the same triad appears as a declaration of the seven deadly sins. Juan de Mañozga is the incarnation of pride, wrath, and sloth. In the same logic, Amaya manifests lust and greed: "It happened the next morning, and Fernández de Amaya himself, who already had his penis up and exposed for his daily orgy" (Espinosa, 2003, p. 133). Pérez completes the picture with envy and gluttony: "A chimeric apparition that God placed in his path to curb his increasingly succulent banquets, worthy of cardinal feasts" (Espinosa, 2003, p. 107). What was mentioned in the previous paragraph adds to these considerations to support the idea:

> In the dynamic Cartagena of Espinosa, the Inquisitor and the Bishop, men of the empire, are trivialized, reduced to the plain general human condition, and depicted as just another identity rather than as representatives of the most powerful empire in the world (Blanco, 2017, p. 78).

It is not only the disregard for individual power, but the disqualification of the entire apparatus that supports the discourse of inferiorization and, by extension, coloniality.

Moving on to a specific analysis, it seems necessary to make some comments about Juan de Mañozga. The first thing worth mentioning is that the chief inquisitor can be read as the embodiment of the change in the heroic paradigm, a figure expressing the end of Spanish hegemony: "Mañozga is not Mañozga. That is a caricature" (Espinosa, 2003, p. 71). Regarding these processes of dethronement and transformations in the ought to be, Claudio Maíz makes some considerations that shed light on Mañozga's condition, especially how to evaluate his role in this context of axiological confrontations: "The distinction between 'defeated' and 'failed' is crucial for compensation in the face of defeat. Failure equates to 'non-realization' and a complete absence of political anchoring, ultimately, to 'non-realization'" (Maiz, 2013, p. 75). What is found in Mañozga is the condition of the loser, as his situation is the failure that arises from an apparent victory, which, in the long run, leads to an unexpected panorama where "The prevailing senses are not those of melancholy but those of nostalgia" (Maíz, 2013, p. 75).

The above is evident in the relationship with his enemy Luis Andrea. While it is true that Mañozga achieves his goal by killing the *mohán*, it is clear that what ends up happening is a situation where the Inquisitor's desire to eradicate the decolonial rebellion ends with the establishment of Luis Andrea as a hero capable of inscribing "in the collective memory of the group, their reality as an individual subject" (Vernant, 2001, p. 7). The sorcerer achieves victory in death by becoming a model of ought to be; the inquisitor keeps his life to suffer defeat. Thus, the constant "Fool that I am, for one day I saw myself in dreams as the Pope of Rome" (Espinosa, 2003, p. 212) *mañozguino* is the expression of "Empty energies, devoid of meaning, that were directed towards goals which, even those that appeared triumphant, are nothing more than a mask concealing corruption, privilege, the abandonment of ideals" (Maíz, 2013, pp. 75-76).

It is important to comment that there is also an operation of dethronement in Pedro de Heredia, “the advanced one”, who serves as an incarnation of civil power. In this case, the dismissal of the subject as a model of ought to be is imposed through the reconstruction that Rosaura García makes of different moments:

> Pedro de Heredia was a man of revelry and fine wines [...] he squandered his fortune in ninety-two consecutive nights of revelry and violated the daughter of a shoemaker and that of a scribe, and even that of a commander [...] I knew him quite well since the time he forcibly opened the door of her house in broad daylight and attempted to assault her. (Espinosa, 2003, pp. 89-91).

The choice to portray the founder of Cartagena as a rapist is a semantic gamble by Espinosa that contradicts the official discourse, where: “Heredia was one of the captains who shone the most in the discovery and conquest of the country; a practical warrior in battles with the indigenous people, courageous and of great steadfastness”. (Arrubla & Henao, 1911, p. 113). Here, once again, the intention to dismiss the moral superiority of the Spaniards is evident, also denying the entire logic that underpins colonial power.

4 The Decolonial Proposal: Transculturation and Neoculturation

The decolonial proposal in the novel is based on the dismissal of the idea of European superiority. The decline of civil and religious institutions, guarantors of power, is symbolically incorporated into their representatives, who embody clear contradictions between their discourse and practices. This institutional vacuum allows for the emergence of a tumultuous panorama in which Spanish cultural hegemony begins to falter, directly impacting the loss of colonial power, both in its material and epistemic aspects. In this power vacuum, the colonized see the opportunity to finalize the process of dethronement, establishing their own way of being as dominant. While what has been discussed so far has been studied in various articles, the reflection has not yet focused on the possibility that this process only succeeds to the extent that colonizers fail to negotiate the social contract between *us* and the *others*, clinging firmly to the foundations of a culture that does not adapt to survive in a changing world. As Sousa Santos has aptly stated, “Imperial discovery does not recognize equality, rights, or dignity in what it discovers” (Santos, 2004, p. 223), thus accommodating the binary process of stereotyping:

> The division of the world into 'us' and 'others' is the stereotype, as a binary mechanism of representing the world that favors the permanence of static boundaries through a series of elementary signs that allow discerning what belongs to the realm of 'us' and what is included in that of the 'others'. (Gustaffson, 2004, p. 5).

Stereotyping is present in various passages of the work where colonizers do not conceive the colonized as individual subjects with specific conditions; instead, their behaviors are shaped by the imaginary they have about them. Jan Gustaffson terms this type of communication closed semiosis: the referents are not updated due to the impossibility of effective communication. The problem is reflected in characters like Friar Luis Ronquillo de Córdoba and Pedro de Heredia, who, faced with incomprehension and the inability to establish relational dynamics with the other's world, seek refuge and escape by returning to Spain. Yet, what happens to those who persist in their desire for domination? If the defeat of the colonizer lies in their inability to form a new us, for Espinosa, the victory of the colonized lies in their ability to transform, recognize, and learn. Anthropologist Fernando Ortiz termed this initial process transculturation and its deepening as neoculturation. Ángel Rama presents it as such in *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina*:

> We understand that the term 'transculturation' more accurately expresses the different phases of the transitional process from one culture to another. This is because the process not only involves acquiring a new culture, as the Anglo-American term 'acculturation' strictly implies, but it also necessarily entails the loss or uprooting of a preceding culture, which could be described as a partial “deculturation”. Furthermore, it signifies the subsequent creation of new cultural phenomena that could be termed “neoculturation”. (Rama, 2008, p. 39).

In *Los cortejos del diablo* the processes of transculturation and neoculturation occur both among the colonized and some colonizers. Before delving into how this happens with characters like Luis Andrea, Rosaura García, and Juan de Mañozga, let us make a comment about the others. The first is Pedro Claver, "The Catalan Jesuit who gathers audiences of Black individuals in the congregation's courtyard and engages in Christianizing them in the squalid barracks" (Espinosa, 2003, p. 108) who can be seen as the direct opposition to the exclusion practiced by the decadent church: "It would be better for you if you are not one, christianizing dogs or lice of dogs, as they have more soul" (Espinosa, 2003, p. 108), says Bishop Pérez de Lazárraga. Through his practices, Father Claver manages to align himself with the logic of accepting the other and integrates into the new us.

It is evident that strong representations of transculturation and neoculturation processes appear in Rosaura García and Luis Andrea. Here, as with the Church and its representatives, we encounter symbolic figures that embody a normative ideal aspiring to become hegemonic. As mentioned before, the murder of the *mohán* responds to Mañozga's desire to halt not only the cult of Buziraco but especially “The rebellious maroons enamored with freedom, with the Luciferian 'Non Serviam'” (Espinosa, 2003, p. 77). However, Espinosa constructs a panorama in which the references of static cultures blur, blend, and update, allowing the emergence of a such a passage as:

> The Christ of the Indies had been born, destined to die in the pyre 33 years later without redeeming anyone with his sacrifice. Andrea appealed to the primal rite of life, the one Moses and Aaron had practiced in the desert, to summon around her a force of mystical flame, a flame-of-love-life, directed against the Spanish empire, against Iberian arrogance, and the venomous staleness of a nation that had only brought us aging. (Espinosa, 2003, pp. 173-174).

The new world appropriates the culture of the colonizer to reinvent its normative ideals, consuming the European to expand its epistemic horizons. The operation through which Christ, Buziraco, Moses, Aaron, shamanism, and witchcraft coexist is what Ortiz and Rama call neoculturation; Sousa Santos summarizes it as “New cultural constellations that cannot be reduced to the sum of the different fragments that contributed to them” (Santos, 2009, p. 247). It is impossible not to think of a more poetic sense and find in Espinosa the echo of the words with which the poet Oswald de Andrade shaped his *Manifiesto antropófago* in 1911: "We were never catechized. We live through a somnambulant right. We brought Christ into being in Bahia. Or in Bethlehem of Para" (Andrade, 1928, p. 2).

As history progresses, it is evident that the process deepens; the power vacuum enables the consolidation of the new normative ideal arising from processes of transculturation and neoculturation. Mañozga states:

> And it fell to me to witness the maroons transformed into legendary champions, as may not happen again in these lands touched by Sausina's foot. I heard the drums and listened to the invocations. I saw the Spaniards and Creoles tremble at the ensemble of those distant sounds from Africa. (Espinosa, 2003, pp. 120-121).

Once again, we witness the destruction of the inferiority fallacy since, in this case, the colonized would have to be "Far from constituting a civilizational threat" and being "merely the threat of the irrational" (Santos, 1982, p. 218). Espinosa constructs the clash of two civilizations: one dying and one emerging. In such a framework, certainties are lost, and it is possible to observe how the Grand Inquisitor Mañozga becomes a victim of the potency of this new normative ideal:

> And that night, I would spend a long time contemplating the stars, questioning them. And, recalling what some erudite abbot had told me about certain ancient heroes, I would believe to see your disheveled hair, Luis Andrea, drawn up there in the constellations. Luis Andrea, I wince at offering you a prayer! (Espinosa, 2003, p. 124).

Mañozga's defeat could also be explained by his inability to accept the new normative ideal by which he has been seduced. Once again, Luis Andrea dies in victory to become a martyr, an affirmation of a new way of life understood as correct for inhabiting the new world. Meanwhile, Mañozga persists to function as a representation of Spanish culture and religiosity "Spanish forces, when faced with the uncontrolled powers that reign in America, either yield, diminish, or internally divide. There is the impression that in the exorcised spiritual confrontation or duel, Spain is the great loser" (Blanco, 2017, p. 80).

What begins with Luis Andrea is an example of how, in Espinosa's work, there is a “The reiterated passion for addressing 'hybridity' as a thematic element in their texts, the vicissitudes of their formation, and their aftermath, with all their implications in the sociopolitical order” (Arango, 2006, p. 111). If Luis Andrea is the Christ who died to establish the new Latin American normative ideal, Rosaura García is the apostle in charge of his consecration. The following passage summarizes the essence of recognizing the other as the focus of the decolonial proposition: “Catalina moved into the outer room, where Rosaura's countless relatives were engaged in all kinds of activities. There were whites, blacks, mulattos, Indians, mestizos, zambos, and quarterons among them” (Espinosa, 2003, p. 103). Is this multiethnic family the representation of transcultural processes that will enable the emergence of neoculturation? Are we witnessing the foundation of a Latin American being born in recognition, learning, and transformation around the other, supported by the accompaniment of an ancestral tradition? It seems so, but Rosaura García is also presented as a character with knowledge that dates back to “The years when Cartagena was merely a provisional settlement from which groups of conquerors often set out in search of another location better endowed with potable water to establish the maritime port” (Espinosa, 2003, p.88). She emerges as a witness of the period in which the war has favored the Spanish, marking the beginning of the Colony.

Now, how does Rosaura relate to the process of neo and transculturation? Her presence in the work is marked by the need to preserve the memory of the atrocities committed by the early Spaniards. However, her purpose is not limited to individualizing the atrocities; it extends to the reminder that what happens there is the struggle between two worlds: “against the Spanish empire, against Iberian arrogance, and the venomous staleness of a nation that had only brought us aging” (Espinosa, 2003, p. 173-174). Being the guardian of this tradition allows her to present herself as the driving force behind the process of dethroning colonial power. The witch says: “That's why she thought of enlightening the world about the importance and necessity of witchcraft. To spread, before her inevitable death, the voice of clairvoyance to the four winds. To release her premonition in the public squares” (Espinosa, 2003, p. 171).

In the same line of thought as the previous paragraph: “She glimpsed in magic the fundamental principle of human dynamics, the most active engine of crowds, and therefore, the most direct means to affirm individual and collective freedom: the Buziráquic Non Serviam” (Espinosa, 2003, p. 173). The constant connections that the work makes between witchcraft and the cimarrons allow us to infer that behind the cult lies, indeed, the germ of the independence processes. In this sense, the carnival of the witches led by Rosaura is the symbolic move to initiate the process of liberation in America: “A search for resilient values, capable of confronting the deteriorations of transculturation, which can also be seen as an inventive task, as a part of neoculturation” (Rama, 2008, p. 47). Here again, the anthropophagic proposal resonates: “We were never catechized. What we did was Carnival. The Indian dressed as a senator of the Empire" (Andrade, 1928, p. 2). The process is successful, of course, considering that “The body of Mañozga, like the entire Tribunal, is corrupt, and all that remains to be expected is the moment when it breathes its last” (Rey, s.f, p. 36). An event that happens soon: “The ecclesiastical judge understood that this was the carnival-like funeral of his public life” (Espinosa 2003, p. 200), thus enabling the establishment of a new culture.

The process of neo and transculturation concludes when the new society visibly rises to occupy the space left by the colonizer. With the notion of inferiority destroyed, Espinosa dares to construct a historical panorama in which the vanquished redeems themselves through learning, achieving processes of dethronement and axiological modifications where the power vacuum is seized to establish a new ought to be for the new world. It is essential not to see this as the mere consecration of the desire for an early independence

process; it is necessary to assume it in all its dimensions: In *Los cortejos del diablo* a decolonial proposal is built, grounded in the construction of a new Latin American ought to be.

5 Conclusions

The analysis of *Los cortejos del diablo* has allowed us to understand how different technical choices and thematic situations can come together to produce a work rich in perlocutionary components. Placing the novel within the framework of literary historiography revealed that Espinosa's concern is not the factual reconstruction of past actions. On the contrary, we can assert that his interest lies in the symbolic representation of a specific socio-historical panorama aimed at revaluing different discursive elements that have become part of tradition and axiology over time. Within this panorama, we could perceive how the revisiting of the past is motivated by a decolonial consciousness, seeking to problematize the concepts of the *other* and the *us*, aiming at the disqualification of the idea of European superiority. Different characters serve as the materialization of the decline of Spanish dominance in Cartagena, creating the institutional vacuum that shakes the Spanish cultural hegemony. In this way. The colonized take advantage of the power vacuum to consummate the dethronement process, establishing their ought to be as the dominant force. These affirmations allow us to conclude that, in *Los cortejos del diablo* by Germán Espinosa, processes of neo and transculturation take place, underpinning a decolonial proposal aimed at shaping an entire project of a new Latin American ought to be.

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ART-AXÉ: THE DECOLONIAL POETRY OF THE VISUAL ORIKIS

ARTE-AXÉ: A POESIA DECOLONIAL DOS ORIKIS VISUAIS

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Abstract

This article aims to highlight contemporary Afrocentric visualities from the Global South as decolonial forms of resistance. To achieve this, it will be essential to analyze a portion of the poetic repertoire of the Bahian teacher, curator, and artist Ayrson Heráclito. The artist's becoming-ritual is relevant in combating the stigmas left on transatlantic diasporic black populations. Simultaneously, it is necessary to understand the violence practiced during the period in which enslaved bodies were racialized, culturally superimposed, socially subordinated, and demonized for belonging to religions of African origins, by mechanisms arising from colonial domination. The main objective is to demonstrate at what point his aesthetic-political poetics breaks away from the Western hegemonic thought, maintained by Eurocentric colonialism, through the aesthetic-performative experiences he proposes. The qualitative methodology is carried out through the observation and analysis of the visual and poetic elements of his work. The result problematizes the consequences left by the colonial domination processes, and how these can be addressed by decolonial poetic expressions. Therefore, his artistic production made it possible to articulate thoughts that promote the rupture of structures attempting to confine black bodies in conditions that limit their ways of living and being in the world. Thus, Afrocentric visualities become essential in the process of healing and reversing the epistemic, cultural, and symbolic violence to which we were and continue to be subjected since the colonial period.

Keywords: Art-Axé, Visual *Orikis*, Directory, Decoloniality

1 Introduction: Before you enter, *àgò*

> A What we have been able to advance and achieve in terms of political and civil rights, in a necessary power redistribution, which the decolonization of society is the presupposition and starting point, is now being destroyed in the process of reconcentration of the power control in world capitalism and with the management of the same people responsible for the power coloniality. Consequently, it is time for us to learn to free ourselves from the Eurocentric mirror where our image is always, necessarily, distorted. It is time, finally, to stop being what we are not. (Quijano, 2005, pp. 138-139, our translation)

Before starting this investigation, it is necessary to ask for *àgò*. The word *àgò* means permission, according to Beniste (2021). The term is also used in Candomblé to ask permission from ancestors. In 2022, the Pinacoteca of São Paulo held an exhibition featuring works by Bahian visual artist Ayrson Heráclito. The exhibition, titled "Ayrson Heráclito Yorùbáiano", presented themes on the African diaspora, *Yorùbá* culture, and Afro-Brazilian religiosity. The assembled works form a narrative set that dialogues with rituals, mythologies, and elements of nature present in the liturgies of the Candomblé cults. The religion, developed in Brazil and practiced in the state of Bahia, inherited the religious and philosophical practices brought by enslaved Africans and adapted to the new environmental conditions. It is the religion of the deities worship: *inquices*, *orixás*, or *voduns*, beings who represent the strength and power of nature, as well as its administrators (Kileuy & De Oxaguiã, 2015).

Art-Axé, as used by Heraclitus to define his poetic action, aims to promote healing through ancestral knowledge, transmitted through decolonial creative performative actions called *Orikis*. *Orikis* are defined by Idrissou (2020) as a living word made up of orally transmitted African memories and worldviews. *Orikis* are also considered an art of the word because they have essential traces of ancestral culture and oral tradition. In *Bori*, the expressions of ways of life and traditions can be considered, according to Idrissou (2020), as a means of transmitting knowledge. Thus, besides questioning the position of hegemonic Western art, they also contribute to reversing the processes of symbolic erasure committed since the diaspora.

Based on testimonies, interviews, curatorial texts, photographs, and videos published on online platforms, this article proposes an analysis of a portion of the symbolic repertoire of visual artist Ayrson Heráclito related to the photographic installation *Bori*. In Candomblé, *Bori* is the ceremony that connects the *Orixá* to a person's head. The reflection presented here is not only about the aesthetic and political intention of the artist. *Bori* is fundamental for us to understand the interruption processes of stigmatized conceptions about black people, as well as his contribution to creating new images for these bodies.

The aim is to identify their symbolic materiality and to understand how they contribute to combating the processes of epistemic and cultural suppression, promoted by the colonialism imposed on black communities and their descendants during slavery. Thus, it is proposed to illustrate in a comparative-associative way, through the reading of the repertoires present in the images of the *Bori* series, the relationship between artist and artwork, within the modern cultural context in which they are inserted. In this way, it will be possible to analyze how the elements present in the work were used to achieve the aesthetic, political, and performative intention of the artist, through visual metaphors representing chants and invocations to the *Orixás*, referred to as visual *Orikis*.

To do this, we will need to understand Quijano's (2005) view on the relationship between contemporary colonial power and Western hegemonic rationality. Then, we will analyze the strategies used in the processes of epistemicide of African peoples and their descendants (Santos, 2009). Next, we will present part of Taylor's (2013) performance on forced incorporation and overlapping of cultural repertoires. Subsequently, we will observe how the practices of maintaining Eurocentric colonial thought can be exposed and combated nowadays. Finally, we will demonstrate the possibility of reversing and reclaiming spaces through aesthetic-political actions (Rancière, 2005) inspired by Afrocentric worldviews, which Sodré (2017) translates into an anti-hegemonic decolonial thought.

2 Without Exu, nothing can be done

While browsing the internet, it is not difficult to come across the *Bori* series. The photographic installation was conceived in the space of the Pinacoteca of São Paulo. Even without knowing who produced it and what its meaning is, one soon can realize that the photographic series has something enigmatic and familiar to Afro-Bahian cultures. It is a set of twelve images, arranged on the floor in the shape of a wheel, supported by metal structures deviating from a certain conventional museographic pattern. The setting is a contemporary art gallery. The fact that the works do not occupy the walls already indicates an intention on the part of those who placed them there, either to provoke some kind of reflection or to exhibit a stance contrary to the traditional ways of hanging paintings.

In addition to the structure itself, what draws the most attention is its composition. The themes depicted in the images feature black individuals seemingly lying down, with calm and conscious expressions. Their faces are turned upwards, and their heads are surrounded by foods that are part of Bahian daily nutrition. So how is it possible for something to be so close yet so distant at the same time? Foods such as yams, okra, acarajé, corn, popcorn, beans, and peanuts, consumed daily at home or on street corners, were now riddles and symbols to decipher.

For sacred reasons, such secrets cannot be fully revealed. They belong to the religious knowledge of Candomblé, which even many practitioners take years to access. Therefore, it is possible to think about what caused me this questioning and why these images still arouse such strange feelings. Heráclito, in addition to *being Ogã*, a position he held within Candomblé, is a researcher, art curator, and university professor. Even so, he remains difficult to grasp fully.

After observing the creative process of the performance *Bori* (Pinacoteca de São Paulo, 2023), I realized that the composition was, in fact, a foundation. It is an ancestral knowledge and teaching, incorporated by a person belonging to the Candomblé culture, transmitted through the performative ritual and photographs. *Bo* or *Ebó* means offering and *Ri* or *Ori* means head, so *Bori* translated can be understood as an offering to the head. In Candomblé, *Bori* is the ceremony that connects the *Orixá* to a person's head, who, by offering flowers, evokes them; following the example of *Yemanjá*, a female *Orixá* considered the mother of all heads. The *Orixá* represents a force of nature that governs each person's life, while the *Ori* is the person's connection to their *Orixá*.

Ayrson Heráclito and his work are inseparable. His repertoire clearly shows his political intent driven by issues of the African diaspora and the consequences left by coloniality to the enslaved and their descendants. Moreover, it also addresses issues related to modernity, such as citizenship, social inequality, and poverty. All of these are consequences of a state model built with the blood and sweat of black individuals. Nevertheless, this system still maintains colonial structures that deny our rights and reinforce negative historical-imagetic conceptions about us.

The desire to investigate him further increased gradually upon understanding that we are alike, contemporaries, children, and descendants of African communities. However, although we belong to the same Bahian territoriality, we are distant in some aspects. Through Heráclito's work, one can see the fissure, "a cut-out of times and spaces, of the visible and the invisible, of the word and the

noise that defines, at the same time, the place and what is at stake in politics as a form of experience." (Rancière, 2005, p. 16, our translation). This kind of sensitive aesthetic-political sharing disrupts colonial thinking, causing a sort of damage (Rancière, 2005) to conceptions of a culture historically stigmatized and denied from the colonial period to modernity.

After the first contact with the visual *Orikis*, there is no turning back. In an attempt to understand them better, it was necessary to resort to the archives: websites, blogs, social networks, interviews, magazines, and articles, to unveil part of the symbology laden with secrets from the religion, which many only know superficially or mediated by the Christian lens. Yes, one cannot speak about Exu, one of the main *Orixás*, without touching on this subject. Now, those born and initiated into a devout Christian family, in which monotheism is taught from childhood, tend to reject Candomblé and other African-derived religions.

The Eurocentric West, possessing a vast pantheon of deities and myths, gave rise to the abyssal thinking that kidnapped us and forced us into the crossing and slave labor. Every Wednesday and Sunday, many are taken to Christian temples. These places are considered strongholds of peace and the pursuit of divine love. Within them, we are introduced to the figures of God and the Devil, and also the main differences between them. Through their liturgies, meetings, books, chants, and stories, one learns how each one looks and acts.

In the Western collective imagination, Jesus, the son of God, who was born predestined to die to give us a second chance, is always white, kind to children, and respected by animals. The contradiction lies in the fact that the way Jesus is represented has a very strong resemblance to the God of the slaveholders, responsible for the deaths of so many people. The Devil, on the other hand, is the divider, separator, and dualist. The angel cast out of heaven answered to the name of Satan and was imprisoned and cast down to the earth, spreading evil and falsehood, becoming its prince. He led men to worship him, opposing God. The being of light, which Ezekiel describes as so beautiful, became proud and plotted to rise above the angels to take the Creator's place. His desire caused him to fall and with him others. On earth, the fallen angels became demons under his leadership.

The Devil in the Christian Bible is associated with a dragon. It is a roaring lion and sometimes appears beautiful and kind to deceive men and tell them about its life. Such fallen angels were often associated with the beliefs of the dominated. Since then, their deities have been demonized and seen by many as something bad, such as Exu. He represents the two worldviews discussed here. On one hand, there is the vision of the Western Church of the nineteenth century, which, in the words of Father Bauduin, a member of the African Missions Society of Lyon and a missionary on the Slave Coast, was "the chief of all evil geniuses, the worst of them and the most feared, is Exu, a word that means the rejected; also called *Elegbá* or *Elegbara*, the strong, or *Ogongo Ogó*, the genius of the knotty staff." (Prandi, 2001, p. 48, our translation). This happened because

> […] Exu "has a susceptible, violent, irascible, cunning, coarse, vain, indecent character," so that "the first missionaries, astonished by such a set, assimilated him to the Devil and made him the symbol of all that is wickedness, perversity, abjection, and hatred, as opposed to the goodness, purity, elevation, and love of God." (Verger, 1999, as cited in Prandi, 2001, p. 47, our translation)

It turns out that "Exu symbolizes the procreated, not the procreator. Its communication dynamizes the erotic search, hence the symbolic developments or liturgical reinterpretations that associate this entity with the multiple paths of eroticism" (Sodré, 2017, p. 215, our translation). The single Christian worldview of the nineteenth century, which separated soul and body and attributed evil to the other, has been reiterated by some religions born from Eurocentric Western Christian thought since then. According to Quijano (2005), this is a consequence of the formation of a new power pattern, which originated the social classification of the world population according to the mental construction of race. The domination strategy was conceived from the Americas' discovery and overcame colonialism itself.

Through colonial (racial) homogenization processes, such as forced catechization, traditional peoples have had their culture subjugated and demonized, and their forms of symbolic production of knowledge and meanings repressed. The consequence of the Eurocentric model adoption by the dominant groups in Latin America led us to live in an idealized "Europe", forming the basis for the colonial nation-state development, which caused the epistemic death of enslaved peoples. According to Quijano (2005), this was the

consequence of the biological association of enslaved black individuals with a natural inferiority situation in relation to the dominator, who held control of the means of production of meaning and capital. Such a structure persists and follows the Western Christian pattern associated with progress and power logic.

The death discussed here is not only about the physical body. Epistemicide, as understood by sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos, is the process of invisibility and knowledge erasure not accepted by Western knowledge. For him, abyssal thinking is the mode of colonial operation that subsists structurally in the modern Western model and remains constitutive of the exclusionary political and cultural relations maintained in the contemporary world system. This structure divides social reality into two different universes, understood as Global North and Global South, always trying to suppress one side, in which:

> Everything that is produced as non-existent is radically excluded because it remains exterior to the universe that its own conception of inclusion considers as the Other. The fundamental characteristic of abyssal thinking is the impossibility of co-presence on both sides of the line. This side of the line prevails only to the extent that it exhausts the field of relevant reality. Beyond it, there is only non-existence, invisibility, and non-dialectical absence. (Santos, 2009, pp. 23-24, our translation).

What strikes us is the lack of need to specify which side he refers to. It was precisely this duality that inaugurated the concepts of race, gender, and belief that resulted in the "ability to produce and radicalize distinctions." (Santos, 2009, p. 24, our translation). What Boaventura de Sousa Santos advocates is the opposite. He proposes an ecosystem that considers a greater diversity of knowledge as other truths, which can be conceived beyond Western science and other types of non-Christian liturgies, such as African-derived religions, among other artistic, cultural, and social experiences, such as those present in Heráclito's poetics. His work proposes the dilution of the visible and invisible lines that prevent us from occupying our place and exercising our science, philosophy, and art. A small sample of all our potential denied and made invisible by colonialism.

Therefore, through Afrocentric poetics, possibilities of healing are proposed. A request to Exu and the opening of new paths, as this kind art promotes, according to Quijano (2005), a power redistribution in which decoloniality is central. Through it, it is possible to see all the inventive potential of our culture, without forgetting that capital remains in the hands of those responsible for our suffering as well as for maintaining modern colonial domination structures that govern society.

2 The Visual *Orikis* repertoire

Most of the information reported about *Bori*, so far, has been conceived through reports in which the artist talks about his creative process, as well as other sources such as curatorial texts and scenes from the performance. But even if you have never seen his works in person, it's possible to revel in their meanings. In conversations with members of some Candomblé nations in the city of Cachoeira, Bahia, and the observation of the photographs taken during the live performance (see Figures 1 and 2), it was possible to understand that such symbols have great potential in the transmission of knowledge through the gestures performed.

What is seen impacts both the observers and the people who lent their heads and bodies during the ritual, since "we learn and transmit knowledge through embodied action, cultural agency, and the choices one makes." (Taylor, 2013, p. 17, our translation). This concept is a means to understand how contemporary Afrocentric poetics can contaminate the hegemonic cultural repertoire. It has material and symbolic elements, that can transfigure established colonial imaginaries that need to be erased, transgressed, and reprogrammed.

Fig. 1: Image of the *Bori* performance. Source: Ayrson Heráclito's personal collection, 2022.

Fig. 2: Image of the *Bori* performance. Source: Ayrson Heráclito's personal collection, 2022.

Carried out between 2008 and 2022, *Bori* managed to cross the traditional field of art, overcoming the contemplative model that sacralizes Eurocentric symbols. A good exercise is to think of the artistic process as a living, embodied material repertoire within the artist, a person possessing a body endowed with knowledge and practices of Afro-Bahian culture and the terreiro (ritual space). This materiality can be seen in the days leading up to the performance, in which Heráclito goes to the open-air market to choose and prepare the food, negotiate prices, and carry out the preparations before offering them to the deities. These are routine habits and customs that are part of his artistic and personal repertoire.

The knowledge and care with the arrangement of food around the heads are immediately perceived in *Bori*'s photographs, as shown in Figures 3 and 4, captured by the artist as part of the performative act. Perhaps his poetics is a way of showing us where we truly came from, highlighting our community's potential. It may also be another path to explain that our preferences for certain foods are a way of serving and pleasing the *Orixás*.

Fig. 3: Image of the *Bori* performance. Source: Ayrson Heráclito's personal collection, 2022.

Fig. 4: Image of the *Bori* performance. Source: Ayrson Heráclito's personal collection, 2022.

Moreover, the open-air market is a living place. In the market, the dynamics of city survival occur. It is a place of commerce, bargaining, transit of people, groups, and places that come and go in search of food, clothes, and utensils. It is where the cultivation, sales, shouting, exchange, requests, tasting, and choices of the best offerings for our home and the deities are. By observing the market's dynamics in food choice, we see that culture is presented in relationships. It acts as a way of knowing and presents its potentialities and territorialities. This is what Iqani and Resende (2019) conceptualize about identity belonging, spatial organization, cultural expressions, and the environmental relations of a given location. It is an intentional and politically selected segment that is often overshadowed by routine.

According to Taylor (2013), his works and repertoires enact embodied, performative, and gestural memory of speech and movement, dance and singing. At this moment, work and artist "convey real embodied actions. Thus, traditions are stored in the body, through various mnemonic methods, being transmitted "live" in the here and now to a real audience. Connected forms, coming from the past, are experienced as presents." (Taylor, 2013, p. 55, our translation). *Bori* is this space of exchange, where culture materializes in codes and gestures loaded with wisdom and dignity. Knowledge is transmitted through bodies in a careful, artistic, and elegant way, even for the uninitiated. A powerful, inventive, sensitive, and caring political body.

In light of this, one can see notice sad and cruel the African diaspora and colonialism were. A genocide that brought with it, according to Santos (2009, p. 33, our translation), the waste of "an immense wealth of cognitive experiences", essential knowledge for the constitution of a better, equitable, and plural nation-state. A place of power from which we have been physically and politically removed, in which we cannot make the most important decisions that affect us.

In this sense, Heráclito's Art-Axé goes against the cultural imposition initiated in the Americas during the colonial period. How? By recreating, according to Taylor (2013), practices that transgress and contaminate the performative project of the world based on the Western cultural model. His becoming breaks with the hermetic concepts used to reject traditional performative actions, such as rites, liturgies, festivals, ceremonies, and knowledge, taxing them as evil, idolatrous, and less relevant. Their political action takes revenge for the cultural and epistemic overlap maintained through existing institutions and social structures. For instance, some religious and educational institutions that fuel the inherited modern and colonialist dynamics, providing them with labor allocated in positions of work that few have the right to choose.

Moreover, Heráclito stands against the cultural and epistemic overlap that currently operates with subtlety. Where? Between the lines of institutionalization that prevent us from occupying certain spaces, such as art galleries, the presidency of the republic, or even a good position in a multinational company. Maybe that's not even the main issue; after all, we need the true means to produce and live in our own way. These are the conventional ways of controlling, enslaving, torturing, and killing us forever.

Therefore, beyond speaking about these pains, it is necessary to seek a cure. Something that connects our image to rights, citizenship, culture, language, freedom of speech, technology, and religiosity, as well as respect for diversity, the environment, divinities, and community life. It's what his repertoire triggers. A pre-diasporic and post-diasporic worldview connected to ancestry under his own creative lens of millennia-old references and resistances, questioning the Western hegemony that has not always been in this position, because

> In the course of history, there has been a change of meaning that has attributed world centrality to the European continent, more precisely to its western part. Such a paradigmatic transformation shows that Europe has not always been the center of the world and that it has taken this position for itself through ideological structures, which reached its apex in the constitution of modernity. (Maia & Farias, 2020, p. 580, our translation).

This fact highlights the strategy of domination and erasure to which we have been subjected. Bringing new visualities to the contemporary art scene and making them circulate in already established hegemonic spaces becomes a viable syncretic strategy to resignify and contaminate existing imagistic repertoires. Appropriating contemporary means of symbolic production is important and necessary for Afro-diasporic bodies to find paths away from the meanings left by colonialism.

4 The *Yorubaiana* Worldview

Ogã of the *Jeje Mahi* Candomblé nation, Ayrson Heráclito has the ability to transmit knowledge about inherited spirituality and ancestry. Through his ecology of belonging, a term used by Barata (2016) when referring to the dynamics of the artist's symbolic production, he proposes immersive and intense aesthetic experiences that connect, according to the artist, Afro-past, Afro-present, and Afro-future. Going back to African diasporic history from an evolutionary perspective, Heráclito seeks to heal stigmas and violence caused by slavery and colonialism without forgetting the contemporary practices of Afro-Brazilian culture and philosophical thought which, according to Sodré (2017), are not exclusive to Greco-Europeans. As such, his art manages to overcome racial, ethnological, and iconographic barriers, contributing to the formation of an ongoing Afro-Bahian thought.

By working with Bahian visualities, the artist promotes new conceptual approaches between art, culture, and life. His ancestral artistic repertoire is based on a philosophy of *terreiro* that disarticulates the canons of Western art imposed by the colonial power, which disregards the artifacts and symbols of other cultures. Ayrson Heráclito's life project is derived from the Afrocentric community worldview originated in the Bahian recôncavo region, where connections and cultural experiences of resistance and new existences exist.

The questions to be asked now are: what is the origin of this repertoire? Where did this knowledge come from and how did it resist so much violence? In this regard, what matters is understanding that such culture was brought from another continent in a devastating manner. It is pondering that all the conditions existed for it to be extinct, and yet it crossed the Atlantic Ocean, not in ships, but in bodies. Living bodies endowed with intelligence, inventiveness, imagination, symbology, languages; as well as ways of speaking,

acting, thinking, hunting, feeding, dressing, worshipping, praying, and loving. Bodies that conjecture, gesticulate, dance, sing, party, produce, trade, evoke, and also feel pain, fear, anger, bleed, cry, and are strong, courageous, and resilient.

It is important to emphasize that the answer will not be found in the usual historical framework, but rather in how these embodied knowledges are transmitted to this day. It is necessary to understand how the reiterated gestures and behaviors resisted almost four hundred years of slavery. They are "gestures, oralities, movements, and dances that enact embodied memory." (Taylor, 2013, p. 49, our translation). This proves the African culture potency present in everything we do, including our contemporary Afrocentric and decolonial visualities. Otherwise, the world would possibly be a vast Europe, a hegemonic place that has placed us in inferior positions through force and the removal of means of symbolic and material production. In this way, it was possible to develop anti-colonial strategies for the production and knowledge transmission that allowed us to convey our own moral, ethical, and philosophical questions.

An example of the transmitted ancestral connection can be seen by bringing together the repertoires of Ayrson Heráclito and Mestre Didi. Silva and co-authors (2007) report that Mestre Didi was a Supreme Priest of the *orixá Obaluaiyê cult*, son of the tailor Arsenio dos Santos and the Mother Lady, *Iyalorixá* of the candomblé house *Ilê Opô Afonjá*. Mestre Didi was an *Axipá* royal lineage descendant, one of the Ketu kingdoms founding families, in Africa, a city of the *Yorùbá* Empire, now Nigeria. In Bahia, the fact occurred from the first *Nagô* house tradition of Candomblé foundation, the *Ilê Axé Airá Intilé*, which later became *Ilê Iya Nassô*, the Casa Branca do Engenho Velho. Mestre Didi was initiated by Mãe Aninha, founder of the Candomblé terreiro *Axé Opô Afonjá*, which reveals his connection with the artist Ayrson Heráclito.

Like Mestre Didi, Heráclito is also an initiated member. Ogã of the *Jeje Mahi* nation, both share an Afro-worldview. This is what Sodré (2017) refers to as Nagô thinking. It is a way of understanding the cosmos from a new symbolic civilizational paradigm, coming from a complex culture whose origins are distant from the Eurocentric model, organized through the accumulation of capital and the rationalization of signs. In his philosophy of the *atabaques*, he defines these civilizations as

> This paradigm corresponds to a cultural complex - whose origins date back to Nigeria and Benin (formerly Dahomey) - which comprises nations known as Egbá, Egbádo, Ijebu, Ijexá, Ketu, Sabé, Iaba, Nagô, and Eyó, incorporating traces of the Adja, Fon, Huedá, Mali, Fasting, and others known in Brazil with the generic name of Jeje. In historical and geographical terms, these nations came from the Costa da Mina (an area that encompasses Benin, Nigeria, and Togo) and began to arrive at the Port of Salvador, in Bahia, at the end of the eighteenth century, as an African barter currency for the acquisition of tobacco produced in the Bahian recôncavo. (Sodré, 2017, p. 103, our translation)

What the cultural complexes, now known as Candomblé nations, have in common is their Afrocentric cultural construction. Territories that were incorporated along with enslaved peoples, who brought with them, as Sodré (2017) explains, the bodily liturgy of non-linear time, ancestral ways of doing things, which are repeated in the actions of the living bodies of their descendants. Mestre Didi is a good example of how these practices are passed down. Inheriting from his artisan father the skill with his hands used to materialize the tradition of the *Yorùbá* people through sculptures, he carries the symbology of the *Orixás* cult and the sacred entities of Candomblé. Materials such as wood, metal, sisal, bamboo, and beads make up his artistic repertoire.

Through art, they were able to transmit knowledge, customs, aesthetic, mythological, and literary conceptions, contributing to Bahian cultural formation. In this sense, Heráclito's life work can be understood as part of this repertoire. A legacy left by Mestre Didi, among others, which for centuries resisted to keep our culture alive, transmitted to their descendants through performative repertoires such as rituals, ceremonies, stories, crafts, customs, and artistic practices. It is not a matter of making comparisons between them but realizing that they were part of the same community, a worldview in which African, post-diasporic, post-colonial, and modern cultures coexist and sustain each other. The main difference between them is the aesthetic-political intention of each time.

The *Bori* performance was born together with this intention. It is not just an archival photographic record: the photographs are a kind of writing. They are social sculptures that dispute symbolic-political spaces, with signs of lives, languages, times, and movements. They carry narratives that describe events and ways of doing things that we repeat to this day. It is an incontestable proof of existence

and ancestral reference, which resisted the model of Western colonial society that tries to erase non-Western knowledge and wisdom. Heráclito presents our culture. He marks his passage with a living repertoire, through rites and offerings to the *Orixás*, stored in our minds and transmitted to our descendants, proposing a new perception of who we were, who we are, and can be.

5 Final thoughts

Bori is the key to better understanding our origins. The transmission of embodied knowledge through performative repertoires is one of the ways we have found to persist and (r)exist against colonial logic. Heráclito's performance is not only a ritualistic transference based on Candomblé practices; it is a political act. A claim of places and imaginaries, both inside and outside Western art galleries. It is a way of remembering that, even though we have been deprived for many centuries of freedom, rights, the written word, voting, education, health, housing, and humanity, we have managed to endure. Our culture has strengthened and is even more alive. His intention also brought healing, a mirror before us, reflecting our full potential, as we were enslaved, demonized, bled, silenced, plagiarized, and killed. Despite all the colonial power crushing us to this day, they failed. Their dependence on our arms has made us resurge as global powers.

In the course of writing this document, it was possible to envision a possible future for us. However, for it to happen, it is important to combat the prejudices built by the imposed hegemonic culture that tries to keep us within its structures and positions of social inferiority. These are mechanisms of power that stigmatize Afro-diasporic bodies, denying them the right to live. Thus, visual *Orikis* are ways of breaking the reiterated behaviors that subjugate us and make us doubt ourselves. The encounter with *Bori's* performance, by constructing sensitive images of our bodies, causes ruptures. By projecting onto us the ritual and ancestral knowledge of the Yorùbá culture, it reveals foundations that we often do not know. It also reveals such inventiveness, adding to our own repertoire, revealing something veiled, and showing us our own shame.

That is why I believe that Heráclito and Mestre Didi are new identity shapers. Their practices not only reproduce the practices of the *terreiro* and Bahian life but also transform them into new possibilities of the world. Through art, they fight the hegemonic colonial violence that affects us on an individual, regional, global, collective, and systemic scale, showing our inventive potential and creating new symbology and imaginaries. Their legacies can be considered decolonial practices because they directly affect the colonialist heritage, making everyone see who we really are.

Therefore, we need to claim and occupy our position in contemporary society, whether in spaces of political and academic decision-making or the production and circulation of knowledge, behaviors, and sensibilities. We must throw stones toward the colonial past so that we can reach the structures of domination and extinction left in our futures. Thus, we will not only be able to resist oppression and violence but also build new images and futures in which we can live fully.

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DECOLONIALITY IN THE PHOTOGRAPHIC WORK OF WALTER FIRMO

DECOLONIALIDADE NA OBRA FOTOGRÁFICA DE WALTER FIRMO

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Abstract

This text aims to recognize Walter Firmo's photographic production in relation to decolonial thinking, observing signs of a decolonization of the camera, as proposed by Mark Searly. According to the author, decoloniality in photography encompasses values of visibility and public recognition of groups and subjects who, in modern and colonial logic, are treated and represented under signs of violence and dehumanization. Having worked for national and international media outlets, Firmo has made a mark in photojournalism by portraying the pluralism of Brazilian culture and subjects from the black community (anonymous and personalities) in a haughty way. Consecrated in the field of photography portrait, he developed methods of capturing reality that are not limited to recording, but give plasticity and organicity to realities and people that are generally silenced. The intrinsic relationships that are established between the images produced by the photographer and decolonial values are based on the assumptions of decolonial epistemology and in dialog with communication, taken up through bibliographical research, and on the method of equality proposed by Rancière. Distancing itself from stereotyped and crystallized views and values as forms of domination, Firmo's photographic production is decolonial as it values subjects and blackness in processes that reinvent representations.

Keywords: Decoloniality, Photography, Walter Firmo

1 Introduction

In the opening text of the exhibition Walter Firmo: no *verbo do silêncio a síntese do grito*, the curator Sérgio Burgi states that Walter Firmo's photographic work is a "clear awareness of origin - racial, social and cultural (Instituto Moreira Salles, 2022, our translation)". Aspects that appear in the portraits of black men, women, and children that the "poet of the camera" (Machado, 1984, our translation) produced, outside the scope of suffering and subalternization, as in the images selected for this work, in which affirmation and exaltation of blackness are present.

This text proposes a dialogue between Walter Firmo's photographic work and decolonial thinking, in order to recognize decoloniality in the photographer's work. In the wake of decolonial thinking, Sealy (2019) indicates that decoloniality occurs in photography from the intention to decolonize the photographic camera. In other words, when the production seeks to promote values that are detached from stereotypes or move away from crystallized representations of violence or socially established hierarchies.

From this perspective, Walter Firmo's photographs are related to decolonial assumptions and values, paying attention to themes, forms of representation and the production of meaning. Although Walter Firmo's research and photographic gaze have been developed outside decolonial thinking, this approach becomes possible insofar as the photographs highlight the blackness and pluralism of black subjects and their cultural, social, and religious practices. One of the meanings of blackness that seems to emerge from the images is, therefore, the strength of black identity as a response to racism practiced by white men, as Munanga (2012) warns.

Methodologically, this work incorporates the principle of non-hierarchy, which guides the method of equality (Rancière, 2012) and values the researchers' intuition in their ways of choosing and reading the texts put into relation in the writing. Other principles of the method are the horizontality of the connections created between texts and discourses, and emancipation based on the principle of equal knowledge, which makes it possible to relate and promote articulations and approximations in a "free play" of intelligences. This is how the idea that Firmo's productions have decolonial traits is developed in this research, based on creative and intuitive choices, and readings of the material, building a fruitful path for relating the texts and images that embody the writing.

As part of this task, the work is based on bibliographical research that reviews the studies of Mignolo (2014), Quijano (1992) and Costa-Gómez (2014) on decoloniality in the field of social and human sciences. Based on these authors, decolonial

thinking also comprises a movement that posits the need of rethinking practices and discourses around being, knowing, and doing that are characterized as Eurocentric. We also turn to the interface of decoloniality in the field of communication, proposed by Torrico (2016, 2018, 2019), as a movement of epistemological broadening of the field, a way of going beyond the approaches constructed by the Global North[1]. From the author's perspective, the notion of alterity is linked to the concept of "alter(n)active" communication (Torrico, 2018) as a way of decolonizing communication practices and processes. In this way, Walter Firmo's photographic practice is "ex-centric" (Torrico, 2019, our translation), because it is unconventional, allowing the denaturalization and reconfiguration of subjects, knowledge, and experiences.

It also highlights the aesthetic and political potential of Walter Firmo's photographic work as a contribution to the affirmation of black identity and culture, a work of resistance and struggle against racism. Wherever it circulates, the photographer's work promotes the pluralism of bodies and discourses of blackness, contemplating the diversity and performativity of groups and subjects (Butler, 2019), constituting and strengthening discourses and political movements that value the visibility of the black population. In Firmo's own words: "The image cannot be neutral. The power of the gaze must influence people because the act of photographing has to be political, and not a mere chance snapshot" (Instituto Moreira Salles, 2022, our translation).

2 Walter Firmo: "A boy, a saci, an enchanter from Irajá"

A Walter Firmo was born in 1937 in Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil’s southeast, when the city was still the federal capital, in the northern neighborhood of Irajá. His parents were from Pará (a brazilian northern state), his mother came from Belém, Pará’s capital, was middle-class and from a family of Portuguese origin, while his father was black and a river dweller, from Monte Alegre, in the lower Amazon. At the age of 84, the photographer considers strange to be called sir and refers to himself as "a boy, a saci, an enchanter from Irajá", when interviewed by Lima (2022, our translation). His contact with the world of photography began when he was still a teenager. During this period, Firmo already admired the work of José Medeiros (1921-1990), a photographer for *O Cruzeiro* magazine who, in the 1940s and 1950s, introduced important changes to photojournalism (Lima, 2022). Medeiros was one of the first to record indigenous communities in the Xingu and rituals of African religions such as candomblé in Salvador.

When he started photographing at the age of 15, Firmo received a Rolleiflex camera from his father, who was a marine and traveled a lot, brought from Hamburg, Germany, according to Lima (2022). It did not take long for his productions to become seen in Brazilian newspapers and magazines, earning him recognition and awards. The photojournalist's first stint in the Brazilian press was with the newspaper *Última Hora*, at the age of 18. In the 1960s, Firmo joined the team at *Jornal do Brasil*. At the time, he proposed to the then editor-in-chief of Jornal do Brasil, Alberto Dines, a series of photographic reports from the Amazon region with portraits of riverside communities, landscapes and political issues. Producing photos and text, *Cem dias na Amazônia de ninguém* was published in the newspaper. With his work, Firmo won the Esso Journalism Prize in 1964. In the same decade, he also worked for the magazines *Realidade* and *Manchete* and was an international correspondent (Lima, 2022).

Walter Firmo also achieved recognition by portraying black artists such as singers Pixinguinha, Jamelão, Clementina de Jesus. He photographed anonymous black people in everyday situations, celebrations, or representative events. In Firmo's images, black people appear smiling, haughty and in often vibrant colors. The portraits contrast with images produced within Eurocentric culture, in which black people are shown as exotic or inferior subjects (Hall, 2016), including on postcards. Most of the photographs produced by Walter Firmo and articulated in this work were produced with directorial guidelines for the

[1] Studies of decolonial thought indicate that the global North and the global South are concepts that denote an abstract and unequal division, created from the imperial project of colonialism and global capitalism. Their meanings do not, therefore, denote exclusively geographical or territorial meanings, but project antagonistic geopolitical identities, which are neither watertight nor independent, and one can interpenetrate the other and vice versa. According to Ballestrin (2020), the knowledge, values and economic and socio-cultural practices generated by the global North are imposed as valid for all, while groups and movements from the global South, in contrast, represent the construction of a political project that claims different ways of belonging in the international system and society, as well as different epistemologies and practices for a fairer society with more solidarity for all.

composition of scenarios. This intervention made by the photographer, however, does not cancel out the contemplation of the material produced, nor does it interfere with the observation of relations with decolonial thinking.

One of the indications of decolonial values in Firmo's work are the portraits he made of the artist Antônio Bispo do Rosário (Firmo, 2013). The essay, produced for a report in *IstoÉ* magazine, in 1985, was set in the former Juliano Moreira Colony (1926-2022), for people with mental health issues and psychological disorders. Bispo do Rosário was an inmate at the institution and was recognized for his artistic skill with thread and needles for creating embroidery, robes, and tapestry pieces. Firmo was the only press professional to record Bispo do Rosário and his artistic productions in the colony (Figure 1). Through his lenses, the photographer portrayed the artist not as a person in a state of mental or emotional vulnerability, but in a way that exalted the artistic value of Bispo do Rosário's works.

Fig. 1: Antônio Bispo do Rosário. Source: Walter Firmo, 1985. Available at: https://ims.com.br/exposicao/walter-firmo-no-verbo-do-silencio-a-sintese-do-grito_ims-paulista/. Accessed: 15/05/2023.

In addition to the portayed people, Firmo's photographic production gives visibility to expressions and themes of Brazilian culture, such as festivities, popular and religious actions, and representations, which are generally located on the margins of the predominant motifs in the Brazilian phonographic universe. This translates into ways of representing and photographing that are close to decolonial values, which suggests that, before decoloniality became a topic of research and theoretical

approach in academia, Firmo was already practicing it through his lens and images. Therefore, considering the importance of thinking beyond the expected structures of knowledge and knowledges, it is important to revisit the assumptions and reflections of decolonial thinking regarding the relationship between political and epistemological positions, in order to associate these concepts with Walter Firmo's photographic work.

3 Decoloniality: ideas and visions

The need of decolonizing and rethinking the processes and ways of producing scientific knowledge, popular knowledge, and identities began with the recognition, by groups of men and women, that the canonized practices for developing decolonial values did not consider the plurality of experiences outside the scope of Eurocentric culture. Thus, the group called Modernity/Coloniality (M/C), formed primarily by intellectuals from Latin America, designed the *decolonial turn* movement. According to Ballestrin (2013), the group's proposal is to reshape knowledge by bringing to light characters and events that have been silenced as a result of the deliberate erasure of power.

According to Mignolo (2014), Modernity brought with itself signs of violence by establishing which discourses and knowledge would be silenced or accepted in the public space. For the author, in addition to rethinking history and the processes of knowledge construction by science, decolonial thinking is based on the political recognition of subjects and groups that have been silenced. Mignolo (2014) also considers that the colonization of knowledge and subjects is inseparable from Modernity, as this period of humanity supported the distinction between groups and consolidated the knowledge produced by the white, Eurocentric, and bourgeois bias as the standard parameter for explaining the historical, social, and cultural dynamics of the world. In the same vein, Quijano (1992) develops the proposal to decolonize knowledge and political practices, questioning Eurocentric references as a universal measure. He also bets on the idea that decolonizing knowledge goes beyond not reproducing Eurocentric thinking and requires detaching oneself from these values in such a way that there can be room for the promotion of freedom and recognition. Decoloniality is thus seen as a manifestation of power, knowledge, and political action (Quijano, 1992).

According to Costa-Gómez (2014), Modernity was a path to violence because it disregarded actions and thoughts that were alien to the prevailing norm. For the author, *doxa*, that is, opinions, could be discarded if they were detached from the modern moral order. Thus, the author criticized the modern position that postulates previously produced knowledge as *punto cero* (zero point). Costa-Gómez (2014, p. 93, our translation) explains that this position refers to the "epistemic dimension of colonialism, which should not be understood as a simple ideological or 'superstructural' extension of it, as Marxism wanted, but as an element belonging to its 'infrastructure', as something constitutive"[2]. The author questions the Eurocentric positioning and points to the importance of thoughts and reflections from other matrices as ways of structuring knowledge, since the culture of Latin American, Asian, and African countries remained on the margins of visibility and appreciation.

The movement to rethink epistemological practices and the processes of constructing history and meanings has advanced in the humanities and social sciences, without losing sight of the intention that studies should “They maintain the singularity of places, people, languages, subjectivities, emotions and decolonial horizons of life"[3] (Mignolo, 2014, p. 15, our translation). The feminist studies, for example, have considered the reality of black and peripheral women from the point of view of intersectionality by bringing in other intersections that make up their existence (Lugones, 2010), which are not limited to analyzing only gender issues, but also seek to observe power relations, social class, and ethnicity. In this way, decolonial feminism opened doors by giving visibility to women who had been forgotten by the reflections of white American and European women.

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[2] From the original in Spanish: “[...] dimensión epistémica del colonialismo, lo cual no debe entenderse como una simple prolongación ideológica o ‘superestructural’ del mismo, como quiso el marxismo, sino como un elemento perteneciente a su ‘infraestructura’, como algo constitutivo.[...]”.
[3] From the original in Spanish: “[...] mantienen la singularidad de los lugares, las personas, las lenguas, las subjetividades, las emociones y los horizontes descoloniales de vida [...]”.

Decoloniality is thought of beyond the field of social sciences and humanities, such as studies that target the way we deal with natural resources and environmental issues. In this sense, Ferdinand (2022) discusses the need of rethinking water use and land occupation beyond conventional practices. For the author, current methods of housing and land use ratify colonial legacies of land ownership. Thus, practices that exploit nature for usufruct are maintained and promote alterity i.e., the death of alterity as a sense of coexistence and sociability.

In a more intimate dialog with the discussions proposed in this work, decoloniality is part of the theoretical framework of communication studies and photography, which are useful for bringing decolonial thinking closer to Walter Firmo's photographic productions. The movement to think of the field of communication as an area of decolonial knowledge was one of Torrico's positions (2016, 2018, 2019). In addition to thinking about communication theories beyond the thoughts built up by the countries of the Global North, the author proposes reflecting on communication processes as a movement to broaden the field's epistemological territory. For Torrico (2016, p. 24, our translation), communication must promote "a non-Eurocentric reinterpretation of world history and promote the dismantling of the mechanisms of compulsive Westernization to which this world was subjected after the integration of America into planetary geography[4]".

Torrico thus discusses the need to recognize the particularities of each region and suggests moving away from the Western colonizing idea of communication, understood not as an action aimed at control, discipline or financial ends. According to the author, communication theories and processes have become established in academia and the social environment as actions aimed at instrumentalization or mechanical uses. In addition to being movements that distinguish and usurp the condition of subjects and groups, according to Torrico (2016), these proposals do not elaborate notions of alterity.

When thinking about the field of communication, alterity is a concept present in the intention to decolonize it. To explain the movement of communication based on this concept, Torrico reconfigures language and creates the idea of alter(n)active. The proposal distances itself from the conventional understanding of alternative communication as a mode of production that offers a counterpoint to the discourses and practices of the mainstream press because there is a communicational deficit as points of view (Grinsberg, 1987). Torrico's idea is communication allied to otherness in such a way that the realities of the groups involved are taken into account as a movement to change the status quo. Thus, Torrico presents the meaning of the expression *alter(n)active*: “1. […] the right of an epistemological-theoretical Otherness (Alternative); 2. […] highlights the local-native and historicized nature of that *Otherness* (Alter/native); 3. And […] involves the proposal to alter the status quo (Alter/ativa)” [5] (Torrico, pp. 79-80, our translation, *emphasis added*).

By contemplating the otherness of Latin American realities and neglected peoples and subjects, Torrico explains that communication fosters pluralism. In other words, it does not develop a reluctance for uniform discourses, but rather a diversity of discourses, of experiences. Torrico's considerations are conducive to understanding and recognizing Walter Firmo's photographs when, as a black man, he strives to portray black men and women with traits of haughtiness and vivacity outside the representations of subalternity and desubjectivation.

Another point to highlight in the decolonial communication conceived by Torrico (2019), which also supports the recognition of Firmo's photographs as decolonial, is the notion of "ex-centric". In addition to alluding to what is odd and unconventional, this other neologism also proposes to conceive of communication outside the center in the possibility of denaturalizing and reconfiguring the field of communication in Latin America. By bringing in black people (anonymous or recognized in their field), Firmo operates off the axis by not portraying the black population through the lens of suffering or poverty, composing scenes and representations that escape these frameworks.

[4] From the original in Spanish: “[...] una reinterpretación no eurocéntrica de la historia del mundo e impulsar el desmontaje de los mecanismos de la occidentalización compulsiva a los que este mundo fue sometido tras la integración de América a la geografía planetaria[...]” (Torrico, 2016, p. 24)

[5] From the original in Spanish: “[...] alter(n)ativa”: “1. […] el derecho de una Otredad epistemológico-teórica (Alternativa); 2. […] remarca la índole local-nativa e historizada de esa Otredad (Alter/nativa); 3. Y […] comporta la propuesta de alteración del statu quo (Alter/ativa) [...]” (Torrico, 2016, pp.79-80, emphasis added)

In photographic productions, decoloniality is present, according to Sealy (2019), from the intention of offering plural meanings to the blackness portrayed. According to the author, in the early years of the advent of photography, still in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the black community was portrayed as exotic by European standards or in extreme conditions of vulnerability and slavery due to imperialism. Black men and women did not go beyond the margins of representation as wild and uncivilized beings, destined for extermination or as targets of violence by the colonizers. Samples of this occurred, for example, in the colonization of the Congo by Belgium which, under the command of King Leopold II, between 1885 and 1924, led to the death of at least 10 million natives (Sealy, 2019).

According to Munanga (2012), it is based on the common history that links all those who are characterized as black by the white western gaze that blackness and/or black identity can be defined. The author explains that blackness depends on a diversity of factors involving religion (of African origin or not), social structures, feelings of belonging to a community and of historical continuity, experiences with the diaspora and racism, forms of language or communication, among other elements and contexts lived and experienced by black people. In this way, it's not just about skin color. These groups have in common that they have been "victims of the worst attempts at dehumanization and that their cultures have not only been the object of systematic policies of destruction, but, more than that, that the existence of these cultures has simply been denied" (Munanga, 2012).

In the face of racism, which inferiorizes and denies the humanity of the black population, blackness emerges as a permanent call for historical awareness, as a political position of affirmation and positive reconstruction of black identity (Munanga, 2012). This occurs with the revaluation and acceptance of the African heritage in the construction of solidarity between the victims and in the fight against the devaluation of black people. In this way, it is possible to relate the approach to Walter Firmo's visual lyricism in relation to blackness, in the images that portray black men and women with an artistic eye, in an engaging, illuminated, majestic way, in a dreamlike atmosphere. They are images that break with the frontier of prejudice that inferiorizes the black and peripheral population.

Sealy (2019) also dialogues with Michel Foucault's (2021) idea about the power of biopower to condition the meanings of black peoples and subjects by limiting the processes of representation in photography, as well as being movements of violence against the black body, which is forcibly given over to control and discipline. However, the photographs of communities and peoples subjugated by the lenses of colonizers, to a large extent, were symptoms of the tricks of the technologies of necropolitics (Mbembe, 2018), as forms of governance that foster death, which occurs both through disregard and the intention to annihilate the other.

According to Sealy (2019), the decolonization of the camera and, consequently, of photography, corresponds to a move away from the ways of portraying and framing promoted by the colonizing gaze. There is a move away from signs and elements linked to violence or desubjectivization to develop empowerment and freedom in photography. The author's understanding strengthens the presence of decoloniality in Firmo's productions because they separate black subjects from elements that suggest the usurpation of their human condition in movements of violence.

4 Decoloniality in Walter Firmo's photographs

Bringing Walter Firmo's photographic productions closer to decolonial concepts offers insights that broaden the sense of representation of subjects and groups that have been marginalized and stigmatized as a matter of power. In this way, it is possible to consider photographs as representations of subjects and places that orbit outside the crystallized order. By featuring black and brown Brazilian artists in his portraits, in a mode of exaltation, Firmo highlights the country's culture and moves away from forms of representation that associate the black population with a condition of subalternity or suffering. In his photographs, men and women from the black community are presented with dignity, in images that distance themselves from those that show hypersexualized black bodies or those in conditions of vulnerability that could serve to form stereotypes or spectacularization. The photographer's work suggests a detachment from Western currents of communication, bringing to light references that enhance the panorama of Latin American artistic production based on his own experiences and lives.

By adopting these photographic methods, Firmo has made portraits of people and situations offering meanings that are outside predictability, thus dialoguing with Torrico's (2019) concept of "ex-centric". The author understands ex-centric as a way of creating theoretical subversions in the field of communication as a way to think of new paths of knowledge outside the conventionally idealized center as a power structure. Torrico's understanding adheres to Firmo's productions in view of the bonds of alterity built in the photographs. This characteristic adheres to communication as a "constructive process of the human and the social, [which] preexists the means that transmit or amplify it and supposes the construction of a com-knowledge (a 'knowledge with the other') in a reciprocal relationship of a dialogical and convivial nature" (Torrico, 2019, p. 101, our translation).

The dialogue between decolonial perspectives and Walter Firmo's photographs can be seen in Fernandes' (2003) reflections on the work of Firmo and other photographers, such as Maureen Bisilliat and Luis Humberto. In the work of these photographers, between 1970 and 1980, it is possible to recognize the intention to portray the pluralism of identities of the Brazilian population, "from the different popular representations, using photography as independent information" (Fernandes, 2003, p. 21, our translation). By using warm colors and portraying black people beyond the signs of suffering and subalternity (Figures 2 and 3), Firmo's photographs translate decolonial values, "whether through the vibrant strength of the colors or the unquestionable dignity of the human being revealed there by the photographer's gaze" (Coelho, 2012, p. 115, our translation).

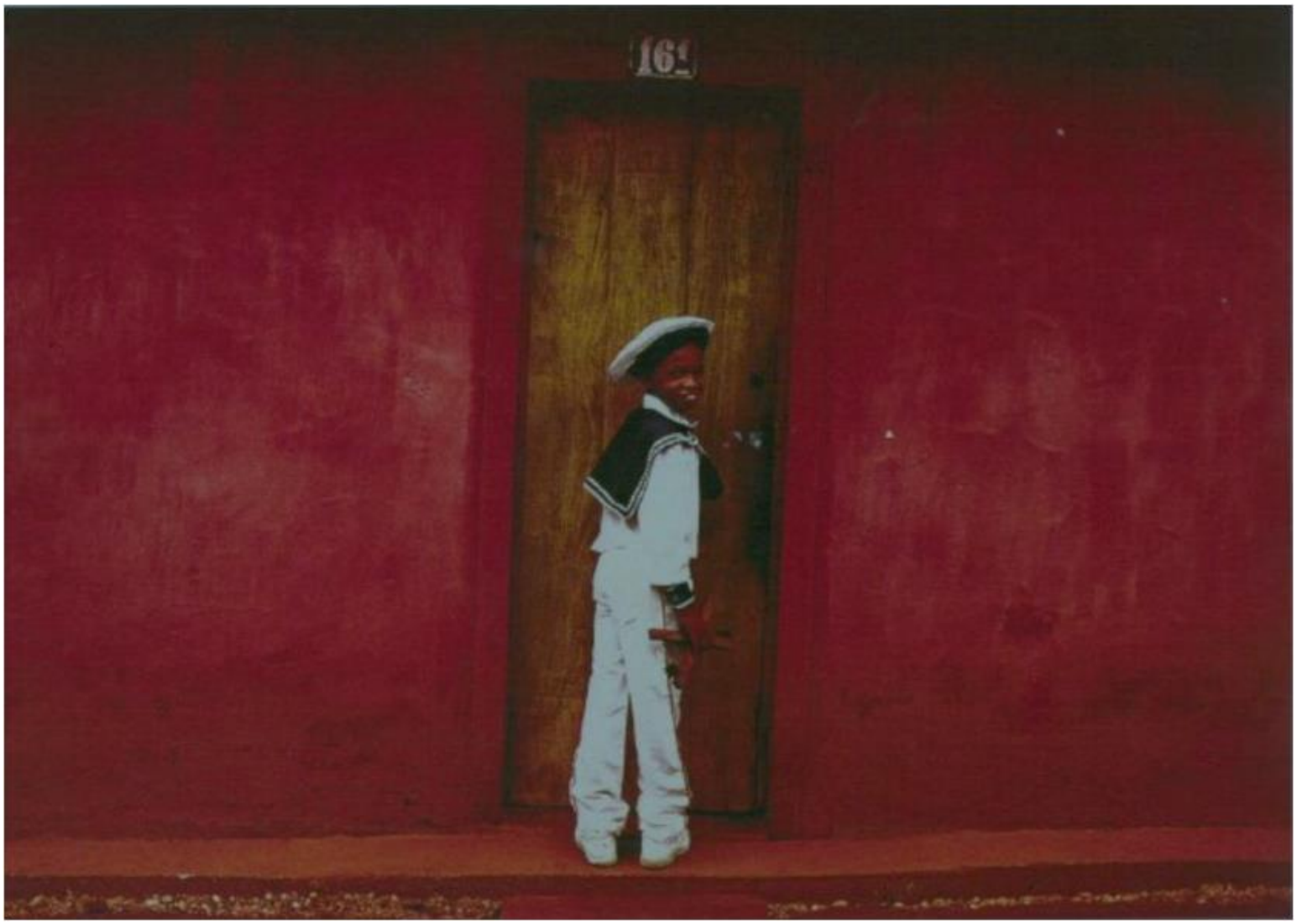

Fig. 2: Untitled. Source: Walter Firmo, 1994, 1992. Available at: Fernandes (2003).

Fig. 3: Carnival in Rio. Source: Walter Firmo, 1972. Available at: https://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/materia/donas-de-si/ Accessed on: 10/05/2023.

In the photographs he produced at the time, Firmo sought, according to Fernandes (2003, p. 156, our translation), "to build an atmosphere involving the participation of black people in the daily life of the country, giving them citizenship, intense affection, timeless luminescence and the feeling of a national hero". In this way, for the author, Firmo manages to celebrate life and build memory. From this perspective, it can be said that Firmo's image compositions create bridges with Torrico's (2019) decolonial proposals, constituting ways of reinventing representations and

> (...) destructuring the logic of the oppressive mechanism and its theoretical justification, using a historical and epistemological positioning whose core is subalternity. Subalternity defines the general condition of forced submission (political, economic, cultural, gender, age, "race", education, etc.) suffered by a human group and therefore implies a specific location, at the base of the social structure, from which a cognitive and mobilizing point of view is formed that is inevitably critical and oriented towards liberation (Torrico, 2019, p. 100, our translation).

Although the photographer presents people who may experience subalternity and vulnerability in everyday life, the images do not approach these references and combine perspectives that confront the discourses and practices of crystallized power regarding black groups and subjects. According to Torrico, subalternity cannot be understood as the stigma of suffering and anguish, but as the power to create knowledge and promote visibility and public recognition. The images sought and produced by Firmo also come close to Sealy's decoloniality as an intention that proposes representations that go beyond meanings that refer to violence and are associated with stereotypes or establish relationships between the dominated and the dominant.

As a means to encourage the decolonization of photography, Searly (2019) suggests not allowing references and signs constructed as movements to colonize bodies, knowledge and subjectivities, signaling a path that is detached from normative and hegemonic values present in media representations. The author points out that, in the early years of photography, the use of the camera was recurrent to portray subjects, peoples and communities as exotic and savage. The movement to decolonize photography starts, according to Searly (2019), from the need to reconfigure the processes of representation of the black community, dissociating it from violence and desubjectification, through humanized signs and far from exploitative or exotic values. Therefore, according to the author, decolonizing the camera means working to promote black culture to destabilize the condition, reception and process of creating the other as exotic.

Decoloniality in Firmo's work also appears in the portraits of subjects and groups outside the frames of places established according to the order of hegemonic power, as Torrico (2018) points out. In this sense, the work of Moraes (2023) is pertinent, highlighting Walter Firmo's proposal not as a way of denying the violence and desubjectification to which black people have been subjected throughout Brazilian history, but as a way of showing that these people have a life beyond this.

> Instead of replicating these situations of suffering in photographs, however, [Firmo] uses them to represent, in another way, the bodies that suffer the most, capturing them in moments of enjoyment, joy or even calm and rest. These are images in which there are almost always signs of invention and the strength of emotional bonds. Images that subvert what is known and suggest other possibilities for living arrangements in the country, in which there is no longer an almost direct association between dark skin and the pain felt (Moraes, 2003, pp. 302-303, our translation).

The subversion of the order of meaning that stigmatizes black bodies can be seen, according to Moraes (2023), in the photograph entitled *Carnaval no Trem* (Figure 4). Dating from 1985, this image shows women in costume in the foreground of a train carriage in the capital of Rio de Janeiro. Highlighting the voluminous costumes and bright make-up, Firmo re-reads the everyday use of urban public transport that makes journeys to take people to work or other appointments in order to portray women in a moment of magic and relaxation.

Fig. 4: Carnival on the train. Source: Walter Firmo, 1985. Available at: https://ims.com.br/exposicao/walter-firmo-no-verbo-do-silencio-a-sintese-do-grito_ims-paulista/. Accessed: 10/04/2023.

> In the same place where, for the rest of the year, many other women (or these women themselves) make the journey to work and back home in a routine without surprises or contentment, the photographer catches a scene that signals a change of mood (...) and triggers new associations between these people and their lives. At that moment, carnival - an event that disrupts the common order - takes place on the train (...) (Moraes, 2003, p. 303, our translation).

The representation of young or adult black women does not present a dialogue with the hypersexualization or fetishization of their bodies, expedients used in photographs of these people at the dawn of photography, as mentioned by Hall (2016). By photographing black women and showing them away from this stigmatization, Firmo performs a movement of alter(n)activity, as proposed by Torrico (2018). This way of portraying presents itself as a path to alterity and the promotion of the constructive and humanized character that the author calls *outridade* and revolts against fetishized or stigmatized discourses. According to Torrico (2018), this movement develops communication proposals using contours that consider the history and aspects of the lives and experiences of the subjects involved.

In addition to Brazilian blackness, Firmo also portrayed black people from other countries, including Cape Verde (Figure 5).

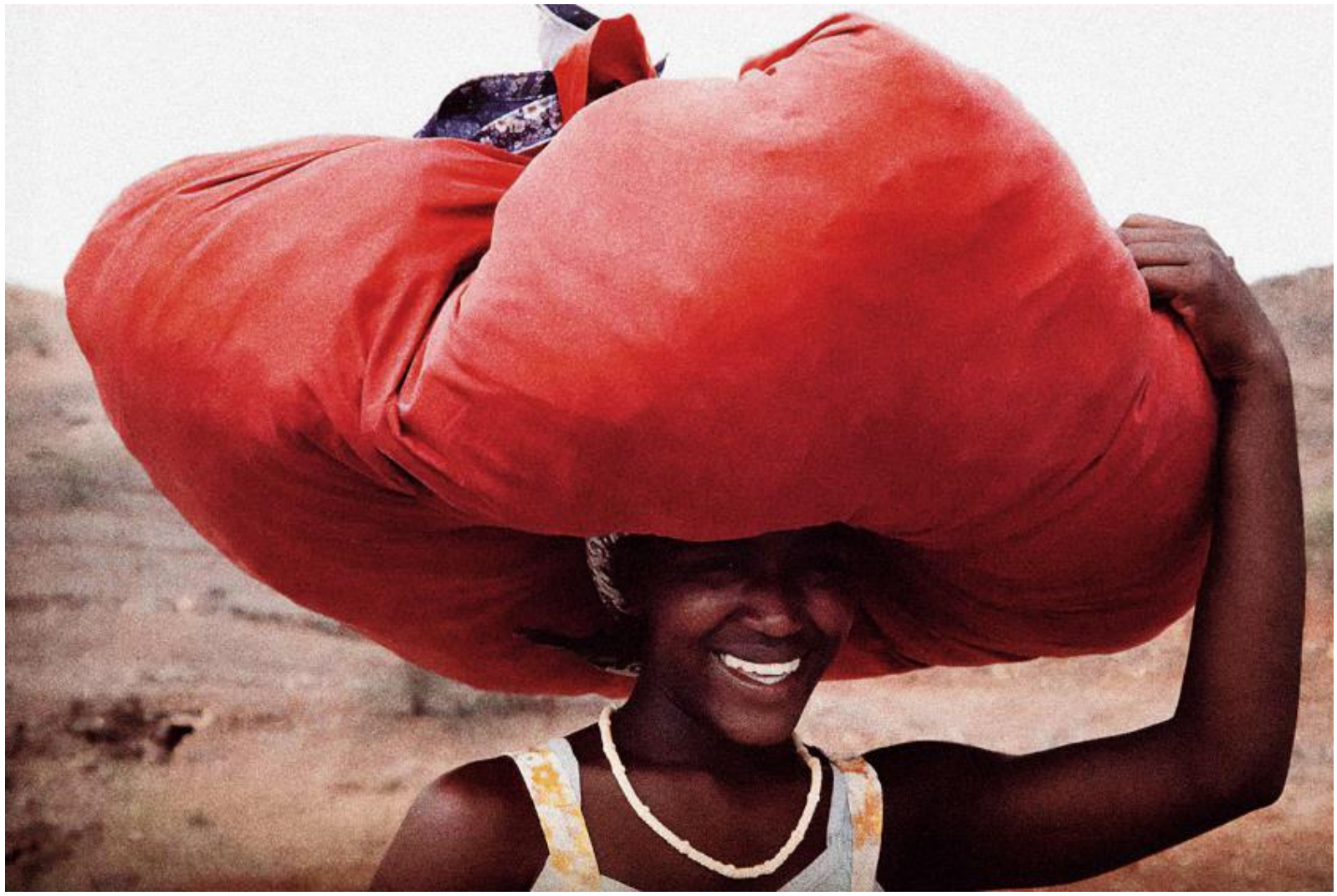

Fig. 5: Untitled. Source: Walter Firmo, 2004. Available at: https://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/materia/donas-de-si/. Accessed on: 10/05/2023.

Firmo did not limit himself to photographing anonymous people, but brought black personalities of national recognition in the arts to his lens, maintaining the visual grammar of portraying them in expressions of joy and contemplation. By refusing to fetishize, Firmo's photographs portray blackness with pride as a form of public recognition and by praising black artists from Brazilian culture, such as Pixinguinha (Figure 6) and Clementina de Jesus (Figure 7), among others. By portraying prominent black figures in the Brazilian art scene, Firmo elaborates on the pluralism of blackness not only in Brazil, but also abroad, as Lima (2022) points out. In this way, the photographer's work can be understood as an action of insurgency, recognizing that black people are worthy of public recognition, as well as projecting blackness beyond the stigmatized elements of desubjectivation.

Fig. 6: Pixinguinha. Source: Walter Firmo, 1967. Available at: https://www.uol.com.br/ecoa/reportagens-especiais/walter-firmo. Accessed: 15/05/2023

Fig. 7: Clementina de Jesus. Source: Walter Firmo, 1977. Available at: https://ims.com.br/exposicao/walter-firmo-no-verbo-do-silencio-a-sintese-do-grito_ims-paulista/. Accessed: 15/05/2023.

Exercising the alter(n)activity movement, Firmo became aware of his blackness when he was a correspondent for *Manchete* magazine in New York (Firmo & Gomes, 2022). As soon as he arrived in the United States, according to Lima (2022), he was discriminated against for being black by the reporter who accompanied him on his coverage. This had repercussions on his productions. On his return to Brazil, Firmo began to experience photography politically and developed his visual lyricism

in relation to blackness, as Firmo himself says in a statement to the Vale Maranhão Cultural Center (2022). In this way, he always had blackness involved in his lenses in such a way that it wasn't under-represented.

5 Final considerations

Thinking about the bridge between decolonial studies and Walter Firmo's photographs offers other insights into the debate on visibility, public recognition and alterity in communication processes. By bringing black people together without the constraints of suffering and under-representation, Firmo exercises alterity, a concept that is part of decoloniality, and also proposes new forms of representation that are detached from the values commonly disseminated in the production of photographic images about the black community. Whether undertaken in the artistic field or in photojournalism, decoloniality is a way of photographing that reconfigures the processes of production and representation of groups and subjects, giving them visibility and public and political recognition.

Firmo's photographic insurgency is not just an act of rebellion, but a movement that challenges new proposals and also slips through the power structures that limit the production of meanings and modes of representation. To a large extent, the decoloniality of Walter Firmo's photographs also becomes insurgent by not following paths that stigmatize black groups and subjects, usually associated with vulnerability, in photographic production.

The images produced by Fimo signal decolonial perspectives on communication, both because they are alter(n)active and are produced from the reality experienced by the groups and their peers, and because of their intention to develop the alterity, vitality and loftiness of the subjects portrayed. In addition, they orbit outside the predictable axis of representation, constituting themselves as "ex-centric" by investigating and bringing to light everyday people and actions. In this way, Firmo's photographs reflect the pluralism of Brazilian representations, identities and references, without the need to standardize or distance themselves from the particularities of each group.

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PROJECT
PROJECT

AFROCENTERED PROJECT: RESCUING BLACK MEMORY IN THE VILA MATILDE DISTRICT, SAO PAULO

PROJETO AFROCENTRADO: RESGATANDO A MEMÓRIA NEGRA NA VILA MATILDE / SP

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Abstract

This article discusses the Afrocentric Landscape Architecture design process, aiming to materialize memory and record Black territories characterized by orality, such as samba and slam, in Vila Matilde, a district in the East Zone of the city of São Paulo, Brazil. The design process results from a decolonial and Afrocentric analysis on how memories are materialized in an urban landscape. It is based on valuing the oral memory of Black communities in urban spaces and identifying forms of memorialization in the landscape rooted in the African worldview. A counter-hegemonic vision is sought through theoretical references related to the decolonial debate, territory mapping, field visits, and oral interviews with local protagonists. The project for the Black territories in Vila Matilde was created based on the philosophy of Ubuntu, which represents the worldview and thought dimensions of the Bantu people, and which had significantly contributed to the Brazilian culture. The research aims to broaden discussions on Afrocentrism, memorialization, and design praxis in urban space, and to critically reflect on the predominance of Eurocentrism in Architecture, Urbanism, and Landscape fields.

Keywords: Afrocentric landscape architecture, Afrocentric design, Design process, Black territories, Black memory.

1 Introduction

Brazil has the largest population of Black people outside Africa due to the African diaspora during the period of slavery. Africans brought their technical knowledge, cultures, languages, and worldviews, which contributed to shape Brazilian culture. Despite the significant influences and contributions, there are very few visible signs of them in the urban landscape. From this perspective, it is importante to reflect on the urban discourse emerging from the landscape. Memories can be revealed by the urban landscape and provide a connection to the urban space. By approaching such issues, it is possible to understand how cities communicate their histories through the marks inscribed in the landscape, contributing to the construction of urban identity. According to Gineste (2016), the city can be read as a system of memories, as its exploration through its own recollections provides a means of delineating the identity of the various neighborhoods that compose it. In that manner, one can reconstruct the history of its spaces and their appropriation by individuals and social groups (Solis, 2019).

The concept of memory results from the constant reinvention by social agents and is not merely a faithful reconstitution of facts. Memory is a social construct that develops and is shared within specific social and cultural groups. It is an individual matter and a social and collective phenomenon. People remember occurrences within a specific social context and are influenced by the experiences and values shared by their social group (Halbwachs, 1992). Lynch (2011) emphasizes the importance of the urban scenery in the understanding and perception of cities by their inhabitants, exploring the way people form mental images of cities based on the visual elements and characteristics of the urban landscape. Moassab and Name (2020) assert that the establishment of memory repertoires in the landscape expresses ethnocentric landscape classifications and violent reproduction of architectural and urban language patterns. These practices have led to the destruction and disposal of knowledge modes from the worldviews of Black and Indigenous groups.

In Brazil, despite the segregating and oppressive architecture (Rolnik, 1989), a sense of Black community has been created on its lands, culminating in Black territories. These territories represent not only resilience and resistance but also the pursuit of dignity based on the marks of Black people as well as identity and memorial affirmation in the face of historical and social erasure. In urban contexts, Black memory is expressed through Black territories, which are physical spaces characterized by their territorial identity. The constantly erased and undervalued Brazilian Black memory is scantily documented in written records or images, with oral tradition being the primary source characterizing these territories.

This study approaches the Landscape Architecture design process from a decolonial perspective and, beyond that, an Afrocentric perspective for urban spaces that lead to a journey through mapped Black territories in Vila Matilde district, located in the East Zone of the city of São Paulo, southeastern Brazil. The theoretical framework was constructed from counter-hegemonic authors: Black, female, Latin American, African, and decolonial voices. This research adopts a counter-hegemonic methodological approach that

uses orality as a decolonial tool. The study aims to encompass a deeper understanding about the history and needs of the territory by gathering testimonies and conducting interviews with local residents. To encompass additional narratives, oral records are collected as a way to supplement the research. These procedures occurred concurrently with developing academic-scientific records, field surveys, and urban morphological studies consulted through cartographic databases[1].

The theoretical foundation and diagnosis, coupled with studies of Landscape Architecture projects by authors focusing on the Black community, contributed to developing an Afrocentric and decolonial project for the delimited region. It is essential to note that this research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. The article is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the research perspective and design process based on Afrocentrism and decoloniality concepts. The second section focuses on the Vila Matilde region, including the geographical delineation and mapping of Black territories through Afrographies of memory. Finally, the last section presents the Afrocentric Landscape Architecture design process developed for the territories of Vila Matilde.

2 Decoloniality and Afrocentrism: A Perspective on the Project

Decoloniality "does not constitute an academic project that would require those who adopt it to cite its key authors and concepts, nor does it constitute a kind of abstract universalism" (Bernardino-Costa and Grosfoguel, 2016, p. 20, our translation). The pursuit of the decolonial debate in the field of architecture and urbanism is motivated by the urgency to explore alternative perspectives proposed by authors not aligned with the dominant hegemony. It aims to create more inclusive and critical design practices, moving away from traditional and Eurocentric narratives. The imposition of domination by European colonialism led to the emergence of the Eurocentric perspective of knowledge, legitimizing ideas and practices of hierarchical relations between conquerors and conquered peoples, establishing a dynamic of superiority and inferiority. Consequently, conquered peoples and their intellectual and cultural achievements were subjugated to natural inferiority (Quijano, 2005).

Although decoloniality emphasizes the importance of combating racism, the quest to break free from elements of domination proposed by decolonial thought is not limited solely to African cultures. In response, an effort has been made to complement it with the approach of epistemologies that reconsider the figure of the African, both on the continent and in the diaspora, such as the theory of Afrocentrism developed by Asante (2016). Afrocentrism aims to revalue Afro-descendant perspectives and knowledge, proposing a reaffirmation of African identity and culture in the global context. The decolonial debate enriched by the Afrocentrism approach seeks more comprehensive paradigm shifts. The subjectivity of Africans, both on the continent and in the diaspora, has been forced into Eurocentric domination and contextualization after being subjected to over 500 years of distance from their own epistemological and cultural productions. The Afrocentrism highlights Africans as producers of knowledge through "collective consciousness, valuing cooperation, collectivity [...], these values are grounded in a deep understanding of African cultural ideas and based on the study and reflection of specific African societies, in a transgenerational and transcontinental manner" (Asante, 2016, p. 12, our translation).

While decoloniality seeks a rupture by constituting a South American agenda, Afrocentrism focuses on restoration through African culture (Almeida, Reis & Silva, 2020). By reconsidering production of knowledge from these epistemologies, different approaches can emerge for academic research in the field of design process. Afrocentric and decolonial approaches can be read as a way to reconstruct Black people's history, memory, and identity. Nascimento (2002) argues that creating a more promising future for Black Brazilians, free from colonial influences, requires collective mobilization and organization aiming to construct a historically humanistic science. This science should synthesize and interpret the experiences lived by Black people, strengthening and consolidating their identities.

It is possible to observe that the Black people's occupation of urban space and their participation in the structuring of cities have been made invisible by counter-hegemonic narratives. Historiographical production related to Black people has been overlooked by the dominant culture. Recognizing and valuing counter-hegemonic epistemologies is crucial for revising historical and urban narratives, making them more representative based on Afro-Brazilian history and culture. The process of creating physical spaces, which involves

[1] Project carried out during the development of Final Year Project Dissertation at the Architecture and Urbanism School of Federal University of São Paulo in 2021, by two Black women (advisor and student). The work received an honorable mention and was highlighted in the equity and diversity category in the *Projetando o Futuro* (Designing the Future) Award, presented by the Council of Architecture and Urbanism, in 2022.

designing and constructing buildings and landscaping elements, can reinforce dominant narratives when it prioritizes monumentalism and becomes a tool for collective memory that only serves the interests of dominant groups. Rescuing memories by recognizing and mapping Black territories in a non-central region, and subsequently considering the design process, suggests a possible path to work on an Afrocentric Landscape Architecture project.

3 Afrographies of Memory in Vila Matilde

According to Martins (2013), "afrographies of memory" explores narratives produced by Afro-Brazilian writers as a form of resistance, memory recovery, and identity reaffirmation. The author highlights the significance of using narratives as a means of promoting the visibility of Black cultures and identities in Brazil. Afrographies deconstruct stereotypes, recover erased stories, and contribute to the construction of collective memories that encompass the experiences of the Black community, subverting hegemonic narratives.

> [...] In their formulation and constitutive modus, the Black cultures that nuanced American territories highlight the intersection of African oral traditions and memories with all other codes and symbolic systems, written and/or oral, with which they came into contact. And it is through these crossroads that Afro-Brazilian identity is also woven [...] (Martins, 2021, p. 31-21, our translation)

The region defined for the research is located in the East Zone of São Paulo, at Vila Matilde district. The specified geographical area includes Vila Dalila, Vila Matilde, and Vila Guilhermina neighborhoods. (Figure 1). It is relevant to mention that in 1989, the district's population consisted of 27% non-whites (Rolnik, 1989), making it the district with the highest number of Black residents in the East Zone of São Paulo. Currently, the district has a Black population of 25.4%, according to data from Rede Nossa São Paulo (2021). The delimitation was carried out to allow for more detailed analyses of the characteristics, histories, and figures related to the neighborhoods. The Black trajectories in the district's neighborhoods allow for exploring the formation of Black territories that emerged in São Paulo in non-central neighborhoods during the city's urbanization process. Examining the sociabilities present in the district reveals how Black people developed (re)existence in a context of exclusion and segregation during the city's formation, serving as historiographical sources.

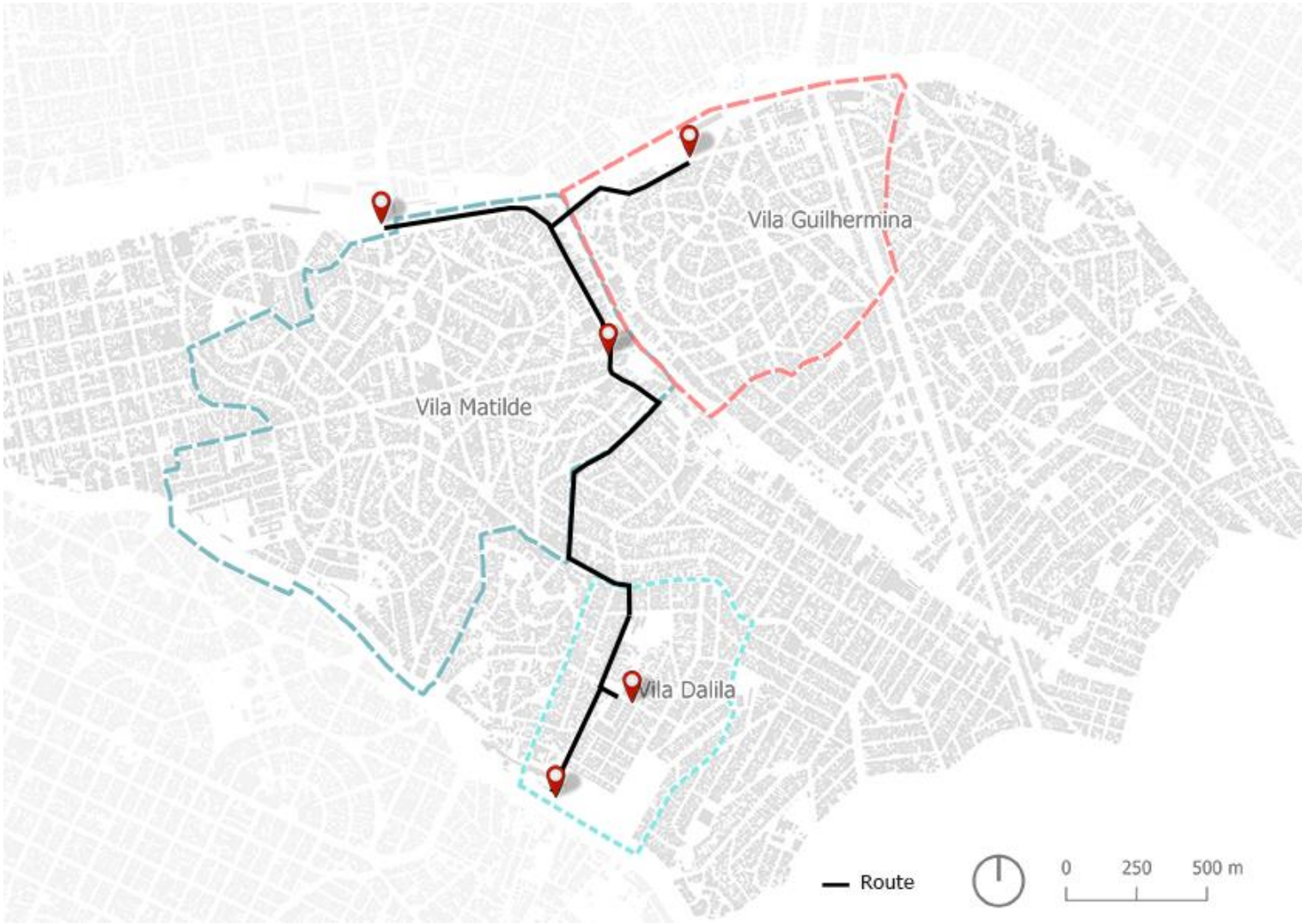

Fig. 1: Map delineating the neighborhoods studied in the Vila Matilde district and the proposed route in the project. Source: Base Cartográfica MDC/SMUL, 2021.

The urban developments that took place in the district of Vila Matilde during the 20th century played a crucial role in the formation of early Black communities in the neighborhood. These communities, such as Vila Matilde and Vila Dalila, were known for their samba circles (*rodas de samba*) and street drumming (*batucadas de rua*), which played an important role in their culture and identity. This scenario is exemplified when it relates the building of Nenê de Vila Matilde's samba circles to informal settlements due to the existence of the Central do Brasil Railway, the high concentration of Black people, and the Carnival tradition of the adjacent neighborhood to the current Vila Matilde district, called Vila Esperança (D'Andrea, 2010). These formations dialogue with the search for leisure and occupation of public space in light of issues in the suburbs, considering that the new developments in the region lacked public cultural facilities.

Some vacant lots and empty areas in the district were used to enjoy the population; with "an intense urbanization process, these areas were occupied" (Doro, 2006, p. 77, our translation), directly impacting the morphological organization of the district's neighborhoods. Another justification for the non-orthogonal urban grid in the spatial cut is the rural aspect that characterized the area. According to Doro (2006), the area's first residents were European peasants, many of whom acquired land for small plantations.

Regarding the local Black community, the "sense of belonging to the place of residence was very significant" (Belo, 2008, p. 28, our translation), a fact reiterated when, at the beginning of samba schools Nenê de Vila Matilde and Flor de Vila Dalila formation, samba circles and gatherings took place at members house and nearby areas, as commented by Cláudio Pedro Barbosa Adão, "Manteiga," about the school's formation: "[...] we used to gather at Brandão's house, [...] so he was the mentor of all this" (Museum of the Person,

2015, our translation). When it comes to urban space, different social groups have been engaging in deep reflection on collectivity. This has led to new discussions about the city, representing an advancement in understanding it as a recognized collective public space, standing out as a territory of common and democratic use (Rodrigues, 2018). In this sense, despite no cultural facilities in the district, groups organize themselves to occupy public space, which becomes a stage for cultural manifestations and urban appropriation, although samba circles no longer take place in the original spaces.

Reflecting the urban changes in the district, such as the creation of public ways like Aricanduva Avenue and Radial Leste, as well as the implementation of Line 3 - Red from subway, and cultural manifestations that emerged after 1980 in São Paulo, poetry battles, called slam poetry, gain space in public areas after the 2000s. The battles at Guilhermina-Esperança subway station are represented by concentrations of slammers, creating the Guilhermina slam. These forms of leisure and occupation of public space in Vila Matilde unfolded from music and poetry, represented by samba circles and slam as a form of (re)existence. The following presents the mapped spaces identified from the described Black cultural manifestations.

Ticket Office (Bilheteria)

The ticket office of the former Central do Brasil train station, shown in Figure 2, is located at the Vila Matilde Viaduct and was considered a Black territory, as its role in shaping these territorialities was responsible for allocating Black people in the region. The connection of the train station with the Black community is emphasized in the narratives of Nenê de Vila Matilde when he speaks about his experiences in the city with samba groups and the train station as an extension of samba circles. "There was a store near the station, and we went to get some crates to support our feet and find another way to play." (Braia & Silva, 2000, p. 38, our translation). Today, it is abandoned.

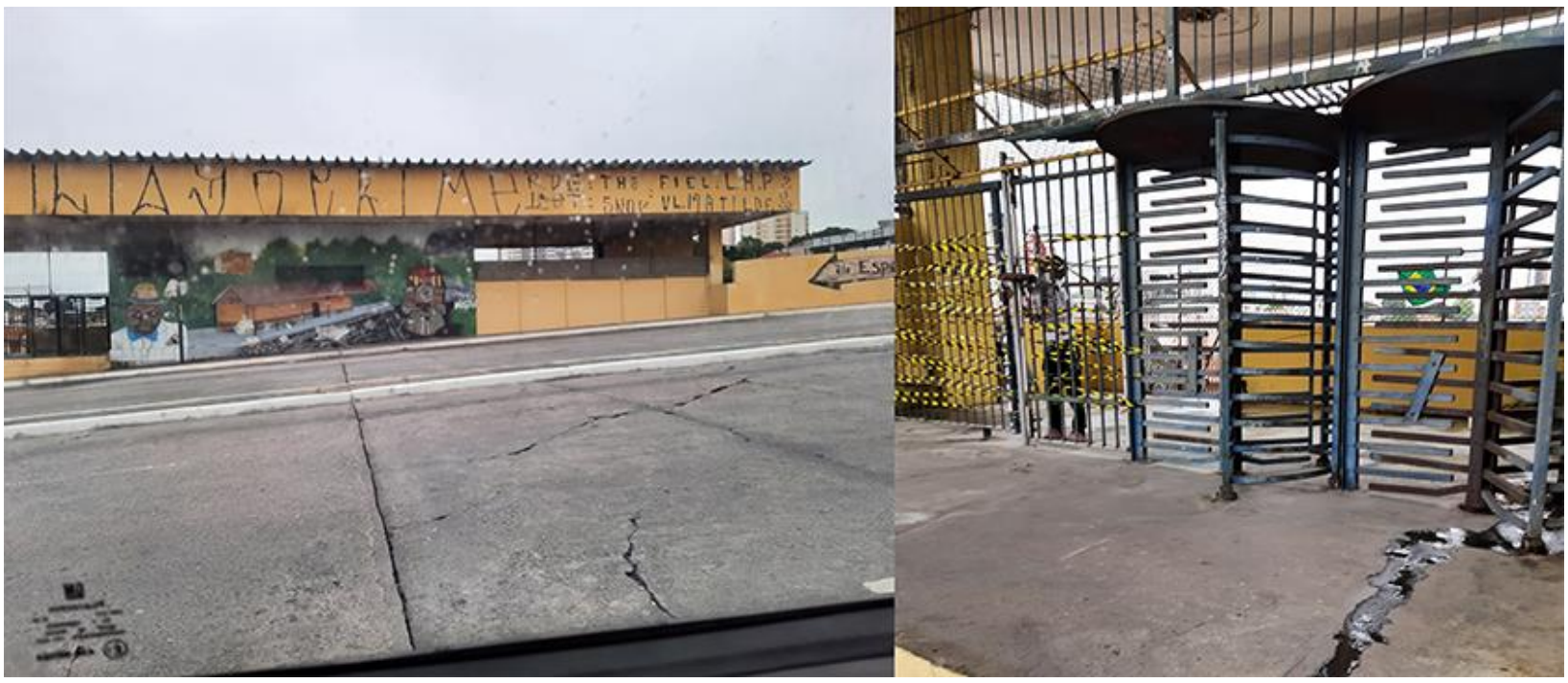

Fig. 2: Pictures of the old Ticket Office of Vila Matilde Station in abandonment (facade and entrance). Source: Dorea, 2022. Accessed on: 01/08/2023.

Largo do Peixe (Fish Square)

The Largo do Peixe, located in Vila Matilde and shown in Figure 3, played a significant role in structuring the Nenê de Vila Matilde Samba School. Reports from Alberto Alves da Silva (Nenê de Vila Matilde, one of the school's founders) help understand the space dynamics of the 1950s when samba circles took place at the beginning of the district's formation and occupation. According to the samba musician, "the place was all bushes, marsh, and it was not called Largo do Peixe [...] but it was also called Largo do Peixe because, among us, there were people who sold fish in the square." (Braia & Silva, 2001, p. 41, our translation). The space was abandoned over the years (Celestino, Dorea & Melo, 2021), as reported in the 1970s in the newspaper Diário da Noite:

There are things that the population of Largo do Peixe and the surrounding areas do not understand. One of them is the abandonment in which the traditional meeting point of Vila Matilde finds itself. After all, it was here in Largo do Peixe that the nowadays famous 'Nenê de Vila Matilde' was born. (Gentlemen from the Regional da Penha, take note of the address in Vila Matilde, 1979, p.6, our translation).

Fig. 3: Picture from Largo do Peixe. Source: Dorea, 2022.

Rua José Piedade (José Piedade Street), No.21 and Avenida Dalila (Dalila Avenue), No.700

The information about the Flor de Vila Dalila Samba School comes mainly from oral sources, such as former member Cláudio Adão and the school's blog. The school's location is where its shed currently stands, at Dalila Avenue, number 700, as depicted in Figure 4. Its formation coincides with the establishing a soccer team called Margarida, which brought together samba circles and balls. Antônio Rosa, an essential figure in the school's history, played a significant role in its consolidation as the balls started at his house located at José Piedade Street, number 21 (Figure 5).

Fig. 4: Picture of Flor de Vila Dalila Recreational and Cultural School (Dalila Avenue, No. 400). Source: Dorea, 2022.

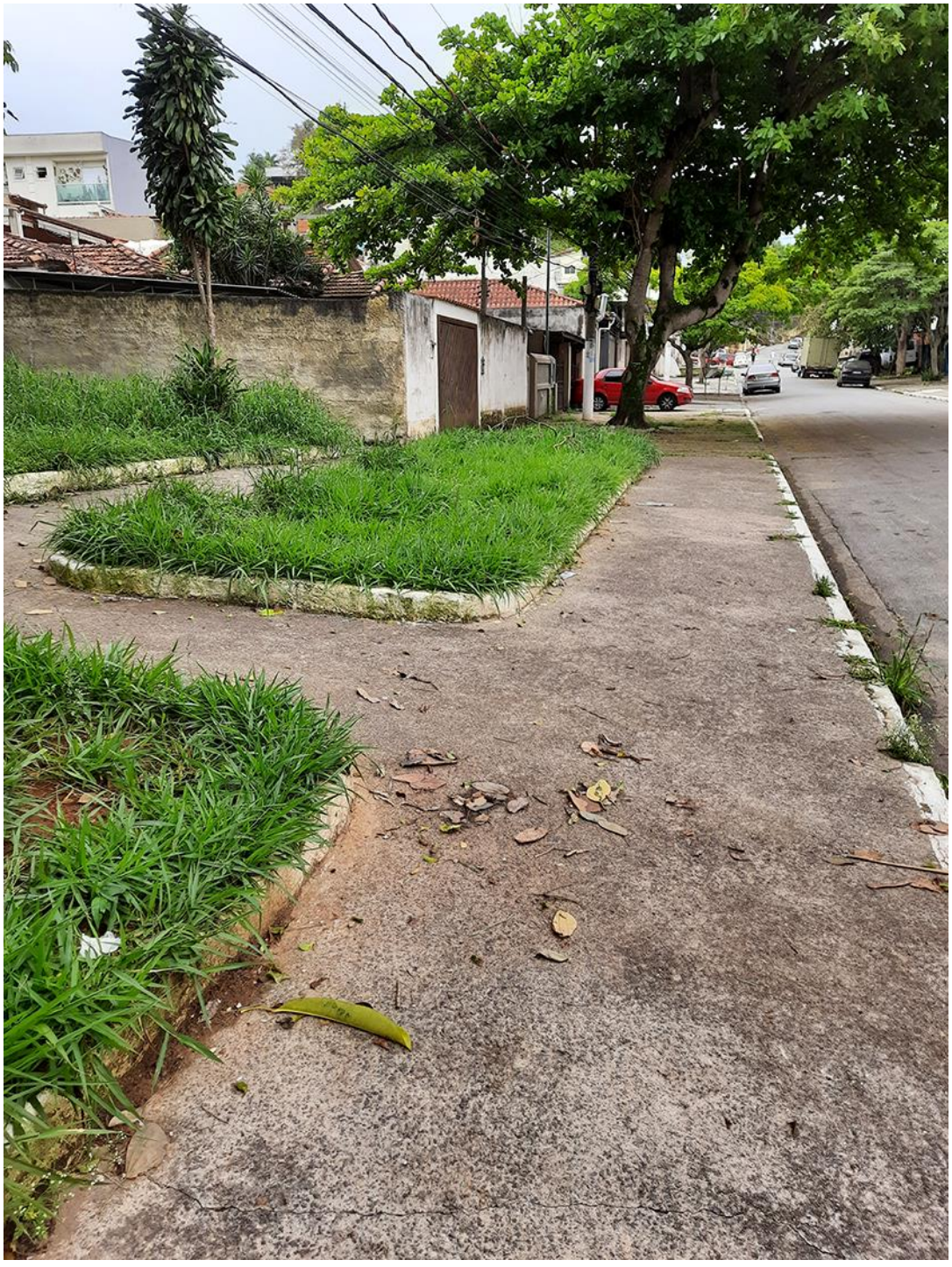

Fig. 5: Photograph of the former house of Antônio Brandão (José Piedade St. No. 21). Source: Dorea, 2022.

Praça Guilhermina-Esperança (Guilhermina-Esperança Square)

In 2012, Slam da Guilhermina was created at the Guilhermina-Esperança subway station. The initiative was taken by Alcade when they noticed that the square had the potential to host literary gatherings and slams due to its easy accessibility. The square has a circular shape and is surrounded by benches, which make it look like an arena theater (Melo, 2021), as shown in Figure 6. Its history in other peripheries' literary gatherings also led to the spreading of artistic expressions to the Eastern Zone. The Slam (Figure 7) is "the world's first slam in a public square" (Melo, 2021, p. 85, our translation), serving as a channel for marginal culture and a voice for the suburb population to express its literature.

Fig. 6: Square at Guilhermina-Esperança Subway Station. Source: Dorea, 2022.

Fig. 7: Picture of an event promoted by Slam da Guilhermina. Source: Dorea, 2022.

4 The Architecture of the Afrocentered Landscape: Process and Design

A connection route was developed between the mapped Black territories in Vila Matilde, considering oral traditions and Black cultural expressions such as samba and slam poetry. This interconnection was elaborated through understanding the African philosophy of ubuntu, which will be explained later. As part of the research, the areas that are significant to Black history and present-day Black issues were mapped, and the schools in the surrounding areas were identified. Based on the experiences of Black authors and those from peripheral areas, the research hypothesized that public peripheral schools could be considered as Black territorialities. This is because the sociability among students and peripheral culture embedded in their experiences can strengthen a communal, ancestral sense of belonging and collective support. On the other hand, when students from suburban schools enter institutions located in central and predominantly white regions, the territorially established bonds may not exist, and the oppressive environment may appear even more hostile to Black people.

Schools stand out as spaces for learning about Black people and epistemological reflections and as places of sociability and oral traditions. With this focus, the connection through routes intersecting in the urban landscape sought to establish a strong link with the community. The proposed route can be traversed on foot, by bicycle, or using public transportation, encouraging the appropriation of public space. This approach aims to promote accessibility and inclusion, enabling a more democratic and integrated use of the route in daily life. The objective of connecting Black territories, cultural expressions, and schools is to create experiences that value Afro-Brazilian history and culture, promoting the exchange of knowledge, local identity and strengthening community ties.

The initiative can promote cultural diversity, fight racism, and build a more inclusive city. This proposed connection between Black territories — considering public schools as part of them, as indicated in Figure 8 — can contribute to complying with Law 10.639/2003, which establishes the mandatory inclusion of Afro-Brazilian history and culture in the school curriculum. To understand the surroundings and points raised for the route, an analysis of the territory was carried out based on various elements: the presence of educational facilities, as the route has an educational character; morphological characteristics; and an analysis of mobility between defined points. Analyses of the territories were also conducted to understand the availability of access to the territories through public transportation.

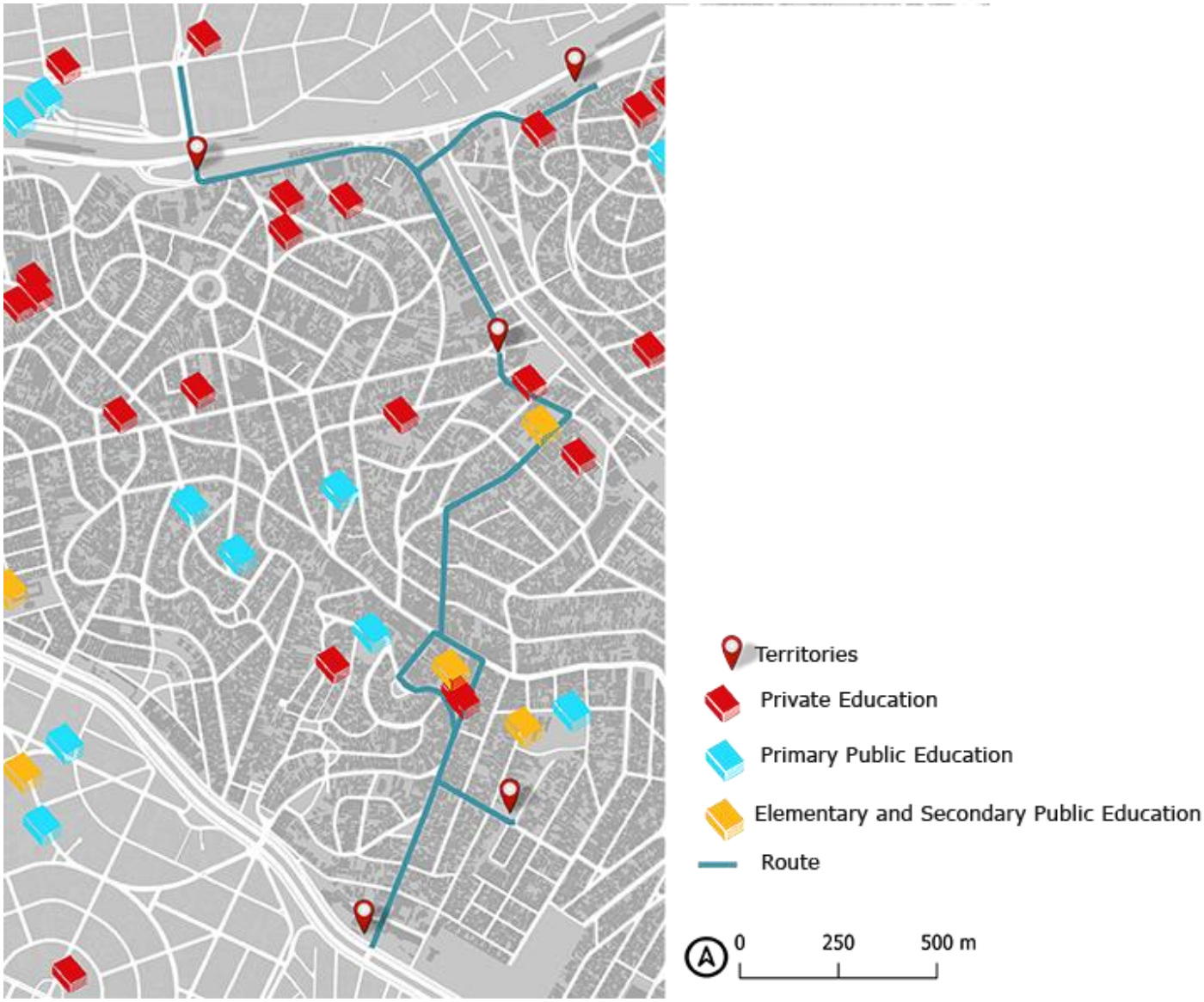

Fig. 8: Map with schools near the route. Source: Base Cartográfica MDC/SMUL adapted by the authors, 2022. Accessed on: 03/08/2021.

Field visits, mapped in Figure 9, were also conducted to better understand the problems and potentialities in the territories. This analysis allowed a deeper understanding of the real conditions and existing challenges. The combination of different approaches — analysis of facilities, morphological aspects, public transportation, and local analyses — provided a foundation for defining the project's approach and identifying the primary considerations to be addressed in developing its Afrocentric design process guidelines.

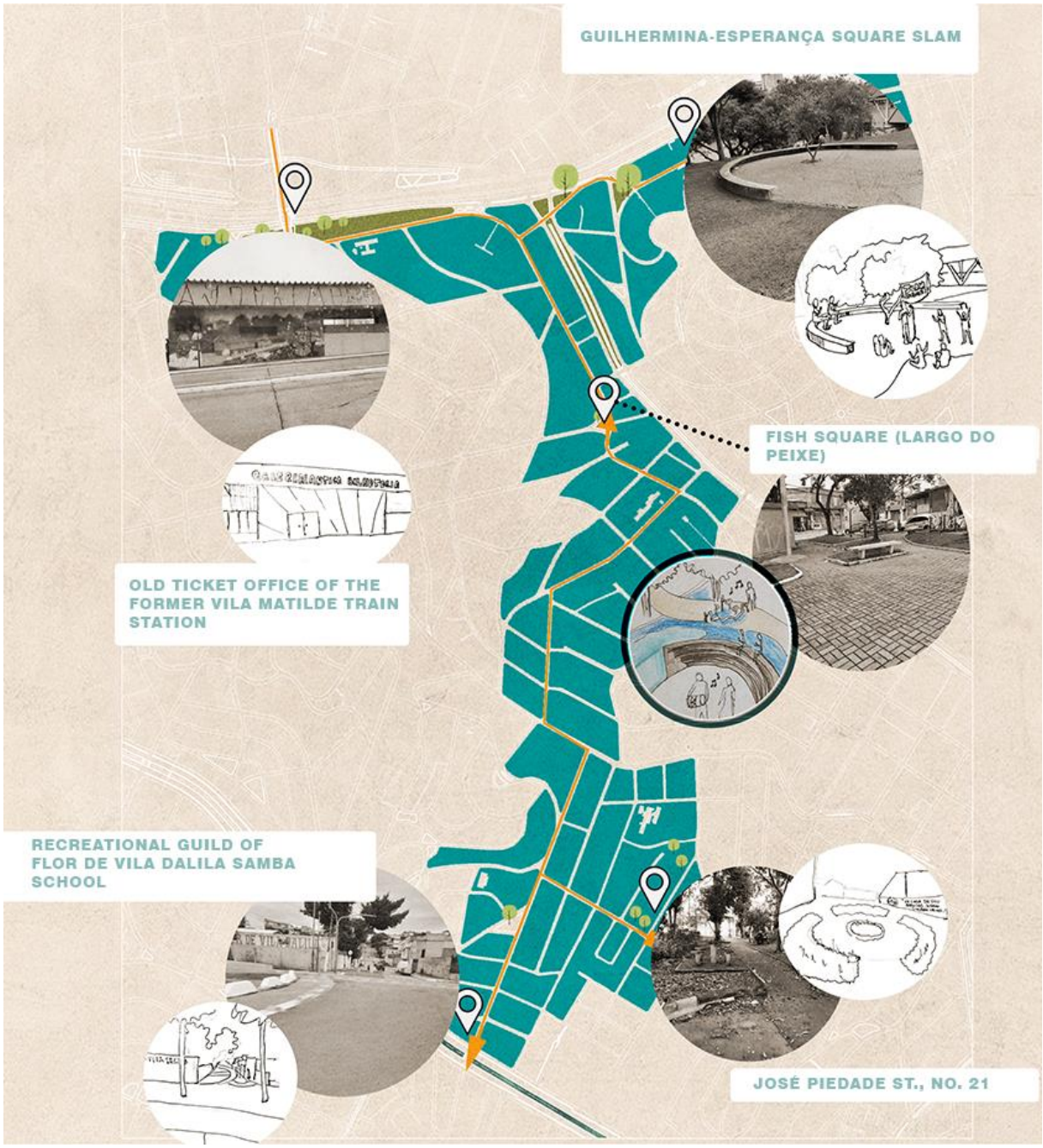

Fig. 9: Map made from field visits with mapped Black territories. Source: Dorea, 2022.

Kuumba: The Process

The project process was named Kuumba, which means creativity in Swahili. According to Noguera (2012), Kuumba is the ability to create from ancestry to shape a better future community. Kuumba synthesizes the Afrocentric design process path to rethink the presence and participation of the Black community in the Vila Matilde district based on African diasporic values. The Afrocentric design process takes center stage here, as the proposal requires rethinking urban space in Landscape Architecture, departing from the Cartesian approach usually proposed in Schools of Architecture and Urbanism. Thus, there is a greater demand to understand African philosophy, worldview, and knowledge to analyze their symbols and subsequently materialize ideas, outlining the realization of a decolonial project.

The path connecting the mapped black territories was developed based on an understanding of the African philosophy of ubuntu, a word present in the Zulu and Xhosa languages of South Africa. The existence of ubuntu is defined by the existence of others (Cunha

Junior, 2010). This perspective views the world as a network of connections among ancestry, community, and nature (Malomalo, 2019), which helps to understand the world as a set of related processes. Ubuntu is directly related to African social values relating to orality, ancestry, and nature. The philosophy of orality refers to the Ubuntu philosophy when it invites encounter and dialogue. Additionally, ancestry and ubuntu have a direct relationship. For the Bantu people, the ancestor plays a central role in maintaining the community.

After studying the established framework, field visits, and dialogues with local figures, the project process stages were as follows: studying the African understanding of landscape memorialization, narrowing the study to the worldview of African peoples that influenced Brazilian culture (Bantu peoples); spatializing the dimensions of Bantu thought and worldview represented by the ubuntu philosophy and fostering guidelines for the project by defining the landscape approach. The research began with studying the African understanding of memorialization in the landscape. According to Harriet Ngubane, African traditions and practices include forms of memorialization that are not restricted to commemorative buildings or monuments (Vosloo & Young, 2020).

This perspective is complemented by the memorialization process proposed by Sara Zewde for the Cais do Valongo in Rio de Janeiro. In this case, the traditional Western idea of a memorial was abandoned, based on marking the time when the event firmly remains in the past, represented by individual monuments such as statues, obelisks, and plaques with inscribed names (Reut, 2018). Zewde, on the other hand, seeks to incorporate the past and present in the project's conception through Afro-descendant culture, going beyond the simple act of remembering and honoring, as shown in Figure 10. An effort was made to understand African culture's worldview and intrinsic values through the analysis of memorialization from the African perspective. Given the multiplicity of peoples and ethnicities, the study of the African diaspora focused on the people that significantly influenced Brazilian Black culture and identity, the Bantu.

Fig. 10: Illustrative image of Sara Zewde's project for the Cais do Valongo. Source: Landscape Architecture Magazine, 2021. Available at: https://landscapearchitecturemagazine.org/tag/sara-zewde/. Accessed on: 24/06/2021.

The Bantu stand out as a group of ethnolinguistic and culturally affiliated peoples located in the current territories of Central, West Central, Southern Africa, and parts of East Africa. They were the predominant group among all enslaved Africans brought to Brazil. The creative process developed stands out in defining the project as it seeks to materialize decoloniality and Afrocentrality in the design praxis, aiming to deconstruct and break free from the deeply rooted chain of Eurocentrism present in design praxis. More than the final product, the process reflects the journey and development of its conception, which seeks to understand the four proposed guidelines: connection, ancestry, nature, and orality, presented in Figure 11, following the defined and mapped path based on African thought represented by ubuntu.

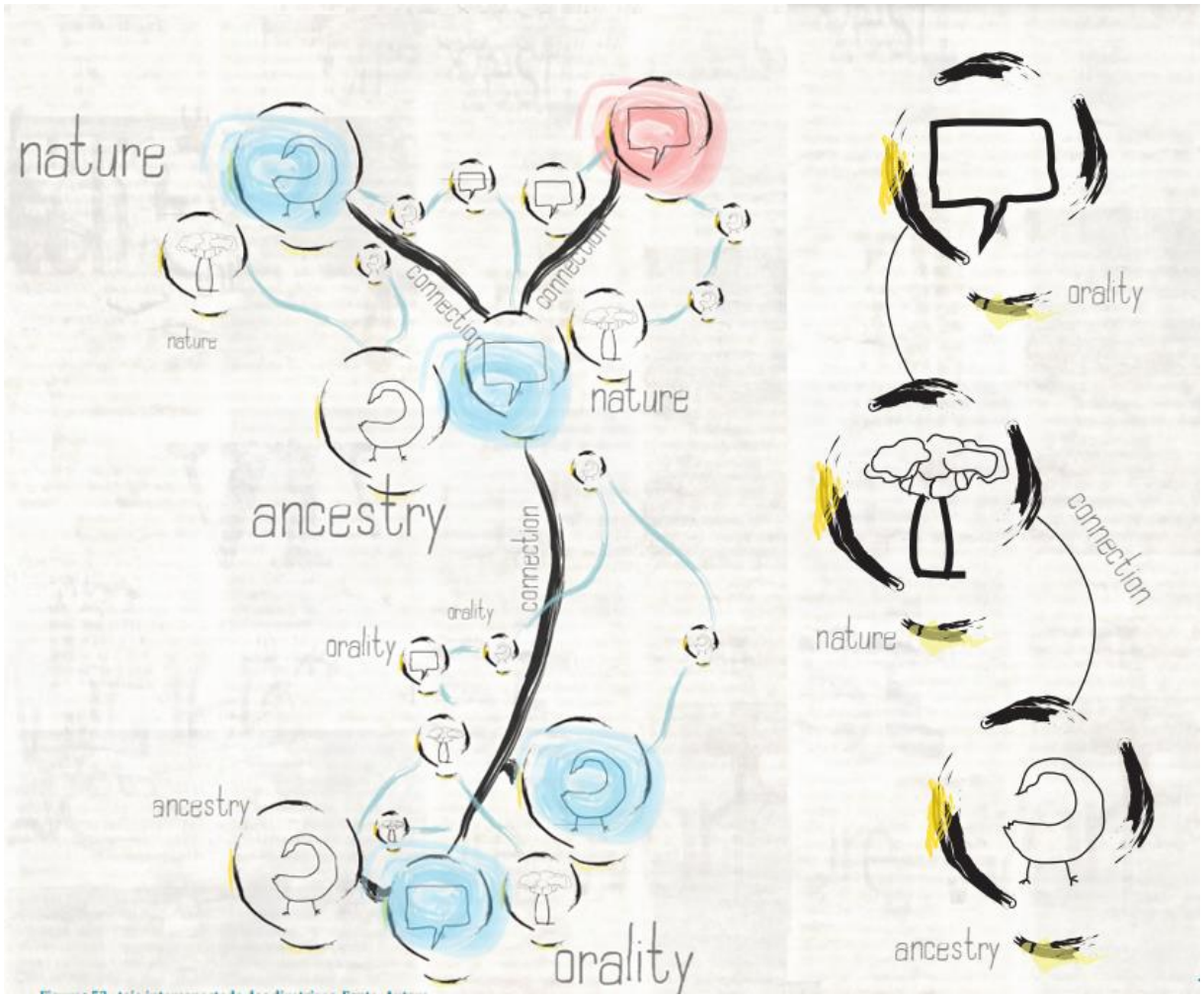

Fig. 11: Diagrams with project guidelines. Source: Dorea, 2022.

Understanding the interconnections and relationships expressed by ubuntu, where nature (kintu), community (bantu), ancestry, and orality (muntu) are highlighted, plays a fundamental role in project development. From the guidelines directly related to the ubuntu philosophy, sketches and studies were carried out to materialize these dimensions in public spaces of the mapped Black territories, associating them with the cultural characteristics that define the Black territories of the Vila Matilde district. The initial studies conducted in sketches considered the aspects of memorialization from the African worldview. Design solutions were sought to materialize symbols, forms, and colors that articulate black history and memory. Figure 12 illustrates the study of organic nature and rhythm that characterize the cultural manifestations of Black territories of the district through samba and circle movements. These symbols were applied in the formal design of urban spaces.

Fig. 12: Images and sketches illustrating the design process. Source: Dorea, 2022. Accessed on: 06/08/2023. Couple of master of ceremonies (mestre-sala) and flag bearer (porta-bandeira) from Nenê, at Carnival 2009. Source: Adapted from Wikipedia, 2009. Available at: https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nen%C3%AA_de_Vila_Matilde. Accessed on: 06/08/2023. Slam event photograph. Source: Motta, Rodrigo, 2017. Accessed on: 06/08/2023.

Finally, the color palette took into account the flag colors of Nenê de Vila Matilde and Flor de Vila Dalila samba schools and the Slam da Guilhermina flag, with blue, red, and yellow predominating as the colors used in the project, as illustrated in Figure 13.

Fig. 13: Nenê de Vila Matilde's flag Source: Wikipedia. Available at: https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nen%C3%AA_de_Vila_Matilde#/media/Ficheiro:Nen%C3%AA_Vila_Matilde.jpg. Accessed on: 06/08/2023. Flor de Vila Dalila's flag. Source: Wikipedia. https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flor_da_Vila_Dalila#/media/Ficheiro:Flor_da_Vila_Dalila.png. Accessed on: 06/08/2023. Slam da Guilhermina's flag. Source: Twitter. Available at: https://pbs.twimg.com/profile_images/1101175590386835456/b8k4D7z__400x400.png. Accessed on: 06/08/2023.

The Afrocentric Project

The Afrocentric Landscape Architecture Project can be a step towards constructing an approach connected to Afro-Brazilian cultural and historical roots. As the project is inserted at the urban scale, an urban plan was developed based on the creative process and defined guidelines: orality, ancestry, connection, and nature. It encompasses interventions in the landscape that include:

- Mapped territories: Largo do Peixe, Avenida Dalila, No. 700, Rua José Piedade No. 21, the Square adjacent to the Guilhermina-Esperança subway, and the Old Ticket Office of Vila Matilde train station.
- The community: Represented by public schools where the insertion of urban libraries was proposed, called oralitura urbana;
- The interconnection route between territories: Encompasses the open spaces that make up the route, called ancestral transition territories;

The urban plan, illustrated in Figure 14, spatializes the project's general proposals. It highlights the changes made in mapped Black territories, prioritizing an organic layout, and materializing design solutions based on the ubuntu philosophy. The following topics will explain which design solutions were adopted for each of the four project guidelines: Connections, Nature, Orality, and Ancestry, which are linked to the Afrocentric project's design architectural party.

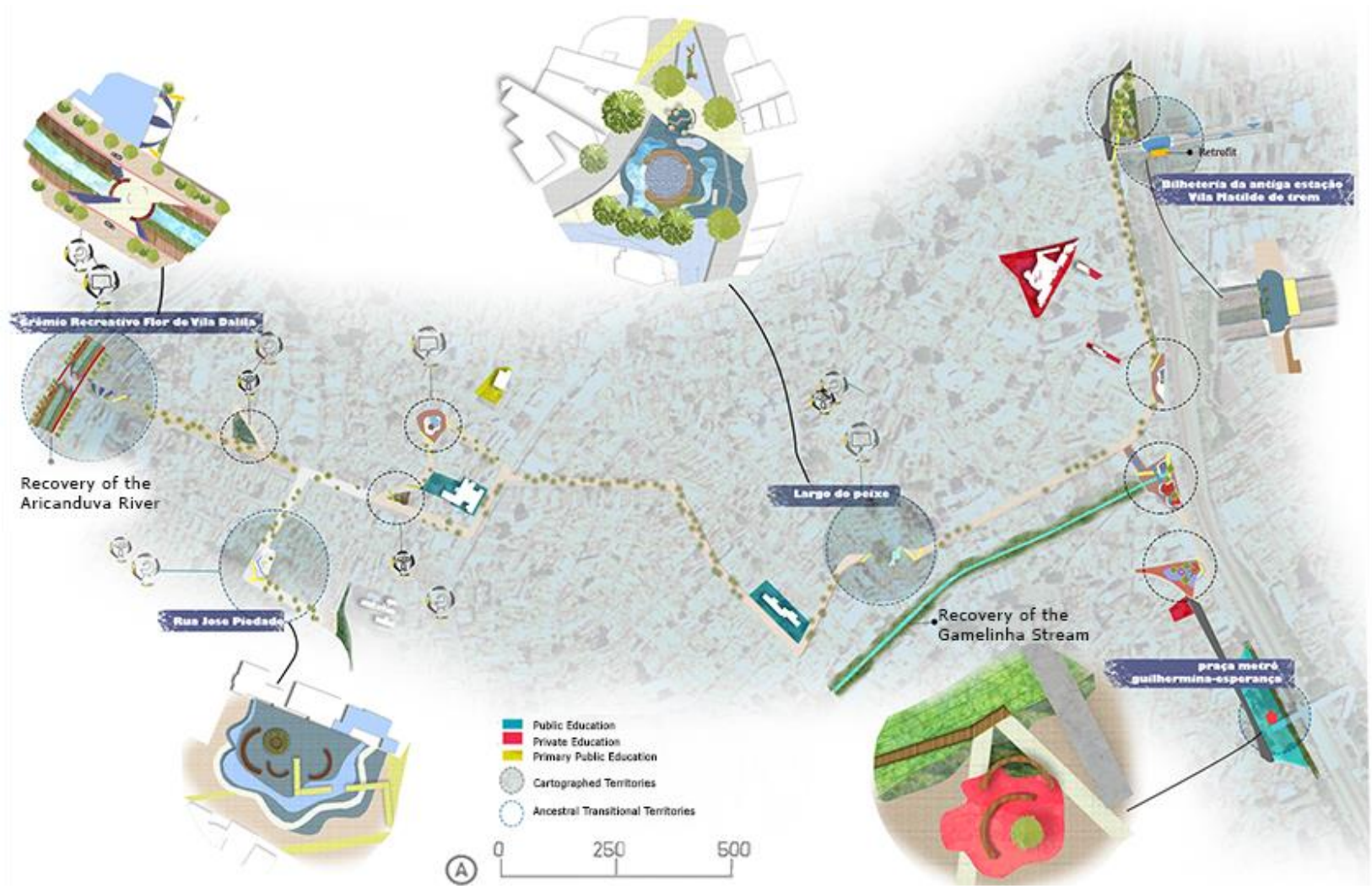

Fig. 14: Urban plan. Source: Dorea, 2022.

Connections

Connections are established through a green corridor that connects the mapped territories and ancestral transition territories, as previously indicated in Figure 14. These territories are characterized mainly by open spaces, which allow for creating an urban green

system, promoting biodiversity and connection with nature. Additionally, there are specific proposals for mapped territories lacking urbanity connecting to the urban open space system. Figures 15 and 16 illustrate the concept of the Afrocentric Project materialized in spaces that include diverse urban furniture and equipment, designs, and pavement colors associated with Black memory and symbols highlighted earlier.

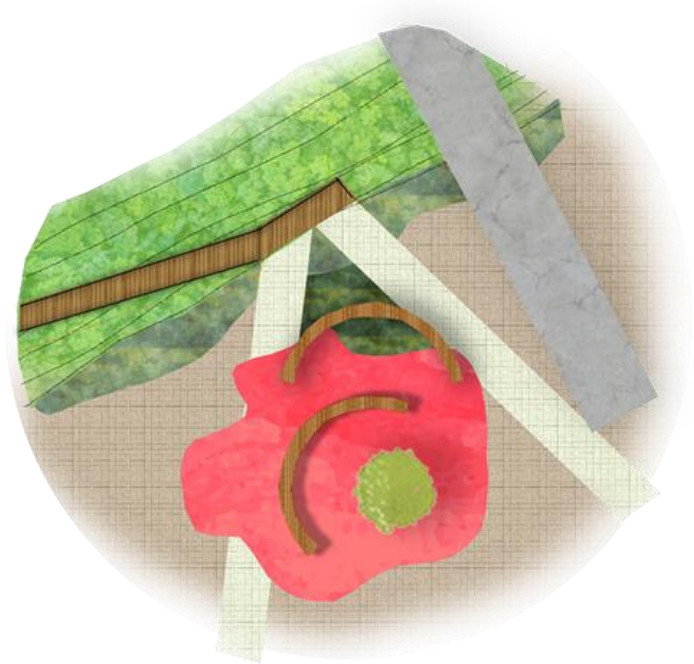

Fig. 15: Afrocentric project plan for the subway square and Slam da Guilhermina use. Source: Dorea, 2022.

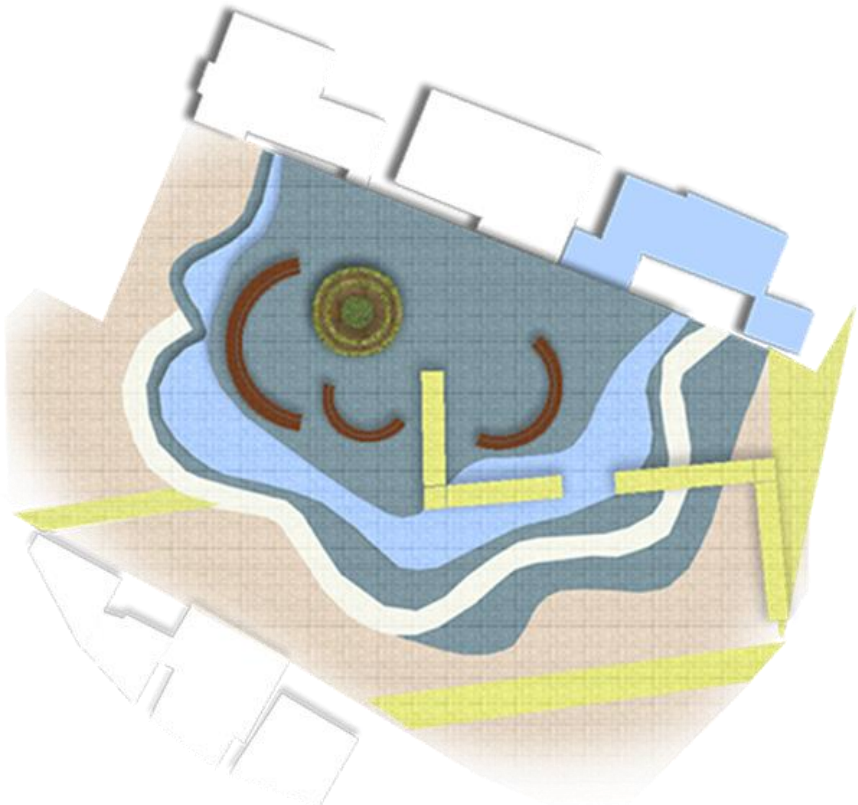

Fig. 16: Afrocentric project plan for the square next to José Piedade St., No. 21 Source: Dorea, 2022.

Another guideline materialization example is the connection of the Flor de Vila Dalila's shed to the public space surrounding. In this proposition, the recovery of Aricanduva stream, integrative floor design, and the revitalization of the bridge that connects the two lanes of Aricanduva Avenue are included (Figures 17 and 18).

Fig. 17: Afrocentric project plan for public areas around Flor de Vila Dalila's shed. Source: Dorea, 2022.

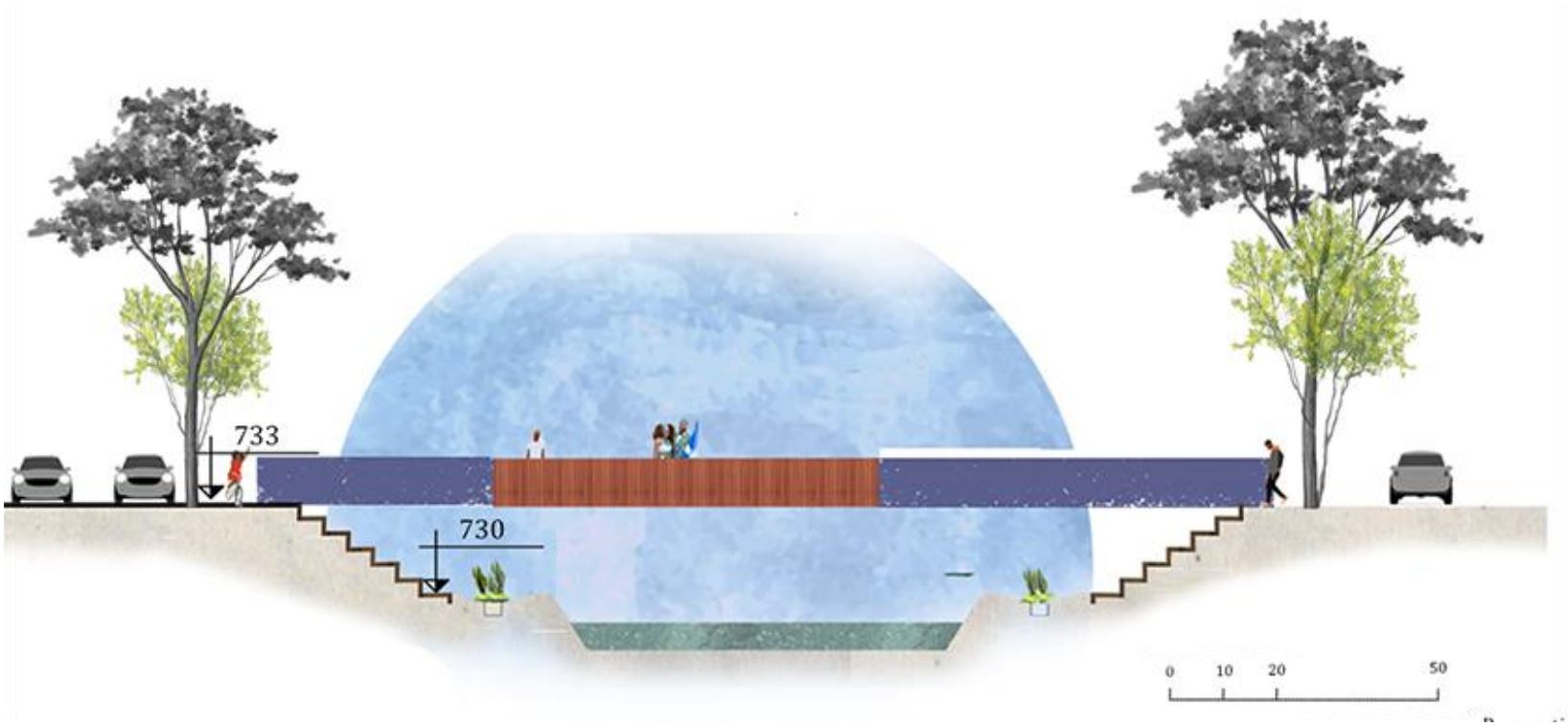

Fig. 18: Section of the Afrocentric project for public areas around Flor de Vila Dalila's shed. Source: Dorea, 2022.

Nature

Ethnobotany was adopted for vegetation choice in green areas, which consists of the relationship between the community and vegetation. Species used in African matrix religions were selected, not only for their ancestry but also for the intrinsic relationships with cultural manifestations such as samba and religious practices, seeking to rescue Black memory. This connection is evidenced by the report of Nenê, who mentions the importance of resorting to a "saravazinho" (Braia & Silva, 2000) to open paths and ensure Nenê de Vila Matilde Samba School’s victory. In Largo do Peixe, for example, the Purple Glory Tree (Tibouchina granulosa), strongly connected to the Nanã orisha due to its purple leaves, and the Ficus adhatodifolia tree linked to the Iroko orisha were used for landscaping (Azevedo, 2015), as shown in Figures 19 and 20.

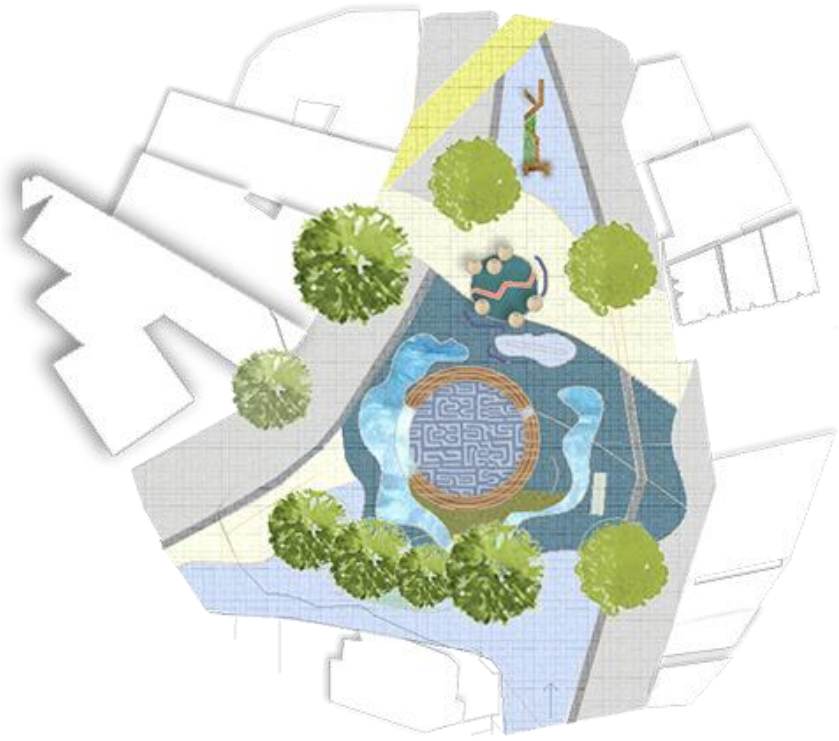

Fig. 19: Afrocentric project plan for Largo do Peixe Source: Dorea, 2022.

Fig. 20: Section of the Afrocentric project for Largo do Peixe Source: Dorea, 2022.

Nature was also considered through the recovery of Aricanduva stream. Rain gardens with plant species such as Snake Plant (Sansevieria trifasciata) and water lettuce (Pistia Stratiotes), recommended for bio-swales, were also included.

Orality

Oralities are explored in proposition of sociability spaces and through sound toys (Figure 21), additionally, a module for oralitura was devised to be installed in external front setbacks that connect to public space. The modules function as small squares and serve as lending libraries for books by Black authors (Figure 22). The term "oralitura" derives from a neologism created by Martins (2021), which breaks with the duality between oral and written word when analyzing Black festivities and congos:

> [...] nuances in this term the singular inscription of oral record that, like "littera" (letter), writes the subject in the narratee and enunciative territory of a nation, imprinting, in the neologism, its value of "litura," language erasure, significant alteration, constituting the difference and alterity of individuals, culture, and their symbolic representations (Martins, 1997, p. 21, our translation).

The oralitura modules, therefore, seek the intersection between oral memory, as they are associated with Black territories of samba and slam in the surroundings, and written memory, as they rescue and democratizing Black voices present in written records. Finally, ancestry is transversal to the proposed guidelines and the formal design of the project. It materializes in representations that rescue the Afro-Brazilian history and memory, giving voice and reverence to the ancestors.

Fig. 21: Sound toys. Source: Dorea, 2022.

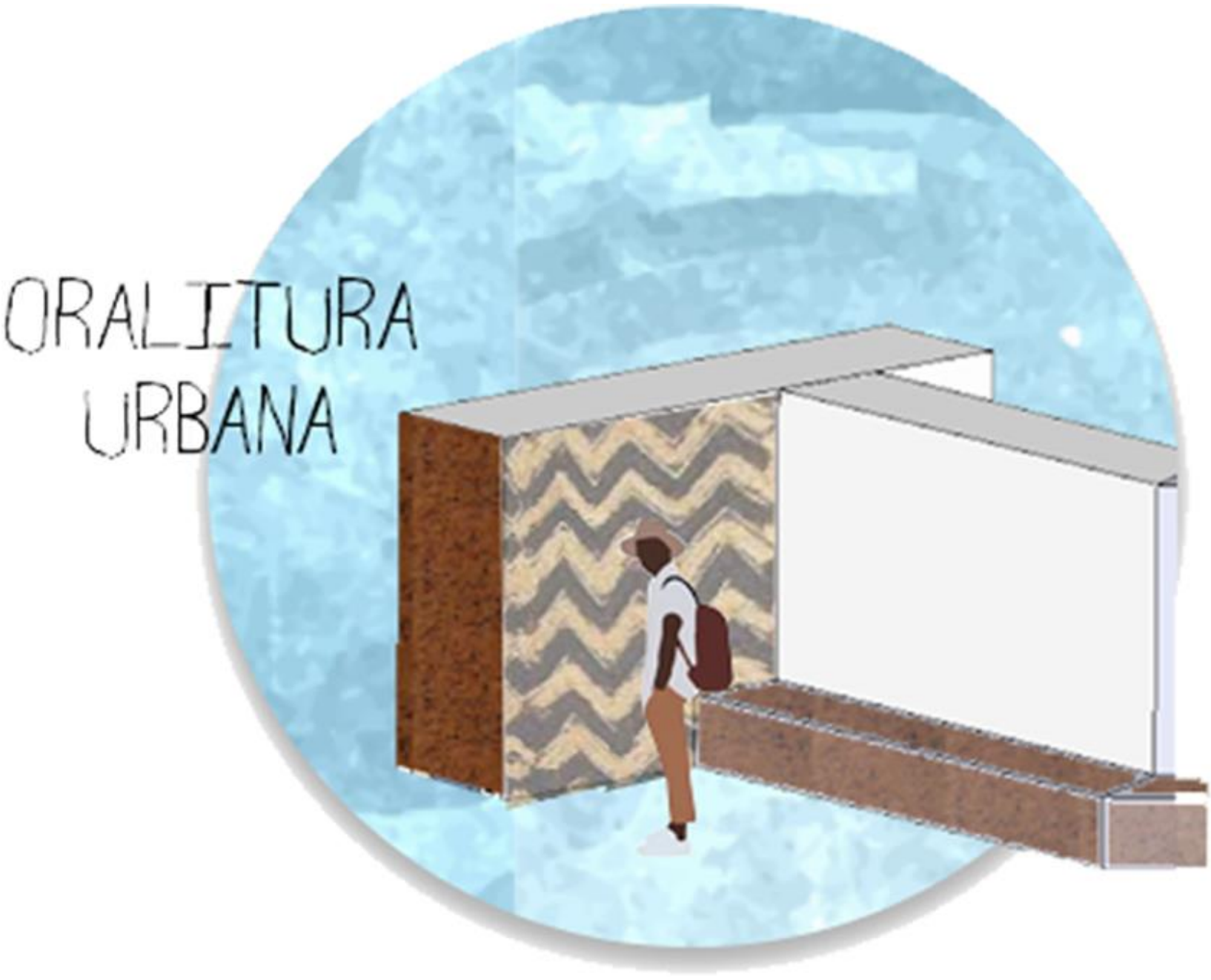

Fig. 22: Oralitura Space. Source: Dorea, 2022.

5 Final Considerations

The valuation and materialization of Black memory in the Vila Matilde district has helped broaden the interpretation of the urban landscape and the design process linked to the landscape constitution, breaking narratives based on Eurocentrism. This study focused on exploring epistemologies that are embedded in the decolonial discourse, enabling a better comprehension of how the hierarchy of knowledge manifests itself in the urban space and in Afrocentrism, which directs the attention towards the practices of designing landscapes and memorials that are rooted in African and Afro-Brazilian cultures, which are the defining features of the Black territories of the district. Pathways were then sought to materialize Black memory in urban space through an Afrocentric design process and routes for possible forms of memorialization and identity through African worldview and Afro-Brazilian culture. Rethinking project practice has become a challenge due to the dominance of Eurocentric design methods in the teaching of Architecture and Urbanism, as well as the lack of academic materials related to Afrocentrism, Black culture, architecture, urbanism, and landscaping.

Questions about the Eurocentric constitution of urban landscapes extend beyond production and projects. The design process, structured from the African cosmology, became a tool for rescuing Black identity in urban space. The development of this Afrocentric design process, embedded in the decolonial debate, was essential to highlight other perspectives on the relationship between urban space, landscape design, identity, and memory. This vision was expanded by going beyond the limits of form, design, and Western elements of memory in urban space and by using elements of nature, understanding the landscape beyond the visual dimension. However, the proposition of the project process from Afrocentrism is not exhausted in the project and studies proposed here. This study also seeks to foster continuities in debates and discussions about counter-hegemonic, decolonial, and Afrocentric design process in architecture, urbanism, and landscaping.

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