The Quilombo and the Favela: Solidarity during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Vale De Ribeira, Brazil

https://www.e-ir.info/2025/09/08/the-quilombo-and-the-favela-solidarity-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-in-vale-de-ribeira-brazil/

CARLA LADEIRA PIMENTEL ÁGUAS, ANA CAROLINA OLIVEIRA MARCUCCI LUCAS CéSAR RODRIGUES DA SILVA AND MAíRA RODRIGUES DA SILVA, SEP 8 2025

This is a part of the article series Decolonial Praxis: Going Beyond Empty Words, edited by Fernando David Márquez Duarte, Dulce Alarcón Payán and Javier Daniel Alarcón Mares. Editorial and Translation Assistant: Lorenia Gutiérrez Moreto Cruz.

An unusual scene caused a great impact in the peripheral regions of some cities in the state of São Paulo, Brazil, during the Covid-19 pandemic: people lining up and smiling, receiving donations of diverse and healthy organic food directly from the hands of the farmers. There were nearly 330 tons of food, destined for approximately 45,000 people, between May 2020 and February 2022. This scenario of solidarity was the result of the Emergency Plan launched by farmers from rural black communities – the so-called quilombos – of the Ribeira Valley region, which, in collaboration, distributed their abundant products to vulnerable families during the health crisis. The objective was to simultaneously allow income generation and food security, minimizing the impacts of the pandemic. Before the health crisis, the Quilombolas Farmers Cooperative of Vale do Ribeira (Cooperquivale) sold most of its products for school feeding through the National School Feeding Program (PNAE) of the Brazilian Ministry of Education. However, when schools closed due to the pandemic, the municipal governments of São Paulo, Santos, Santo André and Cajati suspended their contracts with the cooperative. In response to the crisis, Cooperquivale and its partners created the Emergency Plan to raise funds to organize production and distribute food in the poorest areas of urban centers, known in Brazil as favelas, or by the emic term with great political-identity meaning, *quebrada*.

Through a “consortium of donations”, Cooperquivale, in association with the Socio-Environmental Institute (ISA) and other institutions, managed to commercialize food production in areas of great socioeconomic vulnerability. According to Marcucci and Machado (2023, 38),”From this initiative, links between quilombo and favela were highlighted, which not only make the opening of future markets possible, but also reinforce common affections and alliances”. The initiative, which linked the *quilombo* with the urban black movement through food sovereignty and ancestral exchange, has prospered. Since July 2022, the *Quilombo&Quebrada* fair has been held monthly, in which products from the crops of the quilombola communities on the outskirts of the capital of São Paulo are sold. Between fruits, tubers and vegetables, the products reach consumers at subsidized prices thanks to a partnership between Mulheres de Orì and Kitanda das Minas, which are food culture ventures run by black women, and Cooperquivale.

The Ribeira Valley is located between the south of the State of São Paulo and the east of the State of Paraná, and is home to the largest continuous area of the Atlantic Forest biome of Brazil, in addition to other important biomes, such as sandbanks and mangroves. The region has a dense hydrographic network, which includes the Ribeira de Iguape river basin and the Iguape-Cananéia-Paranaguá estuarine lagoon complex, and great biodiversity. It is also home to several territories occupied by Indigenous and traditional peoples and communities, such as quilombolas, caiçaras, caboclas and ribeirinhas, who are dedicated to fishing and family farming.

The strong presence of the black population in the Vale do Ribeira is linked to the colonial period, when a huge contingent of enslaved black men and women were brought to the region, mainly from the 17th century, in the context of gold exploitation (Santos and Tattoo 2008). This occurred due to the extensive knowledge that these populations

had about the technical and technological processes to find and extract the mineral, introducing various tools and utensils such as the *bateia*, the canoe (leather utensil) and others (Silva 2020).

The so-called quilombos are black communities with differentiated identity characteristics, which maintained their logic of existence despite the end of the Brazilian slave system in 1888, as spaces of resistance to a society built on exclusion. They were fundamental in the process of liberation of the black population from the slave system, in addition to perpetuating a technological legacy of knowledge and techniques used in agriculture, mining, metallurgy and architecture, among other sectors (Gomes 2015).

The word *quilombo* disappeared from Brazilian legislation in 1888, only to reappear 100 years after the abolition of slavery, in 1988. The Federal Constitution promulgated that year gave the inhabitants of these communities the right to the lands they had occupied for centuries. It is important to highlight, according to O 'Dwyer (2007), that despite being a "historical identity" recognized in the law, being a quilombo – that is, resident in a quilombo – in the constitutional text deals with subjects existing in the present and, therefore, subjects of rights today.

Currently, in Brazil, these territories remain in dispute, and its people persist in demanding their constitutionally guaranteed rights, resisting external threats, often linked to the interests of big capital. An example of this is the production of electrical energy through dams in the region: for 30 years, the quilombos, along with other traditional peoples, helped in the fight for the non-construction of theTijuco Alto Hydroelectric Power Plant (Pinto 2014), which gave rise to the Movement of Peoples Threatened by Dams (MOAB).

Another key issue is the persistent presence of mining in the territories (ISA 2013), such as lead mining. This, which in the last century left great liabilities in the physical and biotic environment, interfered with the environmental quality of the territory until more recent years (Silva et al. 2018). Furthermore, the absence of the State in the application of the rights of the quilombola peoples, such as the titling of their lands, is notable, while traditional activities are criminalized through the application of restrictive environmental laws. These laws ignore the environmental protection exercised by the communities themselves and harm the quality of life of residents. As Normann (2021) states, the strong inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and values is a prerequisite for a responsible environmental agenda. Using the concept of green colonialism, the author discusses the dissonance between what is projected from public power about strategies to defend the environment and address problems such as climate change and what really happens in practice; a practice that necessarily has to include decolonial epistemologies.

This research is based on the concepts of coloniality (Quijano 2005; Mignolo 2005) and decolonial turn (Grosfoguel 2008; Maldonado-Torres 2006; Restrepo and Rojas 2010) to analyze the processes of perpetuation of inequalities and strategies for coping with vulnerabilities, derived from them through mutual aid. Our analysis points to another civilizational paradigm that highlights the success of community self-management and solidarity networks in a context of crisis. Non-hegemonic knowledge and forms of action distance themselves from the modern-colonial model of individualism and competitiveness, highlighting the role and effectiveness of solidarity and collective action in the defense of life.

This discussion is part of the project "ENDURE: Inequalities, Community Resilience and New Governance Modalities in a Post-Pandemic World", developed through a transatlantic platform of 15 institutions from 12 countries and funded in Brazil by the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do State of São Paulo (Fapesp). The project examines the short and long-term consequences of Covid-19, proposing a holistic vision for the study of the crisis based on new forms of mobilization/demobilization of societies and political systems.

According to Nel-lo et al. (2022), various authors have pointed out that the relationship between the impact of the epidemic and vulnerability is reciprocal. Thus, already at the very beginning of the crisis, it was warned that inequality could have a significant impact on the spread of the virus. In turn, the pandemic may have caused a persistent increase of global poverty, such that its impact could represent a setback of approximately a decade in global progress in poverty reduction. On the other hand, the authors affirm that in the context of the pandemic, very diverse people organized themselves to provide help and alleviate, to the extent possible, the effects of the situation. These practices have spread to various fields:

From the production of health materials to the provision of food, from care for the elderly to culture, from the prevention of gender violence to education and housing. The diversity of the thematic fields, the speed of their creation and dissemination, as well as the fact of relying on intensive and innovative use of ICT have been some of the characteristics of the solidarity movement on an international scale. (Nel-lo et al. 2022, 13).

The experience of the Ribeira Valley fits into this type of solidarity movement. Among the variety of initiatives that proliferated in the urban peripheries and traditional communities of Brazil, it was an example of success that even generated several developments. Relying on decolonial theory as the backdrop that crosses this discussion, we contextualize the pandemic in Brazil, pointing out how it victimized the most vulnerable populations in a scenario of great inequality. Next, we will focus on the experience of facing the health crisis in the Ribeira Valley, to finally reflect on the role of solidarity in extreme moments.

Pandemic and Decolonial Thinking

The continuity between the colonial system and the present has been defined by Aníbal Quijano (2005) as coloniality, a concept that operates at each of the levels of subjective and social existence. The coloniality of power refers to the relations of domination established and perpetrated through European expansion. Walter Mignolo (2005) describes the first exchange of glances between Indigenous people and Europeans as their point zero. The hierarchization of knowledge according to these criteria of hegemonic validation is called coloniality of knowledge. At the level of subjectivities, the naturalization of the supposed scale of superiority and inferiority between subjects is called coloniality of being.

The context generated by colonization is permanently updated in various forms, becoming the modus operandi and constitutive component of modernity (Maldonado-Torres 2006). The institutionalized colonial system obscures the continuities between the past and current hierarchies of the world-system. For this reason, Maldonado-Torres proposes the concept of the decolonial turn as an invitation to subvert this historically imposed order.

Thinking about the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil means analyzing an exclusive structure based on the criteria of gender, age, race, class and disability. The generic notion of “humanity”, developed by the Western universalist imagination, has as its counterpart the dehumanization of the subaltern “other”. As Fanon (1975) warned, it is not possible to subject subjects to servitude without inferiorizing them. The “other”, being “inferior”, becomes invisible and disposable.

In crisis contexts, exclusionary structures become more evident. Not by chance, a study that evaluated the performance of 98 countries in combating the pandemic revealed that Brazil was the second in the world with the highest number of deaths and the third in number of cases (Rossi et al. 2022). The virus killed nearly 700,000 people in the country and its confrontation was marked by disagreements, denialism, misinformation and disarticulation between different levels of power. It is important to keep in mind that in Brazil the official figures did not report hundreds of thousands of cases, the real number being much higher.

As described by Rossi and his colleagues (2022), the denialism of the Federal Government and its ineffectiveness are clear not only by the alarming data from Brazil, but also by the resignation of two Health Ministers in the space of just one month. Both had disagreements with then-president Jair Bolsonaro about the measures to combat Covid-19, especially about the use of treatment drugs without proven efficacy, such as the “covid kit”, and the relaxation of social isolation (Ferreira 2021). To replace these ministers, Jair Bolsonaro appointed an army general, Eduardo Pazuello, who even claimed to be unaware of Brazil’s Unified Health System (SUS), worsening the pandemic situation. In 2021, a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (CPI) was established to look for omissions and irregularities in the far-right federal government – which caused a huge number of deaths in several regions of the country.

The authors add that, in this scenario, the peripheries of large cities – the favelas or ravines – concentrate environmental characteristics conducive to the rapid spread of viruses such as Covid-19. In addition to the high concentration of people per household, most houses have poor ventilation and little natural light; in addition to being

areas with little access to basic sanitation and water services. According to Rossi at al. (2022, 84):

Brazil is one of the most unequal countries in the world and one of the three with the most deaths from Covid-19. The pandemic has had a special impact on Brazilian cities, to the point that, for example, in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro more people have died from the virus than in 162 countries, making it clear that the the disease does not affect all the world's population equally.

Maricato (1982) states that the urban peripheries are spaces of residence of the working class and the less favored popular strata, largely due to the rural-urban migratory movements that intensified in Brazil in the mid-1950s. Their formation is related to the processes of commercialization of urban space and the advance of real estate markets, in addition to the absence of inclusive and accessible housing policies. In this context, many workers turn to self-construction as a way to satisfy their basic needs. These are conglomerates of small houses, built on small lots, spread over a vast occupied area, generally far from commercial and business centers, and with a precarious urban infrastructure. In favelas, most residents build their houses without owning the land, which gives rise to numerous territorial conflicts.

In addition to this scenario, there are other aggravating factors related to the risky places where these homes are built. Most precarious settlements are located in regions exposed to flooding, erosion and landslides, near streams or environmental preservation areas. The insufficiency of public policies forces vulnerable populations to build their homes in dangerous places. When the growth of the favelas reaches a limit, they begin to expand vertically, in buildings with more than one floor, concentrating a high population density.

Citing data from the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz), Rossi and collaborators (2022) point out that the coronavirus tended to spread more quickly in the poorest urban areas, where public policies to support collective protection were lacking. Santos et al. (2020) add low employment protection and lack of access to health services to the list of weaknesses. In addition, the neoliberal political agendas that neglect public services, weaken the ability to respond to complex problems and amplify the vulnerabilities of historically neglected populations.

The racial perspective is necessary to understand vulnerability in Brazil. Based on 2018 data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), Estrela and her colleagues (2020) report that 75 % of people living in extreme poverty in Brazil declare themselves black or brown. It should be noted that not all people who fall into the category of extreme poverty are inhabitants of favelas, since this contingent includes, for example, inhabitants of the Amazon rainforest and the Pantanal of Mato Grosso. Furthermore, according to data from the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (Neri 2022), the number of people with a per capita family income of up to 497 reais per month reached 62.9 million Brazilians in 2021, around 29.6 % of the country's total population. This figure in 2021 corresponded to 9.6 million more than in 2019, which means that poverty has never been as high in Brazil as in 2021, since the beginning of the historical series in 2012.

Race functions as a social marker. The authors analyze that gender, class and race markers are presented as a condition of fragility in the face of Covid-19 exposure in several countries. It must also be taken into account that, before the pandemic, poverty affected 33% of black women, 32% of black men and 15% of white women and men. In 2021, these figures correspond to 38%, 36%, 19% and 19%, respectively (Nassif-Pires et al. 2021). Referring to 2014 data from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Osvaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz) warned that the percentage of Indigenous Brazilians living in extreme poverty reaches 18% (Fiocruz 2016).

Two concepts are essential for theorizing the Covid-19 pandemic's impact on quilombos: the networks of solidarity and affection (Dias and Gitahy 2021) and the concept of reparation (Klein, 2020). About the first one, given the inefficiency and lack of governance of the Brazilian Federal Government, the confrontation of the pandemic fell to the other levels of government and to civil society itself, through mutual support practices, as described by Rossi et al. (2022). Networks of solidarity and affection, understood as collective initiatives for the defense of life, point towards civilizational paradigms that operate according to other logics, different from modern Western exclusionary logics. Like the competitive and individualistic ideal of the West, these models of acting on the world also make up the fabric

of different societies, becoming especially visible in critical periods by favoring relationships of affection, care and resistance. As for the second concept, it analyzes that the other paradigms that emerge from the actions of subaltern peoples suggest the possibility of profound systemic changes, which Naomi Klein (2020) has called years of reparation:

It is a framework that unites the simultaneous breakdown between the political and ecological spheres. It challenges us to engage in reparation efforts on multiple interrelated fronts. To repair the destroyed infrastructure, to repair the damage done to the natural world, to repair the erroneous stories of supremacy and dominance that brought us here (Klein 2020, 46).

In Ribeira Valley, the first security measures were implemented in March 2020 – ten days after the World Health Organization declared the pandemic – through access restrictions to the communities. The Forum of Traditional Peoples and Communities of the Ribeira Valley (FPCTVR) published a letter recommending local collective agreements "due to the historical abandonment and lack of differentiated medical assistance to the families of these territories and the lack of hospital beds to care for the population of the Ribeira Valley" (FPCTVR 2020 cited in Marcucci and Machado 2023, 36).

Thus, from the first moments of the crisis, the communities of the Ribeira Valley mobilized to defend life. The FPCTVR even launched a set of protection strategies against the spread of the virus, which can be summarized in five central recommendations: 1) avoid the entry of people from outside the territories; 2) avoid going to cities, except in urgent cases; 3) suspend local tourist activities; 4) organize strategies and collective agreements in the territories aimed at prevention; 5) avoid the departure of the elderly from the territories (Marcucci and Machado 2023).

Methodological Strategies

The debate presented here is part of the research being carried out within the framework of cluster 2 of the project "ENDURE: Inequalities, Community Resilience and New Governance Modalities in a Post-Pandemic World". The team that has been working with the communities of the Ribeira Valley adopts a participatory methodological approach, based on interculturality and the horizontality of dialogue between knowledge. It opposes, therefore, a hierarchical vision between university and community – or between subject and object – to confront the coloniality of knowledge. As Castro-Gómez (2005, 80) observes, "the role of scientific-technical reason is precisely to access the most hidden and recondite secrets of nature to force it to obey our imperatives of control."

In this sense, the work currently underway includes workshops in which the members of the project and the communities of the Ribeira Valley will be able to discuss the experiences of confronting the pandemic and the ancestral knowledge that served as a backdrop for these strategies. These workshops, in addition to direct observation, participant observation and semi-structured interviews, will be key moments in the development of the research and include training actions and collective production of materials, with trainers from the academic world and communities. It is important to highlight that some members of the ENDURE project sub-team belong to both the university and the quilombos, constituting border actors (Friedman 2001, Hannerz 1997) that represent the convergence of both dimensions of belonging.

In addition, the data also presents results from previous research specially prepared from non-face-to-face field work due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which included news analysis, online events, social networks, exchange of messages and telephone calls.

Abundance as Health: When the Quilombo and the Favela Meet

"What are we going to do with so many products and so many people going hungry?" This question, described by Michel Guzanchi, member of Cooperquivale (ISA et al. 2022), was fundamental for the creation of the Emergency Plan that allowed the delivery of organic food to vulnerable populations in cities during the pandemic. The cooperative, which already had experience in distribution logistics and networking, used this trajectory to act in association and jointly enable the project of protecting life through food security.

Cooperquivale was founded in 2012, with the objective of marketing the surplus production of the quilombola territories of the Ribeira Valley. It involves around 240 cooperators from 19 communities located in four municipalities in the region: Jacupiranga, Eldorado, Iporanga and Itaoca (ISA et al. 2022). The cooperative works with a great diversity of foods – since variety characterizes the traditional production of these communities – and supplies government purchasing programs, such as the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) and the National School Feeding Program (PNAE). With the closure of schools during the pandemic, school feeding was interrupted, breaking the contracts signed between Cooperquivale and the municipalities the cooperative provided services to. This generated great concern among the partners, since not only would they lose food, but they would not receive the payment resulting from its sale if there was no destination for the production.

It is worth highlighting that all the agricultural planning involved in the production of plantations in these communities requires advance planning: farmers, who are very knowledgeable about the terrain and the planting cycles, prepare by following the correct times of the process involved in growing the crop. From the choice of the location, through the process of obtaining authorization to suppress native vegetation – a requirement of the environmental legislation of the Atlantic Forest region – cutting, burning and cleaning of the space, planting, carpentry and care, until finally harvesting food after months of growing. All this, taking into account the appropriate months for each crop, the seasons, rain cycles, lunar phases, etc.

As a result, the pandemic and the subsequent loss of sales contracts occurred in the middle of the agricultural cycle, for which quilombola farmers had already invested and prepared for. This forced them to develop creative solutions to the loss of food produced and income. Therefore, what was a big problem for the production flow then became an opportunity for solidarity action with the help of the allies. As was described in the online event “Traditional Communities and Food Security in the Pandemic ”, organized by the Linha D ‘Água Institute in 2021 and broadcast through its YouTube channel (Instituto Linha D ‘água 2021), The Emergency Plan was created with the coordination of several collaborators, such as the Socio-Environmental Institute and the Linha D’ Água Institute, and was divided into two action fronts.

The first front of the Emergency Plan was dedicated to prevention against Covid-19 through the distribution of protection kits, such as masks, alcohol gel and soap in the communities of the Ribeira Valley. The second work front was the promotion of food security and income generation through the distribution of food to vulnerable populations in urban peripheries, developed by the network of allies. According to Marcucci and Machado (2023), the partners organized a consortium of donations, acting strongly through social networks and the production of news and videos – especially in a context of social distancing of the pandemic –, mobilizing fundraising campaigns and sponsors to buy food for the quilombola communities and fish from the caiçara fishing populations for distribution.

Through the participation of more than 20 organizations, food was delivered on an emergency basis to peripheral regions during 2020 and 2021, and on a more permanent basis from 2022 through sales at monthly fairs (ISA et al. 2022). In an interview, the ISA coordinator in Valle de Ribeira, Raquel Pasinato, points out:

The meeting between quilombo and periphery promotes something more than a specific solidarity action; It opens spaces for the establishment of future direct marketing between rural communities and urban peripheries. Thus, the project has become an interesting example of how traditional food production, carried out in a sustainable way and with a great accumulation of knowledge over many generations, can reach consumers in a fairer way and strengthen the relationships between traditional communities and urban peripheries (Marcucci and Machado 2023, 42).

This connection between two seemingly disconnected “worlds” generated discoveries for both parties. “Something we loved is that we normally don’t have access to organic products, because everyone knows that organic products are very expensive”, said Catarina Godoi, a leader of the São Remo favela, in São Paulo (ISA et al. 2022).

The recipients of the donations discovered other flavors never before experienced, through access to hitherto unknown products or even the surprising intensity of the flavors of foods that, although they were already known – as in the case of bananas –, did not have the same quality. For this reason, a group of women from São Remo organized an experimental kitchen to test products and recipes, which were then passed on to other families. “Our

national policy as quilombola communities is to tell Brazil and the world that real food is produced on the land. Food without pesticides, with the right to health, to life", explained Nilce Pontes, member of Conaq, in an interview, and added: "We are for life and against hunger" (ISA et al. 2022). Abundance in communities is related to the accumulation of ancestral knowledge. The Quilombola Traditional Agricultural System was recognized in 2018 by the Institute of National Historical and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN) as Cultural Heritage of Brazil. According to Luiz and colleagues, quilombola knowledge reveals a worldview focused on the social realm and aligned with ensuring rights for both their social group and the natural world, of which they are a part. (Luiz et al. 2020). Cooperation is something structuring in the territories of these communities, it is present from the self-organization for the fights against violations of rights and in favor of the territory, as well as in the very logic of producing from joint work (mutirões), religious festivals and the collective way of thinking about the land on which they live (Silva, Mazalla Neto 2019).

The persistence of this knowledge leads us to confront the coloniality of knowledge, which operates by crystallizing hierarchies between different forms of production, accumulation and transmission of knowledge. In line with a circular temporality, in quilombos ancestral knowledge interacts with the construction of futures: "People who search in tradition learn the history of what came before and know more about themselves, about the people to which they belong, the territory they occupy, the struggles that were fought, and the transformations that resulted in resistance and continuation" (Dias et al. 2022, 2).

According to Botelho and Silva, the food culture, which covers everything from planting, harvesting and guaranteeing accommodation, allows the creation of relationships of affection, learning and care between the people involved. But it goes further. It is related to knowledge about the properties of plants, seeds and herbs, about the importance of animals, about understanding the influence and impact of temperature, rain and the moon on these processes (Botelho and Silva 2022, 4).

This accumulation of knowledge also reveals the existence, in the social fabric of these communities, of other relationships between humans and nature, different from the segmentation characteristic of the Western ethos:

In the Kingdom of Tradition, men, women and children learn to observe, interpret and respect the signs of nature, because they are connected to it. Thus, when the thrush sings in the last months of the year, it is the bird opening its mouth to say that it is time to plant rice. When the saracuras sing, the stones cry or the frogs shake, the arrival of rain is announced. The phases of the moon and the way the stars appear in the sky indicate the time to plant, cultivate and harvest crops, hunt and fish, as well as extract vines, wood and other natural fibers to make artifacts, crafts and everyday utensils. There are birds that sing ominously and announce the passage to the ancestral plane. We gain time in the kingdom by talking to nature, because we would not be able to decipher the signs if we were always running, inattentive (Dias et al. 2022, 22).

Therefore, the experience of the Ribeira Valley calls us towards civilizational paradigms that do not understand nature as a resource, nor as something to control and conquer, having as its essence the African cosmoperception that understands existence as a "spider web": By moving a thread, the entire network swings, being totally connected to ancestry. As teacher Ditão, from the Ivaporunduva community, explains, "we quilombolas are the forest" (Silva 2020, 83).

From this perspective, quilombolas and the forest are one; social well-being and ecological well-being depend on each other. The understanding of ancestry, in this sense, is not only based on human beings who are gone and left their knowledge, but also on nature as the ancestor of community life itself (Silva 2020). Likewise, this paradigm is infused with solidarity, which ultimately enables community resilience, relationships of affection and care, and collective strength. The vigor of the rural black communities of the Ribeira Valley is manifested in a very tangible way through food, the ultimate fruit of belonging to the territory: "Food is history, warmth and memory" (Dias et al. 2022, 28). Through solidarity action, all of this was shared and reached the tables of peripheral urban communities, at a time of maximum vulnerability.

Conclusions: Collective and Solidarity Strategies for the Control and Protection of Life

This research, linked to the project 'ENDURE: Inequalities, Community Resilience and New Governance Modalities in a Post-Pandemic World ', is based on the idea that community mobilization, self-management and solidarity are decisive in a crisis context. Taking this reflection as a starting point, we believe that the example of the black rural communities of the Ribeira Valley, in São Paulo, Brazil, shows the potential of collective action. This is work in progress, which must advance through participatory methodologies, so that we can think together about other civilizational paths and the lessons that the pandemic has left.

This experience exposes the effects of the coloniality of power, that is, the denial of racialized and excluded populations, exposed to conditions of vulnerability since the colonization of the global South, who remain overcrowded in the urban peripheries or are often expelled from their communities in rural areas. In the face of the pandemic, peripheral communities in large cities suffered the most from its effects, which include not only access to health services and the ability to socially isolate, but also the threat of food insecurity.

Added to this is the coloniality of being, when we observe the structural racism of Brazil and the vulnerability of the black population in the face of the pandemic – especially the vulnerability of black women. This requires constant resistance and resilience. The example of the communities of the Ribeira Valley has demonstrated the role of solidarity, community self-management and networking to confront crises. Through the Emergency Plan described here, the group guaranteed the flow of production and, therefore, the generation of income for farmers. At the same time, it provided healthy food to the most vulnerable families.

This double path inspires some reflections: firstly, it helps us think about the importance of the connections between countryside and city, their interdependence and the potential contained in the union between peripheral populations. When the quilombo and the favela met, memories and discoveries of common roots emerged, which refer to the processes of colonization of bodies – in this case, mostly black bodies –, to the invisibilization of knowledge and stories, without which Eurocentric domination would not have been possible.

Secondly, this experience reminds us of the importance of territory. In the city, the poorest populations found themselves with few defenses against the health crisis, while in rural communities the existence of land on which to plant and harvest generates stronger health and defenses against adverse situations. Therefore, the existence of territory allows community autonomy. The abundant table emerges as a central element.

Thirdly, planting and harvesting healthy food is only possible with a lot of knowledge. In the case of the communities presented here, ancestral knowledge is fundamental for abundance. It is knowledge that uses their own methods, linked to the sacred and the forces of nature, which is not understood as something external to humanity. To understand the greatness of this knowledge is to confront the coloniality of knowledge.

Finally, the experience of the communities of the Ribeira Valley reveals other civilizational paradigms that coexist and compete with the modern Western hegemonic model. It is a paradigm that, on the one hand, is not guided by the dichotomy between humans and nature, but by African cosmoperception. On the other hand, it is not guided by the individualism and competition that constitute the modus operandi of capitalism. On the contrary: it is a model that only works if it is collective and supportive.

Just as the three dimensions of coloniality are intertwined, so are the pathways of decolonization. The case of the communities of the Ribeira Valley offers us an example of how the affirmation of ancestral knowledge, the vindication of the autonomy of the territories and the importance of the black quilombola peoples complement each other and become especially visible in times of crisis, that expose both the separation of people inherited from colonialism and our inevitable interdependence.

When operating a decolonial turn, what does the surrounding society have to learn from this experience? How can we drink from this fountain? If we really want to build 'years of repair', as Naomi Klein (2020) advocates, we need, as societies, to reject the systematic invisibility of people: 'Community is our best technology. To overcome the crisis, we must find our people, our peers, our bubbles, our packs, our tribes, and take care of each other' (Klein, 2020, 38). If we want healthier societies, in the broad sense of the term, we can learn from the knowledge and experiences that

emerge from people and their territories. After all, as Viviane Luiz and her colleagues affirm, “we plant health” (Luiz et al. 2020, 25).

References

Andrade, Anna Maria; and Tatto, Nilto (ed.). 2013. *Inventário cultural de quilombos do Vale do Ribeira*. São Paulo: Instituto Socioambiental.

Botelho, Andressa C.; and Silva, Frederico V. 2022. ‘Apresentação ‘. In *Na companhia de Dona Fartura, uma história sobre cultura alimentar quilombola,* edited by Luiz Marcos de França Dias, Márcia Cristina Américo, Laudessandro Marinho da Silva, and Viviane Marinho Luiz, 3–5. São Paulo: ISA.

Castro-Gómez, Santiago. 2005. ‘Ciências sociais, violência epistêmica e o problema da ‘invenção do outro ‘ ‘. In*A colonialidade do saber: eurocentrismo e ciências sociais. Perpectivas latino-americanas,* edited by Edgardo Lander, 80–87. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.

Dias, Luiz Marcos de França; Américo, Márcia Cristina; Silva, Laudessandro Marinho da; and Luiz, Viviane Marinho (eds). 2022. *Na companhia de Dona Fartura, uma história sobre cultura alimentar quilombola.* São Paulo: ISA.

Dias, Erica; and Gitahy, Leda. 2021. ‘Redes de Solidariedade e Afeto: a defesa da vida em tempos de COVID-19 ‘. *Observatório da Imprensa*, November 30, 2021. http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/coronavirus-covid-19/redes-de-solidariedade-e-afeto-a-defesa-da-vida-em-tempos-de-covid-19/.

Estrela, Fernanda; Soares, Caroline; Cruz, Moniky; Silva, Andrey; Santos, Iemima; Moreira, Tânia; Lima, Adriana; Silva, Márcia. 2020. ‘Pandemia da covid-19: refletindo as vulnerabilidades à luz do gênero, raça e classe ‘.*Ciência e Saúde Coletiva*, 25 (9), 3431-3436. https://doi.org/10.1590/1413-81232020259.14052020.

Fanon, Frantz. 1975. *Pele negra, máscaras brancas*. Translated by Renato da Silveira. Porto: Paisagem.

Ferreira, Ivanir. 2021. ‘ ‘Tratamento precoce ‘ e ‘kit covid ‘: a lamentável história do combate à pandemia no Brasil ‘. *Jornal da USP*, October 14, 2010. https://jornal.usp.br/ciencias/tratamento-precoce-e-kit-covid-a-lamentavel-historia-do-combate-a-pandemia-no-brasil/.

Fiocruz. 2016. ‘Indígenas, negros e mulheres são mais afetados por pobreza e desemprego no Brasil, diz CEPAL ‘. *Fiocruz,* November 04, 2016. https://dssbr.ensp.fiocruz.br/indigenas-negros-e-mulheres-sao-mais-afetados-por-pobreza-e-desemprego-no-brasil-diz-cepal/

Friedman, Susan. 2001. O ‘falar da fronteira ‘, o hibridismo e a performatividade: teoria da cultura e identidade nos espaços intersticiais da diferença. *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, n. 61, 5-28.

Gomes, Flávio dos Santos. 2015. *Mocambos e quilombos: uma história do campesinato negro no Brasil*. São Paulo: Claro Enigma.

Grosfoguel, Ramón. 2008. ‘Para descolonizar os estudos de economia política e os estudos pós-coloniais: transmodernidade, pensamento de fronteira e colonialidade global ‘. *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, n. 80, 115–147. https://doi.org/10.4000/rccs.697.

Hannerz, Ulf. 1997. ‘Fluxos, fronteiras, híbridos: palavras-chave da antropologia transnacional ‘. *Mana*, 3 (1), 7–39. https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-93131997000100001

Instituto Linha D ‘água. 2021. Diálogos na Linha D ‘Água: Comunidades Tradicionais e Segurança Alimentar na Pandemia Youtube, 16 de setembro de 2021. Disponível em: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmwzcL_OuC0&t=4s.

Instituto Socioambiental (ISA), Associações Quilombolas do Vale do Ribeira, Cooperquivale. 2022. 'Do quilombo pra favela: alineto para a resistência negra '. *Youtube,* July 9, 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgQkqt2auXc.

Klein, Naomi. 2020. *Los años de reparación*. Translated by Paula Vasile. Buenos Aires/Amsterdam: CLACSO/Transnational Institute.

Luiz, Viviane Marinho; Silva, Laudessandro Marinho; Américo, Márcia Cristina; and Dias, Luiz Marcos de França. 2020. *Roça é Vida*. São Paulo: IPHAN.

Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. 2006. 'La descolonización y el giro des-colonial '. *Revista Del Centro Andino de Estudios Internacionales*, n. 7, 65–78. https://doi.org/10.25058/20112742.339.

Marcucci, Ana Carolina Oliveira; and Machado, Cauê Fraga. 2023. 'O alimento da roça quilombola mexe com a memória das pessoas: a construção de resistências e futuros em meio aos desafios pandêmicos '.*[Syn]Thesis, Cadernos do Centro de Ciências Sociais da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro,* 16 (1) (jan/april), 34–48. https://doi.org/10.12957/synthesis.2023.75897.

Maricato, Erminia. 1983. *A produção capitalista da casa e da cidade*. São Paulo: Editora Alfa-Omega. 2 ed.

Mignolo, Walter. 2005. 'A colonialidade de cabo a rabo: o hemisfério ocidental no horizonte conceitual da modernidade '. In *A colonialidade do saber: eurocentrismo e ciências sociais. Perpectivas latino-americanas,* edited by Edgardo Lander, 71–103. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.

Nassif-Pires, Luíza; Cardoso, Luísa; Matos, Ana. 2021. 'Gênero e raça em evidência durante a pandemia no Brasil: o impacto do Auxílio Emergencial na pobreza e extrema pobreza '. *Nota de Política Econômica*, n. 10, April 22, 2021. São Paulo: Centro de Pesquisa em Macroeconomia das Desigualdades/USP.

Nel-Lo, Oriol; Blanco, Ismael; Gomà, Ricard. 2022. 'Introducción: fortalecer y estudiar la acción colectiva ante la crisis. El proyecto SOLIVID de investigación/acción '. In *El apoyo mutuo en tiempos de crisis: la solidaridad ciudadana durante la pandemia Covid-19*, edited by Oriol Nel-lo, Ismael Blanco, and Ricard Gomá, 11–32. Buenos Aires/Barcelona: CLACSO/Universitat Autónoma de Barcelona/Instituto de Estudios Regionales y Metropolitanos de Barcelona.

Neri, Marcelo. 2022. *Mapa da nova pobreza.* Rio de Janeiro: FGV Social.

Normann, Susanne. 2021. 'Green colonialism in the Nordic context: exploring southern Saami representations of wind energy development '. *Journal of Community Psychology,* n. 49, 77–94. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22422.

O 'Dwyer, Eliane Cantarino. 2007. 'Terras de Quilombo: identidade étnica e os caminhos do reconhecimento '. *Tomo*, (11), 43–58. São Cristóvão-SE. https://doi.org/10.21669/tomo.v0i11.446.

Pinto, Maria Aparecida M. 2014. *MOAB: a saga de um povo*. Eldorado: MOAB/EAACONE.

Quijano, Anibal. 2005. 'Colonialidade do poder, eurocentrismo e América Latina '. In *A colonialidade do saber: eurocentrismo e ciências sociais. Perspectivas latino–americanas*, edited by Edgardo Lander, 227–278. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.

Restrepo, Eduardo; and Rojas, Axel. 2010. *Inflexión decolonial: fuentes, conceptos y cuestionamientos*. Popayán: Universidad del Cauca.

Rossi, Julia; Caminha, Julia; and Nascimento, Gabriela. 2022. 'Entre a negação e a autogestão: sobrevivendo e resistindo à pandemia nas grandes cidades do Brasil '. In *El apoyo mutuo en tiempos de crisis: la solidaridad ciudadana durante la pandemia Covid-19*, edited by Oriol Nel-lo, Ismael Blanco, and Ricard Gomá, 83–108. Buenos

Aires/Barcelona: CLACSO/Universitat Autónoma de Barcelona/Instituto de Estudios Regionales y Metropolitanos de Barcelona.

Santos, Boaventura. 2006. *A gramática do tempo. Por uma nova cultura política.* Porto: Afrontamento.

Santos, Kátia; and Tatto, Nilto. 2008. *Agenda socioambiental de comunidades quilombolas do Vale do Ribeira*. Brasília: Instituto Socioambiental.

Santos, Márcia Pereira Alves; Goes, Joilda; Silva, Alexandre; Santos, Andreia Beatriz Silva; Batista, Luís Eduardo; and Araújo, Edna Maria. 2020. 'População negra e covid-19: reflexões sobre racismo e saúde '. *Estudos Avançados*, 34 (99), March/Aug 2020, 225–243. https://doi.org/10.1590/s0103-4014.2020.3499.014.

Silva, Lucas César Rodrigues. 2020. *Análise das tecnologias africanas e afrodescendentes: comunidades Quilombola de Ivaporunduva e Jongo Dito Ribeiro*. M.A. Thesis, Universidade Estadual de Campinas. https://doi.org/10.47749/T/UNICAMP.2020.1149070.

Silva, Maíra da; Andrade, Sara Adrián López de; and Campos, Alfredo Borges de. 2018. 'Phytoremediation potential of jack bean plant for multi-element contaminated soils from Ribeira Valley, Brazil '. *CLEAN-Soil Air Water*, 46 (6), June 2018 p. 1700321. https://doi.org/10.1002/clen.201700321.

Silva, Maíra Rodrigues da; and Neto, Wilon Mazalla. 2019. 'As contribuições da agroecologia para o fortalecimento da Agricultura Quilombola '. In *Agroecologia e Educação do Campo*, edited by Sonia Maria Pessoa Pereira Bergamasco, Maristela Simões do Carmo, Wilon Mazalla Neto, Ricardo Serra Borsatto, and Regina Aparecida Leite de Camargo, p. 221–242. Campinas: Editora Átomo.

About the author:

Carla Ladeira Pimentel Águas is a post-doctoral research fellow at the Department of Science and Technology Policy (DPCT) based in the Institute of Geosciences (IG) in State University of Campinas (Unicamp), funded by the National Postdoctoral Program (PNPD/Capes). Member of the ENDURE (*Inequalities, Community Resilience, and New Governance Modalities in a Post-Pandemic World)* Project. She holds a PhD in Postcolonialisms and Global Citizenship from the University of Coimbra.

Ana Carolina Oliveira Marcucci has a Master's in Social Anthropology from the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP) and a Bachelor's degree in Social Sciences from the same institution. She is affiliated with the Center for Rural Studies (CERES) at the Institute of Philosophy and Human Sciences at Unicamp. She collaborates as an editorial assistant for the *Revista do Centro de Estudos Rurais* (Ruris). She works in the field of Anthropology, with interests in public policies, environmental legislation, agricultural systems, and traditional communities. She is a member of the ENDURE (*Inequalities, Community Resilience, and New Governance Modalities in a Post-Pandemic World)* Project.

Lucas César Rodrigues da Silva is a PhD candidate at the Department of Technological Scientific Policy (DPCT) of State University of Campinas (Unicamp). He holds a Master's degree in Human Sciences and Applied Social Sciences from Unicamp, with studies focused on African Technology and African Cosmoperception; He also holds a bachelor's degree in Environmental Control Technology from Unicamp. Member of the ENDURE (*Inequalities, Community Resilience, and New Governance Modalities in a Post-Pandemic World)* Project.

Maíra Rodrigues da Silva is a biologist and PhD candidate in the Doctoral Program in Geosciences, from State University of Campinas (Unicamp). He holds a Master's Degree in Geosciences. He is a member of the Research and Action Group on Conflicts, Risks and Impacts Related to Dams (CRIAB/UNICAMP). He is also the Coordinator

of the Peregum Black Reference Institute addressing Environmental Racism. He serves as advisor to the Articulation and Advisory Team for Black Communities in Vale do Ribeira (EAACONE). He is a Quilombola person of Ivaporunduva community. He is a member of the ENDURE Project.