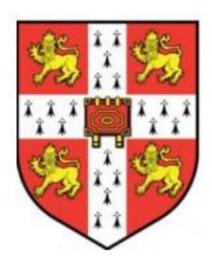**Chaotic Schooling:**

State schools and the making of (un)freedom in contemporary Brazil

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Preface

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University of similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

Abstract

Chaotic Schooling:

State schools and the making of (un)freedom in contemporary Brazil

Caroline Beatriz Rodrigues de Souza

With this work, I explore and discuss the relationship between state-provided education and the making of substantive freedoms for urban Brazilian underprivileged populations. In Brazil, state schools for basic education, which are the ones attended by poor urban students, are highly recognised as low-quality institutions. Far from adopting any simplistic framework to blame the poor and their conditions of poverty for their own educational failure – or for the failure of educational institutions – here I endeavour to make sense of the conditions that render state schools in Brazil as a space prone to generate unfavourable life opportunities for underprivileged populations as well as for their teachers and for general school staff. Moreover, I endeavour to understand the extent to which state schools represent spaces of freedoms, hope, and resistance.

I adopt the definition of freedom provided by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum's Capability Approaches to conceptualise freedom as opportunities to *be*, to *do* and to *become* valuable things in life. Here, I understand that formal education should provide people with a large and diverse set of life opportunities regardless of people's socioeconomic background. As such, I depart from a strong sociological and historically based premise: the idea that Brazil, as a postcolonial state, has historically oriented its action toward fulfilling the interests of dominant groups, and of the dominant structures of power that sustain them. I argue that such a rationale orients the somehow necropolitical state's management of poor people's lives, in that poverty is maintained through its containment. Provided this context, I endeavour to critically perceive how freedoms and unfreedoms are made for poor urban populations. I focus mainly on the aspects of people's lives that are prone to affect how they may benefit from formal education, and, most prominently, on state schools, a primordial institution in terms of its role in providing people with life opportunities and hence in promoting social justice.

Two main research questions I explore are: (1) *What are the mechanisms through which dominant structures of power contribute to the making of (un)freedoms for underprivileged populations through state schooling in contemporary urban Brazil?; and (2) What are the implications of such relationships for the rethinking and reframing of formal education as a means to freedom for urban underprivileged populations?*

This is an ethnographic study, mostly carried out with students and their teachers in two state schools attended by underprivileged children in Southern Brazil. With this work, I attempt to critically understand the reality behind schooling, school life and social life of poor populations in urban Brazil. I question the role of state schooling, and of the state itself, in determining and perpetuating conditions of poverty and social exclusion of underprivileged groups. By doing so, I advance the question regarding how formal education can be turned into an ally in the path toward the making of substantial freedoms for marginalised populations from postcolonial contexts as Brazil's. My aim is to advance the discussion started with the work of the Brazilian Educator Paulo Freire on how to convert state schooling into a means to freedom for the oppressed.

To Helena and Elias.

Acknowledgements

I survived. During my 4 years of PhD, I lived through depression, chronic incapacitating migraine, anxiety crisis and, in the last five months before the thesis submission, increasingly severe asthma attacks, among other stress-related health conditions. Let me tell you something about being a black peripheral woman in Cambridge, in particular, and in academia in general: Not an easy task. In addition to having to deal with all the pressure that is part of academic life, I had to deal with the huge symbolic distance between my peers and I, which impelled me to work twice as hard and to literally pressure myself almost to death, in order to minimally feel that I was deserving and capable of occupying this place, achieving this degree.

With that said, I would like to thank all Brazilian tax-payers who, through the action of the Ministry of Education and the *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* (CAPES), financed the scholarships that made it possible for me to pursue a Master's and a PhD degree. My thanks go mostly to the low-income people who, in reason of the regressive tax structure in Brazil, are the ones relatively paying more in taxes.

I cannot express how grateful I am and do not have words to thanks Dr Graham Denyer Willis. I feel extremely lucky to have such a brilliant and generous scholar as my supervisor. It was because of Dr Denyer Willis' generosity and academic support; it was his belief in my work that made me believe that I was able to put this thesis together. I could not be more grateful to him.

I am also grateful for Dr Flavio Comim's kindness, wisdom, and academic generosity. Dr Comim was my supervisor during my Master's and for part of my PhD journey. I will be forever grateful for his support and for everything I learned under his supervision. On that note, my thanks to my dear friends and colleagues from Dr Flavio Comim's reading groups, especially: Tadashi Hirai, Paola Herrejon, Aline Khoury, Fernando Bucheli, and Arief Lubis.

Also, my gratitude to all my PhD peers and friends. For the thoughtful and insightful comments on my work, I would like to thank Josh Miller, Dr Laurie Denyer Willis, Rebecca Gordon, and Carly Rodgers.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

ANEB – *Avaliação Nacional da Educação Básica* (National Evaluation of Basic Education)

ANRESC – *Avaliação Nacional do Rendimento Escolar* (National Evaluation of School Performance)

BF – *Bolsa Família*

BNC – *Bala na Cara*

CA – Capability Approaches

CCT – Conditional Cash Transfer

CV – *Comando Vermelho*

FASE – *Fundação de Atendimento Sócioeducativo* (Foundation for Socio-educational Service)

FNDE – *Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação* (National Fund for the Development of Education)

FUNDEB – Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica e de Valorização dos Profissionais da Educação (National Fund for Basic Education Development and for Valorisation of Education Professionals)

IDEB – *Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica* (Basic Education Development Index)

IQ – Intelligence Quotient

IPEA – *Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada* (Institute for Applied Economic Reseach)

LDB – *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* (Law of Directives and Bases for National Education)

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PCC – *Primeiro Comando da Capital*

PISA – *Programme for International Student Assessment*

PT – Partido dos Trabalhadores

SAEB – Sistema Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Básica (National Evaluation System for Basic Education)

SEO – Secretary of Education Office

SUS – *Sistema Único de Saúde* (Unified Health System)

UFRGS – *Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul* (Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul)

U.S. – United States of America

Part I: The foundations of (un)freedom

Introduction

Winters are cold in Porto Alegre. That July morning was especially cold, although there was a weak sun struggling to appear between the fog. I arrived 10 minutes late for the morning classes at *Mandacaru*. The school had been closed for the three previous weeks. The winter vacation had been brought forward in face of an electrical short-circuit that left the whole school without power. Three weeks before – on a May Monday morning – a teacher told me while we waited to know whether there would be classes that day: "The electric wires are all exposed under the roof and, when it rains, the water penetrates the damaged roof and reaches the wires. We had problems with this before, but this time, it seems worse". Earlier that year the school was closed for a week because a part of the ceiling, in one of the corridors, had collapsed and almost hit students who were passing by.

On that July morning, I walked toward the older children's classroom. The classroom door was closed – or almost, since the door had no lock and a desk, positioned against the door, was used to keep it closed. I stopped by the door, knocked softly and pushed it just a little, enough to see the teacher, Carla, writing on the blackboard. She smiled at me, told me to come in. As usual, I sat at the back of the classroom. There were only nine students in class. Carla was starting to revise the lesson she had given right before the anticipated vacation, on simple numeric mathematic expressions. She was visibly less stressed and more patient than before the compulsory three weeks break. Carla had been struggling with severe asthma since the beginning of the fall. She often did not have money to buy the medicines she needed, which made her asthma recur frequently and more severely.

In between complaining about not remembering already learning numeric expressions, students were engaged in a back-to-class conversation. The older children's class was usually messy, with students running around the classroom, ignoring their teachers, punching their peers. That day they were relatively calm, talking to each other from their desks while copying the lesson from the blackboard. The break seemed to have done them well. A group of four boys, in particular, were enthusiastic about an event, which included the presence of *Funk MCs[1]* and that was going to be held in the *Vila[2]* at the end of the week. This event should have taken place a few weeks before, but it had to be postponed due to constant shootings. "This time, the *Balas* warned. There are cars circulating

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[1] Funk MCs is a designation for Brazilian funk singers and deejays. MC is the abbreviation of *Mestre de Cerimônia*, meaning Ceremony Master.
[2] *Vila(s)* is how shantytowns are called in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, southern Brazil.

in the Vila with loudspeakers to let everybody know that, if the *Contras* try to get in, the Balas will be waiting for them with their rifles loaded," Pedro, one of the boys, said. The Balas is the gang that controls the drug dealing in the Vila. *Contras* is a rival gang that lives at constant war with the Balas. "This time the party will happen, I'm telling you," the sixteen-year-old boy continued. "Everyone will be carrying a rifle", Pedro said. "Can you imagine... The Contras appear and, instead of rifles, they have 38s," Bernardo, a Black fourteen-year-old boy, replied. Everybody, including the students who were not participating in the conversation, laughed. "They will be *fucked*," Pedro concluded.

About a week before, a fourteen-year-old boy had been assassinated in the Vila by multiple gunshots. "This war has to end. Every time is the same. They [the Contras] come, kill innocent people, then the Balas go there and kill more innocent people. It never ends," Pedro told his colleagues, referring to the dispute between rival gangs that haunts their neighbourhood – *Vila Lanceiro* – and other surrounding Vilas in the town outskirts. "This is terrible," Carla interjected, in response to her students' stories.

It was very cold that day. I could hear some students' teeth clattering during class. Once class concluded, I shadowed Carla for two more periods in the younger children's class. We entered the classroom and after a few minutes of asking the students to sit down, they did so. She began her lesson. While I could not find a chair to occupy my usual spot in the back of the class, Renato, a quiet and shy student, brought me a chair from another classroom. To my thank you, he replied with a smile.

By the time the class started, there was an unusual silence. Students were sat and copying the lesson from the board in their paper notebooks. It must be the cold, I thought to myself while looking at the broken glass of the window. I looked around, saw some boy students wearing shorts, T-shirts and flip flops. "How could they not be cold?", I thought to myself. They were cold. The temperature was around 8°C that morning. It was not hard to notice how their bodies shrunk into the old chairs, curved toward their desks. State schools in Porto Alegre do not provide students with school uniforms. Students come to school with the clothes they have at home. The school receives clothing donations, with which they organise a bazar once a year to raise funds to support school expenses. A portion of the donated clothes is donated to students who cannot afford to purchase a coat for winter, for example. But there are not enough coats for everyone. There is too much need.

I sat right next to Dalila, a white thirteen-year-old student who had an enduring sadness in her eyes. A profound sadness. To my left, sat in a desk further ahead, twelve-year-old Lucia started to take a series of thin sweatshirts from her backpack and pass them to some of her colleagues. I lost myself in my thoughts for one minute. Did she bring the clothes for herself and, since she was not cold, lent them to some of her friends? Did she bring them for her friends because she knew they would need them?

My thoughts were interrupted. Dalila was holding a sheet of paper, pointing it in my direction, with a shy smile on her face. "Take a look," she told me. "Of course," I replied while smiling at her. I took the paper. She directed her attention to her paper notebook again. As I started to read, I froze. It was not the temperature this time. I was holding the death certificate of a fifty-one-year-old woman, who had died from liver-related problems roughly one month before.

I did not know what to say, or how to respond. "Was she your mother?" I asked. "Yes," Dalila replied with her head down, copying her lesson. "I am so sorry, Dalila. I cannot imagine what you are going through. Are you okay?" I said while still not sure about how to react. I was petrified. Dalila looked at me and waved her right hand, in a gesture that meant "more or less." The shy smile was back on her face. I asked why she had brought the certificate to school, and she answered that the school had asked, so she brought it in. I gave the death certificate back to her, told her that I felt deeply sorry and that she could count on me if she needed to talk. The only thing I could really do from my space in that classroom was to show her my support.

Later that day, Carla told me that the woman from the death certificate was not Dalila's birth mother. It was her aunt, who used to take care of her. Dalila's father had been killed a few years before. He had been a drug dealer. Her birth mother was still alive – and was now trying to become Dalila's legal caregiver – but Dalila did not want contact with her. She once told Carla during a class that she did not want to live with her birth mother because she did not want to starve. Her birth mother was a drug addict and a sex worker, and Dalila was afraid that she might force her into prostitute herself.

After her aunt's death, an uncle of Dalila's became her legal guardian. Dalila was terrified of him. A few days after the event with the death certificate, Dalila told some of her school friends that she was afraid of living with her uncle. She said she had been sexually abused by her grandfather and now by her uncle who, according to her, beat her frequently. "I told her that it is better to go into foster care

than to live like this," Dalila's twelve-year-old school friend, Laura told Carla – their teacher. Laura continued: "She needs help, *professora*[3]. She's afraid to tell the truth, but I told her she needs to tell somebody."

Dalila drew my attention the first time I saw her in class. Those sad eyes. She was always gentle toward me and I never saw her as anything but gentle to her peers. I heard more than once some boy students calling her *puta*[4] during a class, because she did not want to copy their lessons for them. I also saw, on different occasions, other girls calling her bad names, and mocking her because of her humble clothes and her curly hair. I did not need much time to notice that she did not have an easy life at school. She did not have an easy life. Not a single student in her class did.

After some hesitation, Dalila told her story to Francisca, one of her teachers, who immediately explained the situation to the school counsellor, Isabela. The school communicated Dalila's story to the Guardianship Council[5] – which was all the school could do, according to Isabela. "This story is complicated. I can't tell if Dalila is telling the truth. When I called her into my office, she told me that she was sexually abused by her grandfather and beaten by her uncle. She said nothing about her uncle being sexually abusive. I communicated her case to the Guardianship Council, asking them to investigate. But I only said she was afraid of going home," Isabela told me, when I asked about Dalila's situation during an informal conversation in her office.

Dalila's uncle appeared at the school to transfer her to another school a few days after Dalila's conversation with her teacher. He said that her birth mother had been trying to contact her around the school area. Mandacaru was not a safe place for Dalila anymore. And so, Dalila left. The only thing I heard about her thereafter was that, several months after she changed schools, she was still living with her uncle and the investigation, which was not a criminal investigation, but rather, a procedure from the Guardianship Council, was still ongoing. "Perhaps the uncle is taking care of her as a favour, and because of this story she ends up in foster care, because he may not want to take care of her

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[3] Teacher.
[4] Whore.
[5] The Guardianship Council – *Conselho Tutelar* – is a state agency whose role is to protect and guarantee the fulfilment of children's and teenagers' rights – that is, the rights of individuals aged under eighteen years old – as instituted by the *Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente* (BRASIL, 1990) – the Statute of the Child and the Adolescent. Schools are obliged by law to report any claim of child abuse reported by its students to the local Guardianship Council, which is responsible for conducting preliminary investigations to confirm if the claim is true and if a child abuse crime was committed.

anymore," Isabela told me. "Perhaps she is receiving good care. I can't know for sure. But I did my part and reported the case. Now, it takes time for the Guardianship Council to solve the situation. We have to wait," Isabela concluded, although the only thing I could think was how we, as a society, had all failed Dalila. Dalila, Pedro, Bernardo, Lucia, Laura, Carla, even Isabela. Brazilian society – and everything that comes with it, especially the Brazilian state – had failed, and was failing, everyone there.

Indeed, Dalila's story speaks strongly to the extent to which Brazilian state schools exist as spaces of both freedoms and unfreedoms. The lives of people living under conditions of urban poverty in Brazil are deeply shaped by the multidimensional circumstances within which they are immersed. These are complex, rough and highly unfavourable life circumstances that, by themselves, act to undermine the advantage poor people might achieve through schooling. The school poor urban individuals frequent – this is, state schools – do not exist isolated from this context but rather as its extension; and as such, is a part of poor people's daily struggle for surviving amidst the subjugating forces that inform their existence within an unequitable postcolonial society. It is hence part of people's daily fight for freedoms, regardless of the plight in which such schools can be found in postcolonial countries, such as Brazil. Under these terms, to discuss schooling of poor urban populations becomes intrinsically about the extent to which people are able to enjoy freedoms vis-à-vis the unfreedoms that permeate their lives. It becomes intrinsically about understanding how the life of those as Dalila is and why; and where the school they frequent stands in terms of the lives they are living now and may be able to live in the future. It becomes intrinsically about making sense of whether state schools can exist as places of hope for better lives.

A story about freedom

This is a story about freedom. About freedoms that are denied, about freedoms that seem to exist but that are, in fact, absent. About the freedoms people perceive themselves to have and about the freedoms people would like to have. Here, I root in the Capability Approaches (Sen, 1985a, 1985b, 1992, 2000, 2009; Nussbaum, 1988[1987], 1992, 2000, 2011) – although not unreservedly – and understand freedoms as substantive opportunities to live a valuable life. I affirm that I use the Capability Approaches as a theoretical basis in a critical manner because, as it will be made clear throughout this work, my research ultimately leads me to critically challenge some important normative assumptions over which the approaches were built. Nevertheless, it is my use of the

Capability Approaches that allows me to recognise that it is the chase for valuable lives that keeps people moving toward reaching different forms of existing – and resisting – within society. Thus, this thesis is, most of all, an account of unfreedoms, about historically constructed social injustices, and about the lives people live as a result of them.

This is not only a story about education, school kids and their teachers. This is a story about entrenched structural inequalities and systematic social exclusion that Brazilian society – and, perhaps beyond – has the moral obligation to acknowledge, to repair, to compensate, but prefers to ignore. This work concerns the lives behind the disconcerting data that tell us how Brazilian teachers are underpaid, how Brazilian state schools are low quality and largely underfunded; how underprivileged students lack educational opportunities in Brazil; how they are failing – or rather, being failed – and abandoning school too early in their lives; how Brazil is an extremely unequal country, where inequalities are gendered, racialised.

Here, I question the role of state schooling – and of the state itself – in determining and perpetuating conditions of poverty and social exclusion of marginalised populations. In doing so, I question how formal education may be turned into an ally in the fight toward the development of substantial freedoms for marginalised, underprivileged populations in Brazil. The answer, I argue, rests in people's capacity to resist and fight against the kaleidoscope of different forms of domination and unfreedoms that permeate their daily lives – thus, it rests on the hopefulness for better lives that inform poor people's daily struggle for survival.

I hence advance the idea of 'failing for freedom' to capture the structural conditions of unfreedom and violence that surround and work through state schooling, *and* the ongoing potential and hope for freedoms that is made within it. Conditions of failing schools, of failing students, might be seen as conditions of domination, oppression. But experiencing such political conditions of 'failure' also shapes forms of resistance, hope and dreaming. 'Failing' is, then, about the ongoing making of everyday freedoms, providing a novel way of understanding how freedom matters – especially for the Capability Approaches.

This is a story of two schools, which I call *Mandacaru* and *Parodia*, frequented by students from a shantytown in the city of *Porto Alegre* in the southern-most state in Brazil. Mandacaru and Parodia denominate two different species of Brazilian cactus. That is, of plants that grow, survive and flourish

regardless of the extremely unfavourable weather and soil conditions with which they are confronted. The shantytown that appears as the basis of this thesis' account, I call *Vila Lanceiro.* *Lanceiros* were slaves who fought as infantrymen in the Separatist uprising in the state of *Rio Grande do Sul* (1835-1845) against the country's imperial government in the middle of the 19th century. They fought under the promise of freedom in the event that the Separatist movement defeated the Empire. Lanceiros, meaning spearmen, denotes how the enslaved-soldiers got their name: from the lances they were given to protect the white Separatist troops. Often erased from history, the Lanceiros were slaves who were literally willing to fight and die for their freedom. I use this pseudonym because this is how these research participants should be seen: as warriors, shackled to and by systems larger than themselves, fighting for freedoms, for emancipation on an everyday basis.

With this thesis, I seek to bring an ethnographic account of a sociological nature forward to challenge existing critical theories by showing that they may no longer hold application in contemporary post-colonial contexts, including that of Brazil. While I recognise that it is not possible to completely avert normativity – sociological research, whether conceptual, theoretical or empirical, is always built upon some sort of normative foundation – the making of this work led me to conclude that a researcher should not limit herself or her research to the premises upon which her study is based. Theoretical concepts must be incessantly questioned against reality, and should be (re)thought and changed in accordance with people's realities and voices. Indeed, it is the constant critical scrutiny of theories against real-world circumstances that dissociates the making of sociological science from a mere endorsement of theoretical dogmas – and that hence makes it possible to pursue social empirical research. This work is, thus, a story about dismantling canonized ideas, envisioning new ones, and constructing hope as a means to resistance – resistance toward freedoms.

A study on state schooling and freedom

It would, perhaps, be inaccurate to say that this research aims to answer a discrete question. Rather, I have built a strong sociological and historically-based premise, and endeavour to make sense of the relations that sustain it. This premise is built over Chapters One and Three: the study departs from the core idea that the Brazilian state has historically oriented its action toward producing freedoms to some groups while oppressing others. What this work endeavours to make sense of is how freedoms and unfreedoms are built as a result of such a state's orientation, mainly within a primordial institution in terms of its role in providing people with life opportunities and hence in

promoting social justice: state schools. Thus, if I had to summarise this work in terms of a research question, the main questions I aim to answer are:

(1) What are the mechanisms through which dominant structures of power contribute to the making of (un)freedoms for underprivileged populations through state schooling in contemporary urban Brazil?, and;
(2) What are the implications of such relationships for the rethinking of state formal education as a means of freedoms for urban underprivileged populations?

Under these terms, my work could be situated among other researchers such as Medeiros (1986), Carneiro (2005) and Cavalleiro (2012) who have endeavoured to critically understand the empirical reality behind schooling, school life and the social life of neglected groups in Brazil. Here, I do not strictly focus on school curriculum or pedagogy – although both curriculum and pedagogy permeate much of the discussion I present throughout this thesis. Rather, I focus on major social structures and features that define all the rest; in other words, that regulate the social, cultural, economic and political conditions responsible for determining the shape of postcolonial societies, of its schools and of the education provided, and of the range of life opportunities such societies make available for their people.

I understand that producing knowledge of neglected populations' lives, and of people's own perspectives over their lives, is part of a way toward constructing a school education that is attentive to the types of lives people are able to live and may be able to live in the future. Thus, I can affirm that my work ultimately aims to make sense of the lives urban underprivileged people are living and why. Also, of the manner in which this is translated in terms of the freedoms people have and may have in the future. I aim to give voice to the struggles, to the lives behind the numbers that tell us how the Brazilian state is persistently failing underprivileged people not only through state schooling, but through all the features and conditions that relate to it. Most of all, I aim to show how these same narratives of struggle carry the hopefulness able to bring about resistance against some of the subjugating social structures that act to limit people's freedoms. By doing so, I seek to advance the discussion on how to turn formal education into a means to freedoms for oppressed, neglected and marginalised populations. Finally, I hope to give a contribution, no matter how small, to a longstanding discussion of education for freedom – which encompasses not only the work of Freire

(1987) but of many others who have followed him, as hooks (1994, 2003, 2009), Giroux (2004[1986]) and Gentilli (2010, 2015).

Research relevance

In 1986, the Brazilian anthropologist, Darcy Ribeiro wrote:

> We propose, as explanation [for the failure of national education], that we are facing a serious case of intrinsic deficiency of the Brazilian society. Our inability to educate the population, as to feed it, is a product of the national society's own character. We are a society sick with inequality, sick with the abandonment toward our population. So, it is because, in the eyes of our ruling classes, old and modern, the country's people is a paltry existence. The destiny and aspirations of the people are not a matter of concern for our ruling elites. […] It is necessary to have courage to see this fact, because it is only from doing so that we will be able to break with our society's backwardness and condemnation to poverty, which are a product of a self-perpetuating underdevelopment process[6] (Ribeiro, 1986, p. 15).

I put on display Ribeiro's (1986) words as they speak unequivocally toward the narrative I establish in this work. It reflects immensely why works like the one I develop here are desperately needed in spaces and contexts like Brazil. This work exposes circumstances that Brazil as a society insists on ignoring, giving voice to problems that are widely known, but still disregarded. This work is a leap of courage and of faith toward recognising that the Brazilian state systematically fails in the education it offers to the most underprivileged sectors of its population. The problem of Brazilian education is much deeper and goes far beyond its schools. The fact is that the Brazilian state continues to condemn underprivileged populations to death – to social, cultural and biological death – by undermining their freedoms to be, to do and to become.

Of course, there are objective reasons why this work is important, beyond the fact that, although school education represents only one sphere of people's education (McCowan, 2010), school is one

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[6] Translated from Portuguese: "Nós propomos, como explicação [para o fracasso da educação], que estamos diante de um caso grave de deficiência intrínseca da sociedade brasileira. Nossa incapacidade de educar a população, com a de alimentá-la, se deve ao próprio caráter da sociedade nacional. Somos uma sociedade enferma de desigualdade, enferma de descaso por sua população. Assim é, porque aos olhos das nossas classes dominantes, antigas e modernas, o povo é o que há de mais reles. Seu destino e suas aspirações não lhes interessa [...]. É preciso ter coragem de ver este fato porque só a partir dele, podemos romper nossa condenação ao atraso e à pobreza, decorrentes de um subdesenvolvimento de caráter autoperpetuante."

of the most important socialization environments for children. I could also argue that carrying out research on education is important because of its potential to influence children's intellectual and socioemotional development (Nussbaum, 2010) and thus, to determine people's future earnings (Heckman, 2008; Becker, 1992). I could also say that, in Brazil, state schools providing basic education are highly recognised as low-quality institutions. Add the fact that those schools are attended by underprivileged populations, whereas middle and upper-middle class people attend private – and often, better quality – schools, which creates a structural situation of inequality of opportunities (Schwartzman, 2003; World Bank, 2018) that can only potentially be solved by enhancing the quality of the education provided to poor populations. This justifies any research that proposes approaching the conditions of state-provided education.

Fostering education is important to ensure the maintenance of stable democracies (Nussbaum, 2010, 2013). The very guarantee of basic education for people, in addition to improving their political participation and their economic success, enhances their capacity to construct fruitful relationships with others (Nussbaum, 1997, 2010).

I could argue that poor students are less likely to progress in school and are less likely to be successful in life, or to achieve their full potential, which traps poor families in intergenerational paths of poverty (World Bank, 2018), further justifying the relevance of educational research focused on the education they receive and on the schools they frequent. To conclude, I could say that the development of a quality basic education is the main source of individual emancipation and national development (UNESCO, 1990), and Brazil's failure to provide underprivileged populations with quality formal education erodes the fundamental right of its people, one that is ensured by the country's Constitution.

Nonetheless, I believe that the research I present here is much more than a study about education in Brazil. This thesis is a political statement that aims to give voice to the daily struggles of a neglected portion of a nation's population. I firmly believe that this fact itself justifies the relevance of my research. However, if such justification is not enough, I can further say that this study contributes to a long discussion started by Paulo Freire, conversation questioning Brazil's state education as an instrument for liberation, for freedom. Freedom from intergenerational conditions of poverty, from historic subjugation by a self-interested, elitist and racist state. Economic, social and cultural freedom. Freedom of mind, of thought, of self. This justification is paired with the fact that it is done

so in the middle of a critical time, a moment in which Brazil rapidly advances toward an even more oppressing and limiting model of state schooling, with the current Federal Government Administration trying to put forward the militarization of state schools (Melo, 2019, January 3) and projects like *Escola Sem Partido*.[7] As Saviani (2018) points out, the sort of school proposed by *Escola Sem Partido* – by denying the political intrinsic character of education and by making society believe that it is possible to separate the political from the educational – would produce students who are incapable of a critical existence within society and would conform to the existing structure, "accept[ing] the conditions of domination to which they are submitted" (Saviani, 2019, p. 303).[8]

Ultimately, it is important to admit that this study, as an ethnographic investigation – just as any social investigation – is limited in time, space and scope. It reflects certain relations, established by small groups of people in particular settings, specific geographies, and distinct moments. Nevertheless, it is able to speak to dominant relations amongst different groups of people within Brazilian society in regard to education, marginalisation, freedom and the role of state action. Far from aiming to solve all of the problems rampant in Brazil's system of state education or to present normative solutions, my work seeks to expose and discuss the everyday educational circumstances – and in many cases, the common existence – that confines Brazilians at the urban periphery in paths littered with and scarred by unfreedoms. Fundamentally, I seek to make sense of how freedoms can be built for poor urban populations who exist under such unfavourable social power relations. In doing so, I further the debate on how to improve the quality of formal education in terms of the real lifelong opportunities with which it provides underprivileged people, considering the general circumstances in which they are immersed. Under these terms, this study endeavours to represent a step forward in the discussion concerning how to build, from the bottom-up, means for the establishment of an emancipatory state education, considerate and genuine for its people. An education that may potentially lead to social change.

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[7] School Without Party.
[8] Translated from portuguese: "em lugar de preparar seus alunos para atuar de forma autônoma e crítica na sociedade, estarão formando para ajustá-los à ordem existente e aceitar as condições de dominação às quais estão submetidos."

Thesis' outline

The narrative I present here is divided into two parts: an introduction; and an ethnography, through which this work is built, and the conclusions critically drawn. Divided into three chapters, the introductory section presents the conceptual, methodological, historical and sociological basis for this thesis. In Chapter One, I present this work's conceptual framework, based on the definition of freedom as raised by the Capability Approaches (CA) (Sen, 1985a, 1985b, 1992, 2000, 2009; Nussbaum, 1988[1987], 1992, 2000, 2011), and on Mbembe (2003) idea of *Necropower*, understood as the extent to which sovereign power in postcolonial countries is exerted as the right to kill.

In Chapter Two, I discuss this study's methodological framework, closely connecting it to the conceptual framework. This chapter also includes information regarding the ethnographic data collection and analysis, and reflections on my positionality and the ethical challenges faced during the fieldwork period.

To conclude this part, Chapter Three explores the historical and sociological basis from which this thesis and its work are built. I step back and investigate how the Brazilian state has injected and interwove colonial values into its institutions, including state schools. Such values define the ways in which the state orients its action to enhance the freedoms of a diminished but dominant part of its population through oppression, thus producing unfreedoms to the majority, the marginalised portion of its population. I aim, broadly, to provide a critical reflection on how the state, schooling and (un)freedom of underprivileged populations may be related in Brazil from a historical and sociological perspective.

Part two is composed of six chapters and a brief conclusion. In Chapter Four, I present Vila Lanceiro, the community through which I investigate, analyse and speak in this academic account. I show how its residents are excluded from basic freedoms, including reliable health care and urban infrastructure, regardless of being in the proximity of a wealthy area of the city.

In Chapter Five, I examine how the state's management of urban poverty is a decisive factor in the existence of poverty itself, and thus, in the freedoms people living on urban poverty are be able to have. I contend that the state manages poverty under a 'necropolitical rationale' that I refer to as the externality approach to poverty. It indicates the state's disposition to address poverty, and the conditions that define it, through palliative public policies that maintain poverty through its

containment. Such rationale aims at creating docility among poor populations while putting forward a discourse of aid that hides the somewhat necropolitical logic of the state's action upon underprivileged populations.

Chapter Six debates the extent to which the state's management of resources for basic education is encompassed by the externality approach to poverty. I argue that the logic behind the state's resource allocation is responsible for the general wrecking of state schools' activities in Brazil, especially for school located in poor urban areas.

In Chapter Seven, I consider how the state's treatment of poverty impacts state schools' teachers and professionals. From the narratives of teachers and school staff, I bring to light the state's neglect and disregard, not only for their working conditions, but also for the lives they live as a result of being state school employees. These circumstances create and perpetuate the unfreedoms of teachers themselves, depressing and subduing their work motivation, which negatively affects students and their opportunities to learn. Nonetheless, I contend that teachers are individuals who endeavor to manage their work and personal life in the ways they find possible, given how the state's necropolitical management of education narrows their agency.

In Chapter Eight, I show how poor urban communities' residents, despite the state's efforts to render them docile, collectively endeavour to build freedoms to which they are denied. I specifically examine how their collective ties serve to make public security-related freedoms, contending that the state's management of organised crime in those urban settings makes residents vulnerable to the action of both the state police and drug gangs. As a result of living in a violent environment and having limited agency and freedoms, shantytown residents build among themselves fragile, informal networks of security and protection. Such networks result in the making of both freedoms and unfreedoms as part of a complex and non-dichotomist process that enables shantytown dwellers to collectively resist as a community – and thus, against the state's management of their lives.

In Chapter Nine, I dispute the dichotomy between docility and freedom, conformity and resistance, that pervades critical theory in education, arguing that state schools exist as fields of both freedoms and unfreedoms. Above all, I contend that schools exist as places of struggle and hope, and, ultimately, as places of resistance against the state's necropolitical treatment of the poor. In the conclusion, I discuss some of the implications of this research, rethinking both theory and practice in regard to

critical educational research and to the Capability Approaches, in addition to the terms of rethinking and remaking state education as a means to freedom. I particularly criticise the overly rigid application of normative values in research and contend that, whether left without critical questioning – and, thus, reviewing – some core concepts over which the Capability Approaches were built – and on which this thesis is based, as the ideas of freedom and agency – can be rendered elitist and therefore unable to explain the lives poor people are living in postcolonial countries. Following this critique, I conclude by introducing the idea of 'failing for freedom' to define the structural conditions of unfreedom and violence that surround and work through state schooling, and the growing potential and hope for freedoms that is made within it.

Chapter One – The conceptual framework

1.1.   Introduction

Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy approach is one aimed toward the building of autonomy of the self and hence toward freedom (Freire 1996, 1967). Freire (1996, 1967) sees in education a transformative possibility, a revolutionary potential for changing, subverting the perverse effects of the capitalist world over subjugated groups. Similarly, the Capability Approach (CA) regards education as a main basis for freedoms and takes freedoms as the end of every human effort toward social and economic development [9].   First proposed by Amartya Sen (1985a, 1985b, 1992, 2000, 2009) and Martha Nussbaum (1988[1987], 1992, 2000, 2011), the CA provides a conceptual framework for social justice assessments. It represents a broader informational space for researching on issues related to justice, development, rights and human values.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the conceptual foundations of my work, anchored on the concept of freedom provided by the CA. In the following sections, I present the CA in detail and in accordance to its philosophical origins, which also informs my research. In continuation, I debate how I relate the notions of power and freedom, considering that my research refers to a postcolonial context. I argue that, under such circumstances, some lives may be seen as more valuable than others and hence relegated to subcategories of living – through, for instance, the state's abandonment with those surviving under conditions of underprivilege – or to actual death (Mbembe, 2003; James, 1996).

1.2.   Development as Freedom

The Capability Approach (Sen, 1985a, 1985b, 1992, 2000, 2009; Nussbaum, 1988[1987], 1992, 2000, 2011) regards development as the expansion of individuals' freedom, which is seen as the opportunities a person has in life to be and to do valuable things. The approach concerns itself with individuals' opportunities to exert their agency and to affirm themselves as autonomous beings. Agency and autonomy – or self-determination – appear as fundamental concepts, as the CA proposes that individuals are protagonists of the process of development. If, on the one hand, it is understood that people and the real expansion of their freedom to be and to do should be the end of development – in opposition to the traditional focus on allocation of goods or resources, for instance (Qizilbash,

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[9] Here, as it is true for most of this work, I am referring to formal education.

1998) – then, it is acknowledged that a person should be able to choose what she considers to be the best for her life, among the available possibilities (Sen, 2000). The consideration of what is best should reflect a process of reasoning, in which the individual should be capable of critically scrutinising among different sets of alternatives in order to choose reasonably valuable beings and doings. As for my study, my adoption of the Capability Approach as a conceptual background is an aid to define social disadvantage and oppression in terms of the restriction of individuals' freedoms. In terms of definitions, the CA can be understood as "an approach to comparative quality-of-life assessment and to theorising about basic social justice" (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 19). Capabilities are defined as substantial freedoms, different opportunities of acting and being (Sen, 2000). They represent the opportunities one possesses to reach distinct achievements in life (Sen, 1992). The actual beings and doings a person is able to achieve are called *functionings*. Capabilities can be understood as concrete freedoms to reach functionings *(*Olsaretti*,* 2005*)* – that is, as achievable sets of functionings, or distinct combinations of achievements that may allow a person to lead different types of life (Sen, 1992).

According to Nussbaum (2011), the approach has five general characteristics: (1) it puts people at the centre of the analysis, considering each individual as an end, and concerns with the opportunities each person has; (2) it concentrates on choice and freedom, stating that societies should provide people with a large set of opportunities, allowing individuals to be whatever they may want to be; (3) it is plural, assuming that people value things differently and that capabilities are dissimilar in quality, in such way that what is a central capability to one person is not necessarily for another; (4) it deals with social justice and inequality; (5) and finally, it speaks directly to improving people's life opportunities and freedoms as a major goal for public policy.

In that sense, the concept of capabilities does not refer solely to individual's personal abilities, but rather, equally recognises the role that political, economic and social conditions play in determining individual's freedoms and opportunities to freedoms in life. Nussbaum (2011) makes this clear by drawing a distinction between internal capabilities and combined capabilities. The former are personal characteristics of the individual, such as personality features and intellectual capacities. The latter represent substantial freedoms, which are defined as the sum of internal capabilities with environmental conditions, namely, the social, cultural, economic and political factors.

In addition to Nussbaum's (2011) classification, Sen's (1992) definition of conversion factors corroborates that individuals' life circumstances – and the historical, cultural, political and socioeconomic contexts that define them – are prone to prevent people's capabilities from being developed and converted into functionings. Conversion factors refer to the presence of personal and social diversities among people (Sen, 1992), and can be classified according to three main categories (Robeyns, 2003, 2005; Trani, Bakhshi, & Biggeri, 2011). They can refer to individual's characteristics, as gender, age, bodily condition, and personal abilities; to societal aspects, as "public policies, social norms, discriminating practises, gender roles, societal hierarchies, power relations", public participation and social cohesion (Robeyns, 2005, p. 99); and to environmental features. Hence, provided the main role circumstances and contexts hold in the Approach, it becomes necessary to critically "scrutinise the context in which economic production and social interactions take place, and whether the circumstances in which people choose from their opportunity sets are enabling and just" (Robeyns, 2005, p. 99).

1.3.   An Aristotelian Approach

The CA's acknowledgment of the importance of individuals' context(s) and circumstances is a consequence of its philosophical origins, mainly founded on Aristotle's ideas of human good and moral virtues described in the main ethical treatise, *Nicomachean Ethics*[10] (Aristotle, 2009). In Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle (2009) departs from questioning what human good is, and how human beings should live. He recognises the complexity of human existence and sees in the particularities of each situation and of each person the path to understand why people value the things they value and why people act the way they act.

The process of critical scrutiny is central to Aristotle (2009), since it leads individuals to capture contradictions and unclarities that could not be noticed otherwise. In this manner, because it represents a reflexive and contextual process in its nature, the Aristotelian sort of ethical judgment cannot be detached from the culture and values to which the examination refers. Based on such interpretation, Nussbaum (1990) builds what she calls the *Aristotelian Procedure to Ethics* (APE). The

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[10] Although to a much lesser extent, the CA also bears on Marxist thought, particularly on the "conception of 'alienation' and vision of reforming society to bring it in line with our creative and associative natures" (Carpenter, 2009, p. 357), on Adam Smith's and John Stuart Mill's moral theories (Robeyns, 2017), and on John Rawls' (1999[1971], 2001) theory of justice (Sen, 2017). Nonetheless, Aristotle's ideas – including some of those presented in *Politics* (Aristotle, 1999) – represent the Approach's strongest influence (Sen, 2017).

APE is part of the basis of the CA and is concerned with ethical judgments that, grounded on Aristotle (2009), are informed by three main characteristics: the non-commensurability of valuable things; the priority of the particular; and the essential role of emotions and imagination (Nussbaum & Sen, 1989[1987]; Nussbaum, 1990).

The Non-commensurability of valuable things suggests that valuable things cannot be represented by single quantitative measures. The APE considers that values are qualitatively different from one another and hence, are not reducible to one single measure (Nussbaum & Sen, 1989[1987]). Thus, the APE is not compatible with the 'science of measurement,' characterised by the concepts of metricity, singleness, consequentialism and the idea of maximisation (Nussbaum, 1990). Metricity refers to the notion that in any situation in which choice is involved, there is one value that varies only in quantity and that can be used as a single parameter to compare the alternatives. Following singleness, all alternatives can be compared according to the same rule, using the same metric. Consequentialism implies that the act of choice is to be valued not because of the reasons that lead to it, but rather, for its outcomes. In that sense, under a 'science of measurement' perspective, for each situation, the rational choice is seen as an outcome of the maximisation of the values that were ordered based on the one value that appears as the parameter (Nussbaum, 1990).

From an Aristotelian point of view, the process through which people deliberate among things that are worth choosing is more important than the choice itself. Accordingly, the Aristotelian individual is capable of seeing that values are not only different from one another, but that they are also not interchangeable (Nussbaum, 1990). In that sense, the Aristotelian deliberation process from which the CA derives "is qualitative and not quantitative, and rational just because it is qualitative, and based upon a grasp of the special nature of each of the items in question" (Nussbaum, 1990, p. 61). Therefore, the APE is not compatible with doctrines that understand that desires or needs can be represented as a single quantitative measure, as utilitarianism[11].

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[11] Utilitarianism represents a moral theory that uses utility as the parameter for individuals' wellbeing (Haslet, 1990). The term utility finds its origins in Jeremy Bentham's theory (Bentham, 1823). Within the economic literature, utility has been defined according to different parameters, as levels of personal well-being (Haslet, 1990), as the outcome of a function representative of an individual's preferences (Broom, 1991), or, as Sen understands it, a multi-meaning term that can be used to define things as pleasure, happiness and desire (Sen, 1991). Sen (1985b, 1992, 2017) has, on several occasions, criticised utilitarianism and its three main characteristics, which he defines, very similarly to the Aristotelian criticism to theories of similar considerations, as consequentialism, welfarism and sum-ranking. As he poses (2017, p. 341), utilitarianism "is a result-oriented (and in that sense consequentialist) theory that concentrates only on utility consequences (which is the informational base identified by welfarism), and, in particular, focuses on the sum-total of utilities

The second feature of the Aristotelian procedure to ethics, the priority of the particular**,** refers to Aristotle's (2009) rejection of general rules and principles. For him, each situation of choice is unique, related to certain circumstances and a given historical context. He defended the priority of the perception, according to which judgments of concrete situations should be performed in a less formal and, rather, more intuitive manner. Hence, judgments based on the observation of the particular features of each situation should be preferred to general rules of any kind (Nussbaum, 1990).

General rules are those meant to be applied to any sort of situation as general guides, regardless of context. Universal rules, on the other hand, are the ones that can possibly be applied to situations that share a similar context. Although Aristotle seems to believe that all situations of choice may have particularities that are exclusively specific to each situation – according to Nussbaum and Sen (1989[1987]), he states that any situation may be composed of non-repeatable aspects that might or might not be new facts with which the agent has never dealt – he believes that universal accounts or any other type of generalisation are valuable only if they regard the particulars (Nussbaum & Sen, 1989[1987]). Individual's perception of concrete situations receives great relevance as it represents a caring dialogue between guidelines and concrete actions, general rules and unrepeatable situations, permitting to perceive and to react to new facts in every case (Nussbaum, 1990).

The last characteristic of the APE is the essential role of emotions and imagination. For Aristotle (2009), human emotions and imagination make the particular visible in all its concreteness, plenitude and salient features, allowing for the possibility to recognise the actual nature of the situation under judgment. Hence, a correct perception could not be achieved only by the use of the intellect, as philosophers such as Plato would argue. On the contrary, it is necessary to engage with "the kind of experienced connectedness that would enable the person to feel and respond to, as well as intellectually apprehend, the values with which he or she is confronted" (Nussbaum & Sen, 1989[1987], p. 27).

1.4.   On Aristotle and freedom

It is not difficult to perceive the extent to which the Capability Approach embodies Aristotle's (2009) ethical theory. The importance of emotions and imagination is explicitly mentioned by Nussbaum

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(which is the demand that sum-ranking makes)". In that manner, Sen too opposes to the indiscriminate use of the 'science of measure' in evaluations concerning social justice and well-being, which suggests the better suitability of qualitative methodologies.

(2011) as a central capability. For her, in the path toward freedoms, people should be able to imagine, to think critically, and to use their senses and reason, to feel empathy toward others and love (Nussbaum, 2011). Drawing from Smith (2002[1759]), Sen (2009) argues that emotions and reason are complementary features of ethical judgments and deliberations – and therefore, of evaluations and research. According to him:

> […] the importance of emotions can be appreciated within the reach of reason. Indeed, the significant place of emotions for our deliberations can be illustrated by the reasons for taking them seriously (though not uncritically). If we are strongly moved by some particular emotion, there is good reason to ask what that tells us. (Sen, 2009, p. 39)

In fact, the very concepts of human capabilities and functionings come from the Aristotelian theory (Nussbaum, 1988[1987]; Sen, 1992). According to Qizilbash (1998, p. 55), Nussbaum builds upon "an Aristotelian conception of human nature, which leads to her (Aristotelian) conception of the good life." Nussbaum's distinction between internal and combined capabilities was also derived from Aristotle, as well as the idea of adaptive preferences.[12] As she poses, for Aristotle (2009), social arrangements should not concern themselves solely with resources, but rather, should focus on "a full conception of the human good and human functioning" (Nussbaum, 1988[1987], p. 7).

Within the scope of the CA, free individuals should be able to undertake decisions, implement choices, and perform value judgements as an Aristotelian agent, making a deeper sense of the context and circumstances, scrutinising their reasons and emotions, and being an active agent in finding well-being. The CA's concepts of agency, autonomy, and the notion of living the kind of life one reasonably values are deeply embedded in those ideas. On the other hand, the priority of the particular is reflected in the CA's focus on individuals and their substantial freedoms, in addition to the

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[12] In criticising how utilitarianism, based upon people's desires, might neglect people's real conditions and result in misled judgments, Nussbaum states (1988[1987], p. 14): "Even at the level of basic needs for food, it can be shown that women frequently express the belief that they are doing well, even while they are demonstrably suffering from diseases of malnutrition. Many of them die without perceiving their need. […] A further merit of the Aristotelian approach -- which asks, instead, which good human functions they are in fact able to perform — is that it enables us to criticize such situations, and to say that more ought to be given to such people. Desire, the contemporary Aristotelian holds, is an easily corrupted, unstable, and unreliable guide to genuine human flourishing."

importance given to conversion factors, which can be internal or founded on contextual, historically-constructed, cultural, economic or political issues.[13]

Furthermore, the CA assumes that valuable things are incommensurable by seeing development as a multidimensional process in which the means to achieve freedom are as important as the ends – or the freedoms reached. Sen's (1997, 2002, 2009) distinction between culmination and comprehensive outcomes relates to this notion. Culmination outcomes are those in which the process through which the choice made is not considered, in such a way that only the act of choice is seen as relevant. Conversely, comprehensive outcomes are defined as those that include the process of choice. The intrinsic importance of comprehensive outcomes – that is, the 'process significance' (Sen, 1997) – relies on to the idea that the process through which things are decided may have a direct effect on the results achieved and on these resulting consequences.

In fact, one main implication of the APE to the CA relates to the relevance of processes. As I mentioned previously, Nussbaum (2000, 2001), for instance, endorses the concept of adaptive preferences, the process according to which people's preferences are shaped over time, influenced by their context and circumstances. It is true that it could be argued that she presents a version of the CA that is considered to be more normative and detached from the very concepts of human agency and autonomy when compared to Sen's (Hamilton, 2019). The argument is based on her proposed list of basic capabilities (Nussbaum, 2011), constructed upon Aristotelian theory and hence, not reliant on people's agency to choose their own valued capabilities. In her defence, Nussbaum (1992) argues that her intentions with this list is to provide people with means and opportunities to critically scrutinise their choices.[14]

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[13] Particularities relate to individuals' concrete context, and to cultural and historical circumstances. The Aristotelian Procedure to Ethics implies that the CA's focus on individuals should not be seen as a rejection to collectively- and socially-constructed issues, as social contexts and history. On the contrary, all of these notions, including the idea of capabilities and functionings, represent interconnected aspects of human life that cannot be understood other than as organic pieces of a whole.

[14] Nussbaum (1992, p. 226) raises four points – of which three deserve to be mentioned here since they convey that her approach allows space for the consideration of processes – to respond to the criticism regarding her list of capabilities. First, she argues, "the list is a list of capabilities, and not actual functionings, precisely because the conception is designed to leave room for choice", given that the availability of opportunities "enhances, and does not remove, choice". Second, she continues, "this respect for choice is built deeply into the list itself in the architectonic role it gives to practical reasoning", in such way that "one of the most central capabilities promoted by the conception will be the capability of choosing itself, which is made among the most fundamental elements of the human essence". Lastly, she argues, "the Aristotelian insists that choice is not pure spontaneity, flourishing independently of material and social conditions." In this manner, under her perspective, "if one cares about autonomy, then must care about the rest of the form of life that supports it and the material conditions that enable one to live that form of life."

Sen, in particular, mentions in several opportunities the importance of taking processes into consideration. Referring to freedom, he states that it has two main overlapping aspects that deserve attention, namely, the opportunity aspect of freedom and the process aspect of freedom (Sen, 2002a). The former regards one's ability to achieve freedom. The latter is concerned with the process through which freedom is achieved. Sen (2002a) understands that it is necessary to consider the person's free decision process in judging the extent to which she is free, irrespective of whether she has or has not achieved freedom. He argues that there is no sense in excluding processes from evaluations, given that individuals value processes and their accomplishment.

In the same direction, in his discussion on Justice as well as in his contributions on the social choice field, Sen (2002a, 2009, 2017) develops an idea of deliberation that is very much based on processes, mainly on public reasoning. For him, the procedure of deciding which capabilities are collectively valuable is context-dependent and should be based on public dialogue and individuals' participation. He rejects the idea of achieving a complete social ordering of alternatives and affirms that incomplete rankings – or the absence of total agreement – are sufficient for just public deliberations (Sen, 2009). This implies that he is not interested in proposing any sort of universal list of capabilities because, as he sees it, the process of choosing reasonably valuable capabilities, as an exercise of people's freedom, is per se relevant (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007).

At this point, I should clarify that my presentation of the CA here is based on its Aristotelian origins; that is, it is developed under the theoretical and conceptual bases of the CA, as originally put forward by Amartya Sen and, later, by Martha Nussbaum. I present the CA in a less normative manner, as I endeavour to use it here in a less normative way. This is why I present a joint version of Sen's and Nussbaum's approaches, as I am mostly informed here by the manner in which the concept of freedom is framed. Sen's and Nussbaum's versions of the Capability Approach indeed present some fundamental differences that are mostly materialised by Nussbaum's (2011) predisposition to establish a list of central capabilities, whereas Sen (2000) argues that individuals should be allowed to choose which capabilities they reasonably value.

Indeed, it could be argued that Sen's version of the CA is less founded on the Aristotelian ethical theory than Nussbaum's, although I tend to disagree. Instead, I would argue that Sen and Nussbaum's approaches diverge from one another mainly in emphasizing different aspects of the APE. At this

point, it should be evident that Sen's and Nussbaum's idea of 'human flourishing,' implicit in the concepts of capabilities and functionings, strongly derives from the Aristotelian ethical theory. As Sen (2017, p. 356) affirms, referring to the CA:

> In recent years there has been considerable discussion on an approach to justice that concentrates on people's capability to lead the kind of life they have reason to value – the things that they can do, or be. The roots of the approach can be traced to the ideas of Aristotle, and, to some extent, Adam Smith; it concentrates on the opportunities that people have to lead valuable and valued lives […]. Aristotle saw this achievement in terms of 'human flourishing'. Among other things, he pointed out, in Nicomachean Ethics, that wealth 'is evidently not the good we are seeking' – 'for it is merely useful and for something else'.

Notwithstanding, whilst Nussbaum (2011) follows Aristotle in asserting that it is necessary to specify central capabilities, I contend that Sen (2000) gives more relevance to the Aristotelian notion of universalisation; that is, to the idea according to which particular concrete situations are dissimilar in value and relate to given circumstances and historical contexts. As such, particular situations should be judged according to one's own perception of her concrete reality. This, I argue, leads Sen (2000) to understand that people should be given the opportunity to – reasonably – choose among valuable things, provided their own circumstances and preferences. It furthermore provides Sen (2000) with an interpretation of what an informed choice is that is somewhat different from the one presented by Nussbaum (2011). Nussbaum (2011) believes that is not possible for a person to make an informed reasonable choice – or, in other words, to make sense of what she reasonably values – without being endowed with some basic freedoms – with which Sen (2000) agrees on some level, considering his reference to basic capabilities. He nonetheless trusts in people's freedom to choose. Under Sen (2000), whether one is reasonable and able to scrutinise her own decisions, she will choose wisely among the freedoms she values, given her own particular circumstances.

As I discuss in the Conclusion, my research led me to question the normativity present in the CA's ideas of agency and freedom. However, for the purposes of this chapter, it is enough to affirm that I present Sen's and Nusbaum's CA jointly as a means to establish parameters, as it is not possible to completely avoid normativity when doing research. I do acknowledge both contributions and understand that the differences between them do not change the core of the discussion, provided

that both Nussbaum and Sen are concerned with the enlargement of people's opportunities to freedoms and agency."[15]

1.5. Education as freedom

The CA focuses on individuals' freedom to choose among valuable beings and doings, but mostly refers to the multidimensional processes through which freedom to be, to do and to choose are achieved, and to the complex and qualitatively rich particular concrete circumstances that inform and shape those processes over time. Regarding this research, my adoption of the CA as main conceptual background indicates that freedom is seen here as "the opportunities that people have to live valuable and valued lives" (Sen, 2017, p. 356). Freedom is hence about opportunities to be, to do, to become, and to choose among different types of life. Under these terms, both means to freedoms and the extent to which people have freedoms are relevant. Expanding people's freedoms is an end itself, but furthermore, is a means to enhance underprivileged people's autonomy, life circumstances, self-determination and self-awareness, and their positions under unfavourable power dynamics.

Education – school education – is considered to be a foundational capability, that is, a sort of freedom that is the basis for the flourishment of a wide range of other freedoms (Sen, 1992; Drezé & Sen, 1995; Nussbaum, 2011)[16]. According to Walker and Unterhalter (2007, p. 8), "education contributes to

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[15] Provided the role Sen (2009) gives to processes, public reasoning and choice, he is against what he calls transcendental justice; that is, theories of justice – as Rawls (2001, 1999[1971]) and Nussbaum (2006b, 2000, 2011) – which, Sen (2009) contends, do not depart from real-world circumstances and seek for ideal notions of justice. I may not have the space here, nor it is essential for the arguments I raise, to deeply present and discuss theories of justice, as they extrapolate the scope of this work. It may be worthy to say that, as I see it, theorising about justice at any level implies in building justice as something closer to an ideal, as real-world conditions are much more complex than any theory – or idea of justice, to not disappoint Sen (2009) – can encompass. Therefore, without disqualifying Sen's (2009) passionate critique to ideal transcendental theories of justice, I depart here from the understanding that both bottom-up context accountable constructions of justice, or of less unjust circumstances, and theoretical constructions are relevant, although perhaps in different levels. The relevant point is that such accounts of justice are not at all incompatible, when it comes to approaching social justice related matters in the real world. Under these terms, I assume an intermediary position, in that I do not fully endorse any theory, but rather critically root on a group of theories. Thus, for the purposes of the discussion I propose here, this joint presentation of the CA should be enough. For a discussion on the differences between Nussbaum's and Sen's version of CA, see Nussbaum (2000), Qizilbash (1998) and Robeyns (2005).

[16] Drezé and Sen (1995) argue that education has an instrumental role, an instrumental process role, and an empowering and distributive role. Education's instrumental role refers to how critical education stimulates and improves the public debate and dialogue on political and social issues. The instrumental process role speaks to how education expands an individual's horizons through the people they meet throughout the process of being educated. Finally, the empowering and distributive role concerns an education's role in

interpersonal effects where people are able to use the benefits of education to help others and hence contribute to the social good and democratic freedoms".

In that sense, education – as a category of analysis referred to within this research – holds a pivotal role within the CA (Saito, 2003). Education is an intrinsically dynamic and evolving process that affects and shapes people's capabilities and functionings sets over time. Even whether one chooses to conceptualise education as instruction, the fact is that more years of schooling enhances a person's chances to gain meaningful employment and to live a 'decent' life (World Bank, 2018). Or, inversely, I would argue that, as education is directly related to the freedoms people may have, it appears here as a relevant category to base this study on the freedoms enjoyed by people living under conditions of urban poverty.

I therefore seek to adopt a concept of formal education that regards education as freedoms. A concept that is informed by the logic that education should be seen as an end in itself, in addition to as a primordial means to better life opportunities. Formal education should allow people to improve their life circumstances by expanding their available life choices and, at the same time, providing them with conditions to critically reflect on their decisions. Formal education should hence serve as a means to help people to develop autonomy, self-determination, and social awareness of the self; in other words, it should assist people to critically understand their position within society.

1.6.   On the state power

It is not possible to discuss underprivileged populations' freedoms in postcolonial contexts without referring to power relations. Power has a central role in the study of social affairs and is especially relevant when it comes to contexts in which society was established based on the submission of certain groups to the domain of others, as it is the case in postcolonial societies (Fanon, 1963; Mbembe, 2001). Far from intending to exhaust the debate on power and power relations, in this

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helping disadvantaged and marginalised peoples, who are often overlooked or simply ignored within the political process, to politically organise. Nussbaum (2010, 2010), on the other hand, argues that individuals should be educated to develop their senses and imagination, and their ability to critically scrutinise their own lives, political matters, and their relationships to and with their environment(s) as well as other human beings. Thus, for her, a kind of education that goes beyond the development of cognitive skills is essential to provide individuals with substantial freedoms.

section I aim to briefly discuss the terms under which I (and my research) understand sovereign power, as an expression of dominant power relations informing state action.

There is extensive literature within political philosophy that aims to debate the relations between power and the state.[17] Within the field of sociology, and as concerns to the discussion I propose here, Foucault's theory of power is particularly relevant.[18] Foucault (1988) defines power in terms of a relation. Power is, as he sees it, an omnipresent and defuse force, inherent to every human relation, in such a way that it is and comes from everywhere. In his genealogical microanalysis of power, Foucault (1988, 1995) concludes that, from the eighteenth-century, with the rise of the nation-states in Europe, there was a change in terms of how these states managed populations. The dominant paradigm based on the punishment of the human body was shifted to a new one, founded on the discipline of human bodies – that is, on the "calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour" (Foucault, 1995, p. 138). Thus, the contemporary nation-state would discipline the bodies not – exclusively – through the use of violence or punitive force. Rather, it would do so by using coercive methods and surveillance, new technologies that are now a transformative and constitutive part of the old disciplinary technology (Foucault, 2003), meticulously built into institutions – such as schools, prisons and hospitals – to dominate the human body by shaping it and its behaviour.

Foucault (1988) sees power as a homogenising and creative force that, through a large set of disciplinary mechanisms, manifests in human bodies and minds. Power reproduces itself inside the body and through the behaviour of the body. He argues that the emergence of this new paradigm was paramount for these states to abandon the ancient *modus operandi* in which state power was ultimately exerted through death – or through the means of the right to kill. Modern nation-states would hence rely on a biopolitics founded on the biological control of the body and even, of life itself. Foucault (1988) calls such, the politics of biopower, which would be materialised in power's orientation toward the generalised concern with survival, health and conditions of living. Biopower, therefore, would work through a careful, systematic and hierarchical governing of life, rather than in the imposition of power and domination through death.

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[17] See, for instance, Hobbes (2013[1651]), Rousseau (2005[1755]; 2001[1762]), Locke (2004[1690]), Rawls (1993).

[18] A summary of the main sociological perspectives regarding power can be found in Haugaard (2002) and Clegg and Haugaard (2013[2009]).

Far from denying Foucault's contribution to the debate on power and sovereignty, I engage here with critical perspectives that understand that Foucault's biopower and biopolitics concepts fail to fully represent the reality lived by gendered, racialised, underprivileged bodies from postcolonial countries (James, 1996; Silva, 2009; Alves, 2018). For colonialism – and also imperialism – nation-states created conditions of marginalisation and subservience over and within colonised geographies with the aim of extracting economic, political and social advantages from the deepening of this unfair relationship (Mbembe, 2001). These nation-states conditions as dominant were defined by the possession of resources able to guarantee dominance by the imposition of force (Fanon, 1965; Hobsbawm, 1977). Such conditions were largely translated into persistent and systemic structural conditions of poverty and inequality within postcolonial countries.

Colonial occupation entailed, as Mbembe (2003, p. 26) argues, "the production of boundaries and hierarchies, zones and enclaves; the subversion of existing property arrangements; the classification of people according to different categories; resource extraction; and, finally, the manufacturing of a large reservoir of cultural imaginaries." Such imaginaries were responsible for attaching symbolic reason to the unequal distribution of rights for different people – who were classified in distinct groups in accordance with different rules. The exercise of state power under such context was attached to occupation – and the violence it implied – to the same extent that occupation involved "relegating the colonised into a third zone between subjecthood and objecthood" (Mbembe, 2003, p. 26). In this way, a major characteristic of colonialism is the imposition of power over not only a geographical space, or not necessarily through the exercise of war, but especially – and systematically – over certain groups of people and their lives, which creates different forms of existence within society. This is a feature that Foucault's (2003) analysis, based on the western European experience with racism, seems to ignore (Silva, 2009).

The recognition of the postcolonial space as one that is fragmented, where bodies with different characteristics are hierarchically organised, has important implications. Firstly, where bodies are not homogeneous, as Foucault (1988) seems to imply, some bodies may be more – or differently – subject(ed) to sovereign power than others solely in face of carrying some specific characteristics that diverge from the dominant norm (James, 1996). Those bodies – whether racialized and/or gendered – may be more subject to direct and punitive state action, including through public spectacles, as in the case of mass killing(s) and the incarceration of poor and Black populations (Alves 2018; Silva, 2009; James, 1996).

On a similar note, Foucault's (1988) description of power as a diffuse force that is not possessed by institutions, governments, or any specific group in a given society, does not seem suitable to postcolonial contexts, where this orientation was historically established. Within these spaces, dominant structures of power that orient state action are constructed as a result of the nature of colonial domination, which produces, as Mbembe (2003) indicates, divided, sectioned and hierarchical societies. It is indeed possible to agree with Foucault's (1988) perspective, from the moment in which states and its institutions are established – with all their power mechanisms, apparatus and discourse – founded on the interests of ruling groups, dominant power may become diffuse and often, symbolic; thus, there might not be an absolute awareness or association that may connect the exercise of state power to the interests of certain groups, exactly because the entrenched, historically constructed, dominant power may appear to flow naturally, and be reproduced, both through people and through institutions, to discipline bodies and minds in an unequal and biased manner.

The fact that dominant power may be diffused in every social relation – which justifies the Foucauldian idea of power coming from everywhere – does not change the fact that postcolonial states tend to exert power founded on dominant group interests. This unjust orientation of the state in postcolonial societies, such as Brazil, has deep implications in terms of distribution of justice and freedom, including with respect to fundamental rights – such as the right to live a dignified life. This idea will become clearer in Chapter Three, where I discuss the extent to which the Brazilian state's primary education system is permeated by colonial and enslaved values. Nonetheless, authors including Caldeira (2000) and Hoston (2008) have already shown the extent to which citizenship and access to basic rights in Brazil are, in practice, fuzzy and blurred concepts.[19]

Thus, irrespective of recognising the Foucauldian contribution, current conditions are well encapsulated by Mbembe's (2003) notion of Necropower. This concept relates to how state

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[19] In her account of *São Paulo*, Caldeira (2000, p. 339) proposes that citizenship in Brazil represents a disjunctive process in which "the civil aspects of citizenship are continuously violated," regardless of the country being a "political democracy" where "civil rights are legitimated." Holston (2008) also shows how the the heavy political power of different dominant elite groups throughout history has rendered citizenship in Brazil intrinsically inegalitarian among different social groups, although formally universal. He speaks to the extent to which Brazil has developed laws and a complex judicial system for "the English to see" (Holston, 2008, p. 198) that, in practice, assisted in excluding most Brazilians from opportunities to effectively universal egalitarian citizenship.

sovereignty in postcolonial contexts tend to be a product of a Necropolitics of power, in which the state – or rather the dominant interest(s) that govern it – decides which lives matter and are therefore entailed to be lived at any and all cost, and, in juxtaposition, those which are disposable. It refers to the sovereign ability to kill and to abandon, to create among neglected groups subcategories of life characterised by unfreedoms that assume the most diverse forms, as police repression, gendered violence, and denial of access to minimal infrastructural conditions.[20] However, I must contend that I do not fully embrace the notion of Necropower for one key reason: it can be rather deterministic in reference to people's power to resist and manage their lives under the necropolitical action of the state. Mbembe's (2003) concept of Necropolitics leaves limited space for dominated people to act against the dominating structures that act upon them, with which I only partially agree. As it will become cleared throughout this work – especially in Chapter Eight – although state necropolitical management of poor people's lives limits people's opportunities to freedoms and agency in relevant ways, resistance against dominant structures of power is a constitutive part of poor people's existence(s). Under these terms, it is more accurate to affirm that the Brazilian state's exercise of sovereign power is one that happens in ways that appears necropolitical in terms of the state's management of life and death, and yet, leaves space for resistance.

Consequently, the sovereign power to which I will be referring to here is one exerted, directly or symbolically, by the state or through the action(s) of the state and its institutions. It is exercised in accordance with dominant social and cultural hierarchies characteristic of postcolonial countries, in addition to structures of complex dominant power relations that perpetrate modern postcolonial societies, while acting through and over people and institutions. Dominant power structures, in that context, serve as a political mechanism of control and self-perpetuation: by means of oppressing non-dominant groups and maintaining the structures of inequalities – through working toward emerging minority groups in a life permeated by unfreedoms – it guarantees its self-perpetuation.

1.7.   On power and freedom

Hamilton (2019) proposes that Sen's account of freedom can be interpreted as "freedom as effective power […] to make and scrutinize the whole range of choices that makes up a human's life" (p. 153). Thus, within the CA, freedoms can be understood in terms of power to reach different types of life.

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[20] The idea of unfreedoms is one that is not well accommodated for within the CA. I understand unfreedoms as the absence of opportunities for a good life or the presence of conditions that are restricting to what is regarded as people's opportunities to live a good life.

Oppression can hence be seen as that which harms individuals' power to determine their path of and in life, which can happen through: (1) reducing their possible options to lead the life they reasonably value; (2) reducing their means to achieve possible options, which includes mitigating their political power to demand access to basic rights and public goods, such as public security, within democratic governments; (3) or even by harming their capacity to engage in critically scrutinised choices. What I suggest here is that in Brazil, as in postcolonial countries in general, the state power – sovereignty – may work as an oppressive force when it comes to certain groups of its population. This is not to define the state as a Hobbesian actor that is an intrinsically bad force – at least, not at this point. There will always be groups who will benefit from the action(s) of the state, as the postcolonial state, directly or indirectly, works to fulfil the interests of dominant groups. Nonetheless, this is to affirm that postcolonial states may not work toward endowing all its citizens with basic freedoms. Nor toward the effective redistribution of *power to* – that is, of freedoms, especially those from a political nature and related people's access to social justice – even when they seem to do so. I explore this idea throughout this thesis and will begin my discussion to what is specifically regarded as the Brazilian case in Chapter Three.

At this point, I would like to raise a consideration to what concerns the relationship between postcolonial state power and people's freedoms. As I discussed in the previous section, I am inclined to see the exercise of state power in postcolonial states as something that carries a negative character. State power is one that serves to oppress marginalised populations to the detriment of the upholding of the dominant social order. Foucault (1995) opposes the idea of defining power as something negative, as "it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'" (1995, p. 194); he sees power as something that produces "realities", "domains" and "rituals of truth" (1995, p. 194). However, I contend that the very characteristic of power as producer of domains is exactly why it oppresses: it produces conditions in which the flow of established relations of power is such that some groups end up exerting forms of necropower over other groups. That is, within hierarchical postcolonial societies, power relations may act in oppressive directions through the restriction of freedoms, even if not directly so, given that some groups are structurally/symbolically better empowered to live a good life than others. Thus, I understand that such an exercise of the state power is *per se* oppressive.

It is not my intention to represent the voices I present in this work as coming from powerless people, who do not possess any control over their lives and circumstances. Affirming that dominant

structures of power work against them does not imply that they are not entitled to any power. As Hamilton (2014) argues based on a Foucauldian account, people are subject to and part of the complex networks of power that characterise modern societies in many different manners. There is no such thing as absolute powerlessness. However, I do understand that, considering the macro structures of power, underprivileged populations' power to reach different types of life – including their power over their own circumstances – may be limited, even diminished. To the same end, saying that people are subject to unfreedoms produced by dominant structures of power does not ultimately imply that people are not at all entitled to freedoms. It is to say that the freedoms people possess may be grounded in different ways – some of which I endeavor to critically understand throughout this work – by the ways in which dominant structures of power permeate their lives, especially concerning the action of the state upon them.

The CA defines freedom in terms of the extent to which people have freedoms. Freedom is, within this framework, something one possesses to a certain degree that is contingent on one's concrete circumstances – which include the political, cultural, historical and socioeconomic contexts. This is not to say that, under the CA, there are no such thing as free individuals. Conversely, individuals' freedoms are seen as something to be enlarged, enhanced. Provided the oppressive character of state power, I attempt here to critically understand the making of freedoms and unfreedoms for urban poor populations, especially regarding state schooling and to the relationships between the action of the state and the lives underprivileged people are able to live.

Finally, before moving forward, it is necessary to quickly discuss and clarify some possible tensions that may be perceived among some of the theories I present in this chapter and from Chapter Three onward – particularly among the CA, Bourdieu's (1997, 2007; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) social reproduction theory, and Freire's (1967, 1987) pedagogy. According to McCowan (2015), those are three distinct normative accounts whose roots are attached to three different paradigms. As I mentioned previously, the CA represents a liberal egalitarian conceptual framework that sees education as a means to individuals' emancipation and to informed social participation, thus generally presenting a somewhat less critical perspective on school education and pedagogy.[21] On

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[21] Although Nussbaum (1997, 2010) has strongly defended the role of a humanities and arts curriculum in developing people's critical thinking skills, imagination and empathy toward others. She criticises what she calls 'education for profit', meaning, modes of formal education that focus only on improving the national wealth and ignore the role of education in preparing people for leading meaningful lives and to fully participating in modern democracies.

the other hand, Bourdieu's (1997, 2007; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) social reproduction theory – which I quickly discuss in Chapters Three and Nine – is a Marxist theory that understands formal education as an instrument whose functioning reproduces and reinforces the unequal power relations characteristic of capitalist societies. Freire's (1967, 1987) radical humanism, however, criticises what he calls 'banking education,' which expresses teachers' – and hence, institutionalised education – predisposition to treat students as non-active subjects whose sole role is to absorb that which they are taught. Freire's (1967, 1987) advocates for a sort of education capable of provoking social change through "the transformation of the self and emergence of critical consciousness," in such a way that "the collective development of understanding in the oppressed, would lead organically and sustainably to the transformation of societal structures" (McCowan, 2015, p. 46).[22]

Thus, in short, whist Bourdieu (1997, 2007; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) sees in school an instrument that excludes poor individuals from educational opportunities by reproducing an elitist culture that is far from poor people's reality and intellectual reach, Freire (1967, 1987) understands the school as a political means of alienation of oppressed classes. Conversely, the CA sees school education as an opportunity for emancipation, presenting a less politically critical view. These are indeed three different perspectives, which I utilise here under three different lenses. In my historical and sociological discussion in Chapter Three, I review Bourdieu's (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) historical analysis to contextualise that, in its origins, school education in Brazil was built upon a scholarly Eurocentric culture and aimed at educating the colonial elites. I nonetheless show how the historical process that culminated with development of the national state system of education – and the consequent massification of education – led to the gradual wrecking of state-provided schools. This process deepened state schools' predisposition to provide a sort of education that does not engage students in critical thinking – at least not intentionally –, which is a mechanism that Freire's (1967, 1987) concepts of banking education and mass political alienation somewhat encompass. As I discuss in Chapter Nine and in the Conclusions, my research led me to criticise both Bourdieu and Freire, as well as the CA, for distinct reasons. Nonetheless, I should clarify that my somewhat joint use of these three different paradigms implies a set of conclusions that is, mainly, threefold. I argue that it may be a mistake to – as Bourdieu (1997, 2007; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) affirms – think of schools as places whose elitist culture and curriculum exclude oppressed groups from educational opportunities, as this sort of argument can be easily used to justify the exclusion of humanities and arts from state schools' curricula, which could harm, as Nussbaum (1997, 2010) defends, the

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[22] I succinctly present Freire's pedagogy in Chapter Three and discuss some of his ideas further in Chapter Nine.

development of poor students' critical thinking capacities and their means to informed political participation. Moreover, I assert that it is erroneous to sustain, as Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) contends, that oppressed groups symbolically consent to the violence to which they are exposed as a product of the dominant structures of power, and, although it may be true that state schools in Brazil are managed in such a way to create a indoctrinated and docile mass of politically-socio-cultural-economically oppressed people – as Freire (1967, 1987) claims – this does not imply that state schools can only fulfil this harmful role of making unfreedoms for vulnerable populations; on the contrary, state schools are also spaces of political resistance and of making of freedom, agency and hope for emancipation, even if these are made through non-dichotomists, non-linear processes that are not encompassed by some of the concepts and ideas bring forward by the CA.

With that said, in the next chapter I clarify the methodological basis that informs the study I present here, which is closely related to its conceptual foundations.

Chapter Two – Methodological considerations

2.1.   Introduction

This is a qualitative study rooted in ten months of ethnographic fieldwork. Qualitative research generally aims to build deep understanding regarding social affairs, and serves to describe and to attach meanings to different social realities. Under the qualitative umbrella, I engage here with critical ethnographic inquiry. Ethnography opens space for the recognition of the role of the researcher in her relationship with other participants and as a subject part of the research. It allows researchers to acknowledge and embrace the complexities that inform human social relations, resulting in bottom-up in-depth research approaches. (Leavy, 2014).

In this chapter, I present, discuss and reflect on the methodological matters involved in producing this study. I start by acknowledging my positionality and reflecting on its implications in terms of reflexivity and ethical representation of research participants. In continuation, I justify the use of ethnography as the methodology and, following that, I present the research ethnographic data collection framework, including information about the fieldwork setting, methods used, and a general qualification of research participants. Next, I briefly approach the ethnographic data analysis procedures used, after which I debate the ethical implications of this research. Finally, I discuss some epistemological implications of combining ethnography with the CA.

2.2.   On Positionality, Reflexivity and Ethical Representation

Thomas Piketty (2014, p. 574), a heterodox economist, affirms: "Everyone is political in his or her own way. […] It is illusory, I believe, to think that the scholar and the citizen live in separate moral universes". Although in some methodologies, the idea of the researcher being political may not be as explicit or well accepted, notably in those based on the positivist notions of objectivity and neutrality (Watts, 2008; Clark, 2012), it plays a main role in ethnographic studies; as an interpretative methodology, it "offers accounts of social phenomena that are filtered through the subjective and personal experience of the ethnographer" (Watts, 2008, p. 4).

Researchers are human beings and, as such, are constituted of values and beliefs that regard to their singular life histories and trajectories – the so-called researcher's positionality. The account the

researcher may be able to build from the observed social reality and from participants' narratives, depends, to some extent, on the set of singular aspects that characterise the researcher's existence as a human being who inhabits a social world that may or may not be similar to the studied one (England, 1994). In the same measure, researchers are prone to experiencing emotions during fieldwork and at the writing up stage, especially when the study, as this one, is developed in vulnerable contexts (Lee-Treweek, 2000; Martin-Ortega & Herman, 2009; Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, & Liamputtong, 2009).

Given the critical feminist orientation of this research, I seek to argue that my ethnographic self works as an intermediary instrument between participants' concrete reality and the multidimensional account that can be apprehended from it, since the research ultimately speaks to the reality I was able to see, as a product of my interactions with participants and with the investigated social world (England, 1994). Therefore, being my ethnographic self a constitutive element of the research, it becomes fundamental to, before discussing research findings, present myself as the complex human being I am, as someone who is part of, and engage with, different social words in distinct manners, for a plurality of different reasons. Bearing on feminist research that understands that the researcher, her positionality and her emotions are inseparable from the research she carries out (Berry, Argüelles, Cordis, Ihmoud, & Estrada, 2017; Behar, 1996), in this section I aim to present some reflections regarding three key issues on ethnographic studies: researcher's positionality, reflexivity, and ethical representation of participants. It is to be discussed how these three features are interrelated in the context of this study, stressing the role of my researcher's self and emotions in the ways in which I make sense of the studied social reality.

During fieldwork, it is often difficult – or possibly impossible – to separate on-duty researcher from off-duty researcher (Brown, 2009). In the particular case of this research, I would argue that there was no and cannot be separation. I went to the field and participated in it as the person I am, moreover as a means to condense research-researched power imbalances by building reciprocal and honest relationships (England, 1994). The person I am is a product of many different aspects, some of which I will try to explain here in a brief autobiographic account.[23] I would like to start by saying,

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[23] Autobiographic accounts serve as an exercise of self-scrutiny to contextualise the positionality from where the researcher engages in building knowledge with participants. Following Davids and Willemse (2014, p. 3), "self-reflexivity broadly means taking a critical stance that includes ourselves in the analytical plane by which we may be able to take a step toward fulfilling the feminist desire to create more egalitarian research relationships."

however, that the making of who I am is not a unilateral process, especially in the field. There is the *who I am*, which refers to my own positionality as an individual with defined personal characteristics, and this *who* is part of a society that carries given features; and there is the perceived *who I am*, which relates to the way participants place me in relation to them and to their own positionalities. Understandably, both aspects impact the research: while my positionality affects the way I make sense of the social world under consideration within the parameters of this study, my perceived positionality influences how participants interact with me and therefore, impacts the development of relationships of trust (England, 1994).

One is, of course, linked to the other. My own positionality affects my perceived positionality and, because of that, may be a good place to start this discussion. I was born in 1989, in *Belford Roxo* in the state of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. I come from a working-class family, as do both of my parents. I grew up between two working-class neighbourhoods, in two different cities in Rio de Janeiro State: I lived in the city of *Mesquita* until I was seven years old and between the ages of sixteen to twenty-two; and lived in *Cabo Frio* from when I was seven to sixteen years old. Both *Mesquita* and *Belford Roxo* are located in a region called *Baixada Fluminense*, which comprises seven cities from the metropolitan – and peripheral – area of the city of Rio de Janeiro. *Cabo Frio*, on the other hand, is an ocean front tourist city located in the *Região dos Lagos* – the Lakes Region. However, I lived in a poor neighbourhood located 50km from the city centre.

I grew up listening to stories about my grandfather, Joaquim, my father's father. He was a railroad worker who, irrespective of his humble life conditions, actively – and secretly – fought against the military dictatorship that took place in Brazil between 1964-1985. My father talks proudly of how he remembers, as child, having militants chased by the authoritative regime hidden in his house in *Mesquita*, often for months, living with him, his four siblings and my grandparents. My grandfather died before I was born, but his story has been a significant influence on the person who I am and on how I perceive the world. It has taught me that a life that is not oriented toward seeking social justice is not a life that is worthy of living.

My maternal grandmother – Helena – however, raised five daughters by working as a seamstress. The condition of poverty in which my mother, my aunts and my grandmother used to live is still part of familial lore. They lived for years in a one-room house, located at the rear of my grandmother's brother's backyard, in *Nova Iguaçu*, another city in *Baixada Fluminense*. "I can never forget the feeling

of not having a thing to feed the girls, except one egg. And of dividing this one egg into six pieces, so that everyone could have something to eat," my ninety-seven-year-old grandmother tells us.

From my grandmother, my mother inherited the strong attachment to education. My grandmother worked hard to guarantee that all her children would get an education. Keeping her daughters in school was of the utmost priority to her. As money was scarce, my mother and my aunts would receive donations of old school uniforms, old shoes, and school supplies. That was how my grandmother was able to graduate three of her daughters, all of whom became schoolteachers. From her point of view, becoming a teacher was the only means through which her daughters could have a dignifying future, a job.

Her youngest daughter, my mother, got a scholarship and finished her secondary education in one of the city's most traditional private schools. She did not want to be a teacher. She dreamed of becoming a judge in a court of law. She still dreams of it. In the face of her life difficulties, only in 2005, when she was 47 was my mother able to complete an undergraduate degree. She enrolled in a Law course after that. However, as the only Black student in her class, she was unjustly accused by a professor – a judge in the court of law – of stealing a book. My mother was humiliated in front of her entire class. The professor later apologised when she realised that no book had been stolen. My mother, however, was never able to return to Law school. She started to have panic attacks when attempting to return to a classroom. I too, during my undergraduate, was humiliated by a professor in front of my class. He, a white, upper-middle-class man in his 60s, said that the university was not a place for a person like me – whatever that meant.

My father was never able to finish an undergraduate level course. He tried in his 30s after he was approved in a public tender to be a bailiff for Rio de Janeiro State. Nonetheless, the physical and psychological exhaustion brought on by his job prevented him from pursuing this undergraduate course. My father does not know – he defines himself as *moreno* – but he is a white man. I grew up seeing how society had different, contrasting ways of treating my parents, for reason of their genders and their skin tones, and of treating me as a product of this mixture.

Life was never easy in my house. We never had money to spare. When I was a child, my parents had only two priorities: to guarantee we would have food for the entire month; and that I, their only child, would receive a good education. I studied in state schools until the third year of basic education,

where I had one teacher that changed my entire life trajectory. I started the fourth year of basic education enrolled in a state school. After the first week of classes, the teacher came to talk to my mother and asked her to please take me out of that school. The teacher said that it was not a place for me. She told my parents that they would ruin my future if they insisted on allowing me to study there. Because of this teacher's warning, I ended up in a private school, as a product of major financial effort from my parents to put me "where I belonged."

I studied in private schools from the fourth to the ninth year of my basic education. These were cheap and small schools, if anything, the ones my parents could afford. It was not an easy period for me. Back then, I lived in an unfinished house, made of exposed construction bricks and clay. The house was so badly constructed that it was common for us to have the rain fall inside on rainy days. My parents used to drive an old, cheap, small car, and we could not afford to buy clothes regularly. I would wear clothes that one of my aunts would give me once a year and some old clothes from my mother. I was bullied in school for being poorer than my peers; for being fatter; for my old, cheap clothes; and because of my hair that exposed to others my afro origins. As a child, I suffered from depression because of bullying. I spent almost half a school year not going to school and studying from home.

I did not like school back then, but I enjoyed studying. Frequently my parents would have no money to buy me the school books for each academic year. So, the books they would not be able to get through book donations, they would borrow from school to make me copies. When I reached the end of my ninth year of basic education, I passed on an admissions test that allowed me to course secondary education in a federal school, recognized around the country for its quality. The school was located about 30km from my home, three cities away. I can still remember how I used to love that school, its large corridors, classrooms, science labs, sports facilities, the huge grounds. I loved all that space and freedom we had as students.

It never occurred to me, during my schooling, that doing an undergraduate course was not an option after finishing secondary school. Irrespective of any difficulty or possible lack of resources, I was never afraid that I would not be able to do it ether. I studied Economic Sciences in a federal university located 45km from *Mesquita* and 155km from *Cabo Frio*. As I could not afford living close to campus, I moved back to Mesquita. Some days, because of the traffic, it would take upwards of five hours to

come and go from university. I would have classes from early in the morning until the end of the afternoon.

During my undergraduate, my family's financial insecurities worsened to the point that we could barely afford food. "We may not eat, but you are going to finish your degree." That was what my mother said when I told her that I was going to drop out of university to find a job and help with the bills. I managed to finish my undergraduate course because of my grandmother – who earned a minimal wage – and some of my aunts who gave me money every month to cover the cost of going to university, and eating and those oftentimes overlooked, small essentials. To help me get to university, my parents bought me an old car from my cousin – they paid for that car for ten years, finally in 2018.

The story was similar during my Master's degree. I accepted an offer to move to another state – *Rio Grande do Sul* – without knowing whether I would have the means to afford living and studying there. My parents did not let me even doubt whether I should go. I went, and the costs not covered by my scholarship were covered by money made from the sale of that old car my parents had yet to finish paying off.

My Master's introduced me to Vila Lanceiro, the backdrop and foundation of this study's exploration. I went to Vila Lanceiro in 2013, when I was assigned to tutoring mathematics classes in a state school located right at the centre of Vila, as part of the agenda of a social project I participated in. Before I started teaching there, I thought I knew the reality of a state school, since I too had studied in schools like this one. However, the reality I came to see was significantly worse than the one I think back to from my childhood – although that one was already not a particularly good one. The intense experience of working for this project led me to change the path of my Masters' research, which in the end focused on conceptually discussing the prominent dysfunctionality of Brazilian state schools.

This motivation, this need to understand how state schools in Brazil can be transformed into a means to good life opportunities for vulnerable populations, brought me to my PhD. That and a feeling of guilt. I still struggle to understand why, of all people, I succeed against these odds. It is not that I do not understand how. I know that irrespective of all of the difficulties my family went through over the years, they never surrendered to conditioning factors ripe for educational failure. I was protected by my family from many major damages that my socioeconomic condition could have caused. That

was the how. Nevertheless, I find it unfair that people like myself – working-class, poor people – are always the exception when it comes to succeeding in life in countries like Brazil.

And thus, this study has a personal motivation. It comes from my personal fight to understand how and why nation-states can leave the most vulnerable groups of their population to their own devices, deprived of the most basic and fundamental support to overcome their own disadvantaged circumstances. It comes from my own personal motivation to find paths to transform this reality through that which changed my family's circumstances: formal education. It comes from my personal experience of struggle, from all I went through – and still go through – along my own path. It comes from the scars that trying to succeed under such deep conditions of overwhelming and all encompassing structural inequalities have left on my own skin and in my soul.

I am a young, heterosexual, cis-gendered, Black woman, born and raised in the peripheral areas of the state of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, who received enough support, and struggled deeply in her way to get to be a doctoral candidate the University of Cambridge. I keep struggling. My socioeconomic origins still ground and tether my reality. My family still lives in the same poor neighbourhoods. And, in many ways, I do too.

My experiences while doing fieldwork in Vila Lanceiro speak a lot toward that end. I would often feel homesick or nostalgic when walking in Vila, as it would often remind me of my neighbourhood in Mesquita, the one where my family still lives, where I still go to spend Christmas. I felt more at home in Vila Lanceiro than in any other part of the city. It is true that I was in a different city, in a different federative state. Nevertheless, the social realities from the field were just a little bit closer to that one in which I grew up. It was familiar, regardless of the fact that I grew up with far more privileges; I always had a roof over my head, I never suffered from hunger, I was never sexually or physically abused, I always had access to education and health services.

Even so, there is an unimaginable distance between me and my academic peers that puts me in a position of disadvantage when it comes to cultural, social and monetary capital. It has been like this since my undergraduate degree. Federal universities in Brazil are dominated of middle class and upper-middle class students. In my undergraduate cohort, within a group of 80 students, I was the only one from Baixada Fluminense. I did not have any money or any extra time to engage with anything other than going to university and studying for my degree. I continued along my academic

trajectory, I saw this distance grow bigger and bigger. Given the assumptions of the academe and of the exercise of academic work – those strongly based on white, masculine values and competition (Berry et. al., 2017) – this space, in practice, intends a path full of emotional distress – anxiety, depression and everything that comes with it – and a permanent feeling of not-belonging.

This research was therefore built from the eyes, from the heart, and from the mind of someone for whom the 'research site' was not far, strange or distant. Drawing from political ethnographic studies applied to, built within, and drawn from the Brazilian reality, like that of Alves (2018), I too affirm that my life experiences have provided me with a very critical view on matters of social justice, and this critical look appears reflected in each part of this work.[24] It also means that, throughout the course of this study, in addition to during periods of analysis and even, now, in the process of writing, my perspective was often close to that of an insider, which gave me a deeper understanding of the studied reality, as I have experienced, in my own personal life, some of the circumstances I observed with my participants (Johnson, 2009). This *close-to-insider* positionality, however, is neither linear nor static, as I was familiar with some aspects of the studied reality but not with others.

With all that considered, I believe that this research represents a political statement in itself. It says: Yes, we *belong*. We have been and continue to be participants, informants, research subjects and research topics. But we – the peripheral, marginalised, gendered, racialised bodies – belong as researchers, as academics, as theorists and as spaces to conceptualise and put forward decolonised and decolonial academic praxis.

The question about how participants perceived my positionality is significantly more difficult to address, as the only means I have is my own perception about how they perceived me. Under these terms, it seems to me that, with few exceptions, adult research participants positioned me as holding a privileged position, distinguished – and if anything, superior – to theirs. More than that, I was seen – and treated – as an outsider by adult participants during most of the fieldwork. I was, especially at the beginning of the research, a strange body in the schools and thus, in the entire community. I cannot recall how many times I heard from teachers and school employees that I was crazy for having

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[24] Alves (2018) builds an ethnographic account based on activist anthropology that argues that in cities such as São Paulo, Brazil, the anti-black orientation of civil society – founded on colonial values – that informs policing strategies leads to "an anti-black social formation where whites exercise their civil rights" (Alves, 2018, p. 3). Alves (2018) acknowledges how his positionality as a Black man from the periphery influenced the political orientation of his study and, in doing so, considers his own racialised experiences in the anti-black city as a constitutive part of his analysis.

elected to be there, not only in Brazil, but in that environment specifically, when I had the choice to be in England. During that time, I had a scholarship from the Brazilian federal government, which was absurdly valued at something close to six times the teachers' monthly salaries, while they were struggling to keep doing their job as teachers and to pay their bills. They had every right to see me as someone who was far from their reality. The sole fact that I was a researcher in "the field" prevented me from being an insider indeed (Gregory & Ruby, 2011).

I could identify two common and opposite reactions from adult participants due to this (perceived) distance: a lack of trust, and unconditional trust. While I was unable to gain the trust of some of the teachers despite my best efforts, others saw an opportunity in this research to talk truthfully and earnestly about their pains and pleasures. I would argue that this happened not for any specific reasons as a result of my personal characteristics – my gender, race, or age – but rather, because they saw me as holding this very specific and advantaged position. They saw this research as an instrument capable of somehow amplifying their neglected voices. This would be made clear to me when I started to regularly hear statements like, "You have to show *this* situation in your research, so that people can know the truth." Statements like this one echoed in many different interviews, situations and circumstances throughout the research, from concerning problems between teachers and school administration to the teachers' lack of money to even get to work.

Regarding how the students, the children, involved in the research perceived me, I would argue that this took many different forms. I of course encompassed many different positions in relation to them during the fieldwork. I was sometimes a teacher; sometimes, although more often, another student trying to understand how they made sense of their own schooling; at other times just a lady with whom they liked to talk. I never attempted to assume the role of a teacher, given the power relations implicit in the teacher-student relationship, especially within the Brazilian context; nevertheless, within this space, this power is materialised as authority inherent in the position of the teacher (Freire, 1987; Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001). However, I felt it was more than fair to volunteer to assist the teachers, and the schools more generally, as it was obvious, both from the research, as well as through personal experience and observation that extra help was needed. I taught some classes, assisted as invigilator during exams period, and developed activities with students when their teachers were late to class or were unable to come.

As time passed, I began to realise two things: students truly appreciated speaking with their actual teachers when they felt that they are being heard and treated with respect; and my position as a teacher, although temporary and changing, did not harm my position as an observer or as a student. To my surprise, they were somehow able to distinguish between my researcher-self and my teacher-self – which is understandably difficult, since I was still a researcher while also performing the role of the teacher. During my 'teacher moments' students would often inquire when I would come back to continue with the research – which, from the students' perspectives, regarded to interviews and classroom observations.[25] Furthermore, it must be stated that I can understand how students could perceive me and my position as *closer-to-an-insider*: in some ways, they may have felt closer to me personally and through my life experiences due to our shared socioeconomic background, although they may have also seen me as someone who was from somewhere else, distinguished and separate from their reality.

2.2.1. Reflexivity, ethical representation and the researcher's self

In the field, in addition to being a Black woman from the urban periphery, who also happened to be a PhD candidate at University of Cambridge, I was, in concrete terms, an economist carrying out ethnographic sociological research to study education-related matters. My training in economics had allowed me to interpret the economic sciences as part of the social sciences, which gave me significant space to work with other disciplines, such as philosophy and history.[26] Regardless, it was very difficult to me, mostly when I started fieldwork, to detach myself, my mentalities and my lens from the positivist views inherent and instilled within my training as an economist.

Empathy was never permitted and is actively discouraged in the positivist space. The idea that I should not feel, that I should ignore and even, remove my emotions, would torture and torment me every time an event or a narrative triggered a painful, personal memory. During fieldwork, I experienced a wide-range of emotions, including anger, deception, sadness, nostalgia, happiness, and even, despair. The realities in and from the field were harsh to witness, chained to difficulties with which to navigate, not to mention that I frequently found myself hearing stories and witnessing

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[25] To that question, and ones similar to it, I would answer that I was doing the research with them during all times I was at the school. The next question would usually be, "But when are you going to be interviewing us?" They loved the idea of giving interviews for someone's work. Again, they felt important, heard.

[26] Much like Piketty, the renowned economist, I reaffirm his statement: "I see economics as a subdiscipline of the social sciences, alongside history, sociology, anthropology, and political science" (2014, p. 573).

events where I was able to see myself and my own narrative, where I was able to personally sympathise. One particular example stands out: at one point during my fieldwork, I interviewed a group of students a few days after two of their friends from Vila Lanceiro had been assassinated by men from a rival gang. On that day, in those reflections and in their words, the students' narratives were drenched in sadness and disbelief. While listening to them, I could not avoid sharing their sadness or remembering the friends I had had who were also murdered under similar circumstances when I was around the same age as my student participants.

It took me some time to understand that who I was then and am now affects the way I perceive the social world of the research, and it made no sense, and was and is arguably detrimental, to ignore my emotions within the scope of my research specifically and as a researcher more generally. Emotions are not only part of who I am; they are also a product of who I am and derivative of the paths from which I have journeyed in the process of becoming myself. Part of the answer to the question of how to provide an account that does justice to participants, their perspectives and the lives they live, is to be honest with myself and with the readers about who I am, and about how that makes me feel in the face of the reality with which I was confronted during fieldwork (Johnson, 2009).

Therefore, as a researcher, I endeavoured to present myself here as an Aristotelian individual, who is a product of her context, culture, circumstances and history, and cannot be understood apart from them, entirely or individually. A person whose choices and judgments are made as an outcome of a process of critical scrutiny that combines reason, emotions, imagination and critical evaluation of the salient facts and particularities of the concrete situation under examination (Nussbaum, 1990). In practice, this implies a very reflexive way of doing research, in which my own life experiences and emotions are frequently scrutinised and confronted with the ones of my participants, a common path in feminist approaches (McHugh, 2014). That is also the reason why the ethnographic account is presented in the following chapters under and in narrative form. Narrative styles are more sensitive to the consideration of emotions (Nussbaum, 1990), in addition to being a well-established writing style successful in its delivery of ethnographic research (Pole & Morrison, 2003).

By recognising the role of emotions – both the researcher's and participants'– in shaping the representations one is able to build, the researcher becomes better able to understand the participants' perspectives, as much as her own (Holland, 2007). Furthermore, it may also assist in better perceiving her own positionality in relation to her social world, in addition to the one of the

participants. The honest consideration of emotions, and of my own personal responses to the reality of the field, under the form of reflexive scrutinised thinking helped me to build a deeper sense of the studied reality.

2.3. Ethnography as a political methodological choice

Beyond the pragmatic choice to operationalize an ethnographic practice simply as an act mimicking its adequacies outlined and argued by previous educational studies, it is a political choice. Although this research departs from education as a level of analysis, education appears here as the background for the discussion of greater problems within the field of development, related to larger questions regarding the political orientation of nation-states – specifically, as to how this orientation permeates their institutions and in favour of whom or what. In that sense, I aim to critically approach the reality behind underprivileged populations' state schooling in contemporary urban Brazil, and to discuss its implications in terms of the perpetuation of unequitable power structures as well as the production of unfreedoms amongst the underprivileged sections of the population. Furthermore, I want this research to serve as an instrument of voice. The recognition and amplification of neglected voices is a political act in itself. The only way in which this could be done was by using a methodology capable of acknowledging the role of the political in determining people's life circumstances. And thus, a critical ethnography approach.

Ethnography is a commonplace methodology used in anthropological and sociological studies, although, it is also used in the fields of education, geography and political science (Harisson, 2014). It represents a very capacious methodology concerned with the collection of qualitative data concerning the social, circumstantial and cultural aspects of people's lives and life context(s) (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). It aims to produce a broad description of the everyday life of a social group or a certain set of people (Charmaz & Mitchel, 2001), thus being characterised as a kind of study in which the researcher engages with participants' social world(s), staying with them and taking part in their lives for considerably long periods of time (Shimahara, 1988).

In that manner, ethnography represents a form of doing research in where the main goal is to "understand the social meanings and activities of people in a given 'field' or setting," involving "close association with, and often participation in, this setting" (Brewer 2000, p. 11). The ethnographer's work is to observe people in their natural settings, to document habits and happenings, things that are said and done, to ask questions, and to conduct research in such way that the social world being

studied can be influential from the inside-out (Sherman & Webb, 1988). The ethnographer must live the subjects' context in order to investigate their social world(s) from within, to be able to see things that the subjects cannot see, and to find relations that the subjects cannot find (Rock, 2001). Hence, ethnographies allow the researcher to build a deeper sense of the research participants' perspectives on their lives and the circumstances surrounding them (Delamont, 2002).

Due to their intended investigative depth, ethnographies are built as small-scale research, based on information collected through fieldwork (Pole & Morrison, 2003). Data collection is considered to be unstructured, happening mainly through participant observation and informal conversations between the researcher and the research participants (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Ethnographic research may also use: in-depth interviews and focus groups; photography, video-recording and audio-recording to document research participants social and cultural worlds and their habits; and both qualitative and quantitative secondary data from historical, contextual or documental sources. Furthermore, different forms of written registry, such as field notes, diary and analytic notes are done during the fieldwork, as an in-depth understanding of the multidimensional realities of people's lives demands a continuous critical analysis (Spradley, 1980; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

Ethnography has been extensively used in educational studies since the 1980s (Pole & Morrison 2003; Gordon, Holland, & Lahelma 2001). The high suitability of ethnography for research on education is partially a result of the predominant influence of people's social context(s) on the extent to which they learn and thus, on their prospective socioeconomic success during adulthood (Coleman et. al. 1966; Hanushek 1997; Heckman, 2008). In terms of research on school settings specifically, it is acknowledged that schools can be understood as complex institutions, permeated by intricate social and cultural contexts, which are not always well expressed by purely statistical relations (Sikes 2003). Each group in a school community has specific social and cultural features that shape what each one is and how people act within these particular groups (Woods 1986; Sikes, 2003). Whether the aim is to understand one of these groups, it is necessary to investigate their context(s) and try to find the relations capable of explaining why things are and happen the way they do, and how they change according to the dynamic situations individuals face (Woods, 1986). Therefore, under this perspective, the school can be seen as a set of distinct interrelated groups of people, each one carrying different sets of social and cultural characteristics (Sikes, 2003).

Furthermore, ethnography can help teachers to better understand their environment, since this approach can provide them with new insights about their reality (Woods, 1988). This may be relevant not only for teachers, but also for other groups, including students, school staff, and children's parents and/or caregivers. In that sense, I would argue that ethnographic research enables an ability to look at education in general – and school education in particular – from a distinct point of view, approaching the problem from within, recognising the perspective of people involved in school education, appraising the contextual, cultural and historical factors that directly or indirectly immensely affect not only the education people receive, but also how education may impact people's lives and life opportunities.

The critical ethnography tradition, in particular, builds its foundations in Marxist thought, first being applied to critical qualitative studies in the educational field (Carspecken, 2001; Gordon, Holland, & Lahelma, 2001). The main difference between critical ethnography and other forms of ethnography is the fact that the former has a political purpose and a general sense of promoting social change (Thomas, 1993). From a critical ethnography perspective, research should be an instrument not only to produce knowledge, but also to promote changes that can guide people toward self-realisation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

In general, critical ethnographies are founded on the idea that modern societies are permeated by structural inequalities that are culturally produced and reproduced (Carspecken, 2001). They represent studies that place themselves against inequality, aiming to bring forth knowledge that can be used as a means for emancipation and empowerment of the studied population, giving them voice and finding solutions for their problems (Spencer, Pryce, & Walsh, 2014). By pursing this study from a critical ethnography perspective, my intention is, on the one hand, to acknowledge the role of Brazilian society's structural, intersectional inequalities in producing a perverse relationship between oppressive forces and oppressed populations. On the other hand, critical ethnographic approaches allow me to acknowledge my positionality as the researcher, given that it "emphasizes the ways by which the values of the researcher and those studied impact the social world" (Spencer, Pryce, & Walsh, 2014, p. 90). Moreover, this research embodies features of feminist ethnographic approaches, mainly in consideration of the relationship between the researcher and the researched, the orientation toward marginalised groups, the recognition of gendered and racialised power imbalances, and, most importantly, the reference to the number of women's voices presented here as both foundations and pillars of knowledge, including mine as the researcher (Spencer, Pryce, &

Walsh 2014; McHugh 2014). Feminist approaches acknowledge that all choices made by the researcher are influenced by factors shaped by a given socio-historical context. In that sense, feminist research recognises the role of researcher's positionality and, hence, of her own experiences and perspectives, including her experienced emotions, inspiring the researcher to also endeavour into a path of critical self-scrutiny and reflexivity (McHugh 2014; Davis & Craven, 2016).

2.4.   Ethnographic Data Collection

This research is a result of 10 months of fieldwork – from March 2017 to January 2018 – carried out in two state schools populated mainly by students coming from Vila Lanceiro, a shantytown located in the city of Porto Alegre, the capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil. It also reflects previous experiences and interactions that I had with the setting and its population, during my Masters'. Irrespective of my personal motivation to choose this particular location as fieldwork site, Porto Alegre, and Vila Lanceiro in particular, are marked by very interesting characteristics for the orientation of this research.

Porto Alegre is a city located in southern Brazil. It is known for its efforts to put forward and implement a participatory democratic model for the municipal budget and the allocation of these financial resources along several areas of interest, including education, urban mobility and development. This initiative, *Orçamento Participativo* – or, "Participatory Budge" – aims to use public consultation within the process of municipal decision-making regarding budget allocation.[27] Irrespective of appearances, Porto Alegre is a highly unequal city, characterised by a high and raising level of income concentration (DATASUS, 2010). Roughly 13% of the city's population lives on the 'outskirts' (IBGE, 2013). Data from the most recent national census (IBGE, 2010) shows that the number of poor households has increased more than 22% between 2000 and 2010, which may speak to an increasing concentration of poverty[28]. Porto Alegre is also considered to be one of the most violent cities in the world, ranked in the top 50, when considering the number of homicides for every 100 thousand inhabitants (SJP, 2018).

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[27] Retrieved from: http://www2.portoalegre.rs.gov.br/op/default.php
[28] IBGE – *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística*, that is, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics – classifies poor households as those in which the household per capita income is half of a Brazilian minimum wage, which in 2010 was BR$510,00 per month (about US$132) (BRASIL, 2010). All values in United States Dollar calculated based on the exchange rate on 21 December 2018 – that is, US$ 1 equals BR$3.87.

Demographically, the city's population is mostly white, with Black Brazilians representing about 20% of the total (IBGE 2010). The distance between the average life conditions amongst white and Black Brazilians is stark and alarming, to say the least. The unemployment rate amongst Porto Alegre's Black population is 89.2% larger than that of the city's white population – indicated to be 12.30% for Black residents in comparison to 6.5% for whites, based on data from 2015 (Porto Alegre, 2015). The city's Black population is mostly concentrated in lower income neighbourhoods, while Vila Lanceiro has the highest concentration of Black residents – roughly 40% according to 2010 data from the Porto Alegre City Council (Porto Alegre 2010).

Vila Lanceiro is better presented in Chapter Four, as it cannot be, and has not been, done justly here. Within the considerations of this chapter, it is enough to say that Vila Lanceiro represents an urban region characterised by poverty and violence, located in close proximity to the wealthier neighbourhoods inherent in a deeply unequal and segregated Brazilian city. It holds an underprivileged position in the city's broader structure of inequality, existing and resisting in its margins and at the margins. The inequalities go beyond the relation between the Vila and the city, and are as well entrenched in the culture and the social relations established inside the Vila itself. Under these terms, considering the distinct faces that power and oppression assumes under conditions of poverty and inequality, Vila Lanceiro and the surrounding area serve as a relevant setting for this research.

2.4.1. Two schools, one ethnography

I carried out the research mainly in two state schools frequented by students from Vila Lanceiro. During the entire 2017 school year, I was in one school during the morning classes, and in the other for the afternoon[29]. Giving the diminished number of state schools in the Vila Lanceiro area, I will only disclose necessary information about the participant schools in order to ensure the research participants' confidentiality. Within these parameters, I can disclose that the main difference between the two schools was the geographical location. One school, which I will call Parodia, was located close to Vila Lanceiro in an upper-middle class neighbourhood and had 90% of its students coming from Vila Lanceiro. The other, which I will refer to as Mandacaru, was located inside Vila Lanceiro itself.

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[29] In Brazil, very few schools – usually technical ones at the high school level – require students to have classes in both the mornings and the afternoons. It is common for students to attend school classes only during either the morning or the afternoon, or, at night for adult education.

This minor, but nevertheless, very important distinction has extremely relevant implications for the research, both in its collection, as well as its presentation here. The schools are not treated here as two separated ethnographies, but rather, as a single one. It does not, however, imply that the research ignores their differences, such as in terms of how power structures effects participants from one school or from the other. On the contrary, the power imbalances are presented, qualified and discussed every time if and when necessary. However, I would argue that it would make little sense to present them as separated case studies, as they were a product of a single period of fieldwork. In addition, the difference between the schools' observed conditions and reality was one of intensity, in which the school located in the Vila presented overwhelmingly stark features of circumstances that were present in both schools. Had I chosen to present this research in the form of two separated and distinct accounts, I would be repeating myself very often, telling two very similar stories. On the same note, when considering that these schools speak to two representations of one institution – that is, the state school – and, as such, are incorporated in and conditioned by larger structures of power in very similar ways, it seems reasonable to present them as a single ethnography. In this case, why two schools and not one? Precisely to assist in the process of making sense of how these bigger structures of power affected the same population or groups – the students from Vila Lanceiro and their teachers – in these two similar, although physically distinct, environments.

In Brazil, the Constitution distributes the state's duty to education between the federal government, federative states and their municipalities (BRASIL, 2013[1988]).[30] Table 1 below provides an overview of Brazil's state education system. It is composed of two parts: the basic education includes primary and secondary education, while higher education encompasses undergraduate and graduate courses. The basic education is usually the responsibility of the states and their municipalities, in such a way that most state basic education schools are controlled by one or the other.

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[30] Brazil is divided into 26 federative states and one federal district. Each federative state is composed of several municipalities (or cities).

General stage	Specific stage	International designation	Grades/school years	Ideal age	Responsible sphere
Basic Education	Infant education	Initial education	4 years	0-3	Municipalities
		Preschool	2 years	4-5	
	Primary school	Elementary Education	1st year	6-10	Municipalities, States
			2nd year		
			3rd year		
			4th year		
			5th year		
		Lower secondary school	6th year	10-14	
			7th year		
			8th year		
			9th year		
	Youth and adults education	Elementary Education/Lower secondary school	1st-9th year	Minimum age: 15	Municipalities, States
	Secondary education	Upper secondary education	1st year	15-17	Municipalities, States
			2nd year		
			3rd year		
	Technical school	Upper secondary education	Years 1 - 3	15-17	Federal government, States
	Youth and adults education	Upper secondary education	Years 1 - 3	Minimum age: 18	Municipalities, States
Higher Education	Undergraduate degree	Bachelor's	2.400 hours	18 or more	Federal government, States
		Higher diploma	2.800 hours		
		Technological diploma	1.600 hours		
	Graduate degree	Master's	2 years		
		PhD	4 years		
		Professional degree	3 years		
		Specialisation courses (certificate)	360 hours		

Table 1: Overview of the Brazilian state system of education. Adapted from: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – OECD (2014)

2.4.2. Research Participants

The research was conducted with four classes of sixth-year students – two in each school – their teachers, and schools' staff[31]. The sixth-year of primary education is acknowledged as a breaking point. In the first years of primary education – usually until the fifth-year – the school is more equipped to address the students' needs. Each class has only one teacher and the method of teaching is more playful and affectionate. However, from sixth-year, students start to be taught a larger number of school subjects by a variety of different teachers. This results in a shift in the logic of

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[31] Although not all students' parents and caregivers directly participate in this research, I had the approval of parents and schools to conduct the research with students, as I discuss further in this chapter. Parents and caregivers were not interviewed – with the exception of two mothers, who are central to the development of Chapter Four – for issues related to access to Vila Lanceiro, which I discuss in the Appendix Two, where I present a summary of the challenges in carrying out the fieldwork.

teaching and schooling within this context, becoming more results-oriented and less focused on the students' identities (Dayrell, Nogueira, & Miranda, 2011).

In practical terms, sixth-year is characterised by high levels of grade repetition, consequently being one of the years where most students are one or more years older than the standard age to that year. Data from Brazil's Ministry of Education for the year of 2018 shows that 22.7% of Brazilian sixth-year students enrolled in urban state's administrated schools were one or more school years delayed (INEP, 2018). In the case of schools administrated by municipalities, however, this rate increases to 32.3%. In urban private schools, only 5.8% of sixth-year students were one year or more delayed, as shown by the 2018 data. Given the orientation of this research, it seemed appropriate to base the study on the most problematic year of primary education.

The two participant classes in each school had one major difference between them: one was attended by students whose age was in accordance with the expected age for that school year – in other words, who were between eleven and twelve years old; while the other class was attended by students whose age was higher than what was expected for that school year, being roughly between thirteen and seventeen years old.

For distinction in the study, I will designate the classes for younger students as '*Regular class*', and the other as '*Repeater class*'. At the beginning of the school year, each one of the four classes had, on average, thirty students enrolled. This number nonetheless decreased strongly over the year as a result of students' infrequency and school drop-out. Most of student-research participants from Mandacaru were Black, whilst in Parodia, there was a similar ratio of Black to white students.

Not all research participants were formally interviewed, as informal conversations were also a source of data collection. From those who were interviewed, a total of 84 students, 45 from Parodia and 39 from Mandacaru, directly participated in the research. Seventeen of their teachers were interviewed – 10 from Parodia and 7 from Mandacaru – of which only two were men, and all, except for one female teacher, were white.[32] In addition to teachers, I also interviewed principals, vice-principals, school counsellors, school pedagogical supervisors, school cleaning staff, school cooking

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[32] In addition to that one black teacher who I formally interviewed, there was also another Black teacher – a woman whom I call Marta – who participated in the research irrespective of not taking part in interviews.

staff, school administrative staff and, as mentioned previously, two students' mothers, totalling 17 participants, all women. All of the women from the cleaning staff who I interviewed were Black.[33]

Thus, the adult participants from the schools was comprised of two distinction groups: the first was made up of mainly white women occupying low-paid functions that required a higher education degree, and the second, by Black women working in even lower-paid jobs that did not demand higher education. In any case, this combination of participants, which I believe accurately represents the reality I observed in those schools, speaks a lot to the extent to which structural inequalities based on gender and race are in practice and entrenched in Brazilian society in general, and especially in a segregated society such as Porto Alegre.

2.4.3. Methods applied for data collection

The data collection followed standard methods employed in ethnographic research in educational settings (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Pole & Morrisson, 2003; Delamont, 2002; Davis & Craven, 2016; Gordon, Holland ,& Lahelma, 2001; Brewer, 2000; Woods, 1986; Sherman & Webb, 1988): daily participant observation in the schools; unstructured and semi-structured interviews; focus groups; and collection of secondary data about the schools, the community and the participants. As for registering the information gathered, I have produced an extensive amount of field-notes under the form of written and audio notes. I would write or record the notes at the end of the day, as it was difficult to find time while in the schools to write. I noticed at the beginning that research participants, mainly the adults, would often feel uncomfortable with me walking around the school and writing on paper, or on my computer or mobile phone. For the sake of being as accepted as possible, I endeavoured to behave as a person who was there to understand and live in that environment as those who live in it would. In other words, no inside actor walks around the schools writing notes, so I did not.

In addition to field-notes, I took pictures, in addition to audio recording interviews and focus groups[34]. Participant observation was done throughout the day, in the mornings in one school, and in the afternoons in the other, during various occasions, including: during classes; in schools' common areas; during students' break times; in teachers and school counsellors' rooms; during

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[33] Indeed, the women from schools' cleaning staff who were not interviewed were also Black.
[34] All of students' narratives transcribed into this thesis were either recorded during interviews or were part of fieldnotes, all which was previously authorized by schools/students' parents.

school routine meetings, as teachers-parents' meetings and teachers' meetings; during school events; and so forth. There was no uniform structure in the process of observation. I never knew, with rare exceptions, what I would be doing before arriving at the schools.

At the beginning of the research, I spent a significant amount of time doing classroom observations, with the intention of allowing students to get used to my presence and feel comfortable around me. It was also a manner of better getting to know students and teachers. During these observations, I would always sit at the back of the classroom, as if to be a student attending the class. In Parodia, every time I wanted to observe a class, I had to ask for the teacher's approval, regardless of the class' school subject. My role, in those cases, was passive. I would simply sit in the classroom and observe. However, in Mandacaru, Carla, a teacher of mathematics and science for the sixth-years, gave me a free pass to observe her classes as well as a more active role in helping her with students. Both kinds of experiences were extremely valuable.

In time, the participant observation became more participation than observation. As time went by, I started to participate in more of the schools' routines, giving classes and helping where I could. Participation allowed me to aid in the aim of observing – that is, to build a deep sense of participants' school realities and of their perspectives. Moreover, I lived each one of the schools intensively and lived the community through the experiences of my participants. As it could be expected, the schools reflected much of the Vila reality, given that students would carry to school with them their experiences and perspectives of life. Complete integration and acceptance in Vila Lanceiro, beyond the institutional protection given to me by the walls of the schools, took me much longer. I was only able to enter after the extension of an invitation: Maria, the mother of a student from Mandacaru, offered me the kindness to taking me on a walk through the Vila in October 2017, seven months after starting my fieldwork.

In regard to the interviews, my goal was to talk to as many different actors as possible within the schools. I sought to present a plurality of perspectives as a means to build a democratic account within the research (Zahar, 2009). Principals cannot, and do not, speak for teachers, teachers for school counsellors, and school counsellors for school staff. I understand that every actor should be able to speak for oneself, including – and perhaps, principally – children-research participants. In light of these considerations, I conducted semi-structure interviews with students, and semi-structured and in-depth, unstructured interviews with adult participants.

I formally interviewed the children-research participants on two different occasions. All interviews occurred between July and December 2017 at their respective schools during class time. The interviews were envisioned and enacted through both Sen's and Nussbaum's praxes[35]. The intention was to achieve a deeper understanding regarding the freedoms enjoyed by the student-research participants – and, in the same vein, the freedoms to which they were denied.

I interviewed students in groups of three, mimicking a style similar to a focus group. Students would leave the class in groups of three to be interviewed somewhere around school, usually in the schools' backyard – which seemed much less oppressive than classrooms or other closed environments. Interviewing students in groups was not a parameter set or a condition established by myself as the researcher, but rather, was a request made by the schools themselves. By interviewing the students in groups, the number of necessary interruptions from the classroom was diminished, and the disturbances to teachers in face of students' interviews was minimised.

In the end, interviewing students through focus groups proved successful. Teachers helped me to organise the groups so that each one would be formed of students who were friends or, at least, had good relationships. This aided significantly in making the students more comfortable to participate. In general, these focus groups became very interesting conversations, led by the students themselves, with them telling stories about their lives in and outside school. The conversations would often go beyond the interview scripts. The main goal of these interviews was to gain students' accounts as to how they made sense of their lives, school, and schooling in general, as well as to discuss the freedoms – or unfreedoms – they experienced due to their life circumstances. Students' interviews lasted, on average, 50 minutes.[36]

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[35] The semi-structured interviews with the children-research participants was framed based on the CA. Nussbaum (2000, 2011) list of central capabilities was used as a flexible parameter, whilst, following Sen's (2000) perspective, participant students could also talk about the freedoms they valued and had, or wished to have, in their lives. As Nussbaum's (2011) list tends to be seen as normative and paternalistic (Hamilton, 2019), combining Sen's and Nussbaum's approaches was one manner I found to avoid being too normative within the investigation's framing of a child's freedoms. Additionally, in the case of children, it is very difficult to avoid some level of paternalism, as it is widely accepted that children need to be exposed to a basic level of a number of things – such as food, education, clothing, and health care – in order to have regular cognitive and socio-emotional development and, as a consequence, to become an adult able to partake in good life opportunities (Biggeri & Mehotra, 2011; Sen, 1999, 2007; Cunha & Heckman, 2008). For Nussbaum's (2000, 2011) list of central capabilities see Appendix Two. For the semi-structured interview schedule for children-research participants, see Appendix Three.

[36] Interviews could not last much longer since more time being interviewed meant less time in the classroom, which was not desirable.

Each adult participant was formally interviewed once. The interviews occurred between November 2017 and January 2018 toward the end of the school year. Irrespective of what had prepared in a script for the interviews, they were generally unstructured. I would begin by asking the interviewee to speak about herself and her function, and the interview would follow from there in accordance to the participant's narrative. In other words, interviews were led by the narratives of the participants, oftentimes resulting in very deep and emotional reflections, and would relate to personal and work-related matters and the struggles associated to them.

Schools are, in general, very dynamic environments. Not all individuals who appear in the daily observations were formally interviewed. Nevertheless, interviewing was important as well as daily interactions and informal conversations. For example, I never formally interviewed Carla, for instance, one of the teachers with whom I ended up being closer. We spent so much time together and had so many meaningful conversations about her life and her duty as a teacher that we decided that no formal interview was necessary. "You know everything," she said a few days before I finished the fieldwork.

2.5.   Ethnographic data analysis

The data analysis in ethnography regards to the construction of "meanings, functions, and consequences of human actions and institutional practices" and to their consequences to local and broader contexts (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 3). The methods applied by ethnographers to analyse data are not often explicit in their work. Brewer (2000) affirms that ethnographers usually conduct data analysis based on a weaker form of either analytical induction or Grounded Theory. Investigations founded on analytical induction start with hypotheses that are tested against data and that may change in case the observation prove that the initial hypotheses cannot be verified in real settings (Brewer, 2000; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Conversely, grounded theory regards to a comparative methodology in which the theory, its hypotheses and concepts are created from data and are constantly driven by data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Ethnographic analyses founded on Grounded theory are based on the use of systematic tools to organise and categorise data, as coding systems, development of typologies and methods triangulation (Hutchinson, 1988; Charmaz & Mitchel, 2001; Charmaz, 2006; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Hence, in general, qualitative data analysis can be understood as the process through which the data are organised into interrelated "patterns, categories and descriptive units" (Brewer, 2000, p. 108).

In ethnographically analysing this research data, I deeply reflected on my fieldnotes and produced a high volume of analytic notes in order to deeply make sense of the categories and patterns that emerged from the fieldnotes. I transcribed and categorised the narratives of different groups of research participants according to predefined codes, as those related to the freedoms people may be able to enjoy as a result of the multiple spheres of their lives – such as freedoms to live a life one may value, freedoms to live in safe environments, freedoms to live in good health, freedoms to learn, to play and to enjoy recreational activities. I furthermore categorised the narratives in accordance with categories that emerged from them, such as lack of motivation, feeling of being depreciated by others, and non-docile behaviour. I triangulated the patterns and categories that emerged from the research by bringing them back to theory, to conceptual constructions, and to research in general. I also used secondary data and the research data coming from different groups of research participants. Thus, the work that I present here is a product of in-depth analysis and was built over and driven by the research data coming from fieldnotes and interviews. The conceptual, sociological and historical basis of this work, which I present over Chapters One and Three, were responsible to establish the basis against which the data were analysed. Under these terms, in my ethnographic data analysis I adopted a very weak form of analytical induction, combined with weak forms of the analytic tools that emerge from grounded theory, to organise and categorise the data, and furthermore to theorise departing from the data.

2.6.   Ethical Considerations

Ethics has a central role in ethnographic inquiry (Pole & Morisson, 2003). When conducting fieldwork – and throughout the research – the researcher must pay attention to the ways in which she interacts and engages with participants, as well as with the information gathered from them (Traianou, 2014). The list of ethical issues of which the researcher should be aware includes (Pole & Morrison, 2003; Murphy & Dingwall, 2001; Traianou, 2014; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007): not provoking any harm to participants; respecting participants autonomy and privacy; respecting participants' personal characteristics, including cultural, gendered and/or religious aspects, and treating them with justice, linearity and honesty; and orienting the research in the direction of producing a useful or beneficial kind of knowledge. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it is nevertheless essential to state. Feminist approaches have also raised concerns regarding issues related to power imbalances between the researcher and participants (McHugh, 2014; Davids & Willemse, 2014; Gordon, Holland, & Lahelma, 2001), which can be especially problematic when the research engages with marginalised populations or vulnerable participants, such as children.

Throughout this research, I have endeavoured to fulfil the ethical requirements in order to protect the research participants' rights. I have explained the general aim of the research to all of the participants, including the children, from the first interaction and throughout different moments in the fieldwork. As the research itself changed along the way, I attempted to be as honest and transparent as possible about what form the resulting research may take, which required continually asking for oral consent from adult participants. While I had oral consent from adult participants – interpersonal relations in Brazil are based significantly on informality, which made the idea of asking adults for formal written consent a little odd – for children, following Pole and Morrison (2003), I asked for formal written consent from schools and, in some cases when the school found it necessary, from the students' parents and/or caregivers. In both cases, I handled participant information sheets, explained the general research goals and procedures, why the participation of children was necessary, information about consent, privacy and the possibility of withdrawal from the study, among other issues, and provided my personal contact details, so that school representatives and/or students' caregivers could contact me in case they had any doubts. I also participated in meetings with schools' representatives with the explicit purpose of discussing the research and its procedures, so that the disturbance caused by my presence in the schools, for both the adults and children, would be minimised.

I attempted to make it clear for both the adults and the children participants that they were free to withdraw from the research at any point. In interviewing children, for instance, I would always ask them first if they wanted to participate in the interviews and reiterate and affirm that it was absolutely fine if they did not. I tried to reduce the effects of the power imbalances inherent in the adult-child dynamic by attempting to ensure that participant children knew they were free to participate or not, to talk or not, to answer questions during interviews or not, regardless of any formal consent given by the school or by their caregivers. All of the interviews with children participants were done inside the schools, in safe and often open environments.

Additionally, I tried to establish a horizontal relationship with all participants. I recognise all of their narratives as distinct and intrinsically relevant, not solely for the research *per se*, but rather, as a means to give voice to their perspectives and to build knowledge from and with them. I must therefore acknowledge the intersectional differences amongst participants that put them in different positions within society and in relation to power – race, gender, work position, etc. – and treat their

voices with justice and equity, trying to build a narrative in which neglected voices receive the focus and relevance they deserve.

To avoid causing any possible harm related to disclosure of sensitive information, research participants are treated under the terms of confidentiality. All names that appear here are pseudonymous. In addition, all sensitive data related to the research – including interview audios and transcriptions, photographs, field-notes, analytic notes and memos – were stored in secure, encrypted, password protected electronic devices to which only I had access. The same is true for sensitive paper materials, which are all stored safely, and shall be safely discarded at the appropriate moment.

Although this research did not have the potential of causing physical harm to any participant, emotional distress was a significant concern; many interviews with adult participants were quite emotional and involved tears and general feelings of sadness. Sadness was also present in the children's narratives. Nonetheless, by the end of the interviews, many participants, including the children, thanked me for the opportunity to speak, freely and openly, and to be unburdened. In that sense, I would argue that the research did not cause long-term or significant emotional distress. Rather, the emotional distress was part of participants' daily lives and, consequently, of their narratives. As a researcher, I understand that showing empathy to people's pains is important to build rapport with participants (Watts, 2008). However, as a person, I see in empathy a feeling that attaches humanity to people (Nussbaum, 1997). It represents the recognition of other people's pains and struggles as both compelling and valuable. Thus, the feeling of empathy I carry, and that I demonstrated to the research participants throughout the research period, is genuine, and not based on concealed aims, such as gaining their trust.

Regarding managing my emotions, I partook psychotherapy during my fieldwork to better make sense of the emotions that emerged as a result of my interactions in the field. I furthermore acknowledge my and my participants' emotions as data (Martin-Ortega and Herman, 2009), building from the understanding that our emotional responses are political as well. People's emotions can

speak to the particular ways in which they are inserted within society, and therefore to how dominant power structures affect them (Heaney, 2011).[37]

Indeed, the main ethical challenge I faced during my fieldwork was how to deal with children's sensitive narratives considering the restrictions imposed by confidentiality. Some children's account presented very disturbing stories of physical and sexual violence, suicide attempts, and intention to cause harm to other children at school for myriad reasons. By virtue of these situations, I decided not to break confidentiality in disclosing to school counsellors the content of children's narratives. In fact, it was not necessary. In each case, I told the schools' counsellors that the student needed extra support and, without saying anything else, the schools' counsellors would know why. I too paid closer attention to these students, to guarantee that, at least while I was there, they would be fine at school.

2.7.   Epistemological framework: an ethnography toward freedoms

Ethnography itself helps us to reframe the debate about how the CA matters, especially in the study of freedoms. In their discussion on the importance of appreciating a person's cultural, historical context as a means to understand why individuals value what they value and arguably, what development is best suited for them, Nussbaum and Sen (1987) propose that evaluations within development fields should be based on a deep, rich and broad description and evaluation of practices, cultures and values. They argue that in order to appreciate what sort of change truly corresponds to development, or to the improvement of one's personal situation and substantial freedoms, it is necessary to understand and translate which values are valuable. This understanding would only come from immersing and experiencing the social world under investigation, considering the historical and circumstantial complexities that define it (Nussbaum & Sen, 1987)[38].

Together, the incommensurability of valued things, the importance of the particularities and of emotions and imagination, presented in the last chapter as features of the CA's epistemology, imply an Aristotelian individual as "a person whom we could trust to describe a complex situation with full

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[37] Heaney (2011) sees in Foucault's (1995) conceptualisation of power potential to accommodate its interconnections with emotions. According to him, "Emotions and power are the fundamental and constitutive features of the lived lives of individuals and the social context in which they are embedded. Researchers attempting to explain or understand such lives must be more cognisant of these concepts and how they interrelate" (Heaney, 2011, p. 272).

[38] According to Nussbaum and Sen (1987) research on requires "internal and immersed critical appraisal" from the researcher and must include "emotional and imaginative responses to the challenges involved" (Nussbaum & Sen, 1987, p. 27).

concreteness of detail and emotional shading, missing nothing of practical relevance" (Nussbaum, 1990, p. 84). What I would argue is, to some extent, this represents the role of the ethnographer, or, at least, this is the role that I have sought to fulfil during the course of this research. Ethnography and the CA are both concerned with particularities and processes. Ethnographic practice holds in high regards a deep investigation into people and the processes that concern their existences, situations and practices. Ethnography, I would thus argue, represents an internal kind of research practice, as demanded by the Aristotelian procedure and, as a consequence, by the CA.

Comparatively, ethnography may also provide the CA with a dimension that, although recognised to be crucial, is often neglected: a political orientation. A number of scholars have shown that research on the CA tends to neglect the role of power and relationships constructed and enacted in power, and thus, of structures of oppression (Hill, 2003; Koggel, 2003; Hamilton, 2019), including the ones related to capitalist forms of production (Dean, 2009), in determining individuals' freedoms in life. It is indeed true that the research under CA, as a normative, explanatory theory that engages in conceptualising social justice and welfare, may not per se carry a direct orientation regarding the consideration of power relations and their consequences (Robeyns, 2017) – although, theoretically, they should always be acknowledged as conversion factors, i.e., as factors that impact the conversion of capabilities, or potential freedoms, into functionings, or achieved freedoms (Robeyns, 2005; Drèze & Sen, 2002).

The same can be said in relation to the consideration of interpersonal and social relations. There is a significant discussion on whether the CA tends to be individualist (Deneulin & Stewart, 2002; Stewart, 2005; Deneulin & McGregor, 2010), unable to take into account the extent to which contact with other individuals may affect one's capabilities (Hoffmann & Meltz, 2017), and thus, the need to incorporate a sphere regarding collective capabilities (Evan, 2002; Ibrahim, 2013). However, it has been argued that, irrespective of pursuing ethical individualism, the CA is not based on ontological individualism (Robeyns, 2005, 2017). In other words, the CA may consider individuals and the expansion of their freedoms as the end of development, which is understood within research generally focused on the implications of different social realities amongst individuals. Nevertheless, it does not imply that the CA understands that social aspects can be reduced to individuals and their personal characteristics (Robeyns, 2005, 2017). On the contrary, at least on a theoretical level, individuals cannot be seen isolated from the social relations – including interpersonal and

institutional relations – and social forces in which they are immersed (Robeyns, 2005; Drèze & Sen, 2002).[39]

Indeed, the idea of collective freedoms is something, which continues to lack consensus amongst CA theorists. The criticisms made toward the concept of collective capabilities argue that individuals who are part of the same group may not necessarily be equally affected by the group's collective action (Alkire, 2008). In addition, it has been argued that collective capabilities are only freedoms dependent upon social conditions (Sen, 2002b). Nonetheless, an intermediary position seems to be more reasonable and more in consonance with this research findings: collective action is not only prone to affect the freedoms a community is able to enjoy, but it is also able to affect a single individual's freedoms, although even, distortedly – as the multidimensionality and intersectionality of each individual's own circumstantial and personal features imply that different individuals from the same community may enjoy different conversion factors and, thus, may have different means to convert collective freedoms into individual freedoms. Therefore, still under the terms of and conditions outlined by the CA, collective freedoms are seen here as freedoms that are prone to be achieved in collective action and multi-layered social interaction (Ibrahim, 2006), and those whose "benefits accrues to the community at large" (Ibrahim, 2017, p. 202), not solely to individual persons. Under this perspective, collective agency can be seen as collective opportunity to social action; that is, as a group's collective opportunities to pursue and achieve shared aims (Pelenc, Bazile, & Ceruti, 2015; Pelenc, Lompo, Ballet, & Dubois, 2013).

Thus, I engage with the CA approach here not in an uncritical manner, as I recognise that there is no philosophical or sociological approach fully able to capture the holistic complexity of the real world, and that, even when it comes of the approach itself, there has been a gap between theory and practice. For instance, this distance is clear when one considers the United Nations Human Development Index, an index based on the CA that is used as a parameter to compare the level of human development among countries (Fukuda-Parr, 2003). The Human Development Index does not take into consideration any aspect related to political freedom or local structures of power. As a result,

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[39] Ibrahim (2006, 2008, 2013, 2017) and Trani et. al. (2011) are good examples of works that try to explicitly incorporate the social and collective dimensions to the operationalisation of the CA.

countries characterised by a long history of violation of basic civil rights – such as, Saudi Arabia in relation to women's rights – end up occupying high positions within the Index's rankings.[40]

In order to make the CA more accountable to holistic, human complexities and structural, coercive forces, there is a need for interdisciplinarity (Robeyns, 2017). In that sense and within this research, given the critical orientation toward feminist ethnography, I have framed a methodological practice in which the CA appears as part of a larger, holistic theoretical framework: it does not appear as a central normative approach, but rather, is presented as the backdrop for defining and making sense of people's freedoms. Additionally, it informs the reflexive narrative style – one, which takes emotions and affect into consideration – adopted in this study. Although terms such as 'capabilities' and 'functionings' may not be frequently mentioned, they are present in meaning, appraised by references to freedoms – potential freedom, substantial freedom, enjoyed freedom, denied freedom, and so forth. Thus, freedom is understood here as opportunities to be, to do and to become valuable things in life, considering the restrictions to agency and freedoms imposed by socially-defined conditions, such as the political, social, historical, cultural and economic contexts and by the power relations in place. Conversely, unfreedoms are seen as the lack of opportunities for a good life, or rather, the existence of conditions that are restricting to people's opportunities to lead a good life. Ultimately, in the ethnographic vision that I put forward in this research, the CA not only takes into account political matters, but entrusts in them a paramount role.

In general, the use of ethnography has the potential to make the analysis within the CA deeper in terms of the perception of particularities, the consideration of individuals' concrete situations, and the description of processes. This has allowed me to deeply take into consideration the political circumstances ascribed to the relations between the state, institutions and individuals from different social, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. It makes me, as the researcher, more able to conceptualise how different forces act to perpetuate established structures of power and the structural inequalities that produce and reproduce them, and hence result in unfreedoms. In practical terms, it means that the combination between ethnography and the CA may provide the research on education not only with an in-depth framework to evaluate the complexities and particularities in which education is

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[40] The Human Development Index considers only three components: a population's health conditions (life expectancy at birth), education (expected and mean years of schooling), and income (gross national income per capita) (United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, 2018). Other conditionalities and factors taken into account within the CA are negated.

immersed, but also with a broader and multidimensional informational space to qualify the complexities and guide the analysis.

The use of the CA combined with critical ethnography represents a political statement: it is assumed here that formal education should, regardless of circumstances, guide people into along and through a path of liberty, empowerment and self-awareness, providing them with substantial freedoms that would allow them to be whatever they want to be in their adult life. School education, as the social manifestation of education, is seen, therefore, as a means to promote substantial freedoms – or capabilities – which may not be equal for all, as people value things differently, but should nevertheless promote equitable good life opportunities for all, considering each one's values and choices. School education should, therefore, as proposed by Freire (1967, 1987), enable people to change the power balances that determine their condition as oppressed, and should challenge and work against dominant unequitable power relations. It is from this political statement and vision that this research departs.

Chapter Three – On the state, schooling and freedoms

3.1. Introduction

The Brazilian Constitution, codified in 1988 following the nation's transition from military dictatorship to democracy, establishes the provision of formal education as a duty of the state. The document defines formal education not only in terms of the development of cognitive abilities demanded by the job market, but furthermore, affirms it as central to the integral development of the individual, who should be "prepared to exercise their citizenship" (BRASIL, 2013[1988], art. 205). Schooling is, nonetheless, always political and, as such, shaped by major social, economic and cultural contexts (Youdell, 2010). This is especially challenging when it comes to post-colonial contexts, such as Brazil, in which formal educational institutions were formed as a product of structural conditions built over hundreds of years of colonial exploitation as well as Indigenous genocide and the implementation and legacies inherited from the regime of African slavery.

Under post-colonial conditions, the pedagogical format that schools assume is as much a problem as the social and political structures that have historically determined it. In Brazil, such structures were directly responsible for the development of an intrinsically marginalising state system of education, one that produces and reproduces the inequalities that inform Brazilian society; one that acts against the emancipation of historically marginalised populations, including Black, poor people from the peripheries (Cury, 2008) – preventing a Constitutionally-outlined, egalitarian orientation toward the integral formation of every individual, irrespective of race, gender and socioeconomic status, from becoming the Brazilian state political practice.

In this chapter I present and discuss the historical and sociological foundations from which this study departs: the understanding that state primary formal education[41] in Brazil was framed upon and entrenched within colonial values and legacies of enslavement that still determines the extent to which state schooling contributes to the persistent social inequalities apparent within Brazilian society. In order to do so, I start by briefly discussing why schools everywhere tend to be institutions framed in a way that (1) discipline the action of the bodies in accordance with the state's interests,

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[41] The exposition I provide here focuses specifically on primary education, as it represents the basis for the acquisition of higher levels of education – and, as such, is the focus of the ethnography I present in Part Two. However, it would not be difficult to show how the same conclusions are applicable with respect to state provision of secondary education. For this discussion, see, for instance, Teixeira (1976).

and (2) to reproduce the values of the dominant classes. Following this, I use a historical approach to show how the state oriented the formation of the state system for primary education in Brazil to directly exclude part of its population from partaking in and enjoying fuller educational opportunities – and thus, opportunities to freedom through schooling. In the following section, I discuss some sociological interpretations regarding the formation of Brazilian society, with two main goals in mind: first, to build a deeper understanding of why the Brazilian state tends to orient its institutions to act in favour of the interests of some groups and to the detriment of others; and second, to clarify, based on the discussion, the interpretation over which this work is constituted. Finally, I discuss the three, most preeminent attempts – all somehow undermined by the state action – to transform state education in Brazil into a means of freedoms for underprivileged populations.

3.2. State schooling as an instance of state power

The idea that schooling serves as a means for nation-states to impose their will and dubious interests over their population is far from new. The most prominent analysis on the matter can be found in the work of Foucault (1995), who discussed it in the European context. For Foucault (1995), the form in which the European states exerted their authority to maintain order changed in the 19th century. The old order based on punishment was gradually replaced by a new paradigm, founded on the embodiment of discipline. He understood the development of national institutions – including, and especially, schools and schooling systems – as a reflection of this process, as he saw schools as institutions designed to control and correct the 'operations of the body,' meaning to frame people's behaviour. To a large extent following the spread of Lancaster's monitorial method in the 19th century,[42] school organisation and classroom rituals began to be planned as a disciplinary apparatus to impose state sovereignty though active surveillance and discipline (Foucault, 1995). Consequently, in the Foucauldian perspective, schools became responsible for training people to be obedient and docile, reinforcing a relation of power in which the state is the major force.

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[42] The monitorial system arose at the end of the 18th century in England, as the result of the work of Joseph Lancaster and Andrew Bell (Boyd, 1947). It represented the first attempt toward a transition to a mass education system. The method consisted of the most advanced students, the monitors, helping their teachers by teaching less advanced pupils (Lancaster, 2014 [1803]). Order and discipline were central features of the method, given that it implied in a series of disciplinary apparatus, as the control of each lesson's time, and the application of exams to assess students. Thus, the monitorial method satisfied the demand for public instruction based on moralization and control of the masses, as well as on the dissemination of national values and principles (Souza, 2011; Caruso & Vera, 2005).

Along those same lines, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argue explicitly that schools are institutions whose mechanisms reproduce existing inequalities. From their perspectives, schools and their pedagogical practices, contents, subjects and learning processes in general are organised in accordance with elitist values and, as a result of this, perpetuate the unequal social order. Bourdieu's (2007) and Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) criticisms are based on the concept of cultural capital, which, as Bourdieu (1997) defines it, exists in three manifestations: embodied, objectified and institutionalised. In the embodied, it represents "long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body," in other words, the cultural knowledge and habitus passed on from family to children (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 47). The embodied cultural capital, once transmitted, becomes an inseparable part of the person and a determinant to the acquisition of other forms of cultural capital. In its physical form, the cultural capital exists as cultural assets, such as "pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments" (1997, p. 47). The object-cultural capital holds a symbolic value, expressed by the necessary embodied cultural capital that enables its use according to its end. Additionally, it has material value, given by its economic value. The third form of cultural capital, the institutionalised, refers to "the objectification of the cultural capital in the form of academic qualification" (1997, p. 50).

According to Bourdieu (1997), wealthier children tend to possess more embodied cultural capital, as the amount of time in which a person can engage in acquiring cultural capital depends on how much free time which her family can provide for her. In addition, the transmission of cultural capital is also a function of the family's previous cultural capital accumulation. Under this perspective, Bourdieu (2007) affirms that, since school culture is based on the culture of dominant groups, poor students who lack cultural capital have significant difficulty in embracing the information taught in school, as they cannot find any relation between their world and school culture. Consequently, their relationship with school tends to be laborious and tense. In contrast, students who are part of culturally privileged classes tend to be more adaptable to school and, hence, to reach better achievement standards.

Therefore, the school-institutional apparatus would be, under Bourdieu's perspective, intrinsically unfair, given that it is founded on the habitus of dominant classes – in other words, on "a system of schemes of perception and appreciation of practices" built through "the lasting experience of a social position" that is strange to underprivileged individuals (Bourdieu, 2002[1989], p. 241). Such a fact would create a symbolic relation of power that reproduces and perpetuates the relations of power that structures society, which would mean that, whether we consider a Foucauldian analysis

accurate, school institutions would perpetuate the state's power, and its dominant interests, over underprivileged populations.

3.3. State Schooling and the historical making of (un)freedoms in Brazil

Bourdieu structured his criticisms against school institutions based on the conditions of the French educational system, which he understands as being in service of the reproduction of class domination structures (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). It could therefore be argued that both Bourdieu and Foucault's interpretations presented in the previous section represent Eurocentric – and white, male – perspectives that do not speak to the reality of a post-colonial country like Brazil.[43] However, irrespective of the dissimilar context, it is possible to argue that the educational system in Brazil was formed under similar assumptions. Throughout history, state schooling in Brazil was shaped – especially with regard to primary schools, although not exclusively – in accordance with the interests of dominant elites based on Western European and colonial values.

The first Portuguese colonists arrived in – and invaded – the land that is now recognised as the Federative Republic of Brazil in around the year 1500. Brazil then became a colony of the Kingdom of Portugal (1500-1822), from which it became an Empire (1822-1889), a Constitutional Monarchy theoretically dissociated from the Portuguese Crown – although, in practice, the ruler was the Portuguese King's son and the territory was still under the domain of the Portuguese Crown. Slavery was abolished only in 1888, and in 1889, Brazil became a Republic (Fausto, 1995). The Republican period was, to say the least, turbulent in political terms. If we consider only the period between the 1930s and the middle of the 1960s, Brazil went through two state coups, four provisory governments, the suicide of a president and the resignation of another. The country faced a violent and authoritative military dictatorship (1964-1985), after which became, once again, a Republic (Fausto, 1995). To date, between the ratifying of democratic Brazil's Constitution in 1988 and the present, Brazil has had five democratically-elected presidents, two of which were constitutionally impeached – one under very controversial circumstances – and thus, removed from the federal administration.

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[43] Bourdieu (2002[1989], p. 235-236) himself admits, "points of view depend on the point from which they are taken, since the vision that every agent has of the space depends on his or her position in that space." Indeed, as I discuss in further chapters, much of Foucault (1995) and Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) conceptual formulations about school do not apply to the contemporary conditions in which Brazilian primary state schools can be found.

Regarding the establishment of educational institutions and consequent educational opportunities – both of which are especially relevant for the formation of fair, democratic regimes (Rawls, 2001) – Brazil has been failing since the beginning of its colonial history. The first form of state-oriented instruction was instituted in the Brazilian territory in 1549. Education was implemented in the Jesuit vision, holding as a central goal the teaching of self-control, to diminish man's selfishness and to stimulate a good relationship with the state (Hansen, 2000). Jesuit-Catholic education aimed to lead individuals to be "subordinate to the political state body, defining their freedom as subordinated to the Crown, under the numerous and naturally unequal positions of the hierarchy" (Hansen, 2001, p. 34).[44]

Throughout the colonial period, Jesuit schools were responsible for educating the sons of the emerging colonial elite, not the Native populations (Casimiro, 2010; Saviani, 2010; Hansen, 2001).[45] The Kingdom of Portugal saw the Indigenous peoples, the people they found when arrived on Brazilian lands, as sinful savages who needed to be controlled for the sake of successful colonisation (Ribeiro, 1995) – a perspective that seems to persist in the contemporary imaginary of Brazilian dominant classes (Galeano, 2000[1976]).[46] The natives fought hard for the domain of their lands but were nonetheless largely exterminated or, to a lesser extent, enslaved by the Portuguese colonisers (Galeano, 2000[1976]; Ribeiro, 1995).

As an instrument of the Portuguese colonial project, Jesuit education served to instruct, at tribes and churches, Indigenous and mixed colonial peoples with Catholicism and civic rules (Mesquida, 2013; Saviani, 2010). The emergence of the school in the colonial period was a consequence of the necessity to instruct more missionaries to work with Native peoples, in addition to being a demand of the new

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[44] Translated from Portuguese: "Segundo o *Ratio Studiorum*, em todos os casos a educação deveria levar os indivíduos à integração harmoniosa com os súditos ou subordinados no corpo político do Estado, definindo-se sua liberdade como subordinação à cabeça real, nas várias posições naturalmente desiguais da hierarquia" (Hansen, 2001, p. 34).

[45] Brazil's colonial elite was predominantly composed of sugar mill owners (Casimiro, 2010; Saviani, 2010; Hansen, 2001). In 1534, the Portuguese Crown divided the Colony into fifteen hereditary captaincies, which were given to members of the Portuguese nobility, who were then responsible for colonizing and developing the lands using their own resources. The landowners had full power to govern their captaincies and provided the Portuguese Crown with a part of the profits (Paiva, 2010). In some of these captaincies, the establishment of sugar mills was responsible for the rise of this elite, who demanded means to instruct their – male – children.

[46] Although Brazil has developed institutional mechanisms to protect the rights of the diminished Indigenous populations that still inhabit its territory, Native peoples are still persecuted and killed in Brazil – being it by direct assassination or by death indirectly caused by state neglect. See, for instance, *Conselho Missionário Índigena* (2017).

local elite. During the time public instruction was controlled by the Jesuit Order, there were two different systems, one for those who held a "good" position in that budding society, and another for Native peoples (Paiva, 2010) – although in both cases, instruction had a strong civilizing, indoctrinating and evangelising character (Mesquida, 2013).

The Jesuit Order was expelled from Portuguese lands and had all their goods and possessions confiscated by the Portuguese Crown in the mid-eighteenth century, as an effect of the spread of Enlightenment ideals in Europe (Boto, 2010). The educational reform implemented by the Portuguese Crown as a result made the state entirely responsible for the provision and general administration of public instruction (Andrade, 1981; Gomes, 1982; Boto, 2010).[47] Nevertheless, in terms of the instruction provided in the colony of Brazil, there was no change. There were not enough resources to guarantee a good functioning school system – which was, as I said, attended by the children of the elite (Saviani, 2010).

Such conditions remained the same for a long time, from the end of the colonial times and the first years of the Empire (1822) to the beginning of the Republican era (from 1889). For many years, the primary state system of education in Brazil was characterised by isolated schools located at teachers' homes with one person teaching many students at different levels at the same time. Most importantly, a significant proportion of the population was partially or even, completely, excluded from the state instruction system, those being, Native peoples, enslaved, freed slaves and women (Cury, 2000; Faria Filho, 2000; Shelbauer, 2001; Almeida, 1989).

Not even the arrival of the Portuguese court in 1807 – which moved to Rio de Janeiro itself with the whole state's bureaucratic system running from the Napoleonic invasion (Fausto, 1995) – changed the educational situation. It is, however, true that a series of institutions, directly or indirectly linked to educational purposes, were instituted as a result of this movement.[48] Yet, all effort was made in agreement with the interests of the dominant elite. None of this new structure was available for the

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[47] This educational reform is known as *Pombalina* reform, put forwarded by the Kingdom of Portugal's Secretary of State, the Marquis of Pombal, inspired by Enlightenment ideals of secularization of education, which was seen as a means to "fortify and dignify the Portuguese kingdom borders" and was implied to "project the nationality's political future" (Boto, 2010, p. 109).
[48] The institutions created included the School of Anatomy, Surgery and Medicine (1809), Military Royal Academy of Rio de Janeiro (1810), National Public Library (1814), the Botanic Garden (1814), the National Museum (1818), all of which are located in the state of Rio de Janeiro, which was chosen to be the Portuguese court's capital (Almeida, 1989).

general population: Black people continued to be enslaved, Native peoples were still seen as savages, and none of them were considered a person, let alone part of the nation. Even after independence and the establishment of the Empire of Brazil in 1822, the public instruction was still restricted to those "considered as citizens" (Cury, 2000, p. 571).

By the time Brazil became a republic in 1889, its population – composed predominantly of former enslaved Africans and Black Brazilians, and mixed-race individuals – was characterised by extremely high rates of illiteracy (Shelbauer, 2011). The *Aurea* Law, instituted one year before the Republic was established, made slavery illegal without establishing any sort of reparative or inclusive public policy for formerly enslaved peoples (Florestan, 1972). Furthermore, Brazil was experiencing a period of capitalist internationalization and modernization in the final decades of the 1800s (Inácio Filho & Silva, 2010). Although the Enlightenment period had raised significant concern throughout Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries in response to establishment of expansive, free, national education systems, directed and run by the nation state and in accordance with the aims of the newly established social order (Bowen, 1981), such considerations did not become a major concern in Brazil until the beginning of the 20th century.

National systems for education started to be discussed throughout European countries as a product of the emergence of the nation-states and of the Industrial Revolution. The discussion was highly influenced by the ideas of Rousseau (1712-1778) in *Èmile* (1762),[49] Adam Smith (1723-1790) in the *Wealth of Nations* (2016[1776]), and by Jeremy Bentham's (1748-1832) utilitarian principles (Bentham, 1823). The utilitarian principles understood that providing people with education – in this case, poor people – was advantageous for all citizens because it would increase the quantity of concerned individuals, meaning people capable to understand the notion of common good. This would imply an increasing range of people with better moral standards and aspirations (Bowen, 1981). The truth behind such a perceivably noble goal was of a different kind: as a result of the industrial revolution in the 18th century, it became important, from the capitalists' point of view, to minimally instruct the growing mass of workers, in order for them to remain ordered and obedient. In addition, there was an increasing demand for scientific knowledge to expand industrial productivity (Bowen, 1981).

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[49] Rousseau, in the five volumes of *Èmile* (Rousseau, 1995[1762]), discussed education according to children's development stages.

Mass schooling systems – and thus, the school itself – were designed in this context based on two main ideas, both related to the indoctrination of the masses: firstly, to create a national identity in accordance to the goals of the state; and, secondly, to keep the masses, the workers under the state's and dominant elites' control. Within this context, Brazil's national system of education started to be developed in the beginning of the 20th century founded on Eurocentric principles and methods, and conceived as a means to enable the 'rustic colonised men' to overcome their 'primitive culture' (Freitas, 2006). It was believed that the only way to turn Brazil into a socioeconomically developed nation was through the construction of a new culture and of new men, and schools would serve to this end (Shelbauer, 2011; Machado, 2010). From their conception, state primary schools were thus designed to provide an elementary kind of instruction, to teach the bare minimum necessary, in order to civilise people. State schools in Brazil were meant to attend the state's and bourgeoisie's interests (Machado, 2010).

3.4. The era of mass schooling

Based on the modernisation purpose, several Brazilian states reformed their education systems between the 1890s and the 1930s and, from that point on, a state education net began to be established through the action of state and municipal governments (Inácio Filho & Silva, 2010; Nunes, 2000a). The reforms were nonetheless insufficient to support the spread of – the already intrinsically problematic – mass schooling. There were still not enough schools to serve the entire population within schooling age, and state schools continued to only be accessible to the children of the dominant elite[50] (Saviani, 2010).

At this time, Brazil was an oligarchical republic, governed mainly by and for the coffee producers and cattle farmers' interests. As only literate men were permitted to vote in the young Republic's elections, the majority of the population was excluded from the electoral process. In addition, those who were able to vote were exposed to the pressures and possible retaliation of local political leaders, since the vote was neither compulsory nor protected by anonymity (Fausto, 1995).

While Brazil begun to enter the era of mass schooling only after the 1930s, the dominant acceptance to the idea that all Brazilians should have basic literacy standards became predominant only around

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[50] The absolute number of illiterate people increased between 1900-1920, although in relative number, the illiteracy rate remained constant at the level of 75% of the total population (Saviani, 2010).

the 1950s (Sanfelice, 2010). Due to the intense process of structural change through which the country was going, school education began to be understood as an important means to economic development. Thus, its indoctrinating and civilizing appeal was partially replaced by a paradigm based on productivity and efficiency. The period between 1930 and 1961 represented a time in which the national education system started to grow, overcoming "a small proportioned educational service, typical of a predominantly rural country" and into "a large-scale educational service, as only happens to nations experiencing a fast industrialization and urbanization process" (Saviani, 2010, p. 36).[51]

Nevertheless, in the 1960s, in spite of the improvements made in the previous 30 years, 39.35% of the Brazilian population was still illiterate (Bittar & Bittar, 2012). With a successful military coup in 1964 – largely supported by the country's dominant classes – the government's educational focus changed from basic to higher education. The dictatorship's educational policy was driven by ideas of "efficiency, productivity, rationality and resources saving principles," focusing on adult literacy and reorganising higher education (Sanfelice, 2010, p. 336).[52] This period was also characterised by a considerable increase in the quantity of state primary schools. However, this expansion was not accompanied by an improvement in quality. In fact, the quality of Brazilian primary state schools largely deteriorated (Bittar & Bittar, 2012). As Bittar and Bittar (2012, p. 163)[53] describe:

> [T]he schools' physical expansion was a feature of the 21 years of dictatorship. However, what school was that? Undoubtedly, the popular classes' [school]; a school in which the shift is intermediary, in which the classroom staying time is slightly more than three hours, poorly equipped, poorly furnished, with no library, precariously built, the one in which teachers receive wages increasingly incompatible with their work journey and degree.

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[51] Translated from Portuguese: "Nesse novo contexto, o Brasil passou de um atendimento educacional de pequenas proporções, próprio de um país predominantemente rural, para serviços educacionais em grande escala, como sói acontecer com as nações que entram num processo acelerado de industrialização e urbanização."

[52] Translated from Portuguese: "por princípios que eficiência, produtividade, racionalidade e economia de recursos."

[53] Translated from Portugues: "A expansão física das escolas foi uma característica dos 21 anos de ditadura. Mas que escola era essa? Sem dúvida, a das crianças das camadas populares; a escola em que funcionava o turno intermediário, com pouco mais de três horas de permanência na sala de aula, mal aparelhada, mal mobiliada, sem biblioteca, precariamente construída, aquela em que os professores recebiam salários cada vez mais incompatíveis com a sua jornada de trabalho e com a sua titulação."

Sadly, such a description still characterises Brazilian state schools today. After re-democratisation in 1988, and largely until the presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2003), the state educational policies continued to be oriented toward foreign – now, neoliberal – ideas. Such rationale still did not meet the necessity of building a culturally- and socially-inclusive educational system to attend to a plural and extremely unequitable society (Leher, 2010; Jacomeli, 2011). The new neoliberal paradigm implied that the educational reforms implemented during the democratic era were oriented to the universalisation of access and improvement of quality – which is not intrinsically bad. Nevertheless, such a paradigm also involved the reduction of the state's general expenditure in education. This led some authors to claim (see, Saviani, 2018; Almeida, 2005) that the state had privatised some of its constitutional responsibilities regarding formal education.

3.5.   New times, old problems, same solutions

Regardless, the most problematic feature of the neoliberal paradigm, I argue, is the lack of concern in regard to the type of education people receive. In addition, the normalising character of its orientations does not consider each countries' particular historical, cultural and social legacies and realities. As a result, the kind of reforms it proposes tends to perceive formal education as instruction, as a means toward economic growth, as something that should be oriented to prepare individuals for the job market. When associated to the utilitarian idea of rationalisation of the state expenditure, such a position can – and in fact does, as I discuss in Chapter Six – imply a wild range of distortions in terms of educational policy.

This is not to say that there were no improvements in the new democratic period. Indeed, revelant measures were put forward within basic education, such as the establishment of the FUNDEB – *Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica e de Valorização dos Profissionais da Educação* – a Federal fund to maintain and develop basic education, first established during Fernando Henrique Cardoso's presidency and amended during President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva's administration (2003-2011) (Savani, 2018). The implementation of social programmes that indirectly target education, such as *Bolsa Escola[54]* and *Bolsa Família*, are also worth mentioning[55]. Policies of access

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[54] School scholarship, in a free translation.
[55] Bolsa Família is a conditional cash transfer programme targeted at families whose per capita income falls below the poverty line, i.e. BR$178 (or about US$49) per month. Bolsa Família ensures the family's right to receive monetary support with the confirmation of regular school attendance by children of school age. However, as I discuss in Chapters Six and Seven, even FUNDEB and Bolsa Família are highly problematic to

and inclusion in higher education aimed at Black, Indigenous and poor populations were also relevant.[56] However, even when considering President Lula's (2003-2011) and President Dilma Rousseff (2011- 2016) governments – which are known as federal administrations that were more concerned with the matters related to poverty and inequality (Pochmann, 2011) – little can be said for policies regarding basic education aimed at breaking with established structures that work against underprivileged populations[57].

3.6.   The vicious cycle

The state primary school in Brazil is still synonymous with poor quality, especially those dealing with underprivileged students (World Bank, 2018). In the 1960s, Brazil entered into the era of mass schooling – without breaking with the past, without considering people's development, or even, the mitigation of the structural inequalities caused by more than 300 years of slavery – at the centre of government concern. Throughout its history, state schools in Brazil worked to deepen inequalities, to separate those who were supposed to have good life opportunities from those who were supposed to remain in their subordinate positions.

The truth, it seems, is that the lack of quality of Brazilian state schools is a product of the educational system itself. As Ribeiro (1986, p. 15) poses:

> [W]e shall conclude that our educational failure has ancient causes. It comes from the colony that never meant to provide literacy for anyone, or that only meant to make literate a few white men for the exercise of governmental work functions. It comes from the Empire that as well never

what concerns promoting educational opportunities for underprivileged children. (Information retrieved from: http://mds.gov.br/acesso-a-informacao/perguntas-frequentes/bolsa-familia/beneficios/beneficiario)

[56] Here, it is possible to refer to the racial quotas policy for higher education access, which reserves part of the places in state universities for Indigenous and Black students; public policies such as PRONATEC, a national project to improve the population's access to technological education and the job market, which includes free professional education courses; and FIES, a state subsidised loan for low-income students to aid in the pursuit of higher education in private universities (Savani, 2018).

[57] Carneiro (2011) reminds us of one federal initiative during the Lula government that directly targeted the cultural inclusion of Black history and Black culture into the compulsory school curriculum. It is legitimate to say that, at least, there was an institutional attempt, during both the Lula and Dilma governments, to discuss paths to national education, materialised, for instance, in the establishment of a federal commitment toward the improvement of national education standards. However, none of the of the initiatives were indeed disassociated from the neoliberal agenda (Jacomeli, 2011).

aimed to educate the people. The republic was not much more generous and brought us to the current calamity in education.[58]

Furthermore, Brazil developed its educational institutions late, and did so grounded on a model that was developed in Europe, fulfilling the demands of other times, for other people, *para inglês ver[59]*. Inácio Filho and Silva (2010, p. 220) argue in this mimicry an intrinsic characteristic of Brazilian culture. Given dominant classes' feelings of inferiority and the subsequent concern regarding the lack of conditions to locally develop a uniform culture and society, the pressure was thus to imitate Eurocentric models (Inácio Filho & Silva, 2010). Hence, not surprisingly, the model on which the Brazilian state primary school is based has not experienced any structural change since the end of the 19th century (Boto, 2014). Mesquida (2013), for instance, highlights that even Jesuit pedagogical premises are still present, both in echo and in practice, in the current Brazilian system of education, which gives little value to students' own curiosity and initiative as well as to their capacity to create, to think critically and to pursue self-inspired research.

In Brazil, the state school remains the same, as more than a hundred years before, it was established to indoctrinate, civilise and create an ordered society, subordinate to the aims of the state and dominant elites. The state system of primary education was never meant to endow individuals with freedoms and autonomy to live a good life. On the contrary, it was imagined and transcribed in colonized mentalities, which entailed the building of a system that has historically used state schooling to produce and reproduce structural inequalities, especially regarding marginalised populations. The reasons for such systematic, enduring, unjust and stratified use of the state power may become clearer when it is considered on the basis through which the Brazilian state and its society were built.

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[58] Translated from Portuguese: "[...] devemos concluir que nosso descalabro educacional tem causas mais antigas. Vem da colônia que nunca quis alfabetizar ninguém, ou só quis alfabetizar uns poucos homens brancos para o exercício de funções governamentais. Vem do império que, por igual, nunca se propôs a educar o povo. A república não foi muito mais generosa e nos trouxe à situação atual de calamidade na educação."

[59] 'Para inglês ver' is a Brazilian expression (translated as, for the English to see) that refers to rules or laws that, although formally established, are not enforced or fulfilled. It is generally accepted that the origins of this expression dates from the1830s, when the Brazilian Monarchy, pressured by the English government, instituted the end of the international slave trade in Brazil – a law that, in practice, was not fulfilled and hence, was established only 'for the English to see'.

3.7. Conceptualizing the exercise of state power in Brazil

From the beginning of the 20th century, several intellectuals started to develop interpretations concerning the formation and shape of Brazilian society and the Brazilian state. Many of these authors – some whose interpretations were held hostage by the colonised education and the colonised mentalities it produces – defined the Brazilian state as one controlled by private interests. Scholars such as Holanda (1995[1936]) and Faoro (2001[1958]) – despite the lack of discussion on the racialised realities within Brazilian societal – present interpretations that speak to the ways in which the state in Brazil operated based on characteristics that entail a historical subordination of the marginalised to the interests of national and international dominant groups.

Holanda's (1995[1936]) investigation reveals the ways in which the Brazilian state was formed based on inherited and entrenched characteristics from the colonial past, constructing a society founded on the features of the rural patriarchal family. From his perspective, the Portuguese colonial heritage – materialised in the social plasticity, individualism and personalism of the nation's people – had turned Brazil into an amorphous society, one incapable of articulating a common good. Holanda (1995[1936]) argues that, as a result, the nation's Portuguese origins prevented the formation of a solid and autonomous state. Thus, the state would not be independent from the imaginaries of and inherent in the patriarchal family, leading to an extremely pernicious confusion between the public and the private sphere.

Similarly, Faoro (2001[1958]) interrogates the concept of *estamento burocrático* as the dominant group of individuals who retains, by privilege, the power and thus, the authority to determine and orient state action in Brazil. The estamento buracrático would be sustained over time by the maintenance of social inequalities that guaranteed the reproduction of the prevailing social order. Indeed, from Faoro's (2001[1958]) viewpoint, the sole existence of the estamento reinforces existing inequalities, due to the privileges enjoyed by its members, whose advantage would be historically determined by the Portuguese Crown's concession of privileges over land and commerce in colonial Brazil in exchange for loyalty. This practice and subsequent legacy would confine the country's socioeconomic development to the satisfaction of the interests of the nation's dominant groups.

3.8.   A stratified society

Based on a different – although still Marxist – interpretation, Ribeiro (1972, p. 72) sees Brazil as a product of a historical process that resulted in an "oligarchic-patriarchal and sociopolitical order that arose as a product of the crystallization of the colonial-slaver formation and that, since then, was only changed to better adjust the same original interests to new conditions."[60] Even when power changed hands in Brazil – for instance, from colonial agents to local aristocrats, or from coffee producers to military politicians after the 1930s – Ribeiro argues that it remained representing the same interests: those of the white and distant upper-middle classes.

Ribeiro (1995) defined Brazil as a stratified society in which the largest component is formed of an oppressed, marginal class composed mostly of Black populations living in city shantytowns and other peripheral areas. In his analysis, he divided Brazilian society into four strata: (1) a modern dominant class, composed of the patronage – such as, big international companies – and the state's political and civil aristocracy; (2) an intermediary class, formed of minor officials and liberal professionals, who, according to him, carry a high propensity to support the interests of the dominant class; (3) a subaltern class, composed of the working classes, mainly formed of specialised workers; and finally, (4) an oppressed class, which is where the majority of the population was (and, I would argue, continues to be) trapped. For him, this stratified structure is responsible for hierarchically organising Brazilian people in such way to be self-perpetuating.

Ribeiro (1995) argues that the unequal architecture through which Brazilian society was constructed prevented the composition and instillation of truly democratic institutions; even the republican institutions of the democratic era were framed to accommodate the dominant classes' new manners of exerting power. He follows Fernandes (1989[1920]) in understanding that there is no democracy where deep structural inequalities are present and, within the Brazilian context, both authors affirm that inequalities are not only based on class, but also, on race.

Fernandes (2008[1964], 1989[1920], 1972), in several opportunities, shows how Black populations were systematically excluded from Brazilian cities' socioeconomic dynamics. He demonstrates how Black culture, bodies and lives were marginalised, not only in the period of chattel slavery, but also

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[60] Translated from Portuguese: "(…) ordenação sócio-política de caráter oligarquico-patriarcal que se implantou com a cristalização da formação colonial-escravista e que, desde então, só se alterou para melhor ajustar os mesmos corpos originais de interesse às novas condições."

in the transition from the end of slavery to their affirmation as a non-slave population. The process of Brazil becoming a Republic – and the processes that followed, including re-democratisation after the dictatorship period – did not have a decolonising character. Hence, society persisted as one organised around the same colonial values that kept Black people enslaved for over three hundred years.

Ribeiro (1995) builds a strong case in that direction by affirming that Brazil's current dominant classes are descendants of old slave masters and, from them, inherited a strong disregard for the country's Black population. Black Brazilians are therefore seen by the ruling elites as the owners of their own disgrace, which was a result of their innate laziness, ignorance and criminal behaviour. As Ribeiro (1995, p. 222) concludes:

> The Brazilian nation, ruled by people with such mentality, has never done anything for the black mass of people of which it is constituted. The nation has denied black people the possession of any piece of land for them to live and grow crops, has denied them schools where they could educate their children and any further assistance. The nation has only given black population repression and prejudice.[61]

3.9. A racialised democracy

Following Ribeiro (1995) and Fernandes (2008[1964], 1989[1920], 1972), the main point is not solely that Brazil is largely recognised in sociological literature as a country in which the state has historically oriented its actions to fulfil the interests of a politically, economically and socially ruling elite. One major consequence of this inclination is materialised in the systematic neglect, abandonment and oppression of Black people. Indeed, many racist interpretations arose in the beginning of the 20th century. Such perspectives – like those of Prado Júnior (1942[1961]) and Oliveira Viana (1934) – blamed Black populations for the underdevelopment of Brazilian national economy as well as its entire society. The sad reality that follows is that those racist interpretations are still part of the Brazilian imaginary, which results in a contemporary society that, directly and

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[61] Translated from Portuguese: "A nação brasileira, comandada por gente dessa mentalidade, nunca fez nada pela massa negra que a constituíra. Negou-lhe a posse de qualquer pedaço de terra para viver e cultivar, de escolas em que pudesse educar seus filhos e de qualquer ordem de assistência. Só lhes deu, sobejamente, discriminação e repressão."

indirectly, discriminates and works against racialised – as well as gendered and underprivileged – bodies.

Souza (2018) argues that nowadays the state is much less a problem than society, as dominant groups would unconsciously behave based on embodied concepts and prejudices that would result in discriminatory practices against poor and Black people. As he sees it, such values would be embodied not only in a dominant group's imaginary, but also in any and every group's imaginaries, in such way that Brazil would be a sort of society where even underprivileged people would present discriminatory mentalities and behaviours against their own group. The state action would be, under this interpretation, just a reflex of society's general inclination to privilege such values over any sort of egalitarian or non-discriminatory ones.[62]

Regardless of if it happens by practice and reproduction or by the imposition of law – or perhaps, both – the fact is that, far from being a racial democracy, Brazil would better be characterised as a *racialised democracy*: one in which race operates as a determinant for opportunities, social position and status, and, even more prominently, to the extent to which the state exercises power over different bodies. I follow Carneiro's (2011) argument that it is not possible to discuss state action in Brazil without taking into account the racial component, especially to what concerns discussions regarding the lives of underprivileged populations – as my work here aims to do. I share Carneiro's (2011) understanding – which she develops from Mills (1997) conceptualisation concerning racial

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[62] Souza's (2018) interpretation, based on Bourdieu's concepts of capital and on Charles Taylor's recognition theory, is quite critical of dominant approaches, like Holanda's (1995[1936]) and Faoro's (2001[1958]), who understand Brazilian society as a product of what Souza (2018) sees as an undefined colonial heritage. Souza (2017) builds a sociological and historical analysis that incriminates the private sector, and the privileges it has enjoyed as a product of the global regime of slavery, for the structural problems faced by modern Brazilian society. According to him, as there was never slavery in Portugal itself, it makes no sense to attribute the characteristics of Brazilian society as inherited from any specific lineage of Portuguese colonial heritage. I partially agree with him, but only to the extent that I also understand that much of Brazil's structural inequalities are a result of the mentality behind the system of African enslavement and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. However, I tend to see slavery as part of a broader colonial project, that not only made Black and Native populations into enslaved, but furthermore, stole Native lands for the sole purpose of exploring and administering them in accordance with the interests of the Crown and private companies. To affirm that the Brazilian state is biased toward some ruling interests is not to say that states are inherently bad or that the state is the only cause of social distortion and inequality in Brazil. Dominant interests are, indeed, mostly private interests that exist on the level of the state's political administration, as well as on the level of capital owners and higher middle-classes, as Ribeiro (1995) would argue. In other words, my criticism to state-provided education is not a criticism against state education, although it might appear as such. It is rather a criticism against the values on which state education is founded in Brazil – and against the consequences of such an orientation.

social contracts – that Brazilian society is organised immensely around racial parameters, which predetermine a racial bias within the state and its institutional apparatus.

How Black populations became historically poor and neglected is a long, but very common, story. After the abolition of slavery in 1888, there was no effort from the Brazilian state, let alone civil society, to integrate Black populations into the – fundamentally racist – society (Ribeiro, 1995; Fernandes, 2008[1964], 1989[1920], 1972). Black people continued to be seen as inferior, ineligible of basic rights and, to a larger extent, as a problem to be solved and thus, erased. This made manifest in state-implemented eugenics policies, which promoted the entry of a large number of white European migrants in the beginning of the 20th century, with the express purpose of whitening the population and instilling 'civilised' European values into the nation (Fausto, 1995).

Racial miscegenation was likewise used as a means to whiten the population, which, undeniably, still exists in the Brazilian imaginary as proof that Brazil is post-racial, a nation devoid of racism (Ribeiro, 1995). The myth of racial democracy was born with Freyre's (2003[1933]) interpretation. He saw in racial and cultural miscegenation a reason to assume that Brazil is a nation formed of tolerant, kind, hybrid, creative and tactful people. In his eyes, the miscegenation that enabled the settlement of the national territory was only possible as a result of Portuguese men's social malleability and strong sexual appetite toward Black and Native women.[63]

It is not to deny that Freyre's (2003[1933]) interpretation represented an advance in comparison to the ones from other racist writers of his time – he, at least, did not treat Black and Native populations as a problem, but rather, saw in them the solution for the lack of Portuguese capacity to populate the country's territory. Nevertheless, Freyre's (2003[1933]) reading naturalises the marginalisation of Black and Native populations within the patriarchal societal structure. In addition, it omits the fact that racial miscegenation during colonial times was enacted through the rape of Black and Native women by white Portuguese settler-colonisers (Carneiro, 2011).

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[63] Freyre (2003[1933]), similar to Holanda (1995[1936]), understands that the patriarchal colonial family – composed of the sadistic landlord, his submissive wife and obedient children, in addition to their Native and Black enslaved/servants – structures all social, economic and political relations in Brazilian society. The political sphere, represented by the state, would hence be merely an extension of the familial domain, which would create a culture in which democracy is exerted by and through authority. Freyre (2003[1933]) paradoxically concludes that the patriarchal state and its institutions, which he admits to often be strict and cruel, represent a positive aspect, given that they made it possible for the economic and political formation of the country.

Racial and cultural miscegenation occurred in Brazil, as it did in post-colonial spaces throughout the Americas and beyond, by the imposition of force, and in the assumption of a national culture and civil society perceived as tolerant of difference, when in practice, stigmatise, segregate and neglect non-white populations. Moreover, the myth of racial democracy that emerged from Freyre's (2003[1933]) interpretation, work and subsequent mainstream acceptance perpetuates the common denial of the existence of racial prejudice and structural inequalities between white and non-white peoples in Brazil. It furthermore suggests that the whitening of the population through racial miscegenation is a desirable end, which instils in a society the overvalue of whiteness and the marginalisation of the non-white (Ribeiro, 1995). As Carneiro (2011, p. 60)[64] clearly states:

> Here [in Brazil], we learn not to be aware of what we are and, above all, of what we should be. We have been taught to use miscegenation and *mestiçagem* as the manumission for blackness stigma: a lighter skin tone, straighter hair or a pair of green eyes inherited from a European ancestral are sufficient to make someone with black descendance to feel *pardo* or white, or to be socially 'promoted' to these categories. And the tacit agreement is such that everyone pretend to believe.[65]

Fernandes (1989[1920], p. 14), writing on how the republican movement was done "by elites, for elites and to elites" – and thus, "by white populations to white populations" – reiterates that the myth of racial democracy was a necessary construction, as it provided white elites with an escape, a means to ignore their moral obligation and subsequent responsibility toward the low standards of living of Black populations. Moreover, it exempts all of Brazilian society from the responsibility toward Black lives. The racial democracy myth became an unconscious feature of Brazil that prevented the masses, the marginalised, the 'Other' from realising the institutional gap between how people with different skin tones – and therefore associated to different races – are treated and positioned within society. This sort of interpretation is responsible, for instance, for arguments against affirmative inclusive state policies for Black and Native populations.

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[64] Translated from Portuguese: "Aqui aprendemos a não saber o que somos e, sobretudo, o que devemos ser. Temos sido ensinados a usar a miscigenação e a mestiçagem como carta de alforria para o estigma da negritude: um tom de pele mais claro, cabelos mais lisos ou um par de olhos verdes herdados de um ancestral europeu são suficientes para fazer alguém que descenda de negros se sentir pardo ou branco, ou ser 'promovido' socialmente a essas categorias. E o acordo tácito é que todos façam de conta que acreditam."

[65] *Mestiçagem* comes from the word *mestiço*, which, in Portuguese, refers to someone descended from more than one race, in other words, one who is mixed-race. *Pardo* is the designation constructed by the Brazilian national census, which is used to define mixed-race people. In English, it may be synonymous to brown, or someone who is neither Black nor white nor Native.

Conversely, the myth of racial democracy may also prevent people from perceiving themselves in positions of disadvantage as a result of their individual biological characteristics – which further serves the state and the dominant structures that govern its action. When individuals do not position themselves at a position of disadvantage, they may have no reason to rise against and challenge that which oppresses them.

3.10. The intersection of determinants

This brief discussion attempts to demonstrate that any study considering underprivileged populations in Brazil must take into serious consideration the intersections between the self and the conditions that define its place within the social world. That is to say that, when considering the experiences of individuals who are part of a stratified society, it is paramount to consider that such experiences will be shaped at intersections of social determinants – including (but not limited to) race, gender, sexual orientation and class – that situate and cultivate the place of the self within the societal structure.

The colonial values that persisted in Brazilian society are not only racist and classist, but are also misogynist and homophobic. This patriarchal heritage signifies a male-centred, hetero-normative culture, which, for example, is implicated in Brazil's high levels of assassinations of transgender people (Queiroga, 2018, November 14). Additionally, Brazil has one of the highest rates of *feminicide*[66] in the world. Black and poor – and mostly Black, poor – women are especially vulnerable (Bueno & Lima, 2019). There is no safety for women and LGBT+ in Brazil, as there is none for the Black population in general – especially for the Black men (Waiselfisz, 2016). [67]

Thus, I adopt an intersectional approach, in pursuit of research that is considerate to the implications of social determinants – and of the intersections among them – to the lives which people live and to the freedoms that they have. In doing so, I follow the work of the Brazilian Black feminist, Conceição Carneiro (2005, 2011), as well as others like Ikawa (2014), who argue that public police should acknowledge the different positions, and thus, the different lives, that different female bodies occupy within Brazilian society.

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[66] Translated from *feminício*, which, in Portuguese, denominates the specific category of murder in which the victim is a woman who is killed as a direct result of her gender.
[67] Waiselfisz's (2016) report indicates, in data from 2014, the number of Black victims – of which Black men were the majority – killed though gun fire in Brazil was 158,9% higher than the number of white victims.

The fact that Brazil is a socially, economically, culturally and politically sectioned country, symbolically structured and hierarchically structured on colonial-enslavement values, has implications not only for the ways in which people individually behave within society, but also for how the state acts in relation to different groups more generally. In Brazil, the onus of the state action does not affect everyone equally. As it connects to state education, the link between discriminatory state action and social neglect/marginalisation of Black and underprivileged populations may not appear explicit. Differently from state policing and criminal institutions, which are frequently directly responsible for the biological death of Black and poor populations (Alves, 2018; Alves & Evanson, 2011; Silva, 2009), state schooling does not – directly – kill. The death provoked by state schooling is actually of a different kind.

Carneiro (2005) analyses such a relationship by departing from Santos's (1995) *Epistemicídio* concept. Santos (1995) defines Epistemicídio as an ethnic form of domination based on the suppression and marginalisation of cultures and groups that could impede the hegemony of ruling groups. Based on this idea, in addition to the Foucauldian concept of biopower, Carneiro (2005) affirms that dominant structures of power in Brazil are oriented toward a marginalisation of racialised bodies and cultures in face of historically-constructed racist perspectives. She states that, through the technology of epistemicídio, this orientation is used not only to abolish and exclude knowledge produced by dominated people "through a persistent process of production of cultural indigence" (Carneiro, 2005, p. 97), but through a set of established mechanisms whose purpose is to deny Black population's access to quality education.

Carneiro (2005) reconceptualization of epistemicídio tells us that ruling power endeavours to disqualify the Black production of knowledge, and to classify the cognitive capacity of Black populations as inferior, undermining Black people's educational self-esteem and killing their learning conditions. Within these terms, I follow Carneiro (2005), and others, in understanding that, especially in regard to populations at the periphery, it is necessary to recognise that Brazilian society and the state do not offer the same opportunities to everyone. The state power – in the sense of repressive and oppressive power – is enacted on and felt by Black and poor populations much more seriously. These populations are largely represented in my study. Therefore, I depart here from the premise – or rather, from the historical and sociological acknowledgment/ascertainment – according to which the chaos in Brazil's state education, expressed in its low capacity to provide peripheral populations with substantive freedoms, is not incidental. Rather, it is part of a range of orchestrated actions

directly or indirectly intended to maintain structural inequalities and historically established – and routinely produced and reproduced – relations of dominance and oppression, both violent and nonviolent. This is a primordial qualification, as it defines and structures the very study I develop here. I endeavour to make sense of the freedoms and unfreedoms produced and reproduced mainly, but not exclusively, through state schooling, for different groups under the school environment; and I do so taking into account the extent to which different bodies are subject to different social conditionings – including gender, race, socioeconomic class, sexuality, and so on – which imply different social positions, and thus, offer diverse departing points from which the degree of dominant power may imply in the production of (un)freedoms.

3.11.   Education toward freedoms?

The idea according to which the state should provide people with quality education is as old as Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle, 2009). In Brazil, the first remarkable defence toward the institution of a somehow comprehensive and quality state system of education came from the *Nova Escola*[68] movement in the 1930s. This movement – which had as its biggest advocate, Anísio Teixeira – was inspired by the pragmatist educational philosophy of the American educator, John Dewey (Nunes, 2000b; 2010). Dewey (2001[1916]) lobbied for a style of education based on experienced and interactive practices, one that would build learning from the experience of social life itself, and, by doing so, would turn schooling into a means to democracy and citizenship.

Very similarly, *Escola Nova* proposed the creation of a new system of education (Cunha, 2010; Vidal, 2000). Education should, according Teixeira (1930), create conditions for emancipation and the exercise of democracy and citizenship. Teixeira (1976) saw school, as an institution, as a representation of its time and place. He argued that Brazilian state schools had always been a representation of elsewhere and were thus disconnected from the local culture and people. Thus, the school needed to adapt, to evolve, in order to respond to the changes the country was experiencing in the first half of the 20th century.

For Teixeira (1930), individuals should be prepared to live in a constantly changing world, to be capable of thinking for themselves, and to able to construct their own life's convictions. He believed that the building of a thinking population could be reached through the construction of a school

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[68] Translated as, New School Movement.

anchored on democratic values, in which each being is treated as a person. A school oriented toward the formation of free individuals, whose specificities are respected, and who carry the values of tolerance and respect toward others. Teixeira (1930, 1976) understood education as a means for social change, to foster general social and political participation, and to expand the rights and opportunities to social mobility, especially for those in underprivileged positions within society. School education would therefore represent a means to reach a democratic life, which, for Teixeira, would be characterised by a gradual and free search for the common good. Such ideals were never implemented by the country's government as part of educational policy[69] (Cunha, 2010).

A remarkable initiative, influenced by Anísio Teixeira's educational ideas, was the CIEPs, or the *Centros Integrados de Educação Pública*.[70] The CIEPs were imagined by Darcy Ribeiro, a Brazilian anthropologist who worked as vice-governor and Secretary of Science and Culture for the state of Rio de Janeiro during Governor Leonel Brizola's first administration (1983-1987). The CIEPs were part of the state's Special Education Program,[71] which aimed, broadly, to enlarge the number of state schools, specifically for vulnerable populations; to progressively institute full day education – or education in two shifts, morning and afternoon – in state schools all over the state; and to better qualify and prepare teachers (Ribeiro, 1986). The CIEPs represented the materialisation of this efforts: they were envisioned to be a new kind of state school, a new institution, with an original and standardised architectonic project and a new way of providing education to marginalised populations. They sought to be a response to the "unjust, unhuman and antipatriotic social reality" (Brizola, 1986, n.a.).

The CIEPs endeavoured to mimic house-schools, a sort of primary schools where underprivileged students could obtain a type of education that sought to be pedagogically inclusive, adapted and culturally accountable to their reality. Students would also receive four meals per day, medical and dental assistance, community-specific cultural and artistic activities, and complementary directed

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[69] Anísio Teixeira was indeed influential in discussions about the Brazilian state education system, although regarding different matters. During his tenure in charge of the INEP, *Instituto Nacional de Estudos Pedagógicos* – the National Institute of Pedagogical Studies – Teixeira was responsible for implementing processes for quantitative and qualitative assessment of the quality of national education (Cunha, 2010; Horta, 2010; Bittar & Bittar, 2012).
[70] Translated as, State Education Integrated Centres.
[71] *Programa de Educação Especial*.

studies – to assist students with major educational difficulties – during the eight hours of school time per weekday (Ribeiro, 1986).[72]

Although more than five hundred CIEPs were built during the 1980s, the project of education as envisioned by Ribeiro (1986) was progressively left behind by the state governments of Rio de Janeiro that succeeded Brizola's administration. The CIEP buildings, designed by the renowned Brazilian architect, Oscar Niemeyer, still exist – some administered by Rio de Janeiro State, some by municipalities, many still housing state schools, others being used as state government buildings. The project of integral education was nonetheless left behind, mainly due to the high costs per student accrued by the integral education (Marqueiro, Berta, & Schmidt, 2006, May 29; Dantas, 2015, July 28) – and of the lack of the state interest for further investment.

Perhaps the most interesting initiative, in terms of the attempt to build a truly decolonised and emancipatory type of education, happened between Teixeira and Ribeiro. Here, I am referring to the national effort to end illiteracy through Paulo Freire's literacy method, put forward during the brief – and interrupted – João Goulart presidency (1961-1963). Freire (1967, 1987) saw schools as alienating institutions that shape people to have a naïve, non-critical vision of their own realities. For him, the teacher-pupil relationship is strictly and fundamentally narrative: the teachers talk, the students listen and memorise. In this context, the content becomes completely separated from the students' realities, and thus, meaningless. Students, on the other hand, are turned into non-active subjects, the listeners.

That relationship characterises what Freire (1987) calls *banking education*, a kind of education in which the only role of the student is to listen to the information, receive the teachers' deposits, stock it and archive it. For Freire (1987), since banking education does not engage students in critical thinking, they grow to be individuals unaware of their own realities, and whose means of participation in democratic life and of actively enacting their demands are diminished. As a result, he argues, banking education creates an alienated mass and, through the masses' lack of social and political engagement, contributes to the perpetuation of dominant power structures.

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[72] A school day in standard state schools in Brazil lasts no more than five hours. Students attend school only during one shift – that is, for a few hours in one part of the day – either during the morning or the afternoon. The CIEPs represented the first attempt to establish schools in which a same student would have frequent activities during both mornings and afternoons.

For Freire (1967, 1987), the solution would reside in an empowering and engaging education, capable of supporting people in their lives through critical thinking and reflection. An education to democracy, to social and political responsibility. An education based on dialogue, aimed to make people critically aware of their conditions and position within society. An education that gives voice to people and endows them with the means to conceive of their own demands. Freire's (1967) pedagogical method was developed based on these core ideas. It was a fast literacy technique for adults based on 'culture circles', a dynamic process in which individuals could learn how to write and read through words that were part of their everyday lives. The method demanded no formal teaching and the circles were organised by a coordinator whose role was to facilitate dialogue. Culture circles were intended to promote literacy through critical discussion and thinking, in such a way that the words were debated according to their meaning and were never dissociated from the context they represented. Consequently, Freire (1967) presented a method that had the purpose of making individuals aware of their own reality. He saw in defeating illiteracy a means to overcome people's democratic inexperience and lack of political participation.

In practical terms, Paulo Freire had good results applying his method with rural workers from the northeast of Brazil in 1961: three hundred workers were literate within a 45-day period (Weffort, 1967). João Goulart's National Literacy Plan was meant to expand culture circles in order to promote mass literacy. However, his structural reforms could not be implemented and, in 1964, Brazil suffered a military coup, characterised by authoritarianism and strong state repression (Fausto, 1995). The military dictatorship (1964-1985) interrupted Goulart's proposal and culture circles were never implemented in large scale. The military dictatorship had the support of the nation's dominant elites, in such a way that the state again acted firmly to protect the interests of its ruling class.[73]

Freire's pedagogy was directed toward the freedom of oppressed populations. Freedom not only from their condition of illiteracy or low literacy standards – which was an impeditive for democratic participation, since illiterate citizens were prohibited from taking part in the electoral process – but also from their condition as subjugated classes, as the development of critical thinking and autonomy was a central goal. Although his work dates back to the 1960s, the message it brings could not be more contemporary. When Freire (1981) states that it is naïve to believe that Brazil's dominant

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[73] The military regime imposed its authority through violence and repression, in such a way that education was a substantive threat to the political order. In economic terms, this period was characterised by fast economic growth and increased income inequality (Hermann, 2010a, 2010b).

classes would admit without resistance the establishment of an educational project inclusive and strong enough as to permit oppressed populations to transcend from that position to occupy positions of power, he could be referring as much to the current conjuncture of Brazilian educational policies as to the situation in 1960s.

I shall continue my discussion on Freire's critical pedagogy in Chapter Nine. For now, it is enough to affirm that, as it is the case for almost the totality of the theories upon which I am basing this work – including the CA – I take the Freirean perspective as a valuable way to assist in thinking about educational matters in postcolonial societies like Brazil. Nonetheless, I do not do so in a thoughtless or unreserved manner. As I argue in Chapter Nine, my research addresses criticisms that arise from some of the patterns I have observed, contradicting some fundamental assumptions of the Freirean approach. This is, however, a discussion for Chapter Nine.

Specifically concerning educational policies put forward in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, at least one recent initiative – implemented by Porto Alegre municipality – deserves reflection. Although Brazilian state schools are mostly financed by resources from the Federal Government, as I mentioned in Chapter Two, the provision of basic education is mainly a responsibility of municipal and state governments. The decentralised provision implies regional differences in terms of educational policies. Brazil does have national curriculum guidelines for basic education that serve as the basis for the curriculum in either federal, municipal and state-ran schools (BRASIL, 1996; BRASIL, 2018). However, as McCowan (2009, p. 108) explains, "municipalities and states have considerable freedom to introduce their own distinctive policies." Regarding the municipality of Porto Alegre, during the municipal administration (1988-2004) of the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT), a new paradigm for municipal education was gradually implemented: The Citizen School. Such a paradigm was based on the idea of the democratization of the management of, access to, and knowledge across Porto Alegre municipal schools (McCowan, 2009; Azevedo, 2007; Azevedo, Rodrigues, & Curço, 2010). In practice, the Citizen School project implied in the institution of direct elections for school principals and school councils, and in curricular changes that reorganised teaching in accordance with learning cycles, included regional and local knowledges, and endeavoured to promote inclusive strategies for street children and children with special needs (McCowan, 2009; Azevedo, 2007). In terms of educational policies put forward by the state of Rio Grande do Sul, it is practical to mention the institution of the Rio Grande do Sul State Educational Plan – *Plano Estadual de Educação* (RIO GRANDE DO SUL, 2015) – aimed to establish goals for state-

run education, such as the improvement of the quality of the education provided, the sustained professional development of education professionals, and the promotion of democratic principles in the management of state-ran schools.

While I mention these local initiatives to illustrate the heterogeneity of conditions that characterise the Brazilian system of education, it is also true that their eventual positive implications are far from the reality of the schools represented in this work, partially because there may be a long distance between what public policy explicitly aims to achieve and what it accomplishes when it comes to improving complex and harsh circumstances – as those in which state school education in Brazil is immersed. Public policy plans, projects and goals should be valuable insofar they are able to promote effective positive changes in people's present lives and in their opportunities to lead valuable lives in the future. As the ethnography I present in the next chapters discloses, the picture brought forward by the schools' realities, and by the voices attached to them, shows how distant state action and public policy for education can be from improving the reality of people living under conditions of social, economic, political and cultural disadvantage in Brazilian urban cities.

Part II: The making of (un)freedom

Chapter Four – Vila Lanceiro

4.1. Introduction

That was a rainy and windy October in Porto Alegre. I woke up that Thursday morning with the wind knocking against my window. Outside the sky was still dark, the sound of an immense rainstorm rushing through. I had called Maria the day before, as she was supposed to take me for a walk around Vila Lanceiro. Maria's youngest daughter, seventeen-year-old Bianca, was a seventh-year student in the afternoon class at Mandacaru. Her other daughter, twenty-year-old Luísa, used to be a student there. She became pregnant earlier that year and had to drop-out school to take care of her daughter, who was born just a few weeks before I first met Maria.

 I had heard about Maria through the Mandacaru administrator, Rita, a very gentle person who had expressed that Maria would be the perfect person to properly introduce me to Vila Lanceiro. Rita described Maria as "someone who everybody thinks is hard to deal with," but who was, in fact, a "very loving person." It was not hard to sense a certain animosity toward Maria in Mandacaru. Maria did not take things lying down. She fights hard for what she considers to be right. On several occasions while speaking with me, Maria would define herself as a "hothead." As I got to know her, I realised that she had to learn very early in life that, given her circumstances – her position within the unequitable society in which she lives – being a hothead was the only way for her to get the basic things she needed. Otherwise, she would not have any voice nor would she be respected as a person and as a citizen. Consequently, she fights with school staff; with her daughters' teachers; with the doctor from the neighbourhood's state medical practice who refuses to provide her daughter Bianca with a recommendation to take a medical test that would allow her to participate in a social project that teaches things related to job market entry.

That day in October, still at home, I waited for the rain to stop. I thought that, since our meeting and my visit to the Vila would probably be ruined by the rain, I had no reason to rush. I imagined that, as usual, the students with whom I was supposed to speak that morning before seeing Maria would not go to school. It was very common to have a reduced number of students in school during rainy days. I got to Mandacaru around 8:40am – the morning classes usually start at 7:40am. The school was oddly calm, almost silent. The sky was cloudy, but the rain had stopped. I went straight to the administrator's office to talk to Rita about whether I should suggest to Maria that we postpone our

walk in Vila Lanceiro. The day before, on the phone, Maria asked me to call her once I got to Mandacaru. She would meet me there.

Maria had awaited my first call for several days. She even asked Rita when I was going to call, if ever. Maria enquired with Rita whether the reason for my hesitation was fear. Partially, yes, it was fear. Vila Lanceiro is famous for stirring fear in those from outside – not to mention people from the Vila as well, as my conversations with the students revealed to me. Not more than five days before I first met Maria, two Vila residents – two teenage boys – had been killed by men from the gang rival to the one in the Vila. "They were good boys." "They were not *envolvidos*."[74] "They had no connections with anything bad." I had heard from different people – mostly, students and teachers – that the assassinated boys where "good boys" who "didn't deserve to die." I wondered who did, and who does.

At this point, I have argued that the Brazilian state is oriented toward producing freedoms to some by oppressing, or restricting, the freedoms of others. I have said that state schooling has been used for that end since the beginning of the country's colonial history. This has strongly contributed to the contemporary structure of Brazilian society, characterised by deep, structural inequalities based on class, gender and race. I have defined freedom as opportunities to be, to do and hence, to become valuable beings in life. I have also defined state power in terms of a necropolitics that determines which lives are worthy and which should be neglected. In this chapter, I begin to present the ethnography that empirically founds this work by discussing some features of life in Vila Lanceiro, the community that serves as the base for this thesis' account. I show how Vila Lanceiro residents are excluded from basic freedoms, including reliable health care and urban infrastructure, irrespective of being near a wealthy area of the city.

4.2.   On favelas, Vilas and urban poverty

Favelas represent the urban materialization of long-lasting structural conditions of poverty and social – and economic, political and cultural – segregation. They are the representation of urban marginalization and, as a result, have been the subject of extensive research.[75] Favelas, at least in the

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[74]The word, 'envolvido*(s)*' means "involved." Within the context of drug trafficking, 'envolvido(s)' often appears to indicate involvement with drug gangs. Thus, to say that "they were not envolvidos*"*, is to say that the boys did not participate in local gangs' illicit activities.

[75] At this point, it may be worth to clarify that my use of the word, marginality and its variations, unless I explicitly say otherwise, is not attached to old uses of the word that connect poverty to the innate presence of

origins of the term, started as informal urban settlements built by the Black residents in the city of Rio de Janeiro following abolition (Alves & Evanson, 2011). Excluded from urban and civil opportunities, treated as a cheap labour force, and surviving in the margins of the society of their time, former slaves were given no option apart from occupying the peripheries of the city (Fernandes, 1964[2008]). Favelas proliferated cities throughout Brazil, excluded from basic urban infrastructure and services; and yet, became an intrinsically crucial part of the cities, supplier of the cheap labour force that metropolises, and thus, the higher classes, needed to progress under a capitalist economy (Perlman, 1976; DaMatta, 1995).

Alves and Evanson (2011) characterise Rio's favelas as contemporary *senzalas*,[76] where the target, instead of the enslaved, is the drug trafficker; a logic perpetuated by the state and its agents, as all favela residents are seen and treated by state police as criminal accomplices (Friedman, 2008). Favelas are a geography, a space, and an object of social tension, as their existence in major cities implies a forced coexistence between the city and its legacies. Often, the imaginary evoked in reference to favelas and urban peripheries[77] relates to urban violence, to Military Police occupation – vehicles with cops armed with big rifles everywhere, constant shootings and indiscriminate police killings, to major media coverage, and to the fear such conditions cause to the general public (Silva, 2008). Favelas and their residents exist as collateral damage for the state and for the social groups who are privileged enough to live outside of city's outskirts. Consequently, favelas exist as settings of resistance (Holston, 2008) – of cultural, social and, perhaps most strongly, political resistance.

Vila Lanceiro is no different: it is a place of existence and resistance within a strongly segregated city. When I first moved to Porto Alegre in March of 2012, I asked myself for months where all the Black people were. At that time, I was living in a middle-class neighbourhood, sharing an apartment close

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deviant and criminal behaviour or to any other intrinsically prejudiced and pejorative meaning – for explanation on older uses of the term marginality, see Perlman (1976). I use marginality as a summary of the general conditions of urban poverty, such as social exclusion, socioeconomic vulnerability, and diminished political voice. For discussions on favela(s) see, for instance, instance Zaluar and Alvito (1999), Birman, Leite, Machado and Carneiro (2015), Fisher, McCann and Auyero (2014).

[76] *Senzala* denominates big and insalubrious sheds where enslaved people were obliged to sleep, often chained, after a long day of work during the Brazilian colonial and imperial times.

[77] My use of the word, periphery refers not only to "designating settlements of people beyond the city's parameters of urbanised services and infrastructure" but also to "relations of mutual dependence – to social productions of space – in which component parts define each other through apparatuses of domination and response" (Holston, 2008, p. 147). Therefore, periphery here refers to socioeconomically disadvantaged urban spatialities within the city, as well as beyond the city, although still connected within a context of segregation and dependency.

to my university with three other students. As a woman living in a strange city, I would never go very far from the neighbourhood where I was living, which meant that I would frequent mostly middle-class areas. One of the first things I noticed was how white the city was. It took me a year and a half to figure out that the Black people were confined to the peripheries of the city, in what are called 'Vila(s)'. Vila(s) is the term for shantytown(s) in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Urban poverty and marginalisation assume different forms and names in different Latin American cities and, although all share some similarities, they are also dissimilar in many ways. They should not be seen or approached as if they are all the same (Auyero, 2011c).

Indeed, perhaps the word, 'Vila' provides a better account of the sense of community over which shantytowns are built, without all of the assumptions attached to the word 'favela', which is associated with the slums of Rio de Janeiro. Vilas, for instance, may not be comparable to contemporary senzalas. While Black people represent only about 20% of the city's total population, they are the majority of Vilas' dwellers. Nonetheless, poverty within Vilas also carries white, European features.[78] Brazil's southern region was settled by mainly white, European immigrants who came to Brazil in the late 19th century to substitute the enslaved, Black work force in the fields – and, as I have already mentioned, also as a means to whiten the Brazilian population (Pitanga, 1999; Hasenbalg, 1999; Schwarcz, 2012). Apart from that, the story is standard: former slaves became the cheapest low-skilled labour force and were pushed to the periphery of major cities, which also received poor, white, former field workers (Monteiro, 2004). Vila Lanceiro, as other Vilas around Porto Alegre, was formed under these conditions and, as a product of already unequal circumstances, learned how to build itself by its own means.

4.3. Who lives, who dies

After I called her, Maria took less than twenty minutes to reach Mandacaru. She arrived with a big smile on her face, accompanied by her daughter, Bianca, and by a little white girl who was dressed in pink. Right after we left the school in the direction of Vila Lanceiro, Maria told me that, although she had been expecting me to call, she would not have been able to meet me before anyways. In the

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[78] Which does not change the fact that Black poor families occupy an especially vulnerable position when compared to white poor families: Black residents tend to be poorest, to possess less years of formal education and to thus occupy worse positions in the job market, and to be more vulnerable to early death. In 2012, 70% of males aged fifteen to twenty-nine years old who were assassinated in the city were Black, according to data from the Porto Alegre Municipality database. Retrieved from: http://portoalegreemanalise.procempa.com.br/?regiao=1_11_233

previous week, she had lost a nephew hit by a bus, and her granddaughter had just left the hospital. The baby had a navel infection and had to be hospitalised for a few days. "If I was there, I would never have allowed them to discharge the girl with her navel as it was", she said. "But as it wasn't me, it was my daughter, they think they can do whatever they want", Maria concluded. By 'they,' she meant the doctors who had discharged her granddaughter from the hospital after her birth. Maria also told me that her nephew had had a mental condition that made him aggressive. He was taken to the hospital after a bus accident and got an infection. "Even so, they [the doctors] sent him home, burning with fever." He died at home, after two days of high fever.

Maria is a Black woman in her forties. When I met her, she was married to Nelson, the father of both of her daughters. Nelson was a middle-aged white man, with a deep facial expression, profoundly marked by age and time. He worked informally as a bricklayer. I never got the chance to engage in a deep conversation with him. The times I visited Maria, he was either working elsewhere or doing some work around the house. Nelson's work was the family's main source of income. The last time I went to see Maria, Nelson was unwell. His legs were swollen, and he complained about having trouble urinating. He had already seen a doctor from the local state general practice and was waiting for some test results. When I asked him about the possibility of going to a hospital – his case seemed very serious to me – Nelson replied that it was complicated. According to him, state hospitals were always full and would often send people home without offering any treatment. Because of that, he preferred to wait for an appointment with the general practice. We talked for some time that day. He told me stories about how he had travelled around Brazil when he was younger, working as a truck driver. I never got to ask him how he ended up living in Vila Lanceiro with his family, under such severe conditions. He died two weeks later, a few days after Christmas in 2018.

Lack of access to basic public services is one of the many conditions of urban poverty (World Bank, 2003; Lomeli, 2013). I understand poverty as something close to Sen's (1981, 1992, 2000) formulation, for whom poverty goes far beyond monetary deprivation. Sen (1981, 1992, 2000) sees poverty as a condition that is multidimensional in causes and consequences. He conceptualises it in terms of deprivation of basic substantive freedoms, that is, of means to live the type of life a person "has reason to value" (Sen, 2000, p. 87). In this understanding, poverty "is not a matter of low well-being, but of the inability to pursue well-being precisely because of the lack of economic means" (Sen, 1992, p. 110). Although, not only economic means. As Unterhalter (2009, 2012, 2015) discusses, poverty can relate significantly to the lack of political means to achieve freedoms, which encompasses

gender and racial dynamics, especially to what concern racist, patriarchal and socially-stratified societies in which some groups experience reduced opportunities to freedom exceptionally because of exploitative and subjugating power dynamics. If, as Sen (1992) affirms, economic means can never be assessed separately from one's real opportunities to convert income into a means to achieve freedoms, neither economic means to freedom nor opportunities to convert income into freedoms can be accessed apart from the political means, and thus, from the power dynamics that determine people's opportunities to income, welfare, freedom and agency in the first place.

As for poor populations from the Global South, much of the minimum levels of freedoms and welfare they can aspire to enjoy are dependent on state-provided services, such as education and health (DaMatta, 1995). Even Sen (1979, 1992, 2000) recognises freedoms such as "the ability to meet one's nutritional requirements" and "to be clothed and sheltered" (Sen, 1979, p. 218), as well as the ability to escape preventable death, as freedoms that every human being should have the power to enjoy.

It does sound obvious to affirm that no one should be dying from avoidable causes – that the first fundamental freedom a human being should to be entitled to enjoy is her biological life. Notwithstanding, in Brazil, as in many postcolonial countries from the Global South, the truism of such a statement tends not to be valid for everyone. In Brazil, the Democratic Constitution of 1988 (BRASIL, 1988), institutes the provision of health services as a duty of the state and a universal right extended to all citizens. The establishment of the *Sistema Único de Saúde*[79] (SUS) created, at least at the legal level, a universal social protection system materialised in a comprehensive net of services and in a set of norms whose main objective was "to protect the population against sanitary grievance and to guarantee the protection for all citizens"[80] (Campos, 2006, p. 29). SUS was built upon the principles of universality and equality of access, and should offer integral health assistance covering all levels of health care (BRASIL, 2000). This implies that all citizens, regardless of any personal, cultural or socioeconomic characteristic, should be entitled to the same level of opportunities when accessing this system, which should offer health treatments for free.

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[79] Translated as, Unified Health System.
[80] Translated from Portuguese: "[...] [SUS é] [u]ma rede de serviços e um conjunto de normas destinados não apenas aos pobres, mas ao conjunto da sociedade, já que objetivava protegê-la de agravos sanitários e garantir fatores de proteção a todos os cidadãos objetivava protegê-la de agravos sanitários e garantir fatores de proteção a todos os cidadãos."

In practice, the provision of healthcare through SUS is characterised by several problems (see, for instance, Cabral (2010, September 30), Albuquerque and Souza (2017), Milz (2018, September 13) and *Conselho Federal de Medicina* (2018, July 26)): lack of resources at all levels, from those related to basic healthcare like medicines to complex medical equipment; insufficient supplies, which takes form in overcrowded state medical facilities, long waiting periods for accessing all types of care, but mainly, for those associated to more complex long term treatments; and corruption, clientelism and patronage. It would be unfair to state definitively that SUS does not work. It does, but only for those who are able to access and to navigate through the lack of resources, and the corruption and clientelism that permeate its structure.

Diminished access to health services is obviously a critical problem, particularly when it comes to individuals living under conditions of urban poverty – or poverty of any kind. The relationship between health and poverty flows both ways. Urban poverty is associated with low environmental and infrastructural conditions, which generally render poor urban environments vastly unhealthy (Auyero & Swistun, 2009). Individuals living in poverty, and hence under the multidimensional deprivations it causes, are more prone to becoming sick, while their health conditions are more likely to be determinant to the type of life they may be able to live (Auyero, 2011b; 2012).[81] In other words, if on the one hand poverty conditions imply high levels of illness for those trapped in it, on the other hand, high levels of illness have the potential to keep people trapped in poverty trajectories (Wagstaff, 2002; Siqueira-Batista, & Schramm, 2005; World Bank, 2005).

As with education, health conditions produce intergenerational effects. Indeed, poverty, healthcare and education are connected in many ways. The low educational level characteristic of poor regions may imply, for instance, an absence of underpriviledged individuals' knowledge regarding how to prevent diseases or how to pursue health treatments (Lavy, Strauss, Thomas, & De Vreyer, 1996; Case, 2006). Being healthy also impacts individuals' opportunities to being adequately educated, especially for children. Whether the consequences of poverty and deprivation for adults are extensive, for children they can be devastating, producing life-long effects (Sen, 1999; Ballet, Biggeri, & Comim, 2011). It is during childhood that individuals' cognitive and noncognitive abilities are

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[81] Even when it is considered only the level of resources, a person's health conditions have a direct effect over her possibilities to work and thus, to earn income (World Bank, 2005). In Nelson's case, for instance, he was not able to work during the period of this sickness. This drastically reduced the family's already low income and made them completely dependent on the state assistance via Bolsa Família, which was far from being enough for the entire family.

developed. Whilst the former refers to intelligence level prone to be measured through the Intelligence Quotient,[82] the latter regards to socioemotional characteristics; meaning, personality traits, as self-esteem, motivation and risk aversion, which are as relevant for individuals' socioeconomic success as cognitive skills (Cunha & Heckman, 2009).[83] Growing up in deprived environments, lacking access to basic levels of healthcare and sanitary conditions, to appropriate food intake and shelter, exposure to unsafe, stressful and/or violent circumstances, among other distressing conditions, necessarily cause cognitive and socioemotional deficits, biologically materialised in the underdevelopment of individuals' brains and bodies (Heckman, 2008). Reduced cognitive and socioemotional skills imply a diminished capacity to learn – and hence, to think critically, to succeed in formal education and to achieve a good position within the job market – to become self-aware as a person and a citizen, to avoid risky behaviours such as teenage pregnancy or the disposition to join criminal gangs, among many other deteriorating consequences (Cunha & Heckman, 2008).[84]

The reduced capacity to fully function as a citizen that comes with lower educational levels may further be revealed in diminished conditions to make demands from governments, local authorities and even, from healthcare public servants, the fulfilment of the constitutional right to quality state healthcare. In other words, lower educational levels may represent a strong barrier to accessing healthcare. This is particularly relevant in the context of Brazil's SUS. Increasingly, the most viable manner to guarantee access to the system is by suing the state for medical treatment (Ventura, Simas, Pepe, & Schramm, 2010; Catanheide, Lisboa, & Souza, 2016; Collucci, 2019), an action that is far from palpable for poor families (Holston, 2008).

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[82] Intelligence Quotient (IQ) expresses an individual's level of cognitive skills when compared to the expected level for the individual's age. It relates to people's ability to learn school subjects, such as languages, mathematics and science (Brunello & Schlotter, 2011). Cognitive processes include "learning, memory and attention" (Souza, Fernandes, & Carmo, 2011).

[83] By socioeconomic success, Cunha and Heckman (2009) refer to job market and income-related achievements, as opportunities to acquire quality formal education or to make the most of the educational opportunities available, and thus, to find a higher-income job. Also, to skills related to individuals' social life.

[84] Of course, impaired health conditions can also refer to the presence of physical or mental disabilities, permanent or not. In this case, the relationship among depriving conditions, access to healthcare, and opportunity to acquire education can be even more complex. A person who lives with a disability may demand an extensive level of health attention – and of educational attention – which may not be available due to the problems encountered in both SUS and in state educational systems in Brazil. Such circumstances imply in an even greater social disadvantage and, consequently, restriction to freedoms – considering that disabilities are per se a restriction to freedoms (Nussbaum, 2006b).

Thus, whilst poor families are largely excluded from healthcare, they are also more likely to need it; and the Brazilian state deliberately fails to deliver state health services to the poorest, which makes populations vulnerable to the effects of illness – including intergenerational poverty – and hence, to death from avoidable causes. More than 200,000 people die every year in Brazil due to either lack of access to SUS or low-quality health (Kruk, Gage, Joseph, Danaei, García-Saisó, & Salomon, 2018).[85] Who are those that are dying? People like Nelson, like Nelson's granddaughter, like his nephew. This reveals a fundamental source of unfreedoms that affects people's lives in many different levels, from the freedom "to live to the end of a human life of a normal length" (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 78) and to live without suffering and with dignity, to the freedom to acquire adequate education and to become a person able "to participate effectively in the political choices that govern one's life" (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 78) – to directly quote Nussbaum (2000, 2011). More broadly, it sheds light on the necropolitical treatment (Mbembe, 2003) of the state upon peripheral populations: the direct control over who may be entitled to live and who may not.

4.4.   On rivers and waterfalls

Given the structural heterogeneity of urban poverty, it is common for the level of socioeconomic vulnerability to vary among families residing in the same community (Duhau, 2014), which is the case in Vila Lanceiro[86]. Part of the Vila is minimally urbanised, comprising of services such as bus lines, a few small commercial stores, and legal access to electric power and piped water (Figure 1). It, nonetheless, represents a minor part of the Vila, which is strongly characterised by a generalised lack of basic urban infrastructure.

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[85] According to Kruk et. al. (2018), in 2016 204,136 people died in Brazil due to either poor quality health care or lack of access to health care. Data retrieved from: https://www.hqsscommission.org/countryprofiles/

[86] As DaMatta (1995) contends, urban poverty is heterogeneous to the level that categories as 'poor' and 'rich' "cannot be translated into absolute states, materialized in actual, compartmentalized, and mutually exclusive social groups" (p. 25). The peripheral urban space is such that it could be better characterised by different levels of poverty within the same geographic space. Thus, in this thesis, my use of the category 'urban poor', and of its variations, does not carry a sense of homogenising urban poverty. Rather, by 'urban poor', 'urban poverty', or even 'the poor', I aim to encompass the set of multidimensional and heterogeneous conditions that characterise poverty across urban geographies in the Latin America - and in the Global South - in general, and in Brazil in particular.

Figure 1: Vila Lanceiro urbanised street (photo taken by the author)

Back on October 19th, Maria, the girls and I walked downhill to the lower side of the Vila and then, uphill, back to Mandacaru. Along our journey, we walked down narrow, bumpy streets, covered in a thin layer of something that a long time before would have been asphalt. Due to the rain, many manholes had overflowed and a light grey water, a mixture of water from the rain and sewage, was rushing down the streets like waterfalls. In some streets, the noise produced by the water was so strong that sounded like river rapids. All that water was just the combined result of heavy rain and the state neglect materialized in poor infrastructural conditions. By state neglect, I mean the

historical lack of the state's – under its general political form of federal, state and municipal governments – concern with the real-life circumstances of populations living under conditions of urban poverty in Brazil. That is, the systematic absence of the state's interest in effectively solving the issues that surround urban poverty, such as poor communities' infrastructural conditions, which generates an enduring status of negligence upon poor urban regions.

That day, we walked directed by the water, sometimes in the middle of the street, sometimes on sidewalks. A few months later, on a sunny December morning, I went back to formally interview Maria at her house, where she used to live with both of her daughters, her granddaughter and her husband. My fieldnotes from that day illustrate well the situation I found:

> Maria and I left the school and walked in the direction of Maria's house, passing through the *boca de fumo*[87] by Mandacaru. Maria was carrying her granddaughter in her arms. We walked downhill through the alleys. Along the way, lots of flies, dogs' faeces, sewage running all around. The alleys we went through were not paved, the floor was made of clay. We got to a regular street, walked a few meters down and turned at another alley. There we found improvised stairs, made of clay inside old car tires. The stairs went down right beside a river – or something that looked like a river – of sewage. It was not exactly shocking, since sewage runs free all over the Vila. However, this alley was particularly dirty, with lots of trash in the way, even more than it could normally be founded in other alleys. We went down those stairs and passed over a small improvised bridge, made of wooden planks, over the sewage river, which, from down there looked more like a sewage waterfall. It was actually an insane volume of sewage running fast and strong. Her house was a little further, but, to get to it, we had to pass over another improvised bridge across the sewage. At the end of that bridge was her house's gate. She lives right in front of the river of sewage, precisely at its margins. The strength of the water coming down in the river due to the heavy rain that fell in the beginning of the month had knocked over the wall of bricks that separated the house's yard from the river. Maria and her husband had to rebuild it with their own hands. In her house, it was shocking. The smell of sewage was very strong. Too strong. It was everywhere inside her house. I felt my nose and my throat burning the entire time I was there, and even hours after I left. At some point, during the interview, I started to sneeze, my head started to hurt.

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[87] *Boca de fumo* is how drug selling points are called in Rio de Janeiro.

By the end of the interview, I felt like I was sick. I had a strong migraine and felt a little nauseous. I stayed there for a little more than two hours. (Fieldnotes, 11 December 2017)

Figure 2: Vila non-urbanised area (photo taken by the author)

"Maria, when it rains, does the...", I hesitated. The level of environmental risk in which Maria and her family – as well as most of Vila Lanceiro's population – face due to daily exposure to an extremely polluted and unhealthy physical environment is indecent, absurd. During our conversation, I did not know which word I should use to define that river of sewage passing wildly in front of Maria's house. I thought about *valão*, which in English would be something like 'big sewage ditch'[88]. That was what Maria called it, regardless of the word's negative tone. "The valão? No. It has only overflood once", she said, covering my silence.

Maria's house is made of wooden planks and brick. It is a very modest house. The living room is divided by a curtain so that her older daughter can have a room of her own to live with the baby. "I bought this house from my sister. It used to be only two little rooms that could only fit a bed, a stove", Maria told me, right before saying that her and her husband had worked hard to turn the house into what it is today. "What I really wanted was a bedroom for the girls, a bedroom of my own, a living room, a kitchen, these things that every woman wants", Maria continued. "And I wanted a big backyard. My backyard is not very big. But it's fine", Maria told me, mixing aspirations and affirmations.

Far from being exclusive to Maria, her living conditions define much of what can be found in Vila Lanceiro. It defines, for instance, the circumstances of Márcia, a cousin of Maria. In 2017, Márcia was a student at Mandacaru. She was also the mother of Fernando, one of the students who participated in the research. I interviewed Márcia on a sunny morning in January of 2018 at her mother's house, which is located in an alley very close to Mandacaru. It is also a very modest house, made of wooden planks, no more than 3 rooms. From inside the house, it was possible to see the outside through the spaces between the planks that form the walls. The same was true for the floor: one could see the clay under the wood. Inside the house, there were bugs, flies and a strong smell, which I assumed came from the old wood. Márcia's house, where she lives with her two children, has a similar construction. It is located right beside her mother's, on the same ground, but a little further down.

Márcia has lived in Vila Lanceiro since she was born. When I asked her if she thought that the life conditions in the Vila had improved over time, she said "just a little." "Because the sewers are still

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[88] This is the term I have always used to define the polluted river that runs half a block from my parents' house in Mesquita in suburban Rio de Janeiro. We call it 'valão' because it is exactly what it is: it is river where sewage coming from all the houses in the neighbourhood – and from other neighbourhoods – runs free alongside with all sorts of domestic waste.

open. *They* don't come to make the right plumbing for people. When it rains, it floods everywhere," she continued. "Even here?" I asked. "It floods, of course. The rain water runs freely. It's horrible," Márcia concluded. Vila Lanceiro is big and formed mostly of narrow alleys. The trash collection by the municipality is done only in the main streets, which can be far depending on where in the Vila a person lives. Alley residents are left with little options to discard their domestic waste, which either end up being put in the streets – and are often spread by streets dogs – or are just thrown along the alleys. "When I moved in here, there, where we passed over the little bridge, it used to be a quite large valão," Maria told me. "As people started to throw trash, lots of trash, not people from down here. People from down here burn the trash. But people from upstairs come and throw tree branches, couches," she continued. When the trash meets the rain, the absolute lack of urban infrastructure makes it difficult for the rain water to drain. Little rivers of sewage become big rivers of trash, alleys become waterfalls, and people's houses become swamps.

4.5.   Does anyone care?

Porto Alegre is a city whose HDI – Human Development Index – is one of the highest among Brazilian cities. The city is considered to have a very high level of human development, which should mean that its residents enjoy something close to a good life, under the CA terms.[89] Moreover, the upper-middle class neighbourhoods that surround Vila Lanceiro have HDIs that are among the 20 highest from a list composed of 11,994 neighbourhoods throughout the whole country.[90]   As I briefly mentioned in Chapter Two, the HDI is calculated based on three main indicators: one related to the population's health conditions, the second related to education, and the last to per capita income (UNDP, 2018). Thus, in the case of Porto Alegre, a very high HDI would indicate that people are generally leading a life in which, at least, they are enjoying good health, good levels of formal education, and high income. On the other hand, as it is common in urban peripheries of the Global South, most of Vila Lanceiro lacks everything, and it has lacked everything since it started being built: from legal access to land ownership, piped water, electric power and internet, to basic sanitation, transport and general urban infrastructure.

The Vila is crossed by a street that connects two different parts of the city. I remember in 2013, when I first started to work in one of the Vila's schools, I used to feel a little disturbed with the flow of

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[89] Using data for 2010, Porto Alegre was classified as the Brazilian city with the 28th highest HDI in the country, from a list of 5,565 cities. Information retrieved from: http://atlasbrasil.org.br/2013/pt/ranking/
[90] Information retrieved from: http://atlasbrasil.org.br/2013/pt/ranking

luxury vehicles going across that particular street. As with most of the streets in Vila Lanceiro, this one is bumpy and narrow. Drivers must often wait for the other cars to pass by, since on some of the stretches of the street, the narrowness only allows for the passage of one car at a time. There is no sidewalk space. Some houses and commercial facilities have their entrances right on the limit of the street, and it is very common for those who live in the area to leave their vehicles parked on that street. In addition to cars, this street is also busy with pedestrians, cyclists, dogs, trucks and motorcycles. It is a corridor that serves both Vila Lanceiro residents and drivers willing to take a shorter route from one part of the city to another.

For several months in 2017, while I was conducting fieldwork, the lower part of that street remained covered in sewage. Dirty water ran from the upper part of the Vila, passing in front of the houses and accumulating at the end of the slope. The sewage ran free for so long that, because of the deteriorated conditions of that part of the street, taxi drivers would refuse to use that route on our way to Mandacaru. Not even the fact that it was a street many people in their luxury cars would take as a shortcut to the other side of the city, nor the proximity to a state administrative building, drove the government to act. The fact that the only stretch of Vila Lanceiro where the city felt safe to circulate, at least during the day, could be flooded with sewage for months revealed the destitute state of sanitation conditions in the Vila more generally. It revealed not only for me, as someone who was able to go inside the Vila and see the circumstances with my own eyes, but for a bigger part of city for whom Vila Lanceiro is an unwelcome black box across which they had to drive with their expensive cars. The level of the state's disregard for Vila residents' living conditions and the normalisation of the degrading circumstances among which urban peripheral communities are pushed to live is such that no one seemed to care.

4.6.   Not equals

Living in such an unequal city, Maria had a clear sense of how she, as a Black woman from Vila Lanceiro, is seen and treated by society in general. "A lot of people show their prejudices when we say that we are from Vila Lanceiro. The Vila is big; there are parts that are more dangerous and parts that are less dangerous. At the part where I live, for example, there is no danger," she told me back in October 2017. "But people don't know that and think it's all the same, that everybody here is the same," she continued. "It is hard even to find a job living here. When we say that we are from Vila Lanceiro, people take our resumé, say 'thank you', and we never hear from them again. It has happened to me many times." This was one of the first things Maria told me during our first informal

conversation. She started working looking after local children after she lost her job. She used to work as a cleaning lady for a state general practice, employed by a company that provides the municipality with cleaning services. "It was nice," she said, "I liked the general practice. People there used to treat me very well, you know?!".

Maria's experience with prejudice was so present in her everyday life that she raised the subject repeatedly during our conversation in December 2017: "You go to a company that needs, let's say, fifty people to work. You say that you live in Vila Lanceiro. What they do is they take your resumé and rip it off, because they don't want people from Vila Lanceiro. They don't hire us. They say 'oh, Vila Lanceiro is too dangerous.' 'Vila Lanceiro is like this.' 'Vila Lanceiro is like that.' People have to see that Vila Lanceiro is big!" she told me emphatically.

Márcia – Maria's cousin – had, nonetheless, a different perspective: "I think that the prejudice comes when the person doesn't have much instruction. Then they… they have this kind of prejudice. But, if a Vila starts to be very, very, very, very badly spoken of, then, for sure they will have second thoughts about hiring people to work. But every time I went to look for a job and said I lived in Vila Lanceiro, like, I always got it. It's normal." Márcia, as Maria, was a Black woman, born and raised in Vila Lanceiro. When we spoke, Márcia was unemployed. She used to work as a cleaning lady at the City's administrative centre. However, for the last few years, she had dedicated herself to studying for her secondary school degree, frequently attending Mandacaru's morning classes. She dreamed about becoming a nurse. In 2017, when she was attending the second of the three years that comprise secondary school in Brazil, Márcia was the oldest person in her class, thirty-five years old. Maria, on the other hand, was a fifty-year-old illiterate Black woman – which possibly had a lot to do with the different manner in which they were treated in the job markets when competing for the same low-skilled jobs.

Vila Lanceiro was indeed "very, very, very, very badly spoken of." The Vila drug gang was famous for being extremely violent and cruel. In addition to the stories about people being shot and killed, about women having their heads shaved, which students used to tell me daily, banally, sometimes between laughs, I was routinely told to not enter into the Vila by myself.[91] I also had to live, during fieldwork, with taxi drivers refusing to take me to Mandacaru through the Vila. One morning, already exhausted from the constant refusals of different drivers, I had a serious argument with a driver who refused to

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[91] I approach the matter of violence in the Vila, and the complexities that surround it, in Chapter Eight.

cross the Vila from one part to another. Crossing the Vila was the shortest route from my place to both schools. I demanded to the driver – very rudely, at that point, I admit – to do as I told, and he said no. We travelled the next ten minutes in absolute silence. When he stopped by Mandacaru to drop me off, he pointed to a street right beside the school: "Do you see that street over there? I lost a friend, two days ago. He was working. He was a taxi driver too. He was robbed and assassinated. They shot him and left him dead inside the car there, right on the corner. I'm sorry, but I don't cross Vila Lanceiro at any time during the day or night, period. I hope you understand." I could. Of course, I could. Nonetheless, on any given morning, Vila Lanceiro's streets were full of workers going to their jobs in the city and of children going to school. No drug dealers, no guns, just people doing their best to exist in a city that continuously maligns them.

Chapter Five – Managing Poverty

5.1. Introduction

18 April 2017, 12:45pm. A teacher was kidnapped inside Parodia School. "It was a former student who took her", the school principal Cátia affirmed. Everyone in the school was confused, terrified. No one could tell what really happened. "She was taken from inside the school. She had just arrived for the afternoon classes", Cátia said, advising me to be careful on my way coming to and going from school. The teacher had arrived, parked her car on the street and, after passing by the school gate, was surprised by a man holding a gun. He had been sitting on one of the concrete benches in the big, wooded schoolyard. As it was common to have a few parents there during Parodia's students entrance time, no one suspected that that man could do anyone harm. The man forced the teacher back into her car, along with another man, who waited for him outside the school. They threatened to kill the teacher if she refused to give them all the money she had in her bank account. Unsurprisingly, the teacher's bank account was empty – back then, teachers received their already low monthly wages in instalments and not having money, or having to take bank loans to pay monthly bills, was an everyday topic of conversation in the teachers' room in both schools. The men drove all around the city and threatened the teacher the whole afternoon. She was released later that day in another Vila, far from the school, and did not come back to school during that year.

Whereas Mandacaru, located inside Vila Lanceiro, is surrounded by high walls, has grids all over doors and windows, and has security guards controlling the entrance, Parodia is encircled by an old fence. "You can see how big our school is. Parodia has more than 7,000 square meters. We have been asking for a wall for more than ten years now, and we haven't been able to get it. They don't give us the money to build it, the Secretary of Education Office (SEO). And the school doesn't have the necessary budget to build it on its own", Cátia told me, expressing strong frustration. From March to October 2017, Parodia School was broken into and robbed seven times. The seventh time, the robbers removed the bars from the teachers' room windows and took the only three computers teachers had to manage and prepare activities for students.

Although Parodia receives students from Vila Lanceiro, it is not located inside the Vila, but in an upper-middle-class neighbourhood, within walking distance of Lanceiro. Muggings are so common around Parodia that students and teachers always try to come and go from school in groups, as

solitary latecomers are often a target. "Muggings are too frequent there, at Parodia. Once they [the robbers] left a kid only in his underwear. They took everything the *guri*[92] had, even his clothes. They left the *guri* in his underwear and sent him back to the Vila [Lanceiro]. I don't know why they [the robbers] would do that. Leave the kid naked. It is too much already" – Márcia, Maria's cousin once told me, laughing. Márcia said that even though she was not satisfied with Mandacaru, she would not want Fernando, her son, or herself to study at Parodia, as she found it too dangerous. Ironically, Márcia lives less than 100 meters from a drug selling point. Perhaps even more ironically, Parodia has a military policeman – who allegedly never saw any of the robberies – living on school grounds. "He just lives here. Earns housing, food, and a telephone for free and does nothing", Berenice, a teacher at Parodia told me about the resident policeman. "He could at least take care of the gate, come here sometimes and see how things are. But not even that", she concluded.

Cátia, on the other hand, is a fifty-nine-year-old white woman who had worked at Parodia for long enough – more than twenty years all together – to know that she could not wait for the SEO to send the money the school needed to get the damaged grids fixed. She also knew that Parodia had no funds to complete the repairs and that the school would be even more vulnerable to new break-ins as the windows were left without grids. Cátia thus decided to pay for the repairs with her own salary. "What else could I do? We needed the grids, I couldn't wait".

In chapter two, I demonstrated some of the aspects that portray the life in Vila Lanceiro. I showed how the Vila residents are excluded from basic levels of health care, sanitation, safe environmental conditions and dignified housing. All of these vulnerabilities shape their diminished educational achievement, limited access to job markets, propensity to intergenerational poverty and to avoidable premature deaths, and their low political control over their environment. All can be seen as basic freedoms (Nussbaum, 2000, 2011; Biggeri & Mehrotra, 2011). In this chapter, I discuss the extent to which the state's management of the conditions that characterise urban poverty is a determining factor for the existence of poverty itself, and hence for the freedoms that urban peripheries' residents may be able to reach.

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[92] *Guri* is a regional word, used widely in Rio Grande do Sul state, and means boy or child. The female version of Guri is *Guria* (meaning girl).

5.2.   The never-ending wait

Democracy can be defined as "the extent to which members of the population under a government's jurisdiction maintain broad and equal relations with governmental agents, exercise collective control over governmental personnel and resources, and enjoy protection from arbitrary action by governmental agents" (Tilly, 2003, p. 41). Under these terms, in approaching people's freedoms – or power to live a good life – it becomes intrinsically important to acknowledge the relationships between national states and its members (Auyero, 2011b). Foucault's (1995, 1988) account of power, which I briefly discussed in Chapters One and Three, represented an important step toward understanding the mechanisms through which the state may endeavour to produce docile populations. That is, populations whose bodies and minds are disciplined and shaped in consonance with the interests of the sovereign state.

Bourdieu (2000) suggests that one of the means by which national states may exert sovereign power over its people is through the careful management of people's time. Following this line, Auyero (2011a, 2011b, 2012) presents ethnographic evidence of what he calls the 'Patient Model'. Departing mainly from poor people's waiting experiences in welfare offices in Buenos Aires city, Auyero (2011a, 2011b, 2012) argues that the state uses a politics of waiting as a means to exercise sovereign power over underprivileged populations. He understands the state as both a subjective macro structure and an objective set of micro structures concretely materialised in its institutions. Drawing on Lipsky's (1980) concept of street-level bureaucrats[93], Auyero (2011b) understands that the state's concrete institutions, such as hospitals, schools and welfare offices, are the state structures with which people most directly interact. This is especially true for the case of individuals living under poverty conditions, who are more dependent on the services the state provides.

By ethnographically investigating these interactions and observing how the Argentinian state institutions recurrently make poor people wait to receive the services they need, Auyero (2011a, 2011b, 2012) concluded that the waiting imposed by the state creates a relation of domination between the state and poor individuals. Such a technique of the state power gives underprivileged individuals, who depend on state provided services, a form of knowledge that informs them that in order to receive welfare they must be compliant, obedient, docile and, mainly non-reactive (Auyero,

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[93] Lipsky (1980) defines street-level bureaucrats as state employees whose work involves dealing precisely with the public.

2011a, 2012). In doing so, instead of being treated as citizens, poor people become akin to 'patients of the state'.

Indeed, during my fieldwork, I was frequently confronted with other people's journeys in waiting. Students waited, and hoped, for several things: for the end of shootings and the drug gangs, for a better equipped school, for better living conditions, in extreme cases for a completely different life. Parents were always waiting for school teachers and administrators to solve all the schools' problems. Teachers and school staff lived in a permanent tension, waiting every month to see whether they were going to be paid, whether their working conditions were going to somehow be improved. School administration staff were permanently waiting for higher state provided revenue to attend to the schools' need for basic resources[94]. To say the least, almost half of Mandacaru's building was at imminent risk of collapsing.

"The school is completely abandoned. No one cares for us here", Ana, former vice-principal at Mandacaru told me in the day we first met. We sat in the principal's office, a small room in which half of the walls were made of a plastic partition wall. It fits only a working desk, three chairs and a small file cabinet. She – a white middle-aged women with dyed red hair, a nose ring and a tense expression – was telling me how the classes in which I aimed to conduct observations were difficult. When she looked deeply into my eyes with a somewhat angry expression and said: "we are completely alone here. We need all the help we can get". Although in a much less critical situation, Parodia school also had a small part of its building condemned and was waiting for funds to get it fixed.

Nelson – Maria's husband from last chapter – died waiting, too. The matter with the politics of keeping people waiting is not only that it has the potential to oppress poor populations through the production of knowledge, that is, conformity and compliance (Auyero, 2011a, 2011b, 2012). The politics of waiting happens in many different layers and accommodates different levels of state disregard of the circumstances within which underprivileged population are inserted (Auyero, 2012). From the perspective of the service recipients – in this case, parents, caregivers, students – the state body that makes them wait is embodied by teachers and school management staff. For school professionals, the SEO in particular, and governments in general, are the face of the state that

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[94] Auyero (2012) ethnographic account brings very similar circumstances to what concern to Argentinian peripheric state schools.

put them and their demands on hold. Thus, when it comes to schools, street-level state professionals are as well immersed in a constant wait.

5.3.   An externality approach to poverty

The waiting nonetheless reaches the lives of individuals living under urban poverty in ways that go far beyond the limits of the state schools, hospitals and welfare offices they frequent. Many of the characteristics of Vila Lanceiro that I described in Chapter Four are a result of years of the state's systematic abandonment to the lives of those living in the margins of Brazilian cities. I say systematic because the abandonment is not circumstantial but refers to a pattern established over numerous years. As for the particular case of Lanceiro, the land that now comprises the Vila was owned by a single family in the beginning of the twentieth century. After the death of the family's patriarch in the 1920s, the land was partitioned, and its pieces started to be sold at low prices to low income families, working class people coming either from other underprivileged areas of the city or from the fields to work in incipient urban industry (Porto Alegre, n.d.). There was no local infrastructure to serve the new potential residents, no potable water, electric energy, public transportation system, public sanitation, and so on. The major part of the Vila was occupied and built irregularly and informally.

Regardless of the constant rise in the population density of the neighbourhood, severe infrastructural problems persisted until the 1980s, when palliative, sporadic and dispersed state action reached the Vila under the same dysfunctional conditions characteristic of state action in peripheral areas. That is, through many political promises that in reality resulted in diminished effective action. Moreover, diversion of investments that intended to improve the region's urban conditions were never completed, resulting in many unfinished and abandoned state projects. Meanwhile, the growing population of the Vila experienced deteriorating public security conditions, due to increasing levels of criminal activities in the region.

The persistence of structural conditions of poverty within capitalist cities was once attributed to what became known as 'culture of poverty' (DaMatta, 1995). It referred to the alleged presence of some innate characteristics of poor individuals, as delinquency, "laziness, promiscuity, and moral degeneracy", which would be responsible to trap them into trajectories of intergenerational

poverty[95] (Fischer, 2014, p. 33). While the scholarship has substantively moved on, this idea remains strong in Brazilian society. On the one hand, the meritocratic discourse that perpetrates Brazilian society (Souza, 2018), tends to blame individuals for their own underpriviledged life circumstances. On the other hand, the state's institutional management of poverty tends to focus on containing poverty in a way that is not necessarily beneficial to people living in poverty, but that may benefit more privileged sectors of the population.

There are good reasons why any discussion of poverty should focus on the lives and the circumstances of those living under it. This is true in relation to both public policy and to more conceptual levels. Sen (1981, p. 10) argues that the causes and effects of poverty are "important issues to study on their own right". He states that poverty should not be approached based on how the privileged sectors of the population feel about it. Nor should poverty be addressed founded on the problems it implies to privileged groups. Thus, following Sen (1981), discussions of poverty should focus on the individuals living in poverty, on their real-life circumstances and on the extent to which such circumstances may affect the types of life they and their family are able to lead in the present, and may be able to live in the future.

Poverty should not, therefore, be addressed according to the way in which it represents a negative externality for the larger society, that is, for the dominant groups whose interests inform the state public policy. Externalities are defined in the economic literature as "the costs or benefits imposed on or enjoyed by an individual, institution, community, or whole society because of the actions of others" (Rogers, Castree, & Kitchin, 2013, n.a.). Whether it is understood that capitalism is exploitative in its nature – that it relies on the deepening of social and economic inequalities as a means to reproduce itself (Piketty, 2014; Marx, 1954) – it is possible to argue that, in relation to where poor populations stand, poverty and inequality are a negative externality of the capitalist system[96]. However, the application I give to the word externality comes from Rein (1971, p. 46), for whom "Externality is concerned with the social consequences of poverty for the rest of society rather than in terms of the needs of the poor".

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[95] Such perspective has its origins on Robert Park ecological approach to urban Marginality from 1920's and 1930's, as part of the Chicago School of urban sociology (Fisher, 2015; Silva & Marinho, 2014).
[96] Although perhaps not exclusive to capitalism.

In Chapters One and Three I argued that the Brazilian state, as a postcolonial state from the Global South, works toward fulfilling the interests of its dominant elites. In doing so, it privileges private interests, detrimentally deepening the structural inequalities that confine most of its population to lower standards of living (Holston, 2008). In this context, the existence of poverty becomes inherently necessary for the maintenance of the status quo that the postcolonial state sustains. The maintenance of the structural conditions that sustain the privileges enjoyed by the elites depends on, for instance, the sustained low formal educational success of underpriviledged populations, as it guarantees high supply of low-skilled cheap labour and upholds unequal networks of political power.

In relation to this complex scenario, the Brazilian state tend to approach – or rather manage – poverty through public policy in a way that, whether it is not intrinsically exploitative, is too often palliative and hence insufficient. One of the ways that poverty is administrated is through initiatives, superficially characterised like aid. Vila Lanceiro is full of such initiatives, like community nurseries that, although subsidised by the municipality, have enrolment conditional on the payment of monthly fees that are frequently an impediment to the poorest families. In addition, the reduced number of enrolment places for children is dramatically insufficient to attend to the demand of the whole Vila[97]. The Vila also relies on several social projects subsidised by the municipality that offer activities like capoeira classes, music and basic computer courses for children and teenagers for some of the hours in which children are not at school.

While the exposure to extracurricular activities favours the development of cognitive and socioemotional abilities mainly during childhood and adolescence[98], such projects do not seem to be focused on fostering children's abilities. Many of the students with whom I talked and who participated in such social projects were not even able to define what kind of classes they had. "I don't

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[97] The presence of state nurseries in any underprivileged community is particularly relevant to women's access to job markets and hence to income. This may imply strong effects on the incidence of poverty and extreme poverty among women, particularly among families in which women are the main income provider. The relevance of state nurseries in poor urban contexts is increased when it is considered that such regions are likely to be characterised by high levels of early pregnancy among teenagers (Duarte, Nascimento, & Akerman, 2006; Martinez et. al., 2011) and of mono-parental families that have in the mother – or in the figure of a woman, being she the mother, the grandmother, an aunt or a neighbour – the main income provider (Lavinas, 1996).

[98] Cunha and Heckman (2009) and Heckman (2008) studies in neuroscience show that individuals' level of cognitive skills stabilise around the age of ten, whereas the level of socioemotional skills stabilise around the age of twenty – meaning that, after those marks, a person's skills become increasingly less malleable. Therefore, childhood and adolescence are in general highly productive periods for the development of people's skills and abilities.

know, [pro]fessora[99]. It was class of something", the twelve-year-old Taís, a Black girl student from Mandacaru told me when I asked her which kind of class she used to do as part of one of those social projects. "They give us bus tickets. If you go in the morning, they give you breakfast on arrival and lunch before you leave. If you go on the afternoon, they give you lunch on the arrival and coffee before you leave", Bernardo, a fourteen-year-old Black student from Mandacaru explained to me about the project he used to participate in. When I asked whether he liked to participate in the social project's activities he answered, laughing: "Sure. With the bus tickets they give me I can go wherever I want".

If the intention of such projects was to aid children by fostering certain sets of abilities that would help them in their path to overcome their conditions of poverty, there would be a greater concern with the quality of the services, that is, the classes offered. As Gentilli (2003, p. 264) argues, whether it is believed that education has a role in promoting social change, public and social initiatives approaching underprivileged individuals' education may be relevant to the extent to which they may be "synonymous of social commitment and of fight toward the radical transformation of the practices that have historically condemn to misery and social exclusion millions of human beings"[100]. Conversely, these projects' principal aim is to avoid children prematurely engaging in criminal activities by keeping them confined in another institutional space, besides school, for additional hours per day. As the incidence of violent crime often surpasses the geographic limits of peripheral urban communities, it is indeed of interest to the state and the larger community to avoid poor children's early entrance in crime[101].

This is not to question whether it has a positive impact for poor children to be given food and shelter for a few hours per day, given the level of vulnerability with which most of them must deal in their homes. The point relates to the extent to which poor children's lives and time is being managed in such a way to give an appearance of providing care and education on the one hand, and to protect them from entering into organised crime on the other, whilst in practice offering no tools for those

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[99] 'Fessora' is an informal abbreviation of the word 'professora', which in English means teacher. This was how the students who participated in the research most commonly called and referred to their teachers, and often to me.

[100] Translated from portuguese: "Solidariedade é, na pedagogia da esperança, sinônimo de compromisso social e de luta pela transformação radical das práticas que historicamente condenaram à miséria e à exclusão social milhares de seres humanos."

[101] Rocha (2015) shows, for instance, how the operation of NGOs – Non-Governmental Organizations – and social projects in Rio favelas are, along with police institutions, part of the state apparatus to discipline and create docility among favela residents.

children to overcome their unfavourable conditions and to reach better lives in the future[102]. These projects are hence not about the children, but rather about managing people in such way to reduce the negative externality – in this particular case, rises in crime rates – produced by the conditions of deprivation in which these children must live. In the case of such social projects, it is almost like underprivileged children's time and lives are being managed so that they may become the socially accepted kind of poor person, the docile one who does not cause problems for the larger society and provides the job markets with cheap low-skilled work force.

This inclination of public policy to focus on reducing the costs of poverty over privileged sectors of the population, rather than on objectively improving the living conditions and opportunities to freedoms of individuals living in poverty, I would classify as the *Externality Approach to Poverty*. It says that the state manages poverty as if it was a negative externality, or a negative by-product of the dominant social order. As with the politics of waiting (Auyero, 2011a, 2011b, 2012), this technique of the state sovereign also aims to create docility and conformism among underprivileged populations. It does so by using a number of different apparatus ranging from palliative public policy to discipline minds and souls, to the punishment of underprivileged individuals' bodies.

An externality approach to poverty can be seen in four ways. First, by working through palliative policies that address only some components of inequality, poverty and hence of underprivileged people's unfreedoms. Second, by dissimulating the somehow necropolitical character of the state intervention, which classify peripheric bodies as inferior and hence not worthy of having a dignified existence within society. Third, by trying to produce docility among individuals living under poverty conditions. Forth, by attending to the maintenance of an unequitable status quo.

5.4.   Eradicating poverty?

The idea of an externality approach to poverty sheds light on the ways that poverty is maintained through its containment. Hartman (1997), for instance, shows how the very mechanisms of the law

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[102] Silva and Leite (2008) fairly criticise approaches to juvenile delinquency that treat the young poor as permanently at imminent risk of engaging in criminal activities – regardless of criminals being a minority within poor urban communities. Zaluar (2000, 2004, 2014), for instance, considers that the normalisation of a culture of violence in poor communities attached to young men's general aspiration for power and social status – subjectively materialized under an ethos of violence and bravery as posed by Norbert Elias (1994) – would be determinant for poor young men to engage in criminal activities within their communities.

that were socially built to humanise the enslaved people in the nineteenth-century United States (U.S.) served to oppress and conceal white-supremacy values that, until the present, inform the existence of Black populations in the U.S.. Very similarly, in reflecting on the extent to which the U.S. public policy is racialised, James (1996) asserts that there is a mode of discourse in place in U.S. society that rhetorically condemns white supremacy, whilst in practice it continually informs the institutional action of the state, that is, of the country's domestic and foreign policies[103]. She affirms that "Irrespective of the allegedly disappearing racist and racism in language, law and society, institutional dominance remains, while white supremacy and its attendants – genocide and fascism – are rendered social fictions" (James, 1996, p. 46). When white supremacy is rendered as something that was eradicated, it is no longer a problem that should be addressed by both society and governments. She concludes by saying that "Law itself is insufficient to bring about political change" (1996, p. 58). What James (1996) endeavours to imply is that discourse, rhetoric and even the law and the public policy that emerge from them, can help to conceal and to uphold the very issues they allegedly aim to overturn. The state's externality approach to poverty can work in a very similar way. It promotes sorts of public policy that allegedly aim to tackle poverty, but in practice sustain it, while putting forward a discourse that informs people in general that the state seeks to and is working toward the eradication of poverty.

An interesting example is the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program Bolsa Família (BF). CCTs are interventions largely used in Latin American countries that – allegedly – aim at "providing assistance to poor households in the short term while creating incentives for human capital investments in children to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty" (Brauw, Galligan, Hoddinott, & Roy, 2015, p. 303). As I briefly mentioned in Chapter Three, BF targets families whose per capita income positions them below the monetary lines of poverty and extreme poverty[104]. The program is today the largest CCT in place in the world, reaching more than thirteen million households in 2019, and

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[103] hooks (2003, p. 28), defines white supremacy as the "system of race-based biases" that informs the life within modern societies and that may encompass both white and "black people/people of colour who have a racist mindset, even though they may organize their thinking and act differently from racist whites". Very similarly to James (1996), hooks (2003) sees in denial of the extent to which we live in racialised societies largely informed by western white values the major challenge of the anti-racist fight.

[104] The monetary extreme poverty line and the poverty line considered for BF concession are BR$89 and BR$178 per person per month, respectively (that is, about US$23 and US$46, respectively). Data from the Brazilian Government *Ministério da Cidadania* – Ministry of Citizenship. Information retrieved from: http://mds.gov.br/acesso-a-informacao/perguntas-frequentes/bolsa-familia/beneficios/beneficiario

paying on average BR$188 (about US$48) to beneficiary families per month[105]. BF conditions the receipt of the monetary benefit to children's enrolment to school, in such way that beneficiary families' children aged between six and fifteen years old must keep a school attendance rate of at least 85%[106]. BF is also conditional to children's medical monitoring in local SUS general practices.

BF is considered to be successful in reducing the intensity of poverty in Brazil (Hoffman, 2008; Barros, Foguel, & Ulyssea 2007), although it substantially fails to take most of beneficiary families above the – already low – extreme poverty line (Bither-Terry, 2014; Souza, Osorio, Paiva, & Soares, 2019). Quantitative research has also pointed that BF positively impacts on school enrolment (Glewwe & Kassouf, 2012; Lomeli, 2013), especially in relation to girls' school attainment and progression (Brauw et. al., 2015). However, such results are contested, as other quantitative studies have pointed out that BF may reduce school enrolments for children aged between six and eighteen years old (Nilsson & Sjöberg, 2013).

The lack of consensus among quantitative research around the impacts of BF is far from surprising. BF provides families whose per capita income is below the poverty line with additional monetary income without promoting a change to recipient families' conversion factors. Here, at least one problem, of both political and conceptual nature, arises. When BF – and CCTs more generally – is considered under the CA's light, it appears to be intrinsically misdirected. First, because monetary poverty lines carry little information on the freedoms people are effectively able to enjoy, given the social, cultural and political circumstances in which they are immersed (Sen, 1981). While all BF beneficiaries are certainly subject to monetary poverty, there may be many families whose income positions them above the poverty line, but whose particular circumstances renders their income insufficient. Particular circumstances can refer to, for instance, whether the family lives in a rural or urban area, which affects the costs of living and hence the families' income needs.

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[105] According to data from the Brazilian Government *Ministério da Cidadania* – Ministry of Citizenship. Information retrieved from: https://aplicacoes.mds.gov.br/sagi/RIv3/geral/index.php?relatorio=153&file=entrada#

[106] Teenagers aged between sixteen and seventeen years old and whose family's per capita income positions them below the poverty line are entitled to receive a complementary benefit called *Benefício Jovem Variável* – something as Variable Benefit to the Young – as long as they keep a school attendance rate of at least 75%. Information retrieved from: http://mds.gov.br/acesso-a-informacao/perguntas-frequentes/bolsa-familia/beneficios/beneficiario

Second, because the extent to which the extra monetary income may be converted into effective life opportunities depends heavily on the means available for the family to turn the slightly higher income into freedoms, even if basic ones. For instance, if the family is a beneficiary of BF but does not have access to food markets – or even information regarding healthy eating – it is possible that the additional income may not be converted into better nutritional standards for the family. This may still leave them to suffer from malnutrition, regardless of whether the BF benefit had taken them out of starvation or off the extreme poverty line. When malnutrition persists, children from the recipient family may still incur serious learning problems and may not take greater advantage from the obligation to attend school imposed by BF rules[107].

This is not to deny that the extra monetary income makes some difference in people's lives, especially for those living under the extreme poverty line. My analysis here is, of course, from a qualitative and conceptual nature, and possibly expresses my pessimism with quantitative impact studies that utilise monetary measures for poverty or even on quantitative measures for educational achievement; under the perspective I assume here, they carry very little information on people's effective conditions. Yet, even when it comes only to the conditions imposed by BF to is beneficiaries, it happens that the program attaches the benefice to children's attendance to wrecked schools – as I show in Chapter Seven – and to a state health system that, as I argued in Chapter Four, tends to be highly dysfunctional in its treatment of underprivileged populations.

Thus, while BF – and CCT programs in general – fails to effectively take people out of multidimensional conditions of poverty, it comes attached to a discourse that informs all segments of the population that the state is tackling poverty, that poor people are now living better lives all over Latin American countries because of the national states' CCT programs[108]. This discourse is clear in documents of neoliberal and highly worldwide influential institutions as the World Bank, which celebrates CCTs as powerful anti-poverty devices – see, for instance, Fiszbein et. al. (2009). The discourse is so strong that it contaminates the political sphere both on the side of those who celebrate

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[107] The matter of malnutrition during childhood – that is, of diets that lack essential nutrients in the right proportions – is paramount as it is related to "higher mortality, increased incidence of infectious diseases, delayed psychomotor development, academic underachievement, and lower productive capacity in adult life", in addition to being passed from mother to children during pregnancy (Souza et. al., 2011, p. 132), which directly connects malnutrition to intergenerational poverty (Heckman & Tremblay, 2006).

[108] Similarly, Lomeli (2013) lists the extent to which the discourse that was created around Latin American CCTs create an illusion around such programs effectiveness that is misleading and hinds the necessity to develop, alongside with CCTs, social security institutions that may effectively work for CCTs' target populations.

themselves for endorsing CCTs[109], and for the side of those who are against CCTs based on the common sense argument that the extra monetary income gives to BF beneficiaries a life that is comfortable and pushes them to move out of the labour markets[110]. When looked under this angle, it becomes possible to argue that CCTs such as BF could indeed be classified as public policies that maintain poverty through containing it. CCTs are palliative public policies that tend to produce docility among underpriviledged populations through an insufficient monetary aid and through the discourse that comes attached to it, which also works to mask the states' disregard for the lives that individuals living under poverty conditions may be able to lead. It thus helps to maintain the unequitable status quo. Thus, CCTs are perhaps the most emblematic example of the state's externality treatment to the poor.

5.5.   'They hit us'

It is indeed true that BF was never intended to take families out of monetary poverty by itself (Bither-Terry, 2015), but was conceptualised as being attached to an umbrella of anti-poverty policies coordinated to eradicate poverty in the long run. This is far from effectively happening in countries like Brazil, where the state's disregard to peripheric lives is such that the externality treatment assumes the form of physical punishment of underpriviledged individuals' bodies. In fact, perhaps one of the cruellest spheres of the state's externality approach to poverty relates to public security measures and police action in urban peripheries. The action of police and legal institutions strongly penalises and oppresses peripheric populations so that the more privileged sectors of society can feel safer (Friedman, 2008; Leite, 2008). This informs modes of state's action that criminalises poverty, especially to what regards to its most general face, Black poor individuals (Caldeira & Holston, 1999; Alves, 2018).

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[109] This rhetoric is particularly present on *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT) party propaganda. This is the political party by which the former president Lula was elected. PT's website informs that the party has a project to expand BF to "put money on the hands of people" (retrieved from: https://pt.org.br/plano-emergencial-emprego-e-renda-propoe-ampliacao-bolsa-familia/). However, such rhetorical is generally present on the political propaganda coming from both left – as PT – and right-wing parties. A good example relies on the announcement by the newly elected extreme-right-wing government of a Christmas monetary bonus for BF beneficiaries, who would now be entitled to receive thirteen instead of only twelve monthly monetary transfers per year (Jornal O Estado de São Paulo, 2019, April 11)
[110] See, for instance, Krakovics (2017, March 13).

The police, often the most visible face of the state in Brazilian urban peripheries, come to be one of the mechanisms of a sort of state action that discriminate against the poorest in order to maintain the dominant social order. The oppressive action of the police in Brazil (Vianna, 2015; Farias, 2015), mainly of the Military Police, serves at least two interrelated purposes[111]. First, it protects the state from the population, mainly from underprivileged groups as the working classes. This inclination can be directly seen, for instance, through Military Police oppressive action against civilian population during public protests whose demands collide with the interests of the state, usually in protests urging for more respect for civil rights. It is common for the Military Police to disperse protesters using teargas, flash bombs and rubber bullets against civilians[112]. Second, it protects the more privileged sectors of the population from the alleged threats imposed by the existence of peripheric communities which, under the larger society's perspective, is evidenced by high crime rates in more privileged parts of the cities. In doing so, the oppressive action of state police institutions shields both the state and the social groups whose interests inform the state management of poverty.

Brazilian Military Police, as an institution with origins in the palace guard from the period of monarchy, strongly assumed the culture it nowadays carries during the dictatorship period. This turned the Military Police into an institution focused on maintaining the public order (Arias, 2006) at any cost. Provided that keeping the public order directly involved protecting the dictatorial state against its opponents, too often by killing them, Military Police evolved to become an institution whose role within the democratic regime is often blurry. As Caldeira (2010, p. 145) summarises:

> "The practices of violence and arbitrariness have been constitutive of the Brazilian police, to varying degrees, since its creation in the nineteenth century. Similarly, police abuses of the discretionary power, usurpation of functions of the judiciary system, and the torture and battering of suspects, prisoners, and workers are deeply rooted in Brazilian history. Such practices have not always been illegal, and frequently they have been exercised with the support of citizenry."

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[111] The Military police are the most often seen in peripheric communities and, indeed, all over the streets of Brazilian cities. As Denyer Willis (2015, p. 58) explains: "The Military police are hierarchical and military-trained reserve of the Federal Military and is responsible for patrolling, receiving emergency calls through the 190 hotline, and responding to all those calls". The Civil Police – also part of the life in Brazilian peripheries although to a much lesser extent – on the other hand, are responsible for investigations in the civil and criminal sphere. Both Military and Civil police are subordinated to federative states governments, although they are paid by the federal government.

[112] See, for instance, Estadão Conteúdo (2019, May 15), Lang (2019, May 16), Mariz (2017, May 25) and G1 CE (2013, June 20).

The *Brigada Militar*, the Military Police in Rio Grande do Sul State, are less lethal when compared to Rio and São Paulo Military Police[113]. They are also visibly outnumbered and less armed around the city. It is furthermore less common to hear about corruption and abusive behaviour against Vila residents in Rio Grande do Sul, which could give the false impression that the action of Brigada Militar in urban peripheric areas is less problematic. Nonetheless, Brigada Militar behaviour in relation to Vila residents is far from the limits of legality and respect to civil rights[114].

Such aspects of the police action appear in the narrative of many of the students who participated in this research. The mention of Military Police discretionary practices upon Vila residents are particularly frequent in boys' narratives. "The drug dealers are cool even" Leo, a twelve-year-old student at Mandacaru said during the interview, in response to my questioning of how it was for them to live among *traficantes[115]* and the war between the city's drug gangs. He was followed by his classmate, sixteen-year-old Ricardo, who agreed: "They [the traficantes] are the coolest". "Who isn't cool?", I asked. "The cops. They take advantage of us" Ricardo said. "They hit us", Leo continued. Both Leo and Ricardo are Black boys. Although they do not explicitly mention it, they are able to make sense of the extent to which the police see them as the embodiment of the enemy to be chased.

"When they catch one walking on the [Vila's] streets at night, they hit", Ricardo continued. "They [the police] don't ask a thing. If they see you walking on the streets at night, they will hit you. We can't walk on the streets at night anymore that they think we are drug dealers and hit us", Ricardo said. "The other day I was walking, and a cop came. He made me put my hands against the wall and asked me what I was doing on the street that late at night. I said I was walking. Then, he kicked me and hit me and sent me away", Ricardo continued. "How many times have you been beaten by a cop?", I asked Ricardo in reply to his story, to which he answered: "As many times as I have been on the Vila streets".

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[113] According to data from the federative states Secretaries of Public Security gathered in the *Atlas da Violencia 2018*, a document from the Brazilian Government's *Instituto de Pesquisa Economia Aplicada* (IPEA) – Institute for Applied Economic research – and the *Forum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública* (FBSP) – Brazilian Forum for Public Security – in 2016, 168 individuals were killed as a result of police action in Rio Grande do Sul, while in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo 925 and 856 individuals were killed in similar circumstances, respectively (IPEA/FBSP, 2018). Provided the data's source, there is a considerable chance of underestimation in the number of homicides by all the federative states police.
[114] According to Arias (2006, p. 175), "Despite a reputation for professionalism, the Brigada Militar, Rio Grande do Sul PM [Military Police], is a deeply divided institution that experiences what seem to be moderate levels of petty corruption but that today has an almost paramilitary attitude toward crime control."
[115] Drug dealers.

Referring to one occasion, in the Christmas of 2016 when he was beaten by the police, Ricardo said: "It happened at night. They wanted money and I didn't have any". "They ask for everything", he continued, referring to some of cops who patrol the Vila. "If you don't have money, they take your mobile", Leo said in reply. "So, you are basically telling me that the police come to the Vila and rob you?", I asked them. "Yes", both answered at the same time. "Some, yes", Ricardo continued. "If you don't have money, they take whatever you have", Leo completed. "They want money, they want drugs, they want everything", Ricardo explained, stating that it did not matter whether the Military Police would find drugs and guns or not during a raid. The police would always try to take something from them.

In a different interview, fifteen-year-old Douglas and thirteen-year-old Emanuel, students at Mandacaru, tell a very similar story. "They want money, [pro]fessora. They hit us", Emanuel said referring to the police, followed by Douglas: "They hit! They hit! They rob the residents. Yesterday they took a computer from a house". "It's true. A computer and a knife", Emanuel continued. "They [the police] broke into the house, saying that it belonged to a drug dealer. But it didn't", Douglas said. "The guy [the owner] was a *trabalhador*[116]", Emanuel continued very emphatically, as if stressing the arbitrariness of the police action. "They took the computer for legal verification, then?", I asked, trying to be sure that I was correctly understanding what they were telling me. "No, [pro]fessora. They took for them! Sometimes they take even our t-shirts!", Douglas replied, perhaps a little impatient with what could have sounded to be an attempt of mine to clear the police of any wrongdoing[117].

The duality between trabalhador and *bandido*[118] is one that informs the discourse of the police and is often used to justify discretionary police action and to attribute individuals into one category or the other a sense of deservedness to live (Denyer Willis, 2015). While the trabalhador is seen as a "gainfully employed, a positive contributor to society", the bandido is seen as someone who "seeks the easy way to wealth and power that comes to the expense of others" (Denyer Willis, 2015, p. 110). Thus, in the social imaginary, the dichotomy between trabalhador and bandito works as a moral filter to police action: trabalhadores should be treated as persons entitled to live, while banditos' lives are disposable. In peripheral communities where no such moral filter holds – as it is the case of Vila

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[116] *Trabalhador* – translated as, worker – speaks to not involved with crime.
[117] Such sorts of police misconduct are also described by Alves and Evanson (2011) as part of the routine in Rio favelas. Dwellers reported that it is common for the police to invade people's houses and, even, to threaten to shoot the residents have they not provide policemen with food.
[118] Bandit.

Lanceiro – the residents may find themselves emptied of both legal and moral guarantees for their lives due to police action. That is, if on the one hand the presence of the police in Brazilian urban peripheral areas is part of the state's public security policy, on the other hand the very presence of the police in poor urban communities may imply less security for those who are destined to live in these regions.

While 'they hit us' was part of the boys' narratives, in girls' narratives the police violence upon Vila residents appeared as 'they hit people', or rather 'they hit my uncle/father/cousin'. It all nonetheless pointed to the same pattern of the state action that targets underpriviledged bodies – especially male Black bodies – as a space of the state's exercise of necropolitical power, further showed by Alves (2018). "The drug dealers are much nicer than the police. They [the drug dealers] throw us parties, for the kids. They give the kids gifts", Leo told me, being followed by Ricardo, who said "They give all sorts of things, even toys and trampoline for the kids". Under these terms, with drug dealers being nice figures and the policeman acting like bandits, the relationship between Vila Lanceiro residents and the police is tense and characterised by non-cooperation. Vila residents are aware that the police do not come into the Vila to protect them in any way, but rather to oppress and even rob them[119] – the epitome of an externality approach to poverty.

5.6.   A marginalising politics

Such a characterisation of the duality between police and drug dealers' modes of action toward peripheral urban populations partially defines the relationship that individuals living under urban poverty conditions establish with the state and its institutions, and among themselves within their communities. Such relationships, which I exam in Chapter Eight particularly with respect to violence, emerge as a consequence of the state's externality treatment and are prone to produce both freedoms and unfreedoms for poor urban populations. However, I understand that it may seem a very strong statement to say that the state in Brazil – and in post-colonial countries in the Global South more generally – serves to shield itself and the social groups whose interests guide its action from underprivileged populations. Nonetheless, this is not a hard conclusion to arrive at. In an empirical study of the characteristics of marginalisation encountered in Rio's favelas in the 1970's, Perlman (1976), concluded that far from being at the margins, favela residents were an important and

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[119] I come back to the issue of the urban violence, the state and drug gang activity in the Vila in Chapter Eight.

constitutive part of a socioeconomic, political and cultural urban system that relied on their existence to be reproduced. Perlman (1976, p. 195) found that urban underprivileged populations:

> […] are not marginal but in fact integrated into the society, albeit in a manner detrimental to their own interests. They are certainly not separate from, or on the margin of the system, but are tightly bound into it in a severely asymmetrical form. […] *It is my contention that the favela residents are not economically and politically marginal, but are exploited and repressed. That they are not socially and culturally marginal, but are stigmatized and excluded from a closed social system.* Rather than being passively marginal in terms of their own attitudes and behavior, they are being actively marginalized by the system and by public policy.

About thirty years later, revisiting her earlier work, Perlman (2010) found that marginality had grown deeper and assumed new forms, with the rise of both drug gangs and extreme police violence. In her follow-up research, she concluded that "the marginalization of Rio's poor is so extreme as to exclude them from the category of personhood" (Perlman, 2010, p. 316). Thus, the state's externality approach to poverty holds empirically as a state politics that deliberately marginalises some groups, excluding them from opportunities to freedoms in many ways and affecting multiple aspects of people's lives. Following from Chapter Four, in this chapter I have presented some of the ways in which the state's externality treatment toward poor populations works. Firstly, palliative public policies, although misdirected, put forward a discourse of aid that aims to create docility among populations living in poverty. Secondly, oppressive and punitive action over poor urban communities through police action forms perhaps the most visible realm of the state's externality treatment.

As I will argue, this externality approach to poverty encompasses state schooling, which has implications for the freedoms and unfreedoms that individuals are able to reach through state-provided formal education. When it is understood that poverty is necessary for the maintenance of the dominant structures of power, the state's palliate public policy becomes one main feature of an externality approach to poverty. In managing poverty through palliative action, the state guarantees that poverty is perpetuated and that poor lives may be kept docile and under the state's somewhat necropolitical control. Moreover, in such cases, palliative public policy becomes a necessary path of action for national states in order to main the dominant order. This is especially relevant in relation to educational policies. Formal education has a predominant role in changing or maintaining the order of things. Education is attached to people's exercise of citizenship and of democratic political participation (Nussbaum, 2006a; 2010, 2013; McCowan, 2009) and to the development of people's

capacity of critical thinking, self-awareness and emancipation (Freire, 1967, 1987; hooks, 1994, 2003, 2010). More education is connected to better insertion in the job markets, to higher monetary earnings and social status (Heckman, 2008). To treat formal education in a palliative manner that deliberately provokes the wrecking of state educational institutions can serve as a powerful tool to exclude underprivileged populations, who depend on state institutions, from real opportunities to freedoms and hence to political empowerment.

Chapter Six – Wrecked schools

6.1.   Introduction

Waking up in the morning and going to Mandacaru school was always like walking to the unknown. Every morning was unique, and I always had this feeling that anything could happen. Perhaps, this was a feeling I developed due to all the times I got to the school and it was closed without notice. Or perhaps as a result of all the times the school was open, but the sixth-year students were not there, because the whole classroom had been suspended for "bad behavior" or because their teachers for the day were absent from school. Mornings at the Mandacaru's sixth-year 'repeater class' were particularly interesting, and often a little messy. It was far from what one could expect from a traditional classroom. Although the class had about thirty students enrolled, I never counted more than ten students coming to class on the same day. Even so, teachers were unable to impose the sort of discipline that traditional schooling demands over students. In fact, students would talk at all times during the class, to each other or to their teachers. They would not be silent, not even during formal examinations. They would also keep walking around the classroom, coming and going, throwing paper, the cream crackers the school served as lunch, their books, or anything they could lay their hands on toward each other. Once the classroom got so dirty with cream cracker crumbs and little paper balls that Pedro, one of the students, decided to sweep the floor. And he did so while his teacher was trying to, well, teach.

Pedro was often absent from the classes. He was one of the students who had two asterisks before his name in the class register sheet. The two asterisks were used to identify students who presented some level of cognitive impairment. The asterisks carried little information on which sort of cognitive impairment students had. Teachers often would not know what the two-asterisks-student problem was and how they should deal with it. In the case of the sixteen-year-old Pedro, teachers would just let him be. And Pedro was very outspoken and direct.

"Have you been there, Leo? To FASE[120]?", Pedro, once asked his classmate Leo in front of the whole class. "His brother is there, [pro]fessora", Pedro continued. Leo was a twelve-year-old Black student

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[120] FASE is the abbreviation for *Fundação de Atendimento Sócioeducativo* – or, in a free translation, Foundation for Socio-educational Service – which is a Rio Grande do Sul State ran correctional institution for underaged

at Mandacaru's 'repeater class'. He was a dedicated student, irrespective of his regularly low grades. He was so dedicated that, as a recognition for his effort, his teachers decided to allow him to pass to the next school grade – the seventh-year of primary education – by the end of the 2017 school year even though he did not have the grades he needed. "I fought for his approval during the teachers' meeting because he deserves to pass. He tried hard. He is one of the few in his class who can be saved", Carla, his science and maths teacher told me right after the meeting. Leo was very shy and did not talk much. Like many of the students that I engaged with, he had a deep sadness in his eyes, for a good reason, given that his family has a history of involvement with organised crime. In 2017, one of his brothers and a cousin were serving time in juvenile prison, FASE. Leo had, therefore, many examples of who not to be. Perhaps this was why he would always sit on the first desk, close to the blackboard, and would look embarrassed every time a friend referred to his imprisoned brother.

"Yes. I was there last week", Leo replied Pedro from his desk that day, from inside a blue *Grêmio* football team[121] t-shirt that he wore often, almost as a school uniform, with a tone of voice that could hardly be heard. "FASE is nice. Better than here. If I was at FASE right now I would be doing something funnier than studying. They can play soccer, watch tv", Pedro, who had already warned his teacher Carla that he was not feeling like studying that day, continued to talk as usual, whist his classmates copied the lesson from the blackboard. "And they eat real food. It isn't like in here where they give us these dry cream crackers and want us to believe that it's food. This is not food!", Pedro concluded.

In this chapter I discuss how the state's management of resources for basic education can be understood as part of the its externality approach to poverty. I argue that the very rationale of the state's resource allocation is responsible for the general wrecking of state schools' activities. Such a politics particularly affects schools located in underprivileged areas of the city, which serves to the state's concealed aim to create docility – and hence unfreedoms – among poor populations.

6.2.   'Not Food!'

Indeed, when asked what they liked most at school, many of Parodia's students answered that it was the food. The importance of school food in underprivileged contexts is obvious. For students, the

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offenders. In Brazil, the legal age, or the age from which a person can be legally liable for criminal behavior, is eighteen years old. Underage offenders are referred to institutions like FASE and not to standard prisons, which are reserved for adult offenders.

[121] *Grêmio* is a soccer team from Rio Grande do Sul.

school meal can be the only meal of the day or, if not, the most important meal (Adamo & Sanches, 2019, July 15; Panke, 2014, March 6). Nevertheless, the food – or the lack of it – at Mandacaru was a big problem for the students, and even for teachers. At least twice per week students would have no break time and cream crackers would be distributed for them to eat during class time. Dry cream crackers, no butter, no jam, no water, no juice, for students living under conditions of socioeconomic vulnerability, for students whose families struggled to put food on the table.

"There are kids who don't have lunch at home. There are children who don't know what pasta is, what *polenta* is[122]", Joice, Parodia school's lunch lady once told me, referring to how students were not familiarised with food. "The food students eat... for many, the food, lunch and dinner, comes from the school", Joice continued. I myself had the sadness of seeing students feeling sick due to hunger. Once, at the beginning of my fieldwork at Parodia, I witnessed Cléber, a Black eleven-year-old boy, asking for Paula's – the school vice-principal – help. It was 4pm and he had not had anything to eat the whole day. Cléber comes from a seriously dysfunctional family. His father used to keep him and his siblings in forced confinement at their home. The man used to threaten the children by saying that, if they decided to escape, he would ask the drug dealers from Vila Lanceiro to hunt and kill them. The father also used to use a gun to force his children into doing housework. Back in 2017, Cléber was living with an aunt. The day he was hungry at school, he had slept at a neighbour's house, as his aunt was involved in a physical fight with her boyfriend and asked Cléber to leave his house. Cléber had not eaten since the previous afternoon.

Cléber's case was serious but not isolated. "Students come to school often hungry, sleepy. Some come to school wet with urine. They urinate in their sleep and there's no one to get them to clean themselves, to take a shower. How can education be improved if my students are in bad learning conditions? Do you really think that a student who sits on her desk with urine on her clothes, feeling hungry and sleepy, will learn something? She will learn nothing!", Angela, the only Black teacher at Mandacaru's morning classes, told me in her interview[123].

Zulmira, the lunch lady at Mandacaru, explained to me that the SEO establishes the school menu while considering basic nutritional demands. Three times per week, the school must serve food to students

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[122]Originally from Italy, Polenta is traditional – and very cheap – dish in Rio Grande do Sul made of boiled cornmeal.
[123] Angela is quite familiar with the reality that informs her students' lives as she also lives in a Vila, in a different area of the city, with her two daughters.

during class break time – as in lunch meals with rice, beans and a portion of meat. In the remaining two school week days, the school can just serve snacks like cream crackers. The problem is that the funds for school food, which come from the federal government, are often insufficient. Zulmira was a sixty-year-old white woman. During her interview, she told me that she enjoyed cooking and hence liked working as school lunch lady. When I asked Zulmira what the worst part of her work was, she replied: "when my [the school's] kitchen pantry is empty, and I don't know what to do. Then it gets complicated". "It is not always that what I have in the kitchen pantry matches what the SEO menu demands. I often have to adapt", she continued.

From where I stood, the adaption meant cream crackers. Even in Parodia, whose school food was highly cherished by students, only cream crackers were being served at the end of the school year. As for Mancadaru students, those cream crackers were nothing more than another sign of the extent to which they were disregarded as human beings. Students would often complain about being hungry during class. "No one likes to eat dry cream crackers, [pro]fessora", Luma, a Black twelve-year-old student told me, referring to the school food as one of the things she did not enjoy at Mandacaru. "It doesn't feed us, and we end up staying hungry", the black twelve-year-old Lúcia continued. I recall one image that made me profoundly sad, students running from their classrooms to the school dining hall right after the break time bell rang, just to find out that they would have a few cream crackers as lunch. Again. "*Isso é um esculacho com nós[124]*!", I heard a student screaming whilst walking away from the dining hall very disappointed. "I have crackers at home, I want real food!", he continued to scream to a colleague at the corridor.

6.3.   The image of abandonment

The matter of school food was only one aspect of the problem. Mandacaru was – and still is – struggling with severe infrastructural problems. The school has two blocks closed due to imminent risk of collapse. In 2017, the part of the school that was working lacked basic things as toilet tissue, classroom doors and functional desks. In some classrooms, students had to move away from the water coming down from the ceiling on rainy days. The computer room, which was barely used as it was thought that students' usage could put the computers' functioning at risk, had several computers ruined by rainwater. The school library was also not being utilised by students as, by the virtue of

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[124] This is a very informal way of saying 'This is abusive'.

the lack of physical space, it was serving as a classroom. From my perspective, Mandacaru school is the image of an educational abyss. Every single day I spent there I could not avoid thinking that, if educational policy was a war between the state and the people, Mandacaru would be the materialisation of scorched earth tactics, with the state managing the destruction of its own property so that its enemy, the people, would die from educational starvation.

Figure 3: Mandacaru school (photo taken by the author)

Figure 4: Mandacaru school (photo taken by the author)

For students, Mandacaru is a materialisation of the abandonment they felt every day. "This school is disgusting! Look at it, everything is broken", fifteen-year-old Douglas said, followed by his colleague, fourteen-year-old Black student Emanuel: "No one cares for this school!". Mandacaru's situation in terms of lack of basic resources was far more complicated than Parodia's. Indeed, my afternoons at Parodia kept me sane after the mornings at Mandacaru. This is not because Parodia do not have problems. In fact, it has the same sorts of problems, but at Parodia the problems are less intense. In 2017, Parodia also had a minor part of its building closed due to infrastructural problems, and was also struggling with lack of monetary resources and school supplies to keep the school working. Cátia, Parodia's principal, had to pay for the school's water, electricity and phone bills with her own salary for four months in the beginning of 2017. When I asked her whether she would receive the amount she paid back, she said: "How can I write a check to myself? I could be accused of diversion of school

funds[125]". Even though she could prove she had paid for school bills with her own money, Cátia had good reasons to believe she would have problems in case she, as the school principal, paid herself back. On one of the occasions that Parodia school was robbed in 2017, the robbers took metal frames from old broken school chairs and desks that were in the storage waiting to be discarded. In describing the robbed items to the police, Cátia, who was quite nervous by the nature of the robbery, referred to the metal frames, which were no longer functional, as chairs and desks. When she reported the robbery, the SEO claimed that Cátia was not taking good care of the school and that she would have to pay for the stolen "chairs and desks" as it was the principal's responsibility to guarantee the integrity of school's permanent assets.

"*They* want to close the school". "*They* are just looking for a reason to close the school". I heard statements like these several times throughout the fieldwork, from different people among teachers and schools' management staff. They referred to the SEO wanting to shut down both Parodia and Mandacaru school activities. While Parodia is a liability because it would bring the Vila problems and Vila people to an upper-middle-class neighbourhood, Mandacaru is just the home of too many problems: a problematic building full of problematic students coming from problematic life conditions. As Angela, teacher at Mandacaru, once told me: "We know that the government doesn't send us [the school] funds. That the government doesn't want the school to be open. The more cheap work force *they* can get, the better for *them*. Because the less people know, the less people may cause *them* problems. Better for *them*. The people in power don't want the student to learn. *They* want the student to dropout school. It's cheaper for *them*".

6.4. A misdirected politics

The *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* (LDB) – meaning, the National Education Bases and Guidelines Law – establishes that the resources for education come mainly from tax collection in

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[125] There was indeed one – out of at least two – main characteristics that distanced Parodia's reality from Mandacaru's: Parodia had a school principal who was willing to sacrifice her own earnings to guarantee school's functioning, and research has argued that accountable school management is positively related to the school efficacy measured in terms of students' cognitive achievement (Christie, 1998, 2001; Fleisch & Chirstie, 2004; Reynalds & Teddlie, 2008). However, how reasonable would it be to expect school principals to pay themselves for state schools' minor expenses under a circumstance in which they are not even being paid in full nor on time? Not at all reasonable, I believe.

federal, state and municipality level[126]. The resources are allocated between two major funds, the *Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica e Valorização dos Profissionais da Educação[127]* (FUNDEB) and the *Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação[128]* (FNDE). The latter distributes resources for some programs relative to, for instance, school food and school transportation. The former is a special fund with resources destined to fund actions toward the maintenance and development of state's basic education[129]. FUNDEB's revenue is automatically redistributed between municipalities and federative states. The amount each municipality and each federative state receives is calculated based on the number of basic education students enrolled in the previous year in each of the state's area – meaning, municipality and federative states. Each federative unit and municipality is free to distribute FUNDEB resources among school nets as they wish, as long as FUNDEB's general norm is respected. That is, at least 60% of resources must be used to pay for teachers' salary, and the maximum of 40% left must be destined to "actions of maintenance and development of basic education", such as "acquisition, maintenance, construction and conservation of necessary facilities and equipment", "usage and maintenance of school belongings", and acquisition of school didactic material and other needed school supplies (BRASIL, 1996).

The LDB establishes that the federal government is responsible for calculating the "minimum standard of educational opportunities" founded on the "minimum expenditure per student capable to assure quality education" (BRASIL, 1996, Art. 74). The annual minimum expenditure per student is calculated by the end of the previous year and considers the different teaching modalities and the regional differences in the cost of school related inputs. On the quality side, the baseline is *the Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica[130]* (IDEB), a performance indicator for education formed of two different spheres: students' achievement on national standardised tests and school pass rate, an indicator calculated based on the national education census[131]. As for the standardised tests, IDEB

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[126] In addition to tax collection, the Article 68 from LDB establishes that the financial resources for education must as well come from: revenue transfers supported by the National Constitution; revenues from social contributions; tax incentive revenue; and from any other source supported by law. (BRAZIL, 1996, Art. 68).
[127] National Fund for Basic Education Development and for Valorisation of Education Professionals
[128] National Fund for the Development of Education
[129] Information available at FUNDEB webpage: https://www.fnde.gov.br/index.php/financiamento/FUNDEB
[130] Basic Education Development Index.
[131] IDEB offers a measure per school that varies between 0 and 10. As closer to 10 is the IDEB index, the better is considered the quality of the education offered. It was developed to create an accountability net among federal, federative states and municipal governments toward the common goal of improving the quality of national basic education (Alves & Soares, 2013). The aim is to take the quality index up to the standards reached by developed countries standards as measured by PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment*).* PISA*,* on the other hand, is a worldwide students' performance evaluation promoted by OECD (Organisation for

uses data from the *Sistema Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Básica*[132] (SAEB), formed of two different tests, the *Avaliação Nacional da Educação Básica*[133] (ANEB), and the *Avaliação Nacional do Rendimento Escolar*[134] (ANRESC) commonly known as *Prova Brasil*. Both ANEB and ANRESC evaluate primary and secondary education students' cognitive knowledge on Portuguese language – reading, writing and grammar skills – and on Mathematics[135].

Thus, on the one hand, the state relies on a utilitarian criterion of minimisation of cost to fix the level of expenditure per student that determines the minimum level of educational opportunities. On the other hand, the lowest level of opportunities is defined based on IDEB, which is a quantitative parameter that confines the idea of educational opportunities to cognitive achievement in two school subjects, Portuguese and Mathematics, and to school pass rates. IDEB carries little information on the qualitative processes and conditions that determine the magnitude of its variables, which makes it outcome focused only (Alves & Soares, 2013; Gentili 2007, 2015). It also carries little information on the effective quality of the education offered, regardless of whether quality is defined in terms of cognitive or non-cognitive skills, or on the development of effective life opportunities (Freitas, 2007).

Furthermore, school pass rates are likely to be affected by several factors. For instance, students may be approved to pass not only by due to having the necessary grades, but rather because teachers may receive the recommendation from school management to approve a certain number of students, so that the school may reach the necessary quantity of students to open a class in the following year. As it is necessary to have a minimum number of students for each class for each school year, when the school does not reach the minimum number, it is prevented by the SEO from opening a class, even if there are some students approved and expected to enrol in such a class in the next school year. Closing classes is bad for schools because they receive fewer resources, teachers lose possible classroom hours and sometimes must be dismissed. Students may be obliged to change schools in case the class for their school year does not reach the minimum number of students.

Economic Co-operation and Development). More information on IDEB available at: http://portal.inep.gov.br/ideb. More information on PISA available at: http://www.oecd.org/pisa/.

[132] National Evaluation System for Basic Education.

[133] National Evaluation of Basic Education.

[134] National Evaluation of School Performance.

[135] While ANEB's sample is composed of students from primary (from 5th to 9th year) and secondary education (only 3rd year) from both state and private schools, ANRESC's sample is formed only of primary education students (from 5th to 9th year) from state schools. More information available at: http://portal.inep.gov.br/educacao-basica/saeb/sobre-a-anresc-prova-brasil-aneb

In addition, to have many students from the same class fail tends to cause school management staff problems with students' caregivers, bringing many angry parents who blame the school for their children's failure. School management staff, in contrast, tend to blame teachers for high student failure. Thus, to avoid major problems, some teachers may choose to pass a higher number of students even if they do not have the necessary grades. Under the logic of the system, this means that they have not learnt as much as it was expected for their school level and therefore should not progress[136].

Indeed, the sole fact that the pass rate is considered for the IDEB can create incentives for schools to manipulate their rates as a way to signal quality improvement and achievement of established goals. "It happens that every school receives funds according to the school's pass rate. So, if we [the school] have too many students failing the school year, our passing rate will be lower and, hence, we will not receive this bonus", Bárbara, a young teacher from Parodia explained to me during her interview. She continued: "we want to receive the full bonus because the school needs it. It isn't a matter of wanting the bonus or not. The school really needs it. If the school doesn't receive the bonus, how can it keep functioning? Unfortunately, it can't".

One of the problems of basing resource allocation on a minimization calculus is that it can create distortions, as such an orientation tends to disregard the inequalities among schools of a same state area – that is, municipality or federative states – in the same city. Even when I consider only Mandacaru and Parodia, two schools attended by students coming from the same Vila, the conditions in which each school is inserted are not homogeneous, just as the Vila socioeconomic conditions are heterogeneous. In fact, given that Parodia is located in a neighbourhood that is close to but still outside the Vila, it may be unsafe for students involved in drug gang related activities, or whose families are involved, to study there. As it may be unsafe for them to leave the Vila, this makes Mandacaru a better choice. In the same logic, for the poorest students, Mandacaru may be the most suitable school option as it has an easier and less time-demanding access.

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[136] On the other hand, not being approved in a given school year does not indicate that a student has learnt nothing or has not had her skills developed (Freitas, 2007). Even psychological aspects as anxiety can influence an individual's performance on standardised tests – which are the basis of students' school evaluation in Brazil. Furthermore, pass rates completely ignore the fact that all and every experience lived inside school is formative for children – given that their cognitive and non-cognitive abilities are being formed and consolidated throughout basic education school years (Cunha & Heckman, 2008, 2009).

My argument is straightforward. Mandacaru is located in a underpriviledged area of the city and is therefore attended by students living under highly restrictive conditions. This implies that Mandacaru may have more needs to be satisfied when compared to either a state school located in an area with different characteristics or attended by students living under less extreme socioeconomic conditions. Mandacaru may have, for instance, more students who rely on school for having their daily meal. It would not be difficult to argue that, given the school's and its students' circumstances, Mandacaru should receive more monetary resources. This could help the school to develop actions and activities toward compensating some of the disadvantages faced by its students. Poor students' disadvantages are partially shaped by the unfreedoms they carry from home and that may potentially undermine the benefits they may take from schooling. Such unfreedoms – as the ones I describe in Chapter Four – are prone to diminish their learning opportunities and put them in a position of disadvantage when compared to students whose background is less unfavoured.

Indeed, following the state's logic of minimization of costs based on minimal learning opportunities, schools should receive at least enough to keep working within a minimal level of functionality over time, which includes, for example, maintaining a functioning school building with functional facilities. This would not change the fact that students may experience different learning opportunities in accordance to their own circumstances (Lopez, 2005; Terzi, 2007). Moreover, it would still be true that schools with students coming from less privileged backgrounds may have to compensate, so that its students reach the same basic level of educational opportunities as students from state schools functioning under distinct cultural, political, economic and social environments.

6.5. Minimising costs, maximising docility

Minimising costs as to maximising something else is one of the first lessons economics' students learn in undergraduate courses. We learn how to minimise our costs while maximising our happiness, how to minimise cost in order to maximise our profits. As an economist, I surely understand that resources are limited per se and must be administered in a rational manner. My criticism here relates to the rationality behind the state's management and allocation of resources among state schools. The rationale is one that is not concerned with what students are effectively learning, with the abilities they are acquiring from schooling, nor with how these abilities may shape their present and future circumstances. Neither is it concerned with schools' effective circumstances and minimum needs in order to provide students with some – any – education. Something must be intrinsically

wrong when educational policy is not oriented to effectively provide people with education – and by provide I also mean with minimum means to learn, such as guaranteeing that students will not attend classes in hunger.

The fact that the allocation is done based on an egalitarian utilitarian criterion creates distortions among schools administrated by the same federative unit – State or municipality – in a same city. This leads to the gradual wrecking of the activities of schools attended by students living under comparatively worse socioeconomic conditions. Consequently, it deteriorates students' educational opportunities measured in terms of whatever criterion one chooses to use[137]. Allocating educational resources based on an average that reflects the minimum necessary, rather than on effective needs, or on schools and peoples' effective reality, can by itself lead to allocational problems. That is, to schools receiving less than they actually need to provide the minimum educational opportunities to which the state refers in LDB. Therefore, by choosing to level educational opportunities, and hence educational resources allocation as an average, the state admits that it is acceptable for students living under diminished political, cultural and socioeconomic conditions to enjoy comparatively fewer educational opportunities within the state system of education[138].

In other words, is not only that the resources are insufficient, it is that they are managed in a systematic way to exclude poorer students from – already diminished – educational opportunities[139]. It is individual schools' responsibility to manage the resources they receive, and when the money is not enough is a problem for individual schools to solve, this is regardless of the level of resources

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[137] My perspective here is, of course, highly influenced by the CA and the idea that education, as poverty, is multidimensional in its determinants and consequences (Walker, 2005; Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). Any policy approaching educational matters should not only take this multidimensionality seriously, as it should recognise that it is qualitative rather than purely quantitative. There is an intersectionality among the factors that define people's life conditions and effective circumstances. Heterogeneity of conditions should require heterogeneity of measures.

[138] It is true that each federative state and municipality can allocate, in addition to FUNDEB revenue, its own resources into the schools they administrate. However, this works to cause even greater allocative distortions given that different federative states and municipalities hold distinct resource endowments (Campos & Cruz, 2009).

[139] The state's expenditure with basic state education in Brazil – primary and secondary education – is more than 50% lower than developed countries average. While Brazil expends US$3762 per state school student per year, developed countries average is US$ 8548 per student per year (OECD, 2019; Justino, 2019, April 16). The school food offers a good parameter. Currently, the FNDE provides each urban state school with RS$0.36 – about US$0.09 – per student per school day for food. This is about US$0.47 per week, US$1.86 per month, US$18.6 per school year – which in Brazil is formed of 200 school days – to feed one student. (Information retrieved from: http://www.fnde.gov.br/index.php/programas/pnae/pnae-sobre-o-programa/pnae-sobre-o-pnae)

being calculated based on parameters that are exogenous to schools' reality. As for the schools, the funds are received in the form of monthly permanent funds, maintenance funds, and funds for some particular actions, as FNDE school food money. The permanent fund can only be used to fund expenses that are seen as permanent usage, or part of the school's permanent patrimony, such as furniture and computers. The maintenance fund can only be used to pay for a school's monthly expenses like school bills and other maintenance related issues. As Joelma, the teacher responsible for Mandacaru's school finances, explained: "We have to work with the funds sent by the state. The maintenance funds are too low considering the size of the school. The school requires much higher maintenance funds as this is the area where we spend the most, because it includes light bulb replacement, repairs to damaged electrical and hydraulic networks and to classrooms". She continued: "We are not able to attend to the daily maintenance needs". "And what happens when the available budget is not enough to cover the schools' maintenance needs?", I asked Joelma, to which she answered: "There's nothing we can do. We have classrooms in need of bulbs. We don't have any money to buy new bulbs. The school was flooded by the latest storm. You saw yourself. You were here. We'll have to do much repair to the electrical network. So, we have to choose and to solve the most urgent thing only[140]".

The truth is that there is a clear and possibly deliberate confusion between means and ends in the state allocation of resources for education in Brazil. This is possibly a result of the neoliberal logic that orient governments' educational expenditure in Latin America (Gentili, 2015)[141]. Regardless of any other parameter, the fact is that the end is to minimise educational costs based upon top-down criteria, in such way that offering a "quality education" becomes a desirable parameter and not an end. Thus, it happens that resources are distributed without any attention to schools' capacity to convert resources into any sort of "quality education".

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[140] There are institutional mechanisms that allow schools to ask for additional funds when the maintenance issues faced are too severe, as it is the case of Mandacaru and even of Parodia. However, as Joelma explains, "the process takes too long and too often is turned into *processo de gaveta*", meaning, into requests that are neither analysed nor fulfilled.

[141] It could be argued that my criticism here refers only to the neoliberal model that has informed the Latin American states' expenditure since the 1980's. However, my criticism is against a process that, although encompasses the neoliberal rationale, is as old as the Portuguese colonial enterprise upon the Brazilian land. Excluding certain groups of people from educational opportunities is a project of the colonial state that subsists within the rationale of the democratic state. Thus, perhaps my criticism is one against colonialism and the new forms it takes within modern democracies.

Considering that there is an accountability net in which federative states, municipalities and schools agreed to work toward improving IDEB, the Brazilian state can show to the whole world that it is working to improve the quality of the education it offers to its citizens[142]. However, what happens in practice is that the higher echelons of the state can exempt themselves from blame, as the effective responsibility to offer "quality education" ultimately relies on individual schools. Although micro state agents, individual schools have their agency capacity limited by goals and resources coming from above and being hence absolutely detached from their objective reality.

As Paulo Freire (1997) recalled, individual schools are made up of people. School management staff, teachers, students, are all people, de jure citizens. What the state policy does at the end, is to transfer the responsibility over state education to its citizens, in such way that when things do not go well, the state has done what it could. And when things go well, the state is the one to be applauded. There is therefore a well-structured state educational policy, in which quality education is defined in terms of parameters that do not regard the extent to which the education offered provides students with effective life opportunities in the present and in the future, and in which resource allocation is not based on schools' objective reality and is subsequently highly insufficient. Moreover, the policy is founded on the exclusion of the poorest populations from educational opportunities.

Under these terms, the state's management of resources for basic education in Brazil is also founded on the logic of the externality approach to poverty. It is a palliative sort of public policy that addresses state education without solving any of its problems. Indeed, it addresses it in a way that deepens the state education's problems, leading to the generalised wrecking of state schools' activities, especially for those located in underprivileged areas. In addition, it is a kind of public policy that carries a discourse that informs people that the state is holding itself accountable to state education. This conceals the somehow necropolitical state action that classifies poor populations as less worthy of educational opportunities. On the other hand, it aims at creating docility among poor populations through both depressing labour and keeping it exceptionally cheap, and by creating a mass of functional and political illiterate (Freire, 1997); this relates to people whose diminished capacity to understand their own social reality prevents them from having a critical participation in the democratic processes that determine the orientation of the state policy.

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[142] The accountability pact among the federal government, federative states, municipalities and the civil society was established by the federal decree *Plano de Metas Compromisso Todos Pela Educação* (All for Education Commitment and Goals) (BRASIL, 2007)

Thus, the state's orientation is also one of managing poverty so that the education offered is not educative in any sense that may harm the dominant power structures that determine the state action upon the poor, particularly for people living in urban poverty. Such a treatment is, nonetheless, not limited to the funds that are administrated by schools. As I discuss in Chapter Seven, it also affects teachers and school staff, their wages and, hence their and their students' freedoms.

Chapter Seven – On state school teachers

7.1.   Introduction

06 October 2017. I was having a slow morning at Mandacaru School. Both sixth-year classes had sent the students home earlier, at morning break around 10 am, as one of their teachers for the day did not come to school, once again. In fact, students were having shorter school hours on Friday since the beginning of September, as the teachers' strike officially begun. Mandacaru, like Parodia, did not have many teachers on strike. As the major number of teachers were hired on non-permanent contracts, there was a general sense – based on an implicit threat – that going on strike could lead them to being fired by the government[143]. These teachers could not afford to be fired. That Friday, in particular, in addition to the absence of the teacher who was on strike, another teacher did not appear. Indeed, I do not recall one week, during my ten months of fieldwork, in which my participant students had all the week's classes[144]. There was always at least one teacher missing, either because of strike or for any other reason. When it was not one of their teachers, it was a teacher who was supposed to teach in other school years and, in her absence, it was necessary to reorganise all the shift's classes – from the sixth to the ninth-years. This usually meant students would not have some classes or one teacher teaching two different classes, for two different years, in two different rooms, at the same time. This implied that some groups had partially formal classes, as one teacher cannot be in two places at the same time.

That October Friday was, therefore, just a normal school day. In the absence of classes, I spent some time chatting with Rita – the school administrator – in her office. Rita is a smart, extremely polite, white middle-aged woman, whose time at work is divided between managing the school's daily administrative work and receiving parents and caregivers in need of assistance with their children's school documents. Rita is hardly seen out of her office. It is her way of avoiding all the tension that surround the days at Mandacaru, her way to stay out of the mess – the yelling, the constant tense arguments, the rudeness, the arrogance of those who find themselves in positions that they judge

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[143] In Brazil, the democratic constitution (Brazil, 1988) establishes that state's working functions should be occupied by permanent public workers, admitted through public tender.

[144] The formal curriculum of sixth-years of primary education in both schools comprised nine school subjects: Portuguese, Religion, Mathematics, Science, Physical Education, History, Geography, English, and Arts education. The subjects were distributed among eight teachers, which should correspond to 25 class periods – five per day – of 50 minutes per week, totalizing about 4 hours and 25 minutes of school time per day.

superior – that characterise the relationships among students, teachers, parents, and school staff. "I come every day, do my work the best I can, and try to stay out of trouble", she told me. Rita is indeed, one of the few people in that school who treats everyone with humanity. "People from Vila Lanceiro have a very hard life. I just try to extract the best of them", Rita once said to me, explaining why she had a respectful relationship with everyone, including the "most difficult" parents. "They want someone who can listen to them. I give them attention". In exchange, Rita receives respect.

I was at Rita's small and cluttered office for more than one hour, chatting whilst she worked, when Isabela, the school counsellor, opened the door. Two students from the Faculty of Education of Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) were at the school doing a research project for a college assignment and requested to see the school's statute[145]. I left Rita's office and walked to the teachers' room three doors ahead. It was already my time to leave to the afternoon classes at Parodia, located approximately a 20 minute walk from Mandacaru. I nonetheless decided to wait as it was raining heavily.

At the teachers' room, I found the two undergraduate students sat at the first of the three green round tables in the room. They were two Black women. One, in her early twenties, had a bun in her hair and was wearing a hoodie on which was possible to read the name of her university and her undergraduate course – *Pedagogia UFRGS*. The other was older, appearing to be in her late thirties. They were reading and writing with their heads down, close to the table. Occupying the table at the back of the room was Angela, the only black teacher on Mandacaru's morning classes, surrounded by paper sheets, working on her undergraduate thesis. That was the first time I saw more than one black person in that room, and that the second person was not me nor someone from the cleaning staff.

Angela has worked as mathematics teacher at Mandacaru school since 2014. Three years before, in 2011, she started her online undergraduate licentiate course in mathematics. Although the course had a duration of three years, after six years Angela was still missing some papers and the undergraduate thesis in order to be able to graduate. "I'm leaving the most difficult papers to the very last moment", she told me, whist explaining why, although she had worked as a maths teacher since 2014, she did not have a teaching degree. "There's a shortage of teachers. So, the SEO hires undergraduate students from their second year to work as teachers. I know teachers, because I know

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[145] The school statute is a document that regulates the functioning of the school and establishes pedagogical and organisational guidelines as well as rights, duties and sanctions for all involved in the school.

a lot of people working at schools, who have been working for 20 years without graduating from college", Angela told me.

Angela never dreamed of being a mathematics teacher. She used to want to be an economist like me, as she would frequently say. She got pregnant during high school, got married and after ten years, another baby and a divorce, decided to go back to studying again. Coming from a low-income family, living in a distant and dangerous Vila in Porto Alegre, working as a telemarketer to support – by herself – her two daughters, she had no means to study for the UFRGS Economics entrance exam. She started the online undergraduate licentiate course in mathematics because it was an affordable way to prepare herself to get into the economics faculty.

Six months after starting, a lady in a bus saw Angela holding a few books. The lady asked Angela if she was studying to be a teacher and advised her to look for internships with SEO. Angela got an internship at a school in her Vila and, for one year and a half, worked as an intern teacher in the mornings and telemarketer in the afternoon and evening. By the end of her second undergraduate year, she applied for a teaching position and was designated to work at Mandacaru. "I thought, 'In Vila Lanceiro? What am I going to do in Vila Lanceiro?'", she said. "I live in a Vila, but I was worried because Vila Lanceiro has a horrible reputation. 'How will I get into Vila Lanceiro?'", Angela told me she thought before taking the job. She nonetheless decided to accept the job offer after visiting Mandacaru for the first time, irrespective of the mistrust of Elaine, the school's principal. Elaine suggested Angela would not be able to manage her job as a teacher. "Elaine asked me 'Are you sure you can handle it?' I was skinny, small, smaller than I am now", Angela told me.

Angela likes to say that being a teacher gave her new dreams. Back in 2017, she dreamed about studying for a master's degree at *Instituto de Matemática Pura e Aplicada*[146], one of Brazil's most respected federal educational institutes. That Friday, Angela told me she was planning to write about the importance of mathematics for people's daily activities in her undergraduate thesis. "My students don't understand the importance of learning maths", she told me. She said that she believed that, for the students, Mandacaru was just a "*lugar de passagem*", that is, a place they frequented because they had to, but that had no further importance in their lives. She said that at first, she used to walk around school carrying many books on her arms, full of ideas about new forms of teaching. However, she felt that students tend to reject anything that is different from standard teaching methods. That is,

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[146] Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics.

different from copying lessons from the blackboard. "Sometimes I just want to give up on everything. Students want nothing for their lives. They come here just to hang, spend time", she continued, saying that the principal's office was not supportive to teachers, and was hence to blame for all the school's problems.

"I'm sorry, but I couldn't help listening to your conversation", the older undergraduate student interrupted from the other table. I confess that I was a bit uncomfortable with Angela's lines about students. I was not there for as long as she was, but I was there for long enough to know that they were not entirely correct. Students were there for much more than just spending their time, which was probably why they rejected activities that they felt were not giving them formal education in the traditional sense. The woman continued: "I was a student at Mandacaru, my son was a student here as well. I did my undergraduate internship here. I study education at UFRGS and have a high school level technical degree in infant's education[147]. I do not agree that Mandacaru is just a 'lugar de passagem'". The woman, who I may call Janaína, continued by saying that Mandacaru had been very important for her life path, and that the problem of the school was teachers like Angela.

Angela and Janaína engaged in a tense argument. Janaína argued that teachers were wrong to not incorporate matters related to Black consciousness in their teaching. She said that it was obvious that teachers neglected Black students and the issues Black students face for being Black, and that no teacher there seemed interested in cultivating Black students' self-esteem and self-determination. "You, as a mathematics teacher, as a Black woman, should work blackness and Black culture into your teaching subject", Janaína continued. The majority of students at Mandacaru were Black and many were not even conscious of their existence as Black persons. "My role here is to teach mathematics and there's no space for that in mathematics", was Angela's reply. "I don't see any difference between Black and white people and see no need to enter into a classroom and say: hi, I'm Back. People can see I'm Black", Angela continued.

Janaína persisted trying to convince Angela that, as a teacher, she had a role to play in supporting students to make sense of who they were. Janaína said that many students at Mandacaru had a harsh family background and that if the school was a 'lugar de passagem', the teachers, who could not understand the students as product of a set of circumstantial complexities, were the ones to blame.

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[147] High school level technical degree in infants' education used to be called in Brazil *Magistério*. Such degree allowed its holders to teach alphabetisation classes.

"I believe people share the same opportunities, regardless of race or income, and what I see missing in students is the will to study and change their lives", Angela told Janaína. I could see the shock in Janaína's face after listening to the words coming from Angela's mouth. It was when her friend, who I may call Ayomide, asked with a perplexed tone: "Do you really think that a Black student from Vila Lanceiro has the same opportunities as a white student who does not live in a Vila?". "Yes, I do. Black students just need to put more effort", Angela replied, provoking incredulous laughs from Ayomide and Janaína. "I cannot accept that my race prevents me from doing anything, from competing with anyone. I fought a lot during my whole life, and this has nothing to do with my skin colour", Angela continued, heatedly. "My skin colour has never helped me to succeed in life, but it has never been a problem as well", Angela concluded.

Ayomide closed the discussion by saying: "If this is how you think, then I have nothing else to say to you". Silence covered the room. In fieldwork, I never knew how to act when I was caught in the middle of other people's arguments, which happened with considerable frequency. I would usually avoid the conflict and keep my mouth shut. Nonetheless, in this case, it was not other people's discussion. I could not help thinking that this was about myself as well. I told Angela, who was already very angry, that the fact that she had to fight that hard to become a teacher already said a lot about how life could be difficult for Black woman. I said that, perhaps, it was relevant that she entered into the classroom and said 'Hi, I'm your teacher and I'm a Black woman', because she was perhaps the only one at Mandacaru who could say so, whilst the majority of her students were Black girls and boys living in an environment that always affirmed to them that they were not worthy – that life for them was a 'lugar de passagem'. I told Janaína, Ayomide and Angela, about how I struggled, as a Black woman, to feel that I belonged to academic settings.

Janaína and Ayomide left the room very angry at Angela, without saying goodbye. I stayed for a little longer. It was still raining, and I did not want to leave Angela so angry alone in the teachers' room. "I cannot accept my skin colour to be barrier!", she repeated to me, with a trembling voice. That day, I left Mandacaru school with Carla, another teacher, who gave me a ride in the middle of the rain. "This is a sensitive subject to Angela. When she started here, students would call her names. They were racist to her. People say the situation was ugly, complicated", Carla told me, whist driving out of school's ground. "But the school is made up of mostly Black students…", I said. "Yeah. It is. From that you can see…".

In this chapter I discuss how the state's management of poverty affects state school teachers and professionals. I bring teachers and school staff narratives that expose the state's disregard not only for their work conditions, but mainly for the lives they are able to live given the low salary they are paid. I show how such conditions make unfreedoms for teachers, which suppresses their motivation to perform their jobs. I argue that, although teachers dispirited work patterns negatively impact students, what I generally observed was teachers trying to manage their work and personal life by any means they could, in relation to the extent to which the state's somewhat necropolitical management of education limited their opportunities of agency.

7.2.   I hear teachers screaming

 "Without teachers no other thing fucking exists!", Joelma told me, in a tone of absolute outrage. She had been a teacher at Mandacaru for 17 years. Although she has a very low tone of voice usually, her expression was always tense, often angry. We talked in December 2017, in her small room and during the interview she looked restless throughout. She would not stop moving while sat on a revolving chair, with her right elbow on her work desk. "If I was to live from teaching, I would be a beggar. [...] *eu me viro nos trinta, nos sessenta, nos oitenta*[148]. The only thing I have yet not done is to prostitute myself. But everything I can do to get money, I'm doing", she said, and continued:

> "My work here as financial officer is horrible. I hate what I do. I do it because, in a certain way, I had to. But it is a job that gives me a lot of tension. It is a work in which you must correct your own mistakes. It's very unpleasant that I must submit detailed account reports for every school penny I manage, whilst I, as a citizen, as a human being, have to look at governments and see so much robbery and corruption. *They* [governments] do not provide us with their accounting reports. I don't see the governor's accounting reports, I don't see the mayor's accounting reports, to be sure they are investing the money right. And I, with this *merreca*[149] of three thousand and something [Brazilian Real] that the state gives us, must do a huge accounting report to justify how I am not stealing *their* money. Now, *they* don't justify themselves and their robbery to me. So, I believe that there's a big

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[148] *Eu me viro nos trinta* is an informal Brazilian expression that means try to get by on one's own, or rather to do anything one can do in other to manage a bad situation quickly.
[149] Tiny amount of money.

inversion of values. Because teachers have qualifications. Teachers are not going to enter in a school to steal. Teachers are going to do improvements. *They* are the ones stealing and we are the ones being held accountable."

"The only thing we can do is scream", Bárbara, a Parodia teacher once told me referring to how she was taught to react in case she witnessed a fight between students. Indeed, Bárbara's statement seemed to me to fit perfectly with the situation I found with teachers during the fieldwork: angry, disillusioned, emptied of hope, or often just sad. I saw a general sense of disappointment and disgust. Back then, teachers were not only seeing the state's abandonment of education through schools' lack of basic resources and supplies, which left them out of proper work conditions, but they were rather feeling it in their own skin. "If I depended on my monthly salary, I would have dropped [working at state schools] a long time ago. It's not even that the salary we earn is not enough for us to live. It's not enough for us to survive", Paula, Parodia's vice-principal, told me, echoing many of her colleagues.

Berenice, a teacher at Parodia since 1982, told me at the top of her hoarse voice, impaired by more than thirty years of teaching activity: "When a student comes to me and says that she is planning to become a school teacher, I say 'for the love of god, what is that that you want? To live without a receiving a salary? To work for free? So, go and work for an NGO[150]!'". By the time we talked, in December 2017, Berenice was extremely disappointed. She lived close to Parodia, at an old building formed of only four apartments, whose owners were basic education teachers like her. "We are four women, four teachers, at the building I live. Do you think we are able to fix the building? We aren't. The building is falling apart!", she told me that day. She had just put her apartment for sale as she did not have means to keep it. "Being a teacher, god forbid, *Tchê[151]*! I don't recommend anyone becomes a teacher. Becoming a teacher for what?! *They* exploit you for your whole life and when you get to retirement, you have nothing. This is crazy, Tchê!*",* Berenice told me when I asked if she had any regrets in being a teacher. "It's too hard. They could take money from anywhere. But *they* choose to punish teachers", she concluded.

The matter of low school teacher salary was, back then, just the tip of the iceberg. Teachers and school staff's monthly salary was being paid in small instalments throughout the month. With Brazil

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[150] Acronym for Non-Governmental Organisation.
[151] 'Tchê!' is an informal expression commonly used in RS that expresses exclamation. In this particular case, it is an expression of Berenice's indignation.

drowned in a political crisis and economic recession since 2015 (Carvalho, 2018), many federative states and municipalities became allegedly unable to pay for their education professionals[152]. If, on the one hand, to determine that 60% of FUNDEB should be directed to the payment of teachers says nothing about FUNDEB being enough to pay for teachers, on the other hand, the existence of a federative pact around FUNDEB put forward a mode of discourse that provides the false impression that the state is concerned with teachers' wages – such as an externality approach to poverty endorses. Whether the concern was real, the state would act toward acknowledging and repairing the degrading conditions in which school teachers and staff are being left. Moreover, the state would acknowledge how the restrictions on their duty as state school teachers impact on the quality of teaching that these professionals are able to provide students.

In delaying and dividing state schools' professionals' monthly salary in small instalments paid throughout the month, federative states and municipalities left state education professionals in an even more difficult situation. Whilst the low wages push teachers to perform other working activities concomitantly, or to work to exhaustion, the instalment gave them a general sense of the state's absolute lack of appreciation. During our interview, Berenice said, referring to the salary instalment: "Can you imagine? It's horrible! This is something that should never exist. It's humiliating for everyone here, from myself to the humblest worker here!". "We have a teacher here who must get three buses to get to Parodia. She gets three buses. [...] Three to come and three to come back home. And she must eat out. I don't know how she does. I think she is paying to work", Berenice told me. She concluded: "There's a complete disregard for education!". The teacher to whom she was referring was Marta, the only Black teacher working on Parodia afternoon's shift. Marta is a middle-aged woman who works 60 hours per week total, in three different shifts, at three different schools. She also gives one-to-one review classes to private school students.

Sadly, Marta's story was not unique. During my fieldwork, I found many teachers working up to 60 hours per week in formal school teacher positions, and working informally selling things like beauty

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[152] FUNDEB's revenue is tied to tax collection. During economic recessions the revenue coming from tax collection tends to decrease, which depresses FUNDEB. In absolute figures, FUNDEB's revenue has increased, in the period 2016-2018. In real terms – that is, after inflation – FUNDEB's revenue has decreased in the period 2014-2018. Information retrieved from: Brazil's Ministry of Education website: https://www.fnde.gov.br/index.php/financiamento/fundeb/area-para-gestores/dados-estatisticos. Values after inflation calculated based on the IGP-M (FGV) – General Price Index – with data from *Banco Central do Brasil* – Central Bank of Brazil – retrieved from: https://www3.bcb.gov.br/CALCIDADAO/publico/exibirFormCorrecaoValores.do?method=exibirFormCorrec aoValores&aba=1

products, clothes and shoes. Aparecida, a middle-aged teacher at Mandacaru who has been a teacher more than eighteen years, told me during her interview: "I do 33 hours per week here and 20 at the other school". She continued: "For a teacher to have a slightly higher income, she must increase and increase her workload. In the end, she ends up with a workload that is so high that prevents her from doing other things, personal things that could also be positive for her to give a good class". "For instance, whether a person has a moment of leisure, of practicing a physical activity, the person can be better physically prepared. Due to the workload, this is not possible. It's very limiting.", Aparecida told me. "The person becomes completely enslaved", Aparecida concluded.

"I got really angry when *they* divided up BR$350[153]", Cora a middle-aged teacher at Mandacaru told me during her interview. "That's why we found teachers are selling *avon*, cake, working as a cleaning lady on the weekends. I know a teacher who works selling popcorn on the weekend", she said. Cora also told me that she does not have a restricted life as she has another professional activity – she works as well as a lawyer – and relies on her partner's help. Indeed, those who had a diminished workload were depending on financial help from their family, whether from parents, partners or former partners. In general, I saw teachers extremely tired, indebted, living under high levels of stress not only because of the financial pressure, but also because of the degrading working conditions. I saw teachers lacking money to pay for fuel, medicine and rent. I saw teachers deprived from leisure by the virtue of the workload and for not having any money to spend on social activities. I saw teachers giving up being a teacher, or about to give up, as they did not have the means to continue. I saw teachers crying for having to give up.

"I'm happy with my profession. But all the political pressure we are suffering makes me sad", Mariana, a teacher in her late-twenties from Padoria told me during our interview. "I'm not sure if you know, but I am doing a hairdresser course for financial reasons. Because, although I feel professionally fulfilled, the financial issue…", Mariana hesitated while her eyes were filled with tears. She continued: "A person needs to eat, needs to live. And with a teacher's salary it's not possible. […] Perhaps in a private school, where the salary is much higher". Mariana comes from an upper-middle class family and, as she told me back in December 2017: "It is quite likely that I will have to quit teaching sometime soon. […] my parents gave me a certain life standard of which I don't want to give up and which I know I won't be able to maintain as a teacher". "And I want children. I am realising that, as a teacher, I won't be able to even have children", she told me in a sad tone. Mariana continued: "During

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[153] About US$90.

my undergraduate course, I had the notion that, as a teacher, I was going to be poor, but not this poor. It's not possible to live! I thought I would be able to leave my parent's house, to have a family. But five years have passed by and I am stagnant. I feel quite lost."

One year later, in December 2018, during a visit to Parodia, I was startled when I saw Mariana. She was visibly much skinnier and carrying deep dark circles around her eyes. "I had to take a leave earlier this year. I had depression. Things got too difficult here, with work", she told me when I asked whether she was okay. Mariana was not the only one looking sad that day. Paula, the vice-principal, told me: "I feel like things got worse this year. This was a very difficult year for us". "I feel like we lost our hope", Paula continued, with an expression that mixed disappointment and tiredness. Paula is very active as Parodia's afternoon classes vice-principal. She walks from one side to another throughout the whole afternoon, to make sure students are not escaping from school through the fence holes and to organise the school timetable for the day, as it is common to have at least one teacher missing the work day. Paula is also responsible for opening the school gates for visitors and for talking to parents. In the morning shift, Paula works as school administrator. She is always kind to students and staff, always concerned with whether it is safe for students to leave the school because of the constant muggings in the school area. "It's frustrating that, although it is beyond our reach, we are not able to provide students with a school that has a nice infrastructure, with a better space for them to better live together", Paula told me back in January 2018, when I interviewed her. "Sometimes we end up losing very good professionals because of the financial issue. Because, enjoying [being a teacher] is one thing. The reality is that we need money to pay for our bills by the end of the month", Paula concluded. In 2017, two teachers left Parodia school and went back to live with their families in the interior of Rio Grande do Sul State as they did not have the financial ability to maintain themselves in the city anymore.

In 2017, the teachers with whom I talked reported receiving monthly net salaries around BR$900 for those working 20 hours week, and less than the double for those working 40 hours per week. This is less US$465 per month for full-time teachers. Marina, Parodia's pedagogical coordinator, summarised well the situation that state school teachers have to face: "It's not only the SEO. […] It's a problem of the state. Governments come and go, and the most important issues are always relative to public security, public health and education". She continued: "We see the difficulties we face at the school. It brings stress to every teacher, besides the lack of security, is the lack of resources for education. And now the lack of resources has started to knock on teachers' doors". "We are, for

instance on strike because we've never had, and I work here for more than 30 years, I've never received my salary in instalments. To receive BR$200 [about US$51] in one week, BR$300 [about US$77] in the other week, BR$150 [about US$30] in another. No 13th salary by the end of the year[154]. To have the 13th salary paid in twelve instalments", Marina said. She concluded: "This causes an economic, financial and emotional stress in all of us. Teachers who live only from the teaching income are really going through hardship. Most of us live far from the school. We need to pay for transportation, we need clothing, we need supplies to plan our classes. All of that causes a big emotional chaos inside the teacher". Under these terms, there is a general sense among teachers that the state disregarded them as professionals – and as people and citizens.

7.3. 'They pretend to pay me, I pretend to work'

"Can you imagine what it's like to work for a whole month and not be able to buy yourself an outfit by the end of the month? Not being able to go to a hairdresser to fix your hair? Of course, I am worn out. I have no self-esteem anymore", Vanessa told me with a sad tone of voice. She has been a teacher at Mandacaru for eight years. Vanessa comes from a family of small farmers from inner Rio Grande do Sul State, and used to work in the field as a child. She moved to the city to become a teacher and for many years lived in Vila Lanceiro. In 2017 she moved to another Vila, far from Mandacaru, because of the violence in neighbourhood. "It became too much for me", she told me, after telling a story about how a few months before, she passed by a group of men cutting a body in pieces in broad daylight in the Vila.

Vanessa's most striking feature is her sincerity, especially around how unmotivated she is with her professional career: "I'm too apathetic. I am not the teacher I used to be anymore. I don't have the same dedication. Things were outraging and outraging and outraging me to a point that I don't have the same affection and dedication I used to have". She continued: "The quality of my teaching is terrible. I'm not able to reach them [the students], I'm not able to teach what I must teach. When one has to teach in more than one classroom at the same time; when one has two, three class periods in which one has to look after three different classrooms at the same time, who can someone learn something under these circumstances? Not myself, because I only get worn out. I don't get to teach anything, no one gets to learn anything, and it creates a snowball effect". With an outraged tone,

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[154] The 13th salary (*décimo terceiro salário*) is the institutionalized compulsory form of the Christmas bonus (BRAZIL, 1962).

Vanessa concluded: "What are we forming? *Massa de manobra*[155]! Workers for low skilled functions" – which indicates that the state's externality approach to poverty keeps working quite well.

Vanessa and I had a formal interview in the Mancadaru teachers' room. We sat at one of the green round tables talking, when she took her mobile out of the back pocket of her old pair of jeans and showed me some pictures. The pictures showed the 2010 class of ninth-year students. It was one of Vanessa's first classes as a school teacher. In the picture, I could see students were gathered together in the classroom, smiling. "Can you see how different I used to be?", she asked me. I could. Vanessa looked young, happy. "Look at my students at this picture. How many of them do you think reached something in life? There were forty students in that class. Only three got to a university. Three! I don't see any merit in having three out of forty students getting to an undergraduate course. Here, 99% achieves nothing", Vanessa told me[156].

Vanessa's words say a lot about some patterns I observed in both Mandacaru and Parodia, and that reflect general patterns affecting Brazilian state school routines. One pattern refers to the extent to which teachers' demotivation affected teachers' work patterns. That is, the general effectivity of the teaching and learning processes relative to the formal and traditional school curriculum. A second follows the general disbelief in the possibility of positive changes in the conditions of state education. I shall start by the first pattern. As others have already observed – see, for instance, Bruns and Luque (2015) and Goldmeier (2018) – classes in Brazilian state schools can be highly dysfunctional, and often chaotic. This means classes that start at least ten minutes late; classes that are not delivered at all because teachers missed work; one teacher teaching in more than one classroom at the same time, usually to cover for teachers who missed work; students with reduced classroom time and leaving school early at least once a week; classroom time not well spent, with teachers missing a lot of time trying to impose order and to be heard in overcrowded classes; and not much of the formal school curriculum delivered to students. These are all part of state schools' daily routine.

"They pretend to pay me, and I pretend to work", Vanessa told me during our conversation. "We don't have the courage to admit that our teaching is not good, that we are discouraged, demotivated", she continued. That many teachers were demotivated and that it influenced the extent to which their

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[155] 'Massa de manobra' is a Brazilian expression that refers to a group of people easily manipulated by politicians.
[156] Indeed, Vanessa's classroom reflects to an extreme the statistics that inform that only 21% of Brazilians aged between twenty-five and thirty-four years old has an undergraduate degree (OECD, 2019).

work patters were dispirited was quite clear to me and to everyone else. As Georgina, a middle-aged teacher at Parodia told me during her interview: "The state has been inhuman with us. We don't see this happening to judges, state lawyers. But we see it happening with nurses, cops, teachers. The professions that are needed the most, public health, education, are the ones being affected". She continued: "This makes the professional highly unmotivated. It's disrespectful to us teachers!". Georgina's words echoed the ones from her colleagues, such as Roberta's, who told me: "Sometimes I compare the amount of effort and work I have as a teacher and what I earn, and it is not compatible. It's revolting! Sometimes I just want to drop it all". Roberta was a teacher for more than 23 years. I had the opportunity to teach some of her students at Parodia and I can affirm with certainty that she was beloved by them. She was caring and respectful to them. In December 2017, Roberta told me in tears that she had decided to retire from teaching as she was not able to live on a teacher's salary anymore. She told me teaching was her whole life and that it saddened her to have to give up. "I feel completely unappreciated. Absolutely unappreciated", Roberta told me, referring to the state.

7.4. 'We kill one lion per day'

In the middle of all that, I observed teachers struggling to deliver content while students ran, screamed and slapped each other. I saw teachers shouting at students in a way that made me extremely uncomfortable. "If they don't have anyone to scream at them at home, I will scream at them here!", a teacher once screamed in one of Parodia's corridors. I saw teachers giving up teaching the whole class, attending to only two or three children among thirty students.

"We kill one lion per day. I get to the classroom every day and I don't know how the day is going to unfold", Caio, one of the few male teachers at Mandacaru, told me at one point. Caio lives outside Porto Alegre. He has to catch two buses and a train to get to Mandacaru. He continued: "Many times, I get here prepared to give a class and I hear that some teacher hasn't come to school, and that I must teach in two, sometimes three classrooms at the same time. I then have to figure out what to do, and to change all my planning", Caio continued, with a disappointed tone. Very similarly to Caio, Amanda, a teacher at Paradia, told me: "There are times when I have prepared a lot of material for students and then find myself teaching more than one class at the same time. Then all my planning is ruined".

Teacher's dispirited work patterns are caused by many factors like lack of basic working conditions, tiredness, the feeling of being unappreciated, stress and demotivation. This has at least three immediate effects that, in the end, shapes students' experience at school. Firstly, it negatively affects

students directly, as they are the ones receiving fewer classes, school time and school traditional content. Secondly, it affects other teachers' motivation to work and hence work patterns. Amanda once told me a story that illustrates this point. One day, she entered a classroom at Parodia after a history class and saw that the classroom walls had the students' work, drawings, pinned up. She complimented the students for the drawings and asked whether they had done it during the arts class. "They said they had done it during the history class, that the teacher asked them to draw whatever their wanted, to put their feelings on paper", she told me, affirming that, although the drawings were beautiful, they were not part of the history class content. "So, at the same time I and some of my colleagues are concerned with our classes and with what students are learning, there are other teachers who don't care about their classes, who ask for students to open the book and copy it during class time and consider it a class", Amanda said. She was referring to how some of her colleagues spent the class time poorly by asking the students to copy from the books the lessons that they should teach.

"I see many problems here with the group, the teachers, the school management staff. It seems to me that people are only concerned with themselves", Angela, teacher at Mandacaru, said while complaining about her colleagues. Vanessa also felt annoyed by the way some of her colleagues managed their work. "If everyone made their work right, it would make my work easier," Vanessa told me, after saying that sometimes she wished to quit working at Mandacaru because of her colleagues lack of interest on the students' learning. According to her, "There's always someone trying to cut corners, trying to leave work earlier, trying to make you do her work". She continued: "When a teacher leaves earlier, she is not teaching everything she should", which impacts both students and other teachers.

7.5.   'She shouts at us'

"I need vacations! I am stressing out too much because of my colleagues, not even the students", I heard Gisela, a teacher from Mandacaru, say. "But we end up directing it on them [students]. We end up losing control for any little thing students do", Gisela completed, affirming that she is not a perfect human being. Indeed, the third way in which teachers overwhelmed working patterns affect students relates to students' perceptions about their teachers' behaviours. Students recognise that some teachers lack accountability toward them and feel unappreciated, in a way similar to how teachers view the state. Moreover, some students reported feeling humiliated, disrespected and demotivated by the way teachers and other school staff treat them.

"I don't like this teacher… the one who is in our classroom right now. She doesn't respect us. […] we can't ask her a question without her shouting at us", the fourteen-year-old Bernardo, student at Mandacaru, declared about one of his teachers. He was echoed by his colleague, the fourteen-year-old Rafael, who said: "She calls us assholes and many other things when she gets angry at us". Another statement came from the thirteen-year-old Cristiana, student at Parodia, regarding one of her teachers: "She isn't a calm person. We tried to talk to her, and she shouted at us. We believe she shouldn't be a teacher. Because when someone decides to become a teacher, she must have the responsibility of being patient with us".

During our conversations, most students would directly associate their teacher's behaviour toward them to their interest in the subject being taught. Students tend to have more interest in school subjects that have teachers who students see as nice, concerned and caring. Teachers who behave in an aggressive and disrespectful manner toward students are either feared – and hence a source of anxiety in relation to the teachers' school subject – or seen as someone who does not deserve attention. In either way, students formal learning and their personal and academic self-esteem is negatively affected.

As hooks (2003) discusses, students' academic – and personal – self-esteem is related to the treatment they receive at school from both their peers and teachers. In referring to the ways in which Black students' school performance may be shaped by their experiences with racism, she affirms that "one of the ways racism colonizes the minds and imaginations of black people is through systematic shaming" (hooks, 2003, p. 95). Systematic shaming serves to reinforce the socially constructed stereotype that regards Black children as unworthy. hooks (2003) affirms that, although the mass media have a great role in perpetuating such stereotypes, schools may as well work to reinforce it. This is the case when Bernardo and Rafael, two Black students, hear from their white-European-looking teacher that they are 'assholes'. hooks (2003) argues that Black children whose self-esteem is attacked in public places like schools tend to have trouble developing positive self-concepts. This is especially true for children coming from dysfunctional homes. She, as Carneiro (2005) and Cavalleiro (2012), affirms that Black students school performance is seriously harmed by the shame-based treatment they receive within school environment. Therefore, whether the constraining force of shaming upon students' well-being keeps being ignored "no amount of support staff, positive programming, or material resources will lead to academic excellence" (hooks, 2003, p. 101).

7.6. Striking for what?

During my fieldwork, state education professionals went on strike for three months. They demanded the state to give them better working conditions, the end of salary instalments, and changes in career advancement. In Brazil, a worker's right to strike is guaranteed by law (BRASIL, 1989). Given the general working conditions of state schools teachers, it was very surprising for me to observe the low number of teachers and staff at either schools participating in the strike. There were only two teachers from Parodia's afternoon classes, and just one from Mandacaru's morning classes. When I spoke with teachers and school professionals about this, they gave me four main reasons for not adhering to the strike.

The first reason was that some said they were not on strike because the schools had decided to not take part. "I believe a strike has to be unified. The moment our school, all schools don't participate, the strike is broken. There is no strike", Joelma, finance officer at Mandacaru, told me. She concluded by saying that "The only reason why I didn't go on strike was because the school chose not to participate". The second reason was that those who did not hold a permanent position were afraid that going on strike could result in them being fired. "I feel threatened. Because I work under a non-permanent contract. It's easy for *them* to fire and replace me by a teacher on a permanent contract", Gisela, teacher at Mandacaru, told me during her interview[157].

The third reason was that some thought that strikes would be harmful to students. "I don't go on strike. Not because of my non-permanent work contract, but because it causes harm. It harms the students and me", Joice, lunch lady at Parodia, said. "If I go on strike, the students will be out of school food. As the school doesn't go on strike, if the school lunch lady goes, the children will have nothing to eat", she concluded. Similarly, Cora, teacher at Mandacaru affirmed: "I believe the strike only harms the student. [...] Society doesn't see the strike in the same manner anymore". She continued: "If the public transportation system goes on strike, the whole society stops. Now, when schools stop, society keeps functioning normally". "What have we reached with 94 days of strike? Nothing. Meanwhile, the students are the ones missing classes", Cora concluded. As with many of her colleagues, Cora believed that strikes had become an ineffective instrument. This is the fourth reason school professional gave for not taking part in strikes, even though many of them could recognise that teachers on strike had very good reasons to do so.

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[157] Gisela could not afford losing her job. Like her students, she also lives in a Vila, but in a city outside of Porto Alegre.

"Our politicians don't care about the strike. The strike means nothing to *them*. There's no reason to go on strike given that *they* don't care.", Mariana, teacher at Parodia told me and was echoed by many of her colleagues. "The strike reached nothing!", Cintía a middle-aged teacher from Parodia told during her interview. "I see this strike as a shot in our leg. People from the union are now with their tail between their legs. Unfortunately! Unfortunately. It's sad to say, but our profession is increasingly unappreciated", Cintía continued. "And this is what the government wants. I say all governments, federal, states, *they* all want us to be undervalued. [...] The dumber the people, better for *them*. The more illiterate people, better for *them*", she concluded in an outraged tone.

Not even Miguel, one of Parodia's teachers who went on strike, was sure about its effectiveness. "[The strike] is a mechanism that...", Miguel hesitated, perhaps unsure about how to finish the phrase. "The government breaks the law, resists to the strike, so we don't know. Nobody knows", he said. Miguel continued: "People ask me 'oh, I think the strike is not a useful instrument anymore. What do you think?' I don't know! I really don't know what else to do". Miguel has been a teacher at Parodia for ten years. Our conversation happened on the day the teachers' union decided on the end of the strike. While we talked, we sat on a table on a sidewalk in one of the city's bohemian neighbourhoods, his union colleagues passing by, bringing him news from the union's meeting that was happening not far from there. Miguel is – like myself – a child of the working-class. He was ten years old when his father, a public employee, took him to participate in his first strike. The day I met Miguel for the interview, he looked exhausted. For moments had tears in his eyes, when talking about the strike. "I had to step away from the [teachers' union] movement. I started to have anxiety crises", he told me, when I asked why he was not participating in the union's meeting.

"Can you believe what is happening? It's absurd! People, students' parents, going against the strike", Miguel told me. It was in fact surprising. As a working-class person myself, I learned very young that strikes were a democratic instrument available for the working-class. I learned that strikes served to help the working-class to balance the unfavourable relation of power characteristic of the relationship between bosses and workers within our imperfect democracies. I also learned that strikes are an act of democracy that served to open paths for possible conversations between oppressed working-classes and elected governments, when no other conversation paths were available or only minimally effective – very Marxist of my younger self, I know.

In modern economic systems, the interdependency among different working-class groups may imply that the strike and claims from one group may affect, directly or indirectly, for good or for worse, other groups. A strike of state education professionals should, for instance, have the potential to positively affect not only school staff and teachers, but the school age population in the present and in the future as well. This should be true whether the aim of the strike is, even, the improvement of state school employee's working conditions.

Strikes, nonetheless, may only be effective in contexts in which workers have some bargaining power upon their bosses. This is something that, apparently, Brazilian state school teachers and professionals have lost. How is it possible that a group of professionals who are so important have so little bargaining power? Even the most utilitarian economist is capable of understanding that education should be a priority for every country, but especially for developing ones, as more education – mainly quality education – is related to economic growth (Krueger & Lindahl, 2001; Oketch, 2006; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2011).

Nonetheless, my fieldwork revealed the complete emptiness of state accountability toward teachers and school professionals. The state managed to undermine the strike by holding schools responsible for finding means to reduce the effects of the strike over students and school activity. That is, non-striker schools were advised to do whatever was necessary to keep the schools' activities running normally, regardless of possible striking teachers. It was hence decided that schools working partially should find teachers from their staff who could substitute for colleagues on strike, so that the classes could go on even if some school professionals had stopped. The government also decided that students from schools on strike would be transferred to schools that were partially or fully working. This was how the state, via this government, divided school professionals. Teachers and school staff going on strike meant more – unpaid – work for teachers and for schools not on strike. At the same time, the state's management of the strike left non-striker teachers and school staff feeling responsible for the conditions in which students were left with the development of the strike.

Francisca, the only teacher from Mandacaru morning classes that decided to go on strike, told me about the time she went back to school, in the beginning of December 2017. "When the strike was over, I was received by my colleagues in a hostile manner. As they see it, I wasn't collaborating with the school. I was on strike fighting for them, but they do not see things in this way. They treated me with an extremely hostile approach, revengeful, threatful. I heard I would be allocated in other school,

I would be made available. I was threatened!". At the end of the school year, Mandacaru management decided to ignore Francisca's school subject and approve all students, regardless of Francisca's absence due to the strike. At Parodia, management took another route and decided to allocate non-striking teachers to teach Miguel's classes. The treatment dispensed to him by the school made Miguel uneasy. He told me that, although he cared a lot about his students at Parodia, he had decided to leave the school. Miguel felt disrespected. When discussing her decision to take over half of Miguel's classes during the strike, Marina, a pedagogical coordinator at Parodia, told me: "I told the teachers to not ask me why I'm doing this. […] I am thinking of the students and of the school". "This is not me criticising my colleagues", she said, affirming that she supported the strike. This was confusing, to say the least.

7.7. Doing the possible

Irrespective of any other factor, including their low wages and poor working conditions, I nonetheless saw teachers trying. Trying hard to deliver some content, anything, to anyone. Indeed, with rare exceptions, I saw each and every teacher trying to work with the means they had, given all the restrictions they faced. Sometimes, this surfaced negative emotional responses, such as shouting at students. "I am not perfect in everything I do. Sometimes I get home and realise I could have acted in a different manner", Paula told me, referring to her treatment of students. I observed that often. The negative ways in which teachers carry themselves inside the classroom is a mechanism to deal with the harsh reality with which they are confronted. That is, all the problems students bring from home and that often become so evident inside the classroom.

It is not that teachers are unaware and distant from students' effective life conditions. Nor that they come from privileged elitists backgrounds and hence carry elitists values that position them and their classroom practices far from students' objective life conditions and culture, as Bourdieu (2007) and Freire (1987, 1967) would contend. That school teachers in Latin American countries, including Brazil, generally come from less privileged backgrounds is well documented (Bruns & Luque, 2015; Gentili, 2007, 2015). Nonetheless, I observed that even teachers whose background was more privileged were able to understand students' realities and the limitations they impose on them as teachers and on students as individuals, and to feel compassion. This is the case of teachers like Cora from Mandacaru. "Student's lives are very difficult", she told me during her interview. "I compare them with my teenage son and the social distance is so big", Cora continued. "Douglas [a student]

showed me a video on his phone. It showed a person whose body was cut up. People were laughing and putting the pieces of that body back together. This is their reality", she concluded.

"I have worked with many mistreated children, children who had suffered sexual abuse. We saw all of that and could do nothing. Many complicated situations", Georgina, a teacher for the fourth-year of primary education at Parodia told me during her interview. She started working at Parodia in the middle of 2017, to substitute the teacher who was kidnaped. Georgina had 19 years of experience in working with children living under urban poverty conditions. During her interview, she told me that her work as a teacher makes her feel frustrated for not being able to help her students. She continued talking about the difficult circumstances that she found some of her students in: "The school would trigger the Guardianship Council and they would do nothing. The children would arrive at school in a pitiful condition. I would take her out of the classroom to feed her, give a shower". "It's frustrating because we feel powerless, as a person and as a professional", she said. "We are not prepared to deal with the difficulties that come from home and this prevents us from moving forward. Because it's not only learning problems, it's not a matter of teaching and that's it. What about the human being?", Georgina asked rhetorically, affirming that school children should not only be treated as students, but rather as human beings that come from a complex social reality.

Very similarly, Barbara, a novice teacher from Parodia, expressed how powerless she feels when confronted with the problems her students bring from home. "When I started teaching, I would get home and burst into tears", she told me. "On the other day a student asked me for help to leave drug trafficking. He told me that he wanted to leave but he was afraid that people from his gang would kill him. I didn't know what to do. There was nothing I could do", Barbara said. She continued: "I saw it happening to many students, to leave the gang and being killed. So, what could I tell him? 'Would you like to die? Then stay. Or run to a place where no one knows you, because, unfortunately, there's no other way'. But how can I, as a teacher, to tell my student to keep working for a drug gang?", Barbara asked rhetorically – she, like Georgina, was looking for answers she could not find.

By saying that teachers understand students' realities I do not mean that they subjectively blame students. Nor do I mean that they regard students as violent or lazy beings who, as a product of their context, have no interest in schooling, in contrast to what Zaluar (2004) and Telles (2016) found for teachers working in Rio favelas. Instead, my evidence shows that teachers in general recognise the conditions under which their students were immersed. On the one hand, many times teachers are the

only ones with whom students can share their daily experiences, but on the other hand teachers are the ones dealing with some of the consequences the rough social environment has on students on a daily basis. "When I stop to talk to them and ask how the weekend was, all they talk about is muggings, death and shootings. They tell stories about the drug trafficking that shock me. And all of that is part of their everyday life", Clarissa, a teacher at Parodia, told me.

In the same vein, it is not the case that the elitist and colonial formal school curriculum subjectively excludes poor students from opportunities to learn – as Bourdieu (2007) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) would argue. Indeed, only a very small part of the formal curriculum was delivered during classes. "You have to know that you're not going to save everyone. It's not possible to save everyone," said Clarissa at Parodia. "But you can save one or two. Around these two there will be another one or two who might be saved. This is the way to multiply", she concluded. These feelings of understanding students' circumstances and of doing the teaching with them in mind was omnipresent in teachers' narratives about their work.

"The sixth-year students can hardly read. I keep thinking of what I am doing wrong. The school keeps pressuring me to teach the whole content expected for sixth-years, but what is the point of teaching all the content if the students are not learning?", Gisela, a teacher at Mandacaru, told me. Thus, provided teachers' effective working conditions and their almost absolute lack of means to deal with the extent to which students' general life circumstances affect students' life inside school, teachers tend to adapt the way they carry themselves and their work patterns. This is less obvious in the formal curriculum being taught, partially due to the effective conditions they found inside the classroom. It is also because of teacher's diminished expectations about student learning. "Getting into the classroom and being able to reach 20% of the students is already a big victory", Miguel (Parodia), told me. Under these terms, far from being villains, teachers are, like everyone else, trying to manage their duties as they can, provided that their circumstances as state school teachers render them with limited means to agency.

Indeed, the narratives I brought up in this chapter converge to show how the state's externality approach to poverty reaches the management of educational resources in a way that leaves teachers and school staff to struggle within subhuman work and life conditions. Being a state school teacher in Brazil today is a challenge. I imagine that it is even a bigger challenge in 2019 than it was in 2017 when I engaged in my fieldwork. After the time-lapse of these two years, in addition to having no

improvements in their situation whatsoever, teachers are acutely being treated as the enemies of the nation. The Ministry of Education even issued an official statement asking students and parents to denounce teachers who use class hours to 'indoctrinate students'. This means to discuss any matter that contradicts the interests of the elected federal government, which includes, for instance, feminism, gender related issues, Paulo Freire's critical theory, politics in general, and even discussions that reflect on the Brazilian Cold War dictatorship period as a dictatorship and not as a revolution[158]. Thus, in general, state school professionals have their freedoms limited by low salaries, long working hours and high workload, poor working conditions, and general societal distrust. Such conditions leave them to deal with high levels of stress, with harmful feelings of despair and frustration, and with limited possibilities for agency in both their professional and personal life. This works not only to create docility among state school professionals, but also among students who end up studying at wrecked state schools, being taught by dispirited teachers.

Docility is not, however, a feature that defines poor urban populations. As I discuss in Chapter Eight, people are prone to build themselves some of the freedoms that they are denied by the state's necropolitical management of poverty.

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[158] See, for instance, Estadão conteúdo (2019, April 28), Lidner (2019, April 9), Uribe and Carvalho (2019, August 9), O Globo (2019, September 3), Folha de São Paulo (2019, April 3).

Chapter Eight – Done waiting

8.1.   Introduction

I interviewed Lídia, Caren and Cristina, students at Parodia, on a rainy July afternoon. It was almost the end of the school day. During the Brazilian winter, from June to September, all school's afternoon classes become shorter, so that students and teachers can leave the school before dark. This was the solution Parodia found to manage the school life amid the danger from constant muggings of teachers, staff and students around the school. Everyone has to leave the school, which has to be locked before the evening. Lídia, Caren and Cristina were, however, quite undaunted. Even after we were told, perhaps for the second time already, that the school was closing and we had to leave, they wanted to stay. They wanted to keep talking and telling stories about their lives because, as Caren told me before we left, talking helped them to unburden.

Caren was a smiling thirteen-year-old Black student. She would spend most of her time in the classroom talking to her peers she found sat close to her. Those peers usually included the twelve-year-old Lídia and the thirteen-year-old Cristina. Like Caren, Cristina had little time outside of school to play with her friends. They both had strict responsibilities at home, such as taking care of their siblings and of domestic tasks. Cristina had an additional concern with school, as her father made it clear how important it was for him for her to progress at school by beating her after she failed the sixth-year of primary education the previous year. Indeed, all of the girls spoke of having been beaten by their parents, but Cristina was the only one of the three who was beaten by the figure of a man, her father.

Lídia is also very talkative. She would come talk to me every time she would find me seated somewhere around the schoolyard. She would tell me stories about boys, her friends, and her teachers. It was Lídia who, while we were all seated around a table during the interview, started to talk about the violence in Vila Lanceiro in response to my question of whether they could play with their friends outside school, in their neighbourhood. None of them could. In explaining why, Lídia told a story about a shooting that happened a few months before in an alley close to her house. "I was sleeping, dreaming about a shooting. Then, I woke up and I heard that *pow pow*", Lídia said, imitating the sound of gunfire. That day, "three were shot and one was killed", she told us. "Many people are

killed here", Caren said, in response to Lídia's story. "I'm afraid that something may happen with my family. If it happens to someone else's family, it can happen to mine too", Cristina completed.

The conversation that followed illustrates the extent to which urban violence is a part of Vila Lanceiro residents' lives. "I'm afraid of getting shot, of something happening to my parents", Lídia said. "I'm afraid to die. I keep think about how it must feel to get shot. Do you think it hurts?", Caren asked us, to which Lídia replied: "No. It doesn't hurt. Only after two hours that you feel like something is burning". "My father was shot in the butt and in the knee", Caren told us, and continued: "He says he felt nothing. He was at a party and then some guys entered and started shooting, you know?! And he stayed down. When he got up, he saw he was bleeding and he didn't know why". "I think that Caren's father may have been shot during a party that my father used to promote", Lídia said, and continued telling that story, about the day her father was at his party in Vila Lanceiro and a group of men walked in shooting. According to Lídia, that day, "A lot of people were shot".

Cristina had her own stories too. "My father has been shot in the shin. My grandfather had to take the bullet out of my father's leg using a pliers", she told us. "Why was your father shot?", I asked her. Cristina stopped and took a second to think, I believe, of how she could answer my question. "He was…", she started to say, but hesitated again. "I don't know what he was doing in a building somewhere, and the security guy didn't let him in", she then told us. "Then, when he walked out, the security guy shot him in his leg. He shot back and killed that security guy", Cristina continued. "Then, my father was arrested. He put an ankle monitor and stayed with it until last year", she concluded her story – in a way that did not implicate her dad.

In this chapter I present some of the ways through which residents in poor urban communities may engage collectively to build their own freedoms in response to the state's externality treatment. I look especially into how dwellers' collective ties can create freedoms related to public security, such as the freedom of not being killed by the local drug gang. I argue that the state's management of organised crime in poor urban settings makes residents vulnerable both to the action of the state police and to the action of drug gangs. In finding themselves living in a violent environment and with limited opportunities for agency, Vila residents establish unstable networks of security and protection among themselves. These are responsible for making both freedoms and unfreedoms in a complex process that allows Vila dwellers to resist collectively as a community – and hence against the state's necropolitical management of their lives.

8.2.   The epitome of resistance

In Chapter Five, I presented Auyero's (2011a, 2011b, 2012) 'patient model' as one of the ways the state creates docility among poor urban populations. Auyero's (2011a, 2011b, 2012) observed that poor people who depended on state services tended to learn that manifesting dissatisfaction to the way in that the state kept them waiting for accessing welfare services was unfruitful. I found this to be partially true. At both schools and in the community, I saw waiting also producing knowledge of another kind: people's deliberate action toward finding solutions for the problems they face as a result of the state's necropolitical treatment of poverty. At the school level, parents would often react and express their dissatisfaction to teachers and administrators, which resulted in an often-tense relationship between the schools and parents. "Parents appear in school just to fight", Cátia, Parodia's school principal, told me when I interviewed her. I heard this same statement from several of the schools' management and teachers. Maria explicitly told me, referring to Mandacaru's vice-principal: "Sometimes you have to put them [school management and teachers] in their places. Because, if you let them, they will humiliate you. The first ones to do so are the school principals. If you allow it, they will be the first ones to scream at you". She continued: "I told her already that I may end up denouncing her [the vice-principal] to the police. She respects no one".

Maria had already denounced a teacher from Mandacaru to the state Guardianship Council: "I went to the school because I had to do Bianca's annual reenrolment. [The teacher] told me that my daughter had never put her feet in school; that Bianca was never a student at Mandacaru". She continued: "I had already warned her that the day she picked a fight with my daughter, she would have picked a fight with me". After lot of yelling and cursing, Maria walked to the Guardianship Council Office and denounced the teacher for refusing to reenrol her daughter. At the end, the teacher was transferred to another school.

This active attitude also appeared in the narrative of Márcia, Maria's cousin. Referring to Elaine, the principal at Mandacaru, Márcia said: "She is never at school. You can ask her". Márcia pointed to her niece, who was also a student at Mandacaru and was present during our conversation. Márcia's niece confirmed that Elaine was in fact an absent principal. Márcia continued: "It's very difficult to find her at school. You ask to talk to her, and people say she is in a meeting. But it's a lie. Once I replied: 'I know she is not here. In which room is she having the meeting? Because she isn't in any of the school rooms. Unless she is having the meeting in the toilet'". Márcia furthermore affirmed that some secondary education students were planning to protest the SEO, in case the school was prohibited

from offering classes in 2018 for the third year of secondary education. In 2016, Mandacaru was authorised to offer secondary education classes for the first time, after students and school representatives organised a petition to the SEO and demanded the classes. In 2017, the school's secondary education classes were restricted to first and second years.

During my fieldwork, I observed how both patient and active attitudes in response to the state-imposed waiting took different forms among different groups. I saw teachers actively fighting for their rights, engaging in strikes and protests. At the same time, I saw teachers patiently waiting for their conditions to be somehow changed. I saw schools organising bazaars to raise funds to pay monthly bills, and saw a school completely paralysed because of its daily financial difficulty. I saw Cátia, principal at Padoria, asking parents for help, as she found herself out of options in face of SEO disregard with the school's crumbling infrastructural conditions. Cátia explicitly asked parents to organise a protest, to occupy the SEO's building, or do whatever was necessary to attract the SEO's attention to the school's plight. "I don't know what to do anymore. I've done everything that is under my control. Now it's your turn to try", she said for the few parents who were present at the meeting she convened. I also saw parents refraining from protesting and students conforming to the injustices of their schools' and general life situation. At the same time, I saw other students rebelling, actively complaining about their teachers to school management staff or to their teachers about their school's conditions.

Thus, my observations showed a hybrid between patience and a deliberate active attitude. I also found that, in some cases, a compliant attitude was essentially motivated by a complete lack of faith in state's accountability. Unlike Auyero (2011a, 2011b, 2012), however, I saw that some people learned to be compliant precisely because they waited for nothing, no improvement or aid, to come from the state. This was especially true regarding school professionals, as I discussed in Chapter Seven.

For people living under conditions of urban poverty, waiting for nothing to come from the state may also create a knowledge that, if the state does not fulfil their minimal basic needs, they must build them by themselves. This is clearly the case of urban poor communities that are in a constant process of self-building and self-regulation (Holston, 2008).

8.3. Making freedoms

As I showed in Chapters Four and Five, poor urban communities lack some basic conditions, such as urban infrastructure, access to legal electricity, piped water, internet, public transportation, and public security. I argued that the structural conditions of such communities are not incidental. They are a product of a set of palliative state policies that works to maintain poverty by containing it on the one hand, and creating docility among poor populations on the other. Such a treatment – the externality treatment, I contend – helps to preserve the status quo by upholding the unequitable power relations that sustain it. Thus, the fact that poor communities endeavour to build some of the conditions to which they are denied can be seen as an act of resistance against the state's treatment of them. Under contexts of domination, resistance manifests as a means to freedoms, entailing people's struggles toward changing unfavourable power relations (Hamilton, 2014).

Indeed, in face of growing lived difficulties, poor urban communities are impelled to develop community ties and forms of collective organisation that are crucial for the community's survival (Auyero & Kilanski, 2015; Auyero, 2000; Fernandes, 2014; Rodgers, 2014). These social ties shape the freedoms a community's residents can individually and collectively enjoy, given the restrictions such communities face. This in turn shapes the community's capacity for collective action and organisation (Ibrahim, 2006, 2008; Ballet et. al. 2007; Pelenc at. al. 2015; Sharif, 2018). As for Vila Lanceiro, it carries a long-lasting culture of resistance through community organisation, initiated back in the 1950's. The main goal was to demand collectively from Porto Alegre municipality the basic services the Vila needed. Thus, the parts of the Vila which dwellers had more means to organise themselves to place their demands saw more investments in infrastructure, which implied in an uneven, although generally sparse, development (Porto Alegre, n.d.)[159].

In addition to political bargaining, another solution found by the Vila dwellers for the area's historical state of abandonment was to protest, a practice that is still very much part of the residents' lives. The problem of the sewage running free in one of the Vila's main streets for months in 2017, which I mentioned in Chapter Four, was only solved when the residents organised a series of protests. They closed the street with old car tyres and pieces of wood. By that time, the sewage had invaded the yard of houses located at the lower section of the street. A TV station appeared to cover the protest and

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[159] These conditions are not exclusive to Vila Lanceiro. In anthropologic research conducted in *Morro da Cruz,* another Vila in Porto Alegre, Shirley (1997) shows how the state services available in *Vila Morro da Cruz* were reached through political bargain and were highly insufficient and inadequate.

only then did the municipality send a team to solve the problem. This is another way that state's externality approach to poverty works. First, by the state palliatively meeting some of people's urgent demands when they become too public. Secondly, by the media's selective coverage of the problems inflicted on poor people's lives. While the problem of the sewage running in that particular street was solved, the situation inside the Vila generally continues to be the same[160].

Mandacaru school, built in the 1950's, is also a product of the community's claims and struggle[161]. The knowledge that emerged from the state's externality treatment does not only take the form of protesting. Vila Lanceiro has developed its own informal networks and has found its own minimal means to enjoy a range of freedoms. For instance, due to the sparse presence of public transportation, some Vila residents created their own ridesharing service. It works based on the rate established by standard ridesharing applications, but all drivers are Lanceiro dwellers and users do not need to access it through a mobile application. The drivers have a phone line and a fixed waiting point in the middle of the Vila, accessible to anyone by foot.

Furthermore, as in many favelas in Rio de Janeiro (Salomon, 2016, July 27; Mendes, 2017, March 17), residents have created online networks, via digital social networks and instant messaging applications. These are used to trade goods and services among them and to discuss and agree on possible lines of action for the community's problems. The online networks also serve to inform other dwellers regarding public security related issues, such as the presence of the police or the occurrence of shootings, killings, or of curfew imposed by the local traficantes. Vila dwellers organise entertainment online as well, including an annual soccer championship and gather around a traditional *Escola de Samba* – or Samba School, a community-based musical institution.

In addition, young Vila residents collectively organise street parties, to which they call *Social.* As Júlia, a black fourteen-year-old student from Parodia told me: "Social is when the young people take drinks to the streets, put on loud music, and drink beer with their friends". Street parties like the 'Social' and

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[160] Indeed, perhaps a whole PhD. dissertation could be written on the role of the media to put forward the discourse and techniques of social control implied by the state's externality approach to poverty. Such discussion is nonetheless out of the scope of this thesis.

[161] Located outside the Vila, Parodia School holds a different history. Although nowadays its students' body is 95% formed of Vila Lanceiro dwellers, it is a state school that was founded for and used to be attended by middle and upper-middle classes children, as it is located at an upper-middle class neighbourhood. As Vila Lanceiro's population increased and other Vilas were built in the surrounds of Parodia's neighbourhood, the school saw its clientele change: the middle-class students disappeared, and the school became a Vila school outside the Vila.

Rio's *Bailes funk* are often associated with the presence of violence and drug dealers. This argument is often used to disqualify the social and the cultural aspect of such parties (Silva, 2016; Pedro, 2017). I have been to Bailes funk in Rio's favelas and, although the presence of drug dealers is noticeable, even in the presence of on-duty policemen, the most prominent characteristic of the Baile funk is how it brings the community together as a manifestation of local culture (Sneed, 2008). It also provides favela dwellers of all ages with entertainment that they may not have otherwise, given the restrictions they face in their daily life. Such restrictions include, but are not limited to, lack of resources to consume other forms of entertainment in other parts of the city (Cecchetto, 1999). In many communities in Rio, the Bailes funk have infrastructure, including the presence of a stage, deejays and informal sale of beverages[162]. The 'Social' carries the same cultural and social appeal of the Bailes funk, with the difference that the 'Social' does not have the structure of some Rio's Baile Funks[163] (Pimentel, 2017). The 'Social' is a source of entertainment for young Vila dwellers that is completely collectively organised, akin to a street potluck party. There is no structured commerce, stage or deejays. People just gather on the streets, mostly over weekends, to have fun and celebrate.

8.4.   'Rajada de tiro'

"[Pro]Fessora, if you decide to go to a Social it's better for you to already take your coffin with you. Seriously, [pro]fessora!", Daniel, a thirteen-year-old student from Parodia told me. "It's not possible to go to Social anymore. It's too dangerous, teacher.", Júlia continued. When I asked whether the danger was due to shootings, Júlia said: "It's not only shootings, It's *rajada de tiro*!". 'Rajada de tiro' – roughly translated as 'blast of machine gunfire' – was an expression often used to characterise the Social, as the presence of local drug dealers attracts rival gangs. The latter, taking advantage of the fact that the Social happens on wide streets, and not at alleys, would often invade the parties to get Vila Lanceiro drug dealers in a more vulnerable position. Because of shootings, the Social became a place of both freedoms and unfreedoms for Vila dwellers.

"People do the Social there on the street. Then, the contras [the rival gang] come and *a bala pega[164]*, in the middle of the street. Then, everybody runs. Those who don't will never run again", Maria once

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[162] The most famous Bailes funk receive people from outside the favela where it is held, being not only a source of entertainment for dwellers but as well of income coming from the informal sale of beverages.
[163] The Social is much similar to São Paulo's favelas' *Fluxo* parties, as described by Pedro (2017).
[164] 'A bala pega' is an expression that in this case indicates that shootings happen frequently.

told me, laughing. The first time I went to Maria's house, back in December 2017, we heard a gunshot. "Is that a gunshot?", I asked, already sure that it was[165]. "It is. It happens sometimes", one of Maria's daughters replied, also laughing. "Someone must be testing the gun", Maria explained to me. If it was something to worry about, we would have heard more than just one gunshot – I knew that too. Maria then continued to tell me that, irrespective of the negative image it carried, she found it safer to live in her alley. Yet, she continued: "They used to kill people and throw the bodies in the valão. This alley used to be known by most people as the *beco da morte* [death alley]. They used to kill people from around and throw them there, dead. Until today some people call it beco da morte". "One day I woke up and there were many neighbours close to the valão, looking on. A heavy rain was falling, and the body was moving from one side to another", Maria said. According to her, "Many people don't come down" the alley where she lives.

When describing the movement of the dead body in the water, Maria had a good laugh. I first went to Mandacaru in April 2017. The then vice-principal, Ana, told me that things had been worse in 2014 and 2015 when, because of the drug gang war, several students had to be transferred to other schools. This was the case for students who lived in neighbourhoods controlled by drug gangs rival to the one that controls drug dealing in Vila Lanceiro. Others, for whom it was not safe to go to school at all, had just dropped out. The gang war got to a point when, in 2016, a decapitated head of a man allegedly connected to the gang that controls the drug dealing in Vila Lanceiro was found on one of the Vila's main streets, inside a box. The body was found in a different neighbourhood, rolled in a duvet on which was written, "*Bala nos Bala, passa nada*": "Bullets for the bullets, nothing goes through"[166]. The killers used the victim's Facebook page to post photos of his decapitated head, surrounded by guns, and of his body rolled in the duvet.

"Now things are calmer", Ana told me, back in April 2017. Whether things were really calmer was something that I asked myself throughout my fieldwork. While writing this chapter, in October 2018, two young black men were killed in Vila Lanceiro and other three people were shot – an eight-year-old child, a fourteen-year-old boy and a sixty-two-year-old disabled man. Men who were passing in cars and motorcycles shot multiple times and drove away. The victims were in front of the school where I had worked in 2013. It happened as students were leaving class. Later that day I was told

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[165] Growing up in Baixada Fluminense has taught me how to easily differentiate gunshots from other similar noises, as some types of fireworks and firecrackers.
[166] *Bala na cara* designates the local drug gang.

that one of the assassinated men was a first-year high school student from Mandacaru. Carla, one of his teachers, told me that he was twenty years old, older than the expected age for his school year, and was a dedicated student. Carla also said that the school was unsure of whether to pay any sort of tribute to the student, given that there was uncertainty as to whether he might have been involved with the local drug gang. If this was the case, there could be retaliations toward the school. "We thought things were better, now I don't know anymore", Carla said, referring to the war.

Earlier, in April 2018, a woman was killed, and other six persons were injured in the Vila under similar circumstances, with men shooting people on sidewalks from inside a moving car. Police found no evidence that the people injured were predefined targets or involved with local gangs. They were just Vila dwellers walking on the street. In July 2018, a man was executed with multiple shots, also by men in a car, after entering the Vila to deliver a pizza. The two young men executed in 2017, to whom I referred in the introduction of Chapter Four, were also killed by men passing in a moving car. "They were ordered to kneel on the street", Ricardo, a Black sixteen-year-old student from Mandacaru told me. He knew the two boys. "They didn't ask the boys any questions", Ricardo said, and the boys were executed without being asked or told a thing. Something similar happened in February 2016, when a group of men in three different cars drove around Vila Lanceiro shooting randomly at houses and stores. Two people died, five were injured, and a total of 556 rifle bullets, reserved for exclusive army use, were found along the streets – personal safety is a freedom that Vila dwellers had to learn how to build themselves.

8.5. 'We can't think only about ourselves'

"One thing that I don't like in Vila Lanceiro is the bad reputation it has; this thing of everybody there being a thief, of all we have there is mugging. Vila Lanceiro is not only that. We enjoy going to church, we enjoy having friends, going to the Social", Isabel, a well-articulated Black thirteen-year-old student at Parodia, told me, when I asked whether there was something in the Vila she did not like. "I'm used to playing on the streets. With the shootings, I already know where to run, where to not run. I know everybody. I'm used to it", Hortência, a thirteen-year-old student at Parodia, said, before explaining that, as her father is an important gang member, she, unlike most of her peers, feels protected walking around the Vila. "No one does nothing against me because everybody knows me and knows that I'm my father's daughter", Hortência concluded. Daniel, her classmate, also enjoyed the same privilege:

"I have lived there my whole life. Everybody knows me. I'm used to it". Daniel continued: "No one messes with me there [in the Vila]. They say, 'this one is Sandra's son, don't even look at him'".

It is well known that people can adapt their preferences to their life circumstances (Nussbaum, 2000, 2001). Nonetheless, more than psychologically adapting, people living under harsh circumstances may also develop collective mechanisms to help them cope and navigate unfavorable conditions. This is related to resisting harmful contexts and to develop collective freedoms through collective resistance. For instance, several times during my conversation with students and Vila dwellers, the idea of being known, and, therefore, seen as part of the community, appeared as a condition for being safe. This can be considered in two different, although interrelated senses: in terms of the preservation of life, and in terms of caring.

On the day I interviewed Maria, when we got to her house, her husband told her that one of the children she took care of had run away. It was a three-year-old boy. Maria immediately blamed Bianca, her daughter, who was supposed to take care of the children while Maria was away, fetching me from Mandacaru. My first reaction, in addition to feeling guilty for having taken Maria from her duties, was to think of all the horrible things that could have happened to the little boy. Had he fallen from the bridge that connected Maria's house to the alley into the sewage? Could he have drowned in the sewage somewhere? Yet, everyone around me looked calm. We went searching for the boy and took a different path, through an alley I had never been to. We got to a street, where three people sat on the sidewalk in front of a house. "Have you seen a boy passing around here?", Maria asked them. "Yes. He was barefooted and going to his house. So, we accompanied him", a lady replied. "I don't know what to do with this kid. He always runs away", Maria answered while already walking in the direction of the child's home, located a little further ahead on that same street. "Aren't the boy's parents going to be upset at you because he ran away?", I asked, afraid of what we were going to find once we got to the house. "No, they've known me for a very long time. The kid runs way. They know". They did know. The house was located at the end of a corridor that gave access to other houses as well. We entered without knocking. The kid's father came, sleepy and smiley, to hand the boy over to Maria. "He ran again", she said. "I don't have his flipflops", the father answered. "He must have left them in my place. I'll carry him". Maria carried the crying little boy back to her house, safe and sound.

Maria embodied a strong sense of care. Despite sometimes not having enough food to feed her own family, she gathered clothes and food for homeless people living at streets in downtown Porto Alegre. "We can't think only about ourselves", she told me when I asked why she engaged in such actions. I

saw similar behaviour among students, who would share water and food, even when they did not have enough for a single person. Students would also share things like clothes and school supplies. Another example comes from stories like Paulo's, a Black fourteen-year-old student at Parodia. Paulo lost his mother to cancer at the beginning of 2017. He had no one else in the Vila to go to, and his neighbour (who was also the grandmother of another Parodia student) informally took full responsibility for taking care of him. "She [the neighbour] took care of him while my daughter was sick and now he is living with her", Paulo's grandmother told me when I spoke to her in Parodia. She lived in another city and was trying to organise to bring Paulo to live with her the following year. Being part of the community thus implied participating in informal networks of care and trust. These could potentially develop essential collective and individual freedoms not only related to care, but also to fruitful social relations, a sense of affiliation and mutual respect, and of safety nets, related to both body integrity and health (Nussbaum, 2000, 2011; Biggeri & Mehrotra, 2011). These are particularly important in that they help foster collective resistance in poor communities.

8.6. The state *versus* organised crime?

Inversely, not being seen as part of the community, and therefore not deserving of trust, was not only associated to a lack of caring, it could mean a lack of deservedness to live. Vanessa, a teacher at Mandacaru, once told me that, although she had lived in the Vila for a few years, she felt a need to move out. She was afraid people could find out that her partner, who had moved in with her, was from Rio de Janeiro. As an outsider, his life could be in danger. After the assassination of the two teenage boys in the Vila in September 2017, she moved to another working-class neighbourhood, not that close to the school and even further from the city centre. The boys had been her students and she had passed by and talked to them ten minutes before they were murdered. A few days after the assassination, I found her in Mandacaru teacher's room, close to despair. She walked back and forth around the room and repeated that she could not live like that anymore. "Have you seen what happed to the *guris*?", she repeated to every teacher who entered in the room, "I saw them. I talked to them. They were close to the gas station. It's unbelievable!".

Indeed, Vanessa's fear was far from groundless. The gang that controls drug dealing in the Vila maintains strict and ruthless control over outsiders walking through their territories (Azevedo, Cipriani, & Lima, 2018, September 22). Given the state of war caused by drug gangs' territorial dispute, being known appears almost as a precondition for being alive. I tend to view organised crime as Denyer Willis (2015, p. 30), who defines it as "a security-oriented collective, often membership

and identity based, and usually with subdivisions of labor that are engaged in the provision of goods and/or services deemed illegal by empirically existing states". He shows how criminal groups like the *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (PCC) and the *Comando Vermelho* (CV) exist both in the margins and as marginalising forces that, along with the state, function as mechanisms of social control within, among and beyond poor communities.

As Denyer Willis (2015) argues, the fact that criminal groups carry their own necropolitical logic, and hence their own rules to control life and death, does not necessarily imply that are a parallel form of sovereignty, opposed to the state. Nor does it mean that criminal groups exist in the void left by weak or non-existing forms of state sovereignty. Rather, organised crime exists, and has existed throughout history, as part of an exercise of state sovereignty based on a necropolitics that stratifies the population according to levels of subjective citizenship that in practice determine who is entitled to live and who is not. In other words, unlike what authors such as Misse (2008) and Adorno (2002) would argue, Denyer Willis (2015) defends that criminal groups and the violence they bring do not occur because the state lacks a monopoly on violence. It is exactly the opposite: the state's management of life and death within urban spaces, and its decisions regarding who is entitled to live, encompasses a sort of negligence that enables the existence of criminal groups. These groups, although often understood as a counterforce, work under the same logic of the state's necropolitics. They are, hence, a constitutive and complementary part of the state's everyday management of life and death.

Thus, in relationships between the state and organised crime in democracies of the Global South, the line between legal and illegal has long been blurry. Arias (2006, p. 35) shows how in Rio's favelas, the state appears both as a part of armed conflicts against drug dealers and as "weapons in the hands of traffickers sold by corrupt officers and soldiers". Drug trafficking power and activities in poor communities do not exist in the vacuum of the state, or despite its presence. They exist as part of a complex network of power and private interests of which state is an indispensable part (Arias, 2006). Other authors have argued that organised crime survives in the Global South because of the states' concealed complacence, materialised the international the war on drugs (Zaluar, 2000; Roberts & Chen, 2013).That is, the international war on drugs pushes commerce and production of illicit drugs to poor areas in developing countries, often characterised by corrupt state policing institutions, which enables illicit drug-related activities. This criminalises the poor, who, almost invariably, are mostly Black.

In Brazil, the state's management of the prison system is perhaps one the most evident spheres of state's tacit agreement with criminal organizations. Large-scale Brazilian criminal groups, such as PCC and CV, and even the now-extinct *Falange Gaúcha* from Porto Alegre, were formed by detainees inside Brazilian prisons. Initially, these prisoners' associations had as a general goal to react to the precarious, subhuman and extremely violent conditions of life inside Brazilian prisons (Cipriane, 2016; Denyer Willis, 2015). In groups, the detainees had more means to demand and negotiate conditions with state actors inside prisons, as well to protect themselves against both the state and other detainees' violent actions. Over time, and due to state's purposeful and corruptive inability to manage life in prison, criminal groups not only grew to almost entirely govern Brazilian prisons and prison life, but also to manage massive criminal enterprises across the country from inside self-regulated state prisons (Biondi, 2017). In Brazil, even criminals get tired of waiting for the state to meet their needs.

Seen from this perspective, the state's necropolitical governance of poor populations also happens through the careful management of crime. As a result, individuals living in poor urban communities are the major victims of the state's management of drug trafficking and drug criminal organisations. They are also the ones who suffer most from criminal organisations and drug trafficking within poor communities, including dying from participation in drug trafficking activities. Zaluar (2000, p. 671), for instance, shows how in Rio de Janeiro favelas*:*

> "The poor *favelados* involved in crime-related activities have either died or have gone to prison, even if they held minor roles in the crimes committed. Most of the petty dealers who are now in this risky activity, excluding the owner or trafficker and his managers, live as poorly (but much more perilously) as their neighbours. Most of what they earn, however, ends up in other hands, especially those of corrupt policemen, and ruthless and powerful traffickers embedded within illegal drug networks that links *favelas* to other part of the city, state, country and beyond."

Beyond large-scale organised criminal associations, the state also directly imposes a policy of violence and a violation of basic civil rights within poor communities and against underprivileged populations (Caldeira, 2000; Caldeira & Holston, 1999; Arias, 2006; Perlman, 2000), as I discussed in Chapter Five. The state thus maintains its action *against* drug trafficking to a low level, hardly affecting the drug trade, but rather directly hits the urban poor who are already directly harmed by the actions of drug gangs within peripheries. In these terms, it is difficult, if not completely mistaken,

to separate the action of criminal gangs in peripheral urban areas in Brazilian cities from the necropolitical power that guides state action upon poor populations.

8.7.   They are just *guris*

Some parts of Vila Lanceiro are mazes, formed by narrow alleys only accessible on foot. I never got to take a picture of the alleys as whenever we approached one, Maria would ask me to put my mobile away. Several alleys were dominated by drug dealers, who would take advantage of the protection offered by the difficult access to establish *biqueiras* along the narrow paths. Biqueiras – also known as 'bocas de fumo' – are the spaces where small drug dealers negotiate and sell illicit substances (Hirata & Grillo, 2017). Several were located close to the Mandacaru school, including one right beside the school's wall, in an alley at the end of an accessible street only three blocks from a major city avenue. This explained why the area around the school was so susceptible to shootings, especially at night: it was the easiest way for rival gangs to confront the gang that controls drug dealing in Vila Lanceiro, without having to enter the Vila.

The particular biqueira by the school was always full of 'guris', including some of the research participant students. I say 'guris' because they were in fact boys – young Black skinned boys, of short to medium stature, appearing to be aged between fourteen and sixteen years old. They sat on an improvised stair that marked the end of the street, visibly carrying mobile phones, or stand in different places throughout the nearby alleys. I never saw a gun on any of them. This made sense, since the students were constantly telling me that the local gang would not walk around the Vila showing off guns. "In Rio favelas the mates carry their guns around, right?", Emanuel, a Black fourteen-year-old student at Mandacaru once asked me, while some of his colleagues gathered around me, anxious for my reply. Emanuel was part of the 'repeater class', in which students, particularly boys, would often question me about life in Rio favelas, as they imagined it. They would ask me about Baile funk, gun shootings and, especially, about the criminal organisation Comando Vermelho, which, according to them, were "*fechados com*" (associated with) the local gang. There was a fascination in their frequent questioning that I found frustrating.

"In some parts of favela, yes, they may carry guns", I replied to Emanuel that day. "Don't they do that here?", I asked Emanuel. "No, are you crazy? There's always children around", he replied. Emanuel's emphasis on calling me crazy for speculating whether the Vila drug dealers would show off their guns contrasted with the gang's reputation. In the Vila, drug dealing was mainly controlled by a criminal

organisation, the *Bala na Cara* (BNC) – literally translated as, 'Bullet to the Face'. Unusually, the BNC was not born inside a prison, but it is rather from a Vila with a long history of violence among rival families. The BNC started not as a drug related gang, but as a group of hired bandits, who would perform freelance services, mainly assassination and robbery, for the city's drug related gangs (Cipriani, 2016). The name 'Bala na Cara' refers to the cruelty with which the gang kills: a gunshot in the face takes the life of the rival and hurts the rival's family, who cannot hold a traditional funeral ritual by honouring the deceased with an open coffin (Cipriani, 2016).

As a criminal group that emerged from and grew because of violence, the BNC established themselves as the most violent criminal group in the city in the 2000s, and are now the main criminal group in Rio Grande do Sul State (Azevedo at. al., 2018, September 22). BNC gained territory around the city by subduing members of rival gangs and bringing their biqueiras into BNC's domain. BNC coerced owners of biqueiras around the city's Vilas to work for the them, in exchange to not getting killed BNC members (Cipriani, 2016, p. 127). The BNC's extremely violent approach became their personal brand: Killing by body dismemberment, torture, often recorded on tape so that everyone could know what happens when one messes with, betrays or disobeys the *Bala*.

"My father doesn't live in the Vila because he owed [the BNC] and was expelled. When they went to my house to kill my father, the gun failed. Failed twice. They hit my father on the head with a gun butt and left to get other guns. Meanwhile, we were able to take my father to a hospital", Rafael, a black fourteen-year-old student at Mandacaru told me. BNC tried to kill his father inside his house, in front of him and his mother, because of a drug related debt. "My father worked for the drug gang, but he was still a trabalhador. He worked because he had to sustain me and my mother, and to pay the guris", Rafael continued, affirming that, although his father had worked for the drug gang, he did so with honesty.

The violence of the BNC around the city reached such an extreme – or rather extrapolated so greatly the geographic limits of the Vilas – that Porto Alegre was placed under a Federal government public security intervention in 2016 (Vasconcellos, 2018, March 12). The BNC's generalised state of violence furthermore impelled other gangs to unite against them, creating the *Anti-Bala* (Anti-Bullet) or *Bala nos Bala* (Bullets for the Bullets); or, as the students used to call them, *Os Contra* (those against). This was a grouping of independent criminal organisations to fight against the BNC increasing their territory (GAÚCHAZH, 2019, March 15). A manifesto was even launched from inside the *Presídio*

Central in Porto Alegre, an overcrowded state prison known nationwide for its degrading living conditions, where about 4,400 inmates occupy a space planned for 1,800 (Dornelles, 2019, March 25; Soprana, 2017, January 31). The manifesto was supported by groups of detainees from two prisons in the city's metropolitan area. It repudiated the extreme violence with which the Bala managed the dispute for territory. Yet, on street level, the Contra uses BNC's level of violence to combat the Bala. From 2016 and 2017, at least 16 decapitated or quartered bodies were found in Porto Alegre and its metropolitan area (GAÚCHAZH, 2019, March 15).

8.8.   Narratives of violence

Figure 5: Classroom at Mandacaru school (photo taken by the author)

Unsurprisingly, surviving in such a harsh environment, students' narratives were pervaded by dead bodies, gunshots, shootings, among other expressions of the violence with which they had to live. "People think that being *Gaúcho* is to sit and drink *chimarrão* all day. But here we also have shootings. *Bah*! People are killed all the time", the thirteen-year-old Daniel, student at Parodia, told me during

his interview[167]. When I asked whether she enjoyed living in Vila Lanceiro, twelve-year-old Laura, a student at Mandacaru, responded, "Here there's only death, [pro]fessora".

The BNC is particularly cruel to women, who are killed for things as small as giving a social media 'like' in a picture of someone related to other gangs, or for being minimally suspected to provide other gangs with information. There are stories of fourteen-years-old girls being assassinated (GAÚCHAZH, 2019, May 23). The following extract comes from one of my interviews with three Mandacaru students, Lúcia, Luma and Tábata, all Black girls aged between eleven and twelve years old. Lúcia moved to Vila Lanceiro from another Vila ruled by a drug gang rival to the BNC. She told me, "One day my sister was walking on the street and a guy called her pretty and demanded that she go talk to him. She said she wouldn't and kept walking. The man started to threaten our family. He said that, if we stayed in the Vila, he would shoot up our house". Amidst all the violence, children had their freedoms grounded by the gang war.

> *Luma*: I can't play [on the streets] because these things are happening. The shootings.
> *Tábata*: No one plays on the streets, [pro]fessora.
> [Me: are there many shootings here?]
> *Luma*: A lot. Now it has stopped a little.
> *Lúcia*: But last Saturday a shooting happened. At night. [...] Sometimes they shoot from cars, shoot in the direction of the alleys. The Contras don't care about the children on the streets. [...]
> *Luma*: My uncles are like that as well [gang members]. But they don't do that because they know there are many children in the Vila.
> [Me: Do you have contact with your uncles?]
> *Luma*: I do. They are from here [Vila Lanceiro].
> *Tábata*: For me... when I see a shooting I get scared to death. My mom is never home. She's always working. She arrives home from work at 10pm. And my brother too, arrives at 11pm. So, I stay home alone with my two sisters. Sometimes there are shootings and I get scared. Then my sister calls my mom to tell her to not stay on the street, to stay somewhere else, but to not come home because of all the shootings.

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[167] 'Gaúcho(a)' refers to a person who was born in Rio Grande do Sul. 'Chimarrão' is sort of tea very popular in Rio Grande do Sul.

Luma: My uncle always lets us know when a shooting is happening. We have a shooting group [on WhatsApp]. Then he lets all the family know. [...] My father died because of that. He was with two of my uncles.

[Me: Did your father work for the gang?]

Luma: No. He only used to smoke [marijuana]. He died because of the police. He didn't see the guys, the police coming down the Vila. My uncles ran, but my father stayed to defend my uncles. And he died. [...] Now my uncles take care of me.

Lúcia: During the last shooting I wasn't even that scared. Only after the shooting I was told that my uncle, who studies here, was shot in the leg, and my cousin was shot twice in the belly. He was shot in the back and the bullets went through his belly. Another bullet hit one of my cousin's feet. [...] My uncle was playing video games at a *LAN house*[168]. When the shooting started, he opened the *LAN house*'s door and ran, because his house was very close by. But he was shot while running back home. Thankfully, he was strong enough to drag himself home. [...] My cousin went to buy credits for his mobile. He was shot when he was coming back home. [...] I don't understand how he was shot in the foot [laughing]. The bullet entered and came out on the other side.

[...]

Luma: Can you imagine that, by the time of that shooting, I was at the market? If I hadn't left a few minutes before, I would have died too!

Lúcia: The market owner tried to save the people who were on the street. He put people inside his market and, as he closed the market's gate, he was shot in the head.

The banality of violence pervades all aspects of students' lives. This extract, and the one presented in the introduction of this chapter, are only two amongst many narratives of violence raised by the children who participated in this research. Students frequently described losing family members, watching family members being killed, finding themselves literally in the middle of shootings and being bathed in other people's blood. This is the reality children currently face in poor neighbourhoods in big Brazilian cities. In such contexts, being alive is already an act of resistance. In such a dire context, it is little wonder that students struggle at school. These life-or-death matters cannot be ignored when looking at schooling. Indeed, by choosing to ignore how deeply urban violence may affect people's lives and prevent them from taking major advantage of formal education, the state takes an informed and political decision to provide peripheral children and families with

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[168] Internet cafés where people pay for computer and internet access, popular for computer gaming.

less than they need to perform well at school. Thus, being alive and persisting in attending a school that ignores the role of urban violence in shaping students' aspirations, self-esteem, and even levels of emotional distress and anxiety, can be seen an act of resistance. I discuss this further in Chapter Nine.

8.9. On collective ties, resistance and freedoms

In this chapter, I discussed how poor urban communities tend to form collective ties that serve to build freedoms for residents in the form of services, protection and care. I argued that, given the state's externality treatment of poverty, poor communities' collective construction of freedom can be seen as resistance, as it challenges the state's orientation toward creating docility among underprivileged populations. Nonetheless, the relationship between collective ties, resistance and freedoms can be more complex than it could seem at first. During our interview, Maria explained how dangerous it could be even for her, having lived in the Vila her whole life, to circulate in parts of the Vila where she was not known. "Depending on the location within the Vila, you really don't enter, I'm not going to lie. If you try to drive in, it is possible that bandits will take your car there and that will be it, you know?!", Maria said. She continued: "It is not that dangerous. But some places are. I've lived here since I was born. There are places in Vila Lanceiro that I don't know. And there are places I don't enter by myself". "I don't enter because I live here, I know all this part here. Downhill, I don't know everybody. I can be a stranger there. They can say 'oh, an *aviãozinho*'[169] or *X-9* [snitch], as they say", Maria told me. She concluded: "You can enter and then leave in a coffin. In a box, as they say. It's dangerous. There are parts here in the Vila Lanceiro... It's very much dangerous".

Maria's indecisiveness between characterising the Vila as a dangerous or non-dangerous space marks a relevant consequence of the collective pursuit of community security. The state's management of crime in urban peripheries renders individuals living in such spaces vulnerable to both the necropolitical action of state policing institutions and to organised crime. Knowing that they cannot count on the police, as I argued in Chapter Five, and having the rival drug gang as an enemy who, without notice, enters the Vila randomly shooting at people, Vila residents are left with little

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[169] *Aviãozinho* is an informal word that designates a lower position within a drug gang hierarchy, in which the gang member is mostly responsible for minor tasks, as keeping an eye on the police and possible rival gang members entering into the community, or even transporting small amounts of illicit drugs from one part of the community to another. *X-9*, roughly, 'snitch', refers to a person whose role is to acquire information from one part to pass it on to another, usually rival, part.

options to protect themselves. As a means of protection and survival in a context of extreme violence, Vila residents monitor their territories from possible threats. That is, from people who could possibly put their and their family's lives in danger. With limited information, the face of danger is materialised in people who are not known in the community[170]. Vila Lanceiro is, however, large and heterogeneous, formed of groups of smaller communities that are established by the geographical space – such as in uphill and downhill. Although one might be known in her area, she might not be known in other areas. Hence, as Maria points out, collective ties bind Vila Lanceiro together and work to produce collective security for its residents, while rendering it both safe and unsafe for its own people.

The collective ties that emerge as a result the state's externality treatment, on the one hand, provide dwellers from a particular Vila with freedoms and opportunities for leading a less difficult life. Such freedoms relate to the ways that collective organisation and resistance produce relevant aspects of social life, such as local services, a sense of affiliation, protection, care, entertainment, social interactions, social bonding, mutual help and trust, and, ultimately, the freedom to live without being killed by the local gang. On the other hand, collective ties are responsible for determining people's right to live under the Vila's territory. Given their own circumstances, at the same time as people may rely on collective ties to feel protected, the ties established by other groups risk endangering them.

The community ties and rules of everyday life establish a complex net of fragile power relations among Vila Lanceiro dwellers, as well as dwellers from other communities, drug gangs, and the police. In the midst of this, Vila residents, and other poor families living in underprivileged urban spaces, find themselves with limited opportunities for agency. As I discussed in Chapter One, under the CA framework, agency is a vital component of people's freedoms. It delimits people's opportunities to choose between different types of life, meaning, between different *beings*, *doings*, and *becomings*. Vila residents exercise their limited agency both through actively acting upon and resisting their circumstances, by organising their community with the means they have available.

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[170] This is, of course, something that exist mostly as part of the gang culture. Nonetheless, under such circumstances, a threat to the gang means a threat to the whole community, as non-gang-members are often caught in the middle of the crossfire. In addition, gang members are also people who have families. They are also people trying to manage life amidst inequality and to survive under extremely unfavourable conditions. As for the children who participated in this research, gang members were their parents, grandparents, brothers, uncles, cousins. That is, they are part of the community and, as such, are as well to be protected.

Under such circumstances, the duality between good and bad or right and wrong becomes blurry. This is an environment where death is justifiable, where the law on the books exists in the hands of a corrupt and repressive state, and the law in practice, based on mutual protection, is the only one that effectively works, for better or worse. Auyero and Kilansky (2015) show, for instance, that one of the ways that poor people may react to the violent environment in which they are immersed is through producing more violence, whether domestic or collective[171]. The truth is that collective action and community organisation can assume diverse, complex and non-dichotomist forms, as they happen in response to circumstances that are far beyond poor people's control. While collective action intended to build freedom may be grounded in people's critical scrutiny of reason (Sen, 2000; Nussbaum, 2011) and critical consciousness (Freire, 2000), it may also result from responses that are not critically analysed, in face of the pure necessity to survive; to manage life and its circumstances under a context of limited agency and political power.

Under such complex contexts, resistance may assume nonlinear paths. Nonetheless, regardless of the form it takes, resistance appears as a potentially powerful means to freedoms, within the reach of poor urban populations subject to the state's externality treatment. How resistance, and the hope it brings about, is present within school environments, and how it may potentially be a conditioning factor for the ongoing making of people's freedoms, I discuss in Chapter Nine.

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[171] Auyero and Kilansky (2015) show "how parents engage in physical aggression against sons and daughters in an attempt to keep their children safe" (p. 199), and also how collective forms of violence, as lynching, may appear as a means to "protect the community norms about appropriate behavior" (p. 202).

Chapter Nine – On state schools, hope and freedoms

9.1.   Introduction

Schools are, in general, a space of unspoken prejudice and segregation (Sojoyner, 2017; hooks, 2003). With rare exceptions, in both Parodia and Mandacaru, there were three spaces where one could find Black people: as cleaning and kitchen staff, as students, or as the community, that is, caregivers and parents. The fact that it was difficult to find Black people occupying higher educational staff positions, per se, indicates that the schools are racialised spaces.

"When you arrive in a place, the impression that sticks is the way in which people look at you," Carmelita said. She told me why she did not enjoy Mandacaru when she first started working as a cleaning lady there, three years before. She is a Black woman in her early fifties. When we talked, Carmelita told me all about how she raised her three daughters by herself, and how it was difficult to live in a Vila. She lives in a different Vila, not too far from the school. She also told me how her salary was not enough for her to cover all of her bills and how, because of that, she was in immense debt. She cried a lot during our conversations. The work at Mandacaru was an especially sensitive topic. "I call it the elite and the senzala. We cleaning staff are the senzala. Because I can see that there's this difference with us here. The women from the cleaning and kitchen staff, and the elite," Carmelita told me. She continued: "The elite are the principal and vice-principal's offices, school counselling and administration, teachers, all these sectors. I feel like it's like we are nothing for them… They don't say please or thank you, you know? It's like these things don't exist to them," Carmelita concluded.

Carmelita was not the only one who felt discriminated by teachers and the school's educational staff. Sônia, her colleague from the Mandacaru cleaning staff felt the same way. Sônia is also a Black woman in her early fifties. She has worked in multiple state schools as a cleaning lady since 1992. "We are discriminated against by our own colleagues. Here and everywhere. The teacher thinks that because she is a teacher and has a higher degree, she doesn't need to look at us, to talk to us," Sônia told me. "I have worked in four schools and things were the same," she said. In April 2017, Sônia got into an argument with a teacher that led her to sue the teacher. "My work here causes me a lot of stress because of this relationship with my colleagues. I sued a colleague because I was verbally assaulted. She tried to humiliate me in the schoolyard, called me names, screamed at me in front of everybody.

The principal saw it and did nothing," Sônia told me. In 2017, she was seeing a therapist and was on medication, taking a strong sedative due to work-related stress.

This treatment was also present at Parodia, although to a lesser extent. Teachers would often ignore Sheila's polite greeting when she appeared in the teachers' room to do her job. Sheila, also a Black woman in her early fifties, worked as cleaning lady as well. We talked in the school's dining room and, during our conversation, Sheila complained about how teachers would not even say 'good day' to her, and how they sometimes acted like she was their maid. "I work at a school for the government. I am not their [the teachers'] maid!" Sheila told me, before saying that she had to learn how to stand up for herself. "If you let them, they will treat people poorly," Sheila continued, while Joice – the school kitchen lady – agreed, nodding her head as she listened. "They seem to think they are better than us because they are teachers. I always tell Joice and she gets mad at me. But they [the teachers] treat the school kitchen lady a little better. The kitchen lady is a slightly higher position because she is the one who cooks," Sheila said. "But us, we are... we are the *ralé*[172]", she concluded. "They try to mess with me too, I just don't let them", Joice replied from the back, as she finished preparing the lunchtime meals. Joice is also a Black woman, although in her sixties, who has lived in Vila Lanceiro for most of her life.

"I always tell my children: 'We are Black and poor. It's two things, not one. We must always try to show that we are good people who is going to do good things, right things. We must be the best and give the best of us,'" Sônia told me during her interview. "And we must know that we'll always have to keep proving to people that we are as good as everyone else. Always," Sônia said, eyes filling with tears, staining her cheeks. "Sometimes I approach the students and they ask me, 'Who do you think you are?' I say that I am an education professional. 'No, you are just the cleaner,'" Sônia continued, saying that the students learn from their teachers this disrespect toward the cleaning staff. Indeed, part of what children learn at schools speaks toward a hidden curriculum, or, in other words, the values "that are tacitly transmitted through the social relations and routines that characterise the school experience"[173] (Giroux, 2004 [1986], p. 70). When white supremacist values are part of

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[172] *Ralé* is an informal Portuguese word that could be translated into English as ragtag.
[173] Translated from Spanish: "La naturaleza de la pedagogía escuelas se podía encontrar no sólo en los propósitos declarados, en las razones de ser de la escuela y los objetivos preparados por los maestros, sino también en las innumerables creencias y valores transmitidos tácitamente a través de las relaciones sociales y las rutinas que caracterizan la experiencia escolar."

schools' hidden curriculum, Black students' racial identities can be negatively affected, along with their self-esteem and self-awareness toward Blackness (Carneiro, 2005; hooks, 2003, 2009).

Until this point, I have pointed out several mechanisms that permeate the Brazilian state school environment – and poor people's lives in general – which are responsible for making unfreedoms for students, as well as for teachers and school staff. I have framed what I call the state's externality approach to poverty as a mode of action and discourse that guide the state's management of poverty, and, hence, its necropolitical action upon the poor. Giroux (2004[1986]) talks about how critical analysis can lead to highly pessimistic results. Such findings tend to focus on the limitations and to represent people's social roles as one of merely reproducing social dominant patterns. Or, even, as inseparable of social roles of dominance or subjugation. This is not at all my intention here. There is indeed a lot about the school that the state offers to poor urban Brazilians that is about 'the making of unfreedoms'. Nonetheless, there is a lot about state schooling that is also about freedom(s) and agency. In this chapter, I challenge the dichotomy between docility and freedom, conformity and resistance, that perpetrates critical theory in education, and argue that state schools exist as both spaces of freedoms and unfreedoms. Most importantly, I contend that schools exist as places of enduring hope and, as such, of resistance.

9.2.   On Paulo Freire, docility and freedoms

There are two ways in which to read the narratives coming from these four Black women: Carmelita, Sônia, Sheila and Joice. A pessimist reading frames schools as a place of reproduction of white supremacist values that serve to oppress children and staff alike, and even children's parents and caregivers. Conversely, an optimistic reading could lead us to engage these four women as active subjects who, irrespective of being victims (or survivors) of white supremacist logics entrenched in Brazilian society, learned how to stand up for themselves and are actively fighting white supremacy on a daily basis. Moreover, these are four Black women who are actively conceptualising Blackness, reflecting on their existence as Black women within a racist society, thus working around the issues they face as Black women in an anti-racist and self-determined manner. As such, these four women may be teaching everyone around them, including the students, how to stand up for themselves, how to resist and exist in an environment entrenched in white supremacy.

In his ethnography about a Black and poor neighbourhood in Chicago, Ralph (2015), found that if we look at underpriviledged people's lives from the bottom-up, valuing their perspectives, we find that

some conditions that are often seen as only negative and restricting, in fact reveal stories of hope, and of collective and individual fights for better lives. The ongoing struggle for better lives is part of what enables resistance to be built in these places. Mbembe (2017), for instance, shows how the idea of Blackness was framed throughout history as something intrinsically negative, and how this turned Blackness into a burden for all and for every Black person in the world. Yet, Mbembe (2017, p. 177) argues that, provided that the burden of Blackness cannot be erased from history nor denied in the present, Black people "will need to work with and against the past to open up a future that can be shared in full and equal dignity." For Mbembe (2017, p. 177), "The path is clear: on the basis of a critique of the past, we must create a future that is inseparable from the notions of justice, dignity, and the in-common." It is not, therefore, by denying the existence of the problems that shape our world, nor by treating them only to the extent that they represent negative aspects of people's lives, are we able to find solutions. The solutions, Mbembe (2017) contends, find power in acknowledging the issues that render people's existence in this world difficult, and in trying to build something good from the harsh realities in which people find themselves immersed.

Schooling has long been deemed as something bad, akin to prison. Schools indoctrinate and create docility (Foucault, 1995). Schools kill creativity and the will to learn (Robinson & Aronica, 2015; Gerver, 2010; Claxton, 2008). Schools are elitist settings that serve to exclude poor children from educational opportunities (Bourdieu, 1997, 2007; Banerjee & Duflo, 2011). These are some of the ways that schools have been conceptualised in the literature. Paulo Freire (1967, 1987, 1997) himself understands that there are only two types of education: the one that sets oppressed people free from their conditions; and the one that *domestica*, or, in other words, the one that creates docility among oppressed people. For him, school education as it is envisioned and enacted in Brazilian state schools today – based on the traditional school model[174] – fits the second. As such, it can only be understood to produce docility and hence, to prevent people from overcoming their oppressed position within society. According to Freire (1997, p. 22), the education that domestica never harms the dominant social structures:

> "[...] On the contrary, they [the social structures] are mystified in diverse manners, which enhance students 'false consciousness'. [...] The illiterates are not invited to make sense of, to find out the roots of the conditions that inform their concrete life; they are invited to accept the reality as it is, or, in other words, to adapt themselves to this reality. For such an ideology of domination,

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[174] For a summary of the characteristics of the traditional school model, see Thomas (2013).

everything that is legitimate and good for the elites, is legitimate and good for the people. From this, results an alienation – which this politics necessarily causes – that is not at all limited to the literacy process. The curiosity, the astonishment that comes when we are faced by our own lives, the capacity to think: all of these must be killed."[175]

In discussing the state's externality approach to poverty, I argued that such a necropolitical condition has four main characteristics: (1) it is materialised in palliative sorts of public policy, (2) whose discourse dissimulates the necropolitical character of the state intervention, at the same time that it (3) creates docility among poor populations and, therefore, (4) attend to the maintenance of an unequitable status quo. As I discussed in Chapters Six and Seven, state schools are a constitutive part of the state apparatus and are managed toward creating docility on, at least, two levels. First, the state's palliative treatment toward education that culminates with the wrecking of the state schools that are offered to urban poor populations, is potentially responsible for making an army of docile, useful, low-skilled (mostly Black) bodies, which depresses labour and keeps people dominated by systems of poverty. Empirically, this is materialised in low state school completion rates and low higher education insertion rates.[176] Second, the absence of education toward critical thinking in state schools, potentially creates docile apolitical bodies, and thus, an army of people who do not understand politics as something with which they should engage or that may make a difference in their lives.[177]

Nonetheless, poor people's existence is political in its causes and in its consequences, regardless of whether people are able to make sense of themselves as political beings. For Freire (1967, 1987), freedom means liberation from the conditions of oppression. Such liberation would occur through a

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[175] Translated from Portuguese: "[...] esta política de educação não toca nunca nas estruturas sociais; é um problema sobre o qual não se tem a necessidade de fazer pesquisas. Pelo contrário, eles "mistificaram-no" de diferentes maneiras, aumentando ainda a "falsa consciência" dos alunos. Aqueles que encorajam este tipo de política educativa – quer o saibam quer não – tem de mostrar a realidade social a uma certa luz. Os analfabetos não são convidados a conhecer, não são convidados a descobrir as causas de sua situação de vida concreta; eles são convidados a aceitar a realidade tal qual é ou, noutros termos, a adaptar-se eles mesmos a essa realidade. Para uma tal ideologia de dominação, tudo o que é verdadeiro e bom para as elites é verdadeiro e bom para o povo. Daqui resulta uma alienação – que esta política necessariamente engendra – e que de maneira nenhuma se limita aos processos de alfabetização. A curiosidade, o sentimento do espanto quando nos encontramos face à própria vida, a capacidade de pensar: tudo isso deve ser morto."

[176] As I previously mentioned, only 21% of Brazilians aged between twenty-five and thirty-four years old has an undergraduate degree (OECD, 2019). In addition, while basic education alone is composed of twelve years of compulsory schooling, is it estimated that Brazilians aged between nineteen and twenty-nine years old who belong to the 25% poorest part of the Brazilian population have, on average, only 9.8 years of formal education (Cruz & Monteiro, 2019).

[177] I shall come back to that point later in this chapter.

process that he calls humanization, that is, through the process of gaining critical consciousness. For Freire (1987,) oppressed populations – that is, poor populations – tend to conform to their conditions as oppressed and thus, do not fight to improve their lives, or even against the injustices that permeate their existence within society. The Freirean humanization process is one in which poor populations become conscious of their own conditions of oppression, and in which dominant groups also develop critical consciousness through the awareness established by the critical consciousness of the oppressed. The Freirean process of humanization is tied not only to individual critical consciousness, but also to effective changes in people's material conditions. As McCowan (2009, p. 53) explains, under the Freirean framework:

> These processes are not only liberating or domesticating in relation to individual consciousness, but also to the material conditions of society, since the oppression of social groups, or alternatively liberation from oppression, depends on their critical consciousness. Education, therefore, becomes a fundamentally political act. If people are not encouraged to be critical, they will accept injustices and not work together to overthrow oppression and transform society.

Thus, for Freire (1987, 1967) there is no freedom without critical thinking and there is no critical thinking without a liberating kind of education. However, as I discussed in Chapter Eight, poor people's lives and the way they carry themselves throughout and among the effective conditions with which they are confronted is much more complex than it may seem at first sight. People are, at all times, struggling toward making better lives for themselves, using the means that they can. Of course, my understanding of freedom here diverges slightly from that envisioned by Freire (1987, 1967). I understand freedom not as a unit – something that can be reached – but as something toward which people should keep working. Following the CA's perspective, I understand freedom as the opportunities for a good life. A life that people may value and may have *reason* to do so. 'Reason' here appears as a key concept, as it appears in connection between the CA and the Freirean perspective. Reasoning for the CA means the process of critical scrutiny of reason through which people may make valuable decisions and thus, make choices amongst distinct types of life. As is true in Freire's (1987, 1967) critical consciousness, there is also no possibility of reaching truly valuable freedoms without reasoning for the CA.

Yet, the reality of people's lives is much more complex, rather than dichotomic or well-reasoned, as both Freire and the CA would contend. The daily making of freedoms and unfreedoms is fuzzy. People living under conditions of poverty are far from being unaware of their own reality just as much as

they are not docile bodies complying with the circumstances within which they are immersed. Docility and resistance can, and indeed do, inhabit the same body. The same externality approach to poverty that aims to create docility also produces resistance and active action. Equally, the same school that aims to make poor populations docile and confined to the unfreedoms that characterise their lives, also produces freedoms and, by doing so, produces resistance against the very status quo that it manages to defend.

9.3. Not Symbolic Violence

To portray underprivileged individuals as docile and conformed is also the case in Bourdieu and Passeron (1990). Indeed, one of the main concepts put forward by Bourdieu's sociology of education is the idea of symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Bourdieu defines symbolic violence as a kind of violence that is exerted by the action of symbolic power. It corresponds to normalised non-physical sorts of violence that would occur as a reflection of the dominant power relations that structure society. Hence, it would present socially accepted sorts of violence, reproduced with the symbolic consent of oppressed groups. This necessarily would encompass, for instance, racism and gender biases (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

One form of emotional violence that students must deal with is being formally separated into regular and repeater classes. This is not, of course, how the formal division is justified. Students are separated by age: those whose age is in accordance with the expected for their school year are allocated to what I called 'regular classes'; and those whose age is above the expected for their school year are allocated in what I called 'repeater classes'. The decision of referring to the classes as 'repeater' and 'regular' is exactly to express the emotional violence that this division causes. In practice, by separating students by age, given the way in which traditional schooling is structured, means dividing the students into two groups, one formed of student who succeeded and another of students who are believed to have failed.

This separation is done not without costs, which schools are willing to assume[178]. As it would be expected, 'repeater classes' were hardly manageable under the standpoint of a traditional school model that expects discipline and order. Some of the students were repeating the sixth-year for the

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[178] Burke and Sass (2013), for instance, have found that students with low school performance show improvement in their school achievement when allocated to classrooms with students whose school performance, measured in terms of cognitive achievement, is higher.

third time. It is not solely that they were tired of not advancing and of trying to learn the same things repeatedly. Their self-esteem was destroyed. Students in the 'repeater class' spoke of themselves as "the worst students in the school" or as the "worst group of the school," as students from both of the schools' 'repeater classes' told me on my first days of classroom observation. Teachers, on the other hand, would present even lower expectations for the 'repeater classes', which would mean even less formal teaching.

I use 'emotional violence' because, although students accepted the division, it was not without conflict. As Zaluar and Leal (2001), I could observe how Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence is not applicable to states schools in countries like Brazil. This is for one key reason: the contemporary relationships among different groups within society is complex and characterised by the presence of deep conflicts. To understand people as mere reproducers of general patterns is to ignore their active role in managing their own circumstances, given the restrictions they face in their lives – as I have argued.

The sole decision of separating students in that manner segregates and informs students that they may not be as good as some of their peers. Under these circumstances, the 'repeater class' generally presented non-conforming behaviours. In other words, students would act in a way that is not in conformity with the expected for traditional school students and their rules. For instance, students did not show passivity, compliance with authority, discipline and obedience (Thomas, 2013).

In this regard, Sojoyner (2017) contends that the way in which U.S. Black youth are in constant refusal and disengagement toward what he calls 'enclosed spaces', that is, the materialisation of the "the removal/withdrawal/denial of services and programs that are key to the stability and long-term well-being of communities" (2016, p. 443) that informs the U.S. state's management of Black education, can be understood as Black resistance. As he argues, "we can understand the actions taken by Black youth against enclosed places as deriving from a set of politics that may reproduce oppression within the confines of governing doctrines (such as the law), but that at its crux is an assertion of agency within a social arrangement that demands subservience" (2017, p. 519).

Sojoyner (2017) sees U.S. schools as enclosed spaces that act to undermine forms of Black intellectual capacity that could potentially take Black subjects out of a position of subjugation within U.S. racialised society. Under such a context, to rise against the school is to rise against the very system

that aims to produce and "to reproduce Black economic, political, and social misery and simultaneously to render said misery as a product of Black failure" (2017, p. 523). He frames the concept of *Black fugitivity* as a contradictory process in which Black people, while chasing and building means to freedom, also tend to do so in such a way that reproduces the forms of oppression to which they are subject, even when they are able to somehow build spaces of freedom.

Sojoyner's (2017) construction strongly speaks to the sort of resistance I saw Vila Lanceiro dwellers establishing, not only among themselves in their community – as I showed in Chapter Eight – but also toward the school – as an institution that functions under the terms of the state's externality approach to poverty. Students from 'repeater class', for instance, would constantly argue with their teachers – especially the older students – and transfer their anger and dissatisfaction into the material of the school by, for instance, vandalizing it. Dropping out of school for the year was another way in which students engaged in this rather contradictory form of resistance.

Even the youngest students that I had the opportunity to talk with, were generally active actors who were perfectly able to identify and understand the unfairness behind the daily emotional violence they suffered at school. They knew when they were being treated with prejudice, be it by race, gender, class or any other aspect. They also knew when teachers were not doing their jobs properly and when their peers and teachers were being disrespectful toward them. They were aware of the extent to which they and their lives were disregard by the state and by public policy, although they did not fully understand why or how.

"Brazil steals more from us, than we steal from *them*. The politicians steal much more [from us] than we steal from them," the twelve-year-old Leo told me during his interview. "Does this discourage you?" I asked him in reply. "Of course! Because they are stealing a lot, and money for the school they never have," Leo concluded.

"Politicians are all corrupt!"; "Elections are worth nothing!"; "The only thing *they* do is to rob us!"; "*They* promise and do nothing. The only thing *they* do is to take money from us". These were some of the statements I heard from students about politicians. Most students felt that politics and politicians – and, therefore, democratic elections, and the state under the form of governments and governing authorities – did little for them or for their schools. Camila, a sixteen-year-old Black student at Mandacaru*,* perfectly summarized much of what I heard from students regarding politics: "What *they*

[politicians] promise to do is for us, right? But they never live up to what they promised. This affects our lives. Because if they do everything they promised, they would be helping us. Especially us here. As they promise and don't keep their promises, they harm our lives. Then, voting or not, we end-up harmed in the same way."

It is not that people feel powerless; and it is definitely not that people are forced to conform with the conditions of cultural, political and socioeconomic disadvantage within which they are obliged to live. It is more that they feel they are on their own. The truth behind people's apparent passivity – and this speaks to teachers and school staff as well – is that the way that people manage their own circumstances has little to do with accepting and complying with established conditions of oppression. On the contrary, it is about their limited agency. In restricting people's freedoms, the state confines people's agency. That is to say, the state limits people's perceived options to act and manage their own circumstances. This is one of the means through which it is guaranteed that people will remain trapped to their conditions of poverty and that an inequitable status quo will be upheld. The state's externality approach to poverty creates knowledge that informs people that they cannot rely on the state, or in politics in general. This has nothing to do with normalising poor people's conditions and symbolically leading them to comply with the dominant culture – as Bourdieu (2002[1989]) argues. Rather, it refers to emptying them of their means to effectively fight against the daily experiences of oppression that they suffer.

And yet, people keep fighting and, by doing so, people keep resisting. People in the community keep trying to find ways to compensate for the freedoms to which they are denied. Teachers keep working. Most children keep going to school. Freire (1992) asserts that oppressed people tend to fear freedom, as the idea of raising critical consciousness may seem anarchical in its own way. My participants would disagree. It is not about fear. People long for freedom, whether defined as the extent to which people have opportunities leading toward a good life, or in terms of freedom from the conditions of oppression. Their chase for freedoms is solely grounded by the means they possess to do so.

9.4. Schools as spaces of hope and freedoms

Figure 6: Classroom at Mandacaru (photo taken by the author.)

When I asked the teachers what it meant to be a teacher at a state school in Brazil, I heard repeatedly the words 'challenge' and 'fight' in these replies. Teachers and school staff are indeed struggling to make a living by themselves in Brazil. Yet, for many teachers that I had the opportunity to talk with, having a higher education degree and becoming a teacher was itself a great life accomplishment. The same was true for the part of the schools' staff who did not hold higher education degrees: being a state school employee was cherished and seen as an accomplishment, not only because of job security and other benefits – such as health insurance – but also as an accomplishment in itself. For both Joice

and Carmelita – the lunch ladies at Parodia and the cleaning staff at Mandacaru, respectively – working at a state school allowed them to resume their formal education studies and to finish secondary education.

For almost every teacher with whom I spoke, teaching was a source of satisfaction, of development of humanity and of personal improvement, which gave them a sense of accomplishment. Teachers enjoyed being teachers and took great pride in seeing their students' progress in school and in life. As Francisca (Mandacaru) told me: "It's very significant to me to work with students from the periphery because they lack everything." "One of the things that motivates me more in working with education is to realise that I somehow can contribute to students' transformation," she continued. "I feel more human when I see that I was able to make them appreciate education", Francisca concluded. Francisca's colleague at Mandacaru, Joelma told me: "In working with human beings, although each one is different from the another, one can always learn something and teach something. When I'm in the classroom, I'm teaching them, but I'm also learning." Joelma continued, "Students here, coming from Vila Lanceiro, have a reality that is different from mine. So, I learn. I started to put my personal values in practice. I find that a person becomes more human working here." Very similarly to Joelma, Bárbara (Parodia), told me during her interview: "I like working with people. It is nice how in a school, one is always talking to different people and learning different perspectives." According to Bárbara, "one can learn a lot hearing people's stories. One can see one's own life from a different perspective and realise how life can be harder for others."

"This is the good side [of being a teacher], to know that you changed something", Amanda (Parodia) told me, describing a story about a talented female student at Parodia and Vila Lanceiro who was enrolled in a licentiate higher education course at UFRGS because of Amanda's support and encouragement. "I changed her and her family's life," Amanda continued. Now, as a teacher, the student would have a profession. Indeed, I learned that a teaching career carried a sense of possible life change for many teachers. This was the case for teachers like Angela (Mandacaru) and Cíntia (Parodia). Whereas Cíntia was the first person from her family to gain a higher education degree, Angela saw her life change after deciding to become a teacher: "I was married and lived my life as a housewife, cooking, washing clothes. And that was going to be my life forever. When I started to study to become a teacher, I got a divorce. Not because I started to study. It simply happened. I gained the courage I needed to get a divorce. That was my release; by studying and becoming a teacher, I started to search for better things for myself."

Patrícia, a teacher at Parodia in her late thirties, was another woman for whom becoming a teacher had opened a new horizon. She told me: "I'm not frustrated by being a teacher. The problem I see is that we don't have the governments' recognition, not solely from the current one, but also from all the previous ones too." Patrícia continued: "Teachers are always wrong. We are always the '*vagabundos,*'[179] the ones who don't work, who spend the day drinking coffee, the troublemakers. When we marched as part of the strike movement, we heard people screaming at us on the streets. 'Go back to the classroom, you vagabundos!' 'You shouldn't be here, closing the traffic!' It makes me think whether I chose the right career. But, when I enter in the classroom and see all those little shining eyes looking at me, asking me questions, I feel reinvigorated," Patrícia said. "I just miss being valued by the state," she continued, although proudly declaring: "But I never felt diminished. I was the first one in family to graduate from higher education. No one had a diploma. I was the first one. So, even with all the difficulties we face, I'm happy. I love my job."

For Carla (Mandacaru) as well, becoming a teacher was a step toward freedom. Carla raised her only daughter by herself, working as a hairdresser. She became a teacher after graduating with a higher education degree in her early forties. When I met her in 2017, it was her second year working as a schoolteacher. Mandacaru was her first school. For her, becoming a teacher was a means to improving her and her daughter's life conditions. She not only enjoyed teaching, but also dreamed about doing a graduate course and following an academic career.

Thus, at the same time that state schools are a source of struggle for teachers and staff, they can also be a means for underprivileged women's emancipation. By doing so, it harms, even if minimally, the status quo of patriarchal and highly classist societies. In addition, schools endow teachers with a sense of accomplishment and affiliation, in the sense of recognising other people's needs and to show concern for other human beings (Nussbaum, 2000, 2011). There is no dichotomy between the making of freedoms and unfreedoms. Different aspects of the same complex situation – in this case, being a state schoolteacher – make freedoms and unfreedoms in a process that is just as particular as the conditions that characterise each individual's life.

As for students, state schools represent an environment where children are able to somehow exercise agency. In addition, at schools, children are able to enjoy basic freedoms, such as the freedom to play,

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[179] Meaning, lazy bums.

to have aspirations, to have friends, to have people with whom to talk and unburden, to imagine, to have hope, and to be free from domestic violence and sexual abuse. These are all basic freedoms (Nussbaum, 2000, 2011; Biggeri & Mehrotra, 2011; BRASIL, 1990).

Many of the child-participants had no space other than the school to be children, to play, to enjoy recreational activities, to socialise, to exercise their agency – even if in such a way that goes against the traditional school culture. For many, they could get some rest from their lives outside school. Most of them, when not at school, had to take care of their siblings, and to do significant domestic work, such as cooking and cleaning the house.[180] In addition, some of them were engaged in informal jobs to help their families, like assisting in informal construction work. Many of the youths, especially the girls, were not allowed to leave their houses to play with their friends because of Vila Lanceiro's violent environment. Others came from highly dysfunctional families and carried their own personal stories of sexual abuse, physical violence, both usually caused by family members, and parental negligence. Not to mention that, to a greater or lesser extent, all of them had to live in or among poverty, inhuman levels of violence, and drug use and its destabilising trade. Therefore, irrespective of how chaotic the schools were, for many children – indeed, for most of them – the school environment was the safest place that students could be.

Most of the time, the school was a place of happiness, laughs, curiosity, and friendship. It was refreshing to observe how happy students of all ages looked during break time and physical education classes where they could play games with their friends in the schoolyard. To the same extent that it was common to have short school days because of missing teachers, it was also common for students to stay in the school or around school after the school day was over. They would not go home. They would stick around and keep hanging out with their colleagues, playing, talking, until it was the proper time to go back home. Being at school was their moment to be free and hopeful. It is a place, for instance, where girls could dream about being doctor, or veterinarians or lawyers who could help to get her father, her uncles, out of prison. It was a place to aspire for better days to come, even if the levels of aspirations were not that high.

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[180] The answer I received from thirteen-year-old Débora, a student at Parodia, when I asked how she used to spend her mornings before going to school, illustrates this point well. She said: "I have to take care of my sister, dress her to come to school, wash the dishes, sweep the house, and clean my and my mother's bedroom."

I can never forget the expression on Emanuel's face – a Black fourteen-year-old student in a 'repeater class' at Mandacaru – when, during a classroom informal conversation with him and his colleagues, I asked what they wanted to be when they grew up. I was sitting by the teacher's desk, and he and his friends were gathered around me, telling me all kinds of stories about their lives and asking about mine. Emanuel was standing with his back to the blackboard and had both of his hands on his back. With his head down in a low voice, he replied: "*Eu quero ser trabalhador,*" – I want to be a worker.

Emanuel was already a trabalhador. He and his five siblings assisted their mother in preparing, cooking and selling *salgadinhos*, a popular Brazilian version of finger food, around the Vila. Nonetheless, anyone who observed his classroom behaviour throughout the school year would think otherwise. Emanuel was the *dono* – the boss – of his classroom. They called it the 'biqueira' in a make-believe war against other classes' 'biqueiras'. Emanuel and his make-believe gang from sixth-year 'repeater class' conquered some other classes' 'biqueiras' run by the older students that year. It was very interesting to observe how much fun students would have pretending to be drug dealers, defending their territories, their classroom – and, sometimes, depending on how much power they had, their classroom corridor – from an imagined enemy, who was in fact a friend.

Emanuel was very talkative and active in the classroom, the kind of student who teachers find too agitating. He would walk from one side to the other talking to his peers, would run to leave the classroom during class, and would be frequently sent to the principal's office for 'bad' behaviour. By the middle of the school year – this being his third time in the sixth-year – he was one of the few students from his class who did not give up and leave school. After all, Emanuel dreamed about being a trabalhador.

Emanuel's story has a lot in common with the story of many other students from both the Mandacaru and Parodia 'repeater classes'. Students have a natural, and rather obvious, will to learn, a natural curiosity. They would, at every opportunity, ask me about things like my life in Rio and abroad; about the countries I have visited, their culture, and even about other countries' currencies. They would ask about what I wanted to be in future, whether I liked studying, if I could speak English and, if so, whether I could teach them. They would listen very attentively to every story I would tell, to every explanation I would give. To affirm, as Freire (1967; 1987) does, that schools kill students' curiosity and will for a better life is mistaken. To affirm that underprivileged children are not able to progress in school because they do not have the culture that is necessary to understand schools' content, as

Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) contend, is mistaken. Such an affirmation underestimates poor children's capacities to learn school contents and can favour segregating perspectives according to which poor students' should only have access to school contents useful for low-skilled manual work functions – as students' lack of cultural capital would prevent them to absorb the scholarly culture embodied in the teaching and learning of humanities and arts. We live in the era of technology, children, even the poorest ones, have some access to the Internet – even if only at Vila's LAN houses – and to all the information it brings. Children's school behaviour is less a reflex of their indifference to learning or to knowledge, but is rather a greater reflection of the tough lives they live. These are lives that are remarkably characterised by all kinds of freedom deprivation, including affective deprivation, through violence, exclusion and abandonment.[181]

One of my questions to students was why they came to school. The answers varied from to 'be with my friends' to 'to eat the school lunch.' Nonetheless, the most common answer was "*para ser alguém na vida*" – "to become someone in life." This is indeed something that underprivileged children living in Brazil hear a lot and learn very quickly, at least to repeat it to others. 'We must study to become someone in life' is a funny turn of phrase. It teaches us, between the lines, that we are not someone, we are not entitled to personhood, unless we go to school, get good grades and progress in schooling. "I come to school to become a worthy," fourteen-year-old Júlia told me. "I come to school to guarantee my future," twelve-year-old Beatriz said. "Neither of my parents, not my mother nor my father, could finish their studies because they were too poor and had to work as children," Beatriz continued. "My parents always talk to me about guaranteeing my future. They say that if I don't study, I will be no one in life. And I take this to the bottom of my heart," Beatriz concluded. I began to think whether her parents considered themselves 'no one in life.'

Schooling, thus, is a daily fight for personhood. To this extent, schools become intrinsically about freedoms. Being a student at a state school in Brazil under the conditions where state education can be found is a struggle for freedoms and, as such, is an act of resistance. Even whether it refers to freedoms, or even a sort of resistance, that are not based on critical consciousness, or on reasoning,

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[181] There is also the fact that traditional schooling is boring for most children (Gatto, 2009; Robinson & Aronica, 2015). Nonetheless, I do not stress it here because the boredom – in what Gatto (2009) calls the state in which traditional schooling leaves children and teachers – was not stressed in most of students' narratives about their school life. When asked what they did not like in school, they cited things like the food; the presence of impatient and careless teachers; schools' wrecked infrastructure – which prevented them, for instance, from having a safe space to play during break time – and lack of basic resources as computers, and balls; and the violence around school that made them afraid of going to school. The boredom was the least of students' concerns, if at all.

or even agency-driven – as schooling is compulsory for children. Still, schooling is hope. It is a daily fight for personhood, for recognition, for emancipation, and for existence in a society that strives to deny people living in poverty a place of power. In making state education a space of oppression, segregation and exclusion, the state turns those who resist the effort to conceal that underlies Brazilian state education from effective opportunities to freedoms, into warriors for freedom.

State schooling is not a losing battle. The system is indeed managed to exclude students, their parents, teachers, and school staff from freedoms under the forms of opportunities for a good life. Yet, insisting on trying to become a person through state schooling is an act toward making freedoms. The bottom line is that schools give children the opportunity to hope, to dream. Under the CA perspective, hopes and dreams are seen as aspirations, which are important potential freedoms. They assist people in forming their own concepts of the good life they would like to pursue (Nussbaum, 2000). Paulo Freire (1992, n.a.) affirms that "there is no change without dreams and there is no dream without hope[182]". Mbembe (2017), on the other hand, affirms that, as for oppressed populations, there is no liberation without struggle. Ralph (2015) contends that, under very restrictive contexts, hopes and dreams, even whether frustrated, can be the only thing that keep people away from paralysis, that is, that keep people moving toward established goals and, hence, struggling for better lives. Thus, as posed by hooks (2003, p. xiv) "Hopefulness empowers us to continue our work for justice even as the forces of injustice may gain greater power for a time".

Throughout this thesis, I discuss how the Brazilian state's somewhat necropolitical management of poverty renders state schools unable to provide quality formal education or formal knowledge to poor urban populations. Yet, let there be state schools so that underprivileged people can dream and hope; so that they can build resistance through their struggle against the structures that seek to subjugate them; so that they can build power and make freedoms through their resistance.

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[182] Translated from Portuguese: "Não há mudança sem sonho e não há sonho sem esperança."

Conclusions: Failing for Freedom

Many of my conversations with students brought detailed stories about people being killed in the cruellest of circumstances. The heaps of stories from students from both schools, and the natural way in which students would tell them in response to questions not directly related to violence, was scary and heart-breaking[183]. I also heard very lucid narratives of physical violence by family members, in which children referred to being beaten by their parents and caregivers as an everyday occurrence. Under this condition of blended violence inside and outside the home, girls were especially vulnerable. An appalling account comes from Camila, a sixteen-year-old Black student from Mandacaru. Camila was constantly beaten by her mother and had tried to kill herself by cutting her wrists at school. During her interview, Camila told me she did not feel safe in her house. "It's possible that my mother may kill me there and that will be it." "All mothers hit," the eleven-year-old Pamela said, in reply to Camila. "There's no mother who doesn't beat [her children]," Pamela continued. "But not to the point where her daughter may want to kill herself!" twelve-year-old Laura interrupted. During our conversations, although she never spoke openly about the subject, Camila hinted a few times that she had suffered sexual abuse during childhood by a former boyfriend of her mother.

During one of our interviews, Camila told us about a shooting that had happened in the Vila about two months previous: "Once I was at a bar with my mother and a shooting started. My mother's friend was shot. Five of my mother's friends were shot. I was with them. One was shot in the butt and the other in the foot." Camila continued: "Like, we find it funny but when it's happening, my god, it is chaos. The blood splashed on us, you know? Another one was shot in the arm and another was almost shot in the heart. We were [lying] on the floor and bullets were sailing over our heads. If we stood up, it would go through our heads and that would be it," Camila said looking right into my eyes, while I tried to hide some of my perplexity and sorrow toward her story. "They don't care that we have nothing to do with their war. They shoot and don't care if we are innocent people who have nothing to do with them," she concluded. A daughter of one of her mother's friends was still at the hospital after being shot, she finished.

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[183] I am referring to responses to questions like, "Do you enjoy living in Vila Lanceiro?" or "With whom do you live?"

There is nothing about the way that the state manages poor people's lives that is not heart-breaking. Ruth Behar, in her defence of the role of emotions in anthropology, affirmed that an "anthropology that doesn't break your heart just isn't worth doing anymore" (1996, p. 177). Borrowing from Behar (1996), I would say that research on vulnerable contexts that does not break the researcher's and the reader's hearts is not worth doing. Any picture of such complex realities comes filled with the emotions of those who live in it. Emotions attach humanity to people, to the way they carry themselves among the restrictions they face. To their struggles to survive and to live the life they may or may not have reason to value. It does not matter at the end whether reasoning is or is not part of the process. People do not make choices as Aristotelian agents. The Aristotelian perspective informs that the process of choosing among valuable alternatives is more important than the choice itself. This is relevant as it affirms that it is imperative to consider the ways in which people manage their lives among unfreedoms produced by domination. However, the Aristotelian idea of 'having reason to value' that informs the CA is highly utopian and, furthermore, elitist. People do not have time to critically scrutinise all of their choices, and to expect this is a wasted exercise. The CA, similar to transcendental theories, aims for an ideal that is not reachable for the majority of the population. Raising awareness, self-determination, agency, and making freedoms – being it in the sense of opportunities to freedoms (capabilities) or freedoms itself (functionings) – have, at the real-world level at least, much more to do with actions that do not pass by the filter of critical reason or even of analysed emotions. And there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. These are actions that still, somehow, reach the end of building agency and freedoms. In the real world, making freedoms and agency is what is indeed relevant for the lives that people living under circumstances that are largely permeated by all kinds of restrictions are able to live.

One of the implications I bring forth from this research is that it is time to leave the normativity of theory behind – or, at least, rely on it less – and to investigate social realities as they are. I do understand that it is not possible to completely avoid normative values when doing social research, as they serve to establish initial parameters and to delineate research problems that may lead to empirical studies. However, it is necessary to rethink the usage of overly rigid normative frameworks in order to favour the voices and the circumstances coming from people. I advocate here for a kind of research that is not restricted to the bases over which it is built, and that disputes theory, constantly questioning it against – and being (re)thought and changed in accordance with – reality. When academics engage in such inquiries, perhaps conceptual constructions cease to underestimate people. Critical scrutiny of reason and emotions is not a linear process, nor is it normatively

established or equally done by every human being. Human beings are, at every moment, making decisions based on both reason and emotions. Reason and emotions are at the basis of what defines us as human beings. When the CA talks about scrutiny of reason and of examined life; when Freire (1997) refers to docile people who have no self-awareness or self-determination; or when Bourdieu (2002[1989]) talks about how people comply with dominant structures of power without resistance; They are all underestimating people's own means to make decisions and to act upon the injustices to which they are subject. In other words, they are discrediting and disregarding people's own processes of reasonable critical scrutiny, as there was a general superior norm to orient the way people should think and take informed decisions. Moreover, they are revising arbitrary assumptions of what an informed decision looks like. To what concerns the social world of the urban poor in Brazil – and in the Global South – in the real world, there is no such thing as truly informed decisions, or as partially informed decisions. There are decisions that are made as a means of survival, with highly limited space for agency. To say that the end of development should be to enhance people's freedoms is not enough and says nothing about how to do it. To say that a valuable life is one that is reached through critically scrutinised decisions is to disregard the lives people are living and the means through which they are fighting every day to lead better lives.

Thus, for being so theoretical, the CA becomes contradictory in itself. A paradox in terms. It can, of course, be applied to real world research, as I have done here, and others have done as well. Nevertheless, the CA needs to take into better account the lives people are living and why. It needs to do so from a less normative theoretical position. Normativity needs to be constantly questioned against the norms it establishes. It needs to be continuously challenged in terms of whom it serves, which groups it empowers and which groups it disregards. Theory and conceptual constructions need to be grounded on politically engaged bottom-up perspectives. It needs to acknowledge that people are political beings even when they are not aware. As such, people are always political actors whose agency, freedoms and unfreedoms happen as a result of a highly complex net of political, social, cultural and economic circumstances. All of that renders agency and freedoms, in any and every form they appear, as politically relevant. Indeed, it is exactly this real-world form of agency that makes us move beyond the political project of the post-colonial state and, in fact, does so on an everyday basis.

Life in peripheral communities from the Global South is difficult. It is messy. There is no way a methodological/conceptual approach that separates emotions from people, that treats people as

numbers, that disregards them as human beings, will be able to take account of the complexity that determines people's opportunities to freedoms. To treat people as human beings is an act toward freedom itself; it is an instrument of voice for people's struggles. Struggle, Mbembe (2017) reminds us, is part of what is needed to resist and work toward social change. It is in the struggle – and in the ways people are organising themselves to move beyond the political project – that hope resides.

Without making sense of people's struggles, we may not have any useful way to know how people are engaged in producing social change and thus, may produce distorted pessimistic pictures of their realities. When I speak of social change, I am not referring to Freire's utopian world in which the oppressed rise and become free, and the oppressors make sense of their lack of humanity and participate in that change; I am talking about reachable levels of social change. I am referring to leading less difficult lives, to succeeding in formal education, one grade after another, to surviving amongst death. I am referring to little things that, tied together, lead to different sorts of existences and resistances within post-colonial societies.

Regardless of any other aspect, the formal education acquired though schooling is still seen, in capitalist society, as the form of knowledge that implies in social and economic recognition (Illich, 1971). As such, schools, irrespective of how wrecked they may be, are places of struggle toward social and economic recognition and, hence, of hope and aspirations of better forms of life to come. Ralph (2014, p. 8) found that the people in this violent and poor Chicago neighbourhood "dreamed in ways that expressed desires for a different world." He contends that people's dreams, although modest and often unattained, had the power to keep people "working toward them, regardless of whether or not they come to fruition." In Ralph's (2014) ethnography, people's dreams to overcome the hardships they faced in their community were exactly what kept people moving toward reaching better lives.

Under the CA, dreams appear in the name of aspirations. Often though, minor aspirations are disregarded by research and treated as a reflex of impaired capacity for critical thinking. People want little because they have adapted to their hard circumstances (Nussbaum, 2000). Yes, people do adapt, and they do so as a means of survival. However, how can aspiring to live far from the risk of getting shot at any time be considered little for people living in the crossfire? How can wanting to be a trabalhador be considered little when one's chances of actually becoming a trabalhador are so reduced? How can aiming to finish secondary education – as a final degree – be considered little when one has, for years, been struggling to finish the sixth-year of basic education without success?

To say that people's aspirations are minor is to disregard people's hopes. Much of what I discuss in Chapter Two – about myself and my family – is about hope and about how hope changes lives. Hope keeps us moving forward. The hope that comes with the voices I bring here; the hope that these voices will reach other people's hearts in a way that leads other people to resist alongside them; hope was what kept me working in this thesis. The thought that I might have brought my student-participants some hope of a better future when I engaged with their stories and shared with them mine, made me persist in my fieldwork when I lost the faith in my work as a means to change. When the harsh reality from the field hit me in a way that broke my heart and paralysed me, it was hope for any better future for my research participants that kept me advancing. It is hope that keeps every voice that appears here advancing. It is what keeps them moving. And it is on the hope, and on the belief in the strength of people and their struggle, that we must focus our attention.

Under the conjuncture of postcolonial countries form the Global South, states schools become zones of 'failing for freedom'. That is, state schooling is a space where the structural conditions of unfreedom and violence that surround and work through state schools root as well the constant potential and hope for freedoms that form the basis upon which people's capacity to resist under conditions of dominance and limited agency is built. While the persistent conditions of failing schools, of failing students, might be understood as only producing dominance, oppression and unfreedoms, in reality the experience of living under such political conditions of 'failure' also builds forms of resistance, hope and dreaming. Therefore, 'Failing' refers to the ongoing making of everyday freedoms, which should be seen as intrinsically relevant as a product of people's everyday hopefulness and struggle for better lives.

It is, then, time for academics to leave pessimism behind and start to look at people and to see the potential they carry to promote change. Academics must allow people to be, to produce the change. Academics must think how they can aid, how they can envision means to assist people to lead the change they value in their lives. Academics must not condemn people or put them into discrete theoretical boxes. Academics must value people's knowledge and people's capacity to resist. Academics must build theory from people and with people, not solely for people. One thing that I heard a lot from teachers and education professionals was that both governments and academics – and thus, the solutions both groups propose – are detached from the daily reality of schools. From the perspective of school professionals, this is where academics stand: alongside governing

authorities who are incapable of presenting feasible solutions, because their theory often does not stand with practice.

Regarding education and state schools, perhaps the next step is to move toward a discussion that values people and the instruments they build for reaching better lives. A relevant point raised by this research is that, although there is a political project that aims to immobilize poor individuals and keep them this way, there is also space to think of ways to resist and to move beyond the political project through resistance. If docility and resistance can exist as part of the same individual, the path forward demands that academics reflect on how resistance can be cultivated as a means to freedoms for underprivileged populations.

Sojoyner (2017) also found that the disengagement of Black U.S. youth toward formal education had little to do with people's disregard to learning. It was rather a reaction against a sort of school education that is perceived by Black youth as not worthy to which to engage. Sojoyner (2017) advocates for a sort of education disconnected from the state and more accountable to the knowledge valued and built within Black communities. Thus, his proposition would invariably lead us to cease discussing ways to improve state schools and move toward building ideas of public education. That is, when it is acknowledged that it is necessary to build means to assist underprivileged populations to move beyond the political project, we should then think of ways to help people to build schools – or rather educational institutions – that exist from and for people.

To do so, the first step may be to give space to the voices that are neglected by both theory and practice in education: to the people who are in fact fighting for education on a daily basis. I am talking about teachers, school professionals, students, and parents. One may never be able to frame a school that works for underprivileged populations, whether one does not take into serious account, for instance, the extent to which poor urban areas are immersed in high levels of violence, to which students and their families are subject. To ignore this aspect is to neglect a core part of people's lives and to keep offering a kind of school that will never be able to fulfil its role, be it providing basic instruction or as I defend, providing the means to freedom, self-determination, agency, empowerment. The only way of making sense of how urban violence is a constitutive part of people's lives – and hence, how it impacts people and their opportunities to learn – is to listen to people's own accounts and to value people's own perspectives. It is time to listen to people, to understand their

reality and to build means to assist them to build the school they want and need, given the circumstances with which they are confronted.

I started this thesis in writing that this was a story about freedom. I wrote that I believed that formal education should be a means to people's making of self-determination, self-awareness, agency and freedoms. I affirmed that I believed that schools should lead to people's cultural, social, economic and political emancipation. I stand by my words. However, throughout the making of this work, I have come to realise that all of these categories – emancipation, self-determination, self-awareness, agency and freedoms – are much fuzzier, complex, non-linear and often contradictory. People living in urban poverty are self-determined and self-aware in ways that can only be understood when one takes a deep account of the lives they are living. Poor people lack opportunities of agency. This, I believe, should be the route that educational research should take: to make sense of how schools may become spaces where people's hopes and dreams can materialise into opportunities of agency, to conduct and make social change. Ultimately, research should make sense of how agency can be exercised, enhanced, and empowered in such a way that reaches out-of-school spheres within people's lives; and, furthermore, how agency can be articulated around political resistance.

In practice, what I propose here is a straightforward, although very demanding, way of producing knowledge and social change through formal education: to qualitatively document, make sense of, and operationalise, through extensive in-depth research, poor urban people's hopes, struggles and own means to freedoms. To acknowledge the ways in which people are failing for freedoms. This may enable us to rethink and reframe formal education in a way that values their knowledge – built over lifetimes of resisting to state necropolitical power – and that strengthens them to increasingly resist and hence actively fight against the subjugating forces that inform their existence. I understand that this is still a very theoretical way to think of education. Yet, it represents a step forward toward more context-accountable bottom-up forms of building a sort of formal education that may effectively work for poor people as a means to freedoms. This is how the state's externality approach to poverty may be progressively undermined; by improving people's opportunities in actively resisting it.

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Appendix One – Nussbaum (2000; 2011) List of Central Capabilities

Life	Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.
Bodily health	Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.
Bodily integrity	Being able to move freely from place to place; having one's bodily boundaries treated as sovereign, i.e. being able to be secure against assault, including sexual assault, child sexual abuse, and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.
Senses, imagination and thought	Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason – and to do these things in a "truly human" way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing self-expressive works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to search for the ultimate meaning of life in one's own way. Being able to have pleasurable experiences, and to avoid non-necessary pain.
Emotions	Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by overwhelming fear and anxiety, or by traumatic events of abuse or neglect.
Practical reason	Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience.)
Affiliation sense	A. Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another and to have compassion for that situation; to have the capability for both justice and friendship. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech.) B. Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails, at a minimum, protections against discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, caste, ethnicity, or national origin. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.
Other species	Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.
Play	Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.
Control over one's environment	A. Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association. B. Material. Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), not just formally but in terms of real opportunity; and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure .

Table 2: Nussbaum list of Central Capabilities. Adapted from Nussbaum (2000, p. 78-80)

Appendix Two – Challenges in carrying out the fieldwork

As a novice researcher in the field, the first practical difficulty I encountered followed me throughout my fieldwork. It was difficult, in all senses of the word, to gain access to the community in Vila Lanceiro. In comparison, gaining access to the schools was relatively easy. I had a contact in one of the schools that helped me to obtain the school's consent for carrying out the research. This school in particular was used to receiving researchers, which made the research process slightly easier, despite the distinct characteristics of this study. In other words, the school was not really used to having researchers carrying out ethnographic studies and, as a result, staying in the school for long periods of time. As for the other school, after several attempts, I was able to schedule a meeting with the vice-principal, who gave me consent to conduct the research at the school.

Gaining access to the community was very difficult for two distinct reasons. Firstly, the institutional path, specifically through the schools, did not offer a suitable possibility. The relationship between students' caregivers and the schools was not always, or even often, on the best of terms. Both schools showed concern when having students' caregivers come to school for interviews was discussed. In one case, the school completely ruled out the possibility. They bluntly stated it would be too dangerous for me and for everyone in the school to have me asking questions for students' caregivers, who were generally close to or directly involved with the Vila local drug dealing activities. The other school suggested that I call only select caregivers, the "good ones", asserting that, even in this case, it would be unlikely for them to come and talk to me. I felt extremely uncomfortable with the idea of disregarding the perspectives of some parents and caregivers based on such arbitrary criterion. Indeed, to do so would conflict with the very aims of this research. Furthermore, I was not confident that the schools were the best setting for conducting interviews with adults from the community – even if it was only to start a conversation – given the clear antagonism that I was beginning to observe between the schools and the community from Vila Lanceiro.

I then decided to attempt to find a path to Vila Lanceiro on my own, when a second hurdle emerged. I had no contacts inside Lanceiro and the contacts I had, the ones that might be able to somehow know someone who could be willing to take me in, to introduce me to people there, were too afraid to do so. I heard so many times that getting into Vila Lanceiro as someone in my position – a woman, alone, not known by the community, from Rio de Janeiro, doing "research" – was too dangerous. It is very difficult to be a woman carrying out ethnographic research alone in the field (Berry et. al., 2017). Irrespective of having grown up in Brazil, under and within its misogynist culture that relegates to women's bodies, especially Black bodies, the position of sexualized object, and of being used to how vulnerable women's bodies can be under such cultures (Berry et. al. 2017), I felt exceptionally exposed during fieldwork. I did not feel fear in the schools, but rather, everywhere outside of them. I was aware of how women could be treated in Vila Lanceiro, especially if there was any suspicion regarding their intentions in the Vila. Under these circumstances, I only felt safe entering the most narrow and closed parts of Vila Lanceiro when I was introduced to Maria about seven months into fieldwork. The only reason I felt safe was because she was a woman too.

Another practical challenge regards to gaining participants' trust. Both schools were characterised by the presence of conflicted and often, tense relationships between different groups, such as teachers, students, school staff, students' caregivers, government educational authorities. School staff in general, but mainly teachers, were – and still are – under incredible pressure in Brazil. The pressure did not reflect only low wages and lack of reasonable working conditions, but also their duties as teachers. Teachers were being portraited as indoctrinators by part of civil society – and now also by the elected federal extreme right-wing government (see Ferreira & Grandelle, 2017, June 1; Fagundez, 2018, November 5). It was not hard to observe, especially at the beginning of my fieldwork, that teachers and school staff felt uncomfortable with my presence in the school, mostly for not being certain of how they would be portrayed: whether I would judge their behaviours and depict them as bad and lazy indoctrinators whose only goal was to teach Marxist/Communist ideology to children or if I was there to write something sympathetic to and reflective of their daily struggles. I could also see how people would be concerned with the picture I was building from them, as I sought contact from a variety of perspectives from many different groups. I had participants trying to convince me not to believe, even not to give relevance to the narratives of people belonging to other groups. It was not an easy task to manage while doing fieldwork given that part of my responsibility was to listen to everyone. The only way I could navigate this was to be honest and say that my role required that I not judge, but rather serve as an empathetic listener.

Table 3: Challenges in carrying out the fieldwork

Appendix Three – Basic interview questions for participant-students

Name?

How old are you?

Who do you live with? Have you got any siblings?

Where do you live in?

How long have you been a student in this school?

Would you say that you enjoy studying? Why?

What is it that you like about school? What is it that you do not like about school?

Which is your favorite school activity? Why? Which school activity you like the least?

Do you think that what you are taught in school is going to be useful to you in the future? Do you see any use in coming to school? Why?

Do you usually study while at home? Why? If you do, for how long do you study?

Have you got any help while doing your homework?

What would you say that could make school more interesting? If you could, what would you change about school? Why?

What kind of activities would you like to do while at school? Why?

What do you usually during your free time?

Have you got to do chores at home? Why? If you do, which one is it?

Do you get involved in any extracurricular activity? If you do, which one?

Have you got books/toys at home? Which one do you like the most?

Can you talk a little bit about the community you live in? What is it that you most like about it? What is it that you dislike about it?

Are you involved in any activity outside the community you live in or your neighborhood? If you are, which one and where? If you are not, why?

Do you have a religion?

Have you got a definition of what is a good life? What is a good life for you? How does life have to be for you to consider it good?

What are the things that you believe are the most important in life today?

What do you wish to do when you grow up? Is there anything that you dream of doing in the future? Do you think that school is going to help you with that? Why?

What do you think you are going to be doing in the future? Why?

What kind of life would you like to lead in the future?

What are the things that you think are important for you to have and to be in the future?

Do you think that you and your family own everything that you need to lead a good life?

Do you think your house is adequate to your needs?

Do you think you own everything you need to do well in school?

Do you believe you eat healthily?

Do you believe you always eat what you like to eat?

Do you have access to dentist and medical care?

Do you practice physical exercises?

Do you feel safe and protected at home?

Do you feel safe and protected at school?

Do you feel you are learning everything you need in school?

Do you think you use your imagination in your everyday life? (When?)

Do you feel respected when you are at school?

Do you think you have opportunities to play?

Do think it is important to vote in democratic elections? Why?