For an Anarchist Decolonial Agenda

New Perspectives on Anarchism, Marronage, and Indigeneity from Brazil/Pindorama

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Abstract

This paper proposes new perspectives on anarchism, indigeneity, and Afro-descendent struggles, by discussing the case of Brazilian anarchists' commitment to *luta afroindígena*. They mean by this term the intersection of indigenous and Afro-descendant resistances for the recognition of land, against the violence of states, agribusiness, and extractivism. I argue that this case offers key insights to radical geographies, and to the broader field of decolonial scholarship, to challenge cultural and racial essentialisms by connecting different militant traditions. I also argue that, taking inspiration from indigenous thought and socio-territorial practices of broader Latin American social movements, these cases enhance decolonial bids for "decolonising methodologies" by showing the importance of starting from practices before theory. My arguments are based on documentary work on past and present relations between anarchism and decoloniality in Latin America/Abya Yala, on personal militant work in Brazil/Pindorama, and on a sample of qualitative interviews with activists.

This paper discusses new theoretical and practical perspectives on the relationship between anarchism, indigeneity, and Afro-descendent struggles. It especially addresses the commitment of Brazilian anarchists to daily activism in *quilombos* (former communities of runaway slaves that are now formally but not effectively recognised by the Brazilian state) and in indigenous villages whose right to land is currently threatened by the infamous proposal known as *Marco Temporal*. Declared anti-constitutional by the Brazilian Supreme Court on 20 October 2023, later approved by the Parliament and still the object of heated conflicts, this proposal is supported by the *Bancada Ruralista*, a parliamentary lobby associated with agribusiness and reactionary planters that is characterised by a mix of violent white suprematism, religious antifeminist/homophobic fanaticism, and support for unregulated capitalism (Souza 2020). It aims at dispossessing indigenous communities whose lands were not officially demarcated at the date of the 1988 Brazilian Constitution, which granted them a formal right to ancestral lands. *Marco Temporal* substantially means the cancellation of this right.

If we embrace the idea that decolonisation should imply full devolution of lands stolen by colonialists (Coulthard 2014; Murrey and Mollet 2023; Tuck and Yang 2012) and that all Brazil was indigenous land before its "discovery" in 1500, the results are clear that only crumbs were granted to indigenous communities hitherto. According to the latest data provided by the Fundação Nacional dos Povos Indígenas, the governmental agency for the rights of indigenous peoples, over 736 areas that are susceptible to delimitation to become indigenous "territory", representing only 13.75% of Brazil (Pindorama as for its indigenous name), only 48 are delimited and 12 definitively regularised, with some 490 claims for land still to be examined (FUNAI 2023). Yet, as I discuss below, ideas of delimitation and bounded territory are problematic for both anarchist thinking and indigenous/*quilombola* worldviews (Anthias 2018; Oslender 2019; Postero 2017; Zaragocin and Caretta 2021).

As for the insurgent tradition of quilombos, this phenomenon is currently addressed by geographical literature (Ferretti 2019; Guillén 2021; Wright 2020) and by works arguing that these experiences were essential to elaborate the concept of freedom as we know it (Roberts 2015). It

is exactly at the intersection of these axes of struggle, called *luta afroindígena*, that Brazilian anarchists see a strategic point in their bid to get rid of state, capitalism, patriarchy, and coloniality for building a society that is free, egalitarian, and respectful of all differences and environments.[1] These activists find confirmations of their theories in the practices of autonomy, federal decentralisation, and self-government from below that are put into practice by indigenous and *quilombola* communities. They claim that these experiences are closer to the anarchist tradition than to other socialistic tendencies such as Marxism and envision new anarchist understandings of decoloniality, a field of study that intrinsically questions traditional ideas of the European Left identifying revolution with the mere seizure of state power (Zibechi 2010). This paper tries for the first time to extend and put in communication anarchist geographies, decoloniality, indigeneity, Black resistance, and marronage.

My main argument is that the connection between anarchism and *luta afroindígena* provides unique contributions to current intersectional and pluriversal agendas for making transnational and transcultural alliances that can overtake single-axis approaches to social transformation. For this bid, the internationalist anarchist tradition contains powerful conceptual tools to avoid racial or cultural essentialisms. This means challenging at the same time narrow localisms and flattening universalisms, breaking divides between what is indigenous and non-indigenous, to extend postcolonial geographers' calls for planetary indigeneity (Sidaway et al. 2014). Additionally, anarchist key notions of coherence between theory and praxis, means and ends (Malatesta 2014), well match the current focus of Latin American grassroots movements on horizontal practices challenging the inadequacy of official leftist parties and governments (Souza 2016; Zibechi 2012).

These practices are often inspired by indigenous ethics and highlight what decolonial activists call the need to "decolonise methodology", which means putting centre stage praxes before theories, against the Eurocentric figure of the leading intellectual (often white and male) who elaborates the "correct" theory to direct struggles (Mignolo and Escobar 2010; Zibechi 2022). Matching and extending recent claims for "defiant scholarship" (Daley and Murrey 2022), anarchist views of indigeneity and marronage likewise question all kinds of chauvinisms and nationalisms, including "the territorialised monolingualism of the colonial nation-state", towards "anti-nationalist solidarities" (Chapman 2023:24). Thus, enhancing anarchist decolonial agendas productively enriches both anarchism and decoloniality.

Very keen to learn from different cultures and experiences for finding alternatives to European ideas of territory understood as geometrically bounded space (Halvorsen et al. 2019; Ince and Barrera de la Torre 2016), the field of anarchist geographies maintains its vibrancy after having been especially prominent after the 2012 *Antipode* special issue (Springer et al. 2012). This scholarship is now extending and diversifying its reach by connecting material and textual legacies of the anarchist tradition to new scholarly tendencies (Brigstocke 2022; Ferretti 2023), trying Deleuzian readings of Latin American historical cases (de la Torre Hernández and Barrera de la Torre 2019), reflecting on technologies (Gerhardt 2020) and relaunching historical geographies of anarchism and revolution (Camps-Calvet et al. 2022).

In a recent *ACME* special issue, continuing a discussion on "other" geographies and anarchisms (Barrera Bassols and Barrera de la Torre 2017), Gerónimo Barrera de la Torre notes that "many of the 'anarchist' ideas and values are shared with other *anti-authoritarian* perspectives

[1] Interview with anarchist collective *Aurora Negra* (Mahu and Johnny), São Paulo, 24 September 2023 (hereafter AN, 2023).

that question oppressive social organisation, such as Indigenous, Black or feminist perspectives" (Barrera de la Torre 2021:145). These authors express special interest in "the possibilities that are opened through … decolonisation and indigenous autonomies" (Barrera de la Torre and Ince 2021:216) towards an anarchist decolonial agenda. Considering the historical intersections between anarchism and indigeneity that were analysed, among others, by an eminent figure of Latin American decolonial feminism, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (1988), this scholarship recognises the need to question the "state-led schemes of 'multicultural' … and land titling strategies that have had consequences on indigenous people through reproducing and entrenching (capitalist, modern) state schemes of dispossession under the guise of 'recognition'" (Barrera de la Torre and Ince 2021:219–220). These tend to reproduce oppression under new forms and to destroy indigenous identities in exchange for some economic concessions, as I further discuss below.

Parallelly, Marcelo Lopes de Souza criticises colonial behaviours that are still identifiable among both Northern and Southern "progressive" scholars, including anarchists. For Souza, the problem is not only the classical "Northern" scholar who goes researching among destitute people for the mere sake of publications and career. Souza also denounces cases such as the "Brazilian or Mexican white, middle-class scholar who condemns ethnocentrism, racism and xenophobia at the international level [but] is typically not aware of how ethnocentric, racist and xenophobic his or her behaviour … often is towards many of his or her fellow citizens: indigenous people, black shack dwellers living at the outskirts of cities, homeless people, landless land workers and have-nots in general" (Souza 2019:9). This is a crucial warning against any generalisation or essentialisation about "Northern" and "Southern" identities that is also suggested by scholarship on South–South relations (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Daley 2018), questioning Manichean divisions between the "centre" and the "periphery", as well as between who is "inside" and who is "outside" the struggle, elements that likewise emerge from my interviews.

Anarchist geographers still stress the need to enhance links between scholarship and daily activism, involving people and knowledges outside the academy (Mullenite 2021). It is exactly what this paper does by discussing the work of anarchist groups in Brazil, including their concrete engagement with and theoretical reflection on the problems that anarchist commitments to *luta afroindígena* entail. My sources include: public statements and other documentation produced by anarchist collectives on indigenous and quilombo matters; personal experiences from a series of visits that I made to Brazilian anarchist meetings and places, the last one to the Guarani villages Yrexakã and Takuá Ju Mirim in the state of São Paulo; and a set of qualitative interviews.

Individual and collective, these interviews are informed by a well-established methodology in interviewing public figures (Harvey 2011) as they concern a representative sample of indigenous, *quilombola*, and anarchist activists who are publicly renowned for their militancy. Speaking with the names or nicknames through which they are known in the struggle, my interviewees are: two representatives of the theatre collective *Motim de Teatro* (Theatre Riots), Ricardo and Linguiça, animators of historical anarchist groups in the region of Espirito Santo and active in the *quilombola* region of Sapé do Norte; São Paulo indigenous scholar and activist Júlio, from Guató people, member of the collective Colibri (*Coletivo Libertário de Resistência Indígena*); Yrexakã village leader and *payé* (spiritual authority) Nino; Takuá Ju Mirim village leader Luciana;

and two representatives of São Paulo anarchist collective *Aurora Negra* (Black Dawn), Mahu and Johnny.[2]

Methodologically, this work implied the acknowledgement of my own positionality. Being involved in militant solidarity with Brazilian anarchist groups for several years and having attended many of their meetings as an activist rather than a scholar, I was previously acquainted with at least four of my overall seven interviewees. Thus, the fact that I am a white academic man from a (neo-Latin) European country was never perceived as a barrier, as my interviewees refuse any essentialisation of cultural or racialised belongings, stressing instead our internationalist "kinship". However, everybody remains aware of such class differences, and our relationship is informed by the explicit request, agreed from both sides, that European activists or scholars tailor their privilege to the service of the struggle. In this vein, I would contend that militant involvement, far from constituting a bias for any false "objectivity" that colonial and positivistic "science" pretends, constitutes the best way to do research avoiding disembodied standpoints, as well as academic "vampirism" (Souza 2019:11). My activist position allows me to return the results of my work not only by producing academic "expertise", but by giving speeches, producing materials in Portuguese, and bringing radical ideas from activist groups in other areas of the world, together with their material solidarity, in my periodic trips to Brazil. This kind of task should not be neglected by scholarship that pretends to be emancipatory.

In the first part, I discuss anarchist traditions of anti-racism, blackness, and indigeneity with a special focus on Latin America. In the second part, I address the case of anarchist struggles within Sapé do Norte quilombos in the light of current geographical scholarship on Black Studies. In the third part, I analyse anarchist engagements with Guarani villages Yrexakã and Takuá Ju Mirim and their potential to extend critical decolonial studies on indigeneity.

Latin American Anarchisms: Engaging with Blackness and Indigeneity

A rich although still neglected scholarship in anarchist studies deals with the relations between the proletarians of European origin who first brought anarchism to Latin America since the end of the 19th century, and indigenous and Afro-descendent people. While it is widely acknowledged that an anarchist inspiration characterised early socialism all along the sub-continent and that anarcho-syndicalism remained hegemonic for several decades in countries such as Brazil and Argentina (Rama and Cappelletti 1990), anarchism's alleged exclusive whiteness and Eurocentrism remains commonplace for several scholars. An analysis of relevant sources substantially contradicts these commonplaces, as such judgements can apply to some militants and groups but cannot be generalised to the entire movement. Scholars such as, among others, Steven Hirsch, Lucien van der Walt, Kirwin Shaffer, Raymond Craib, and Geoffroy de Laforcade recently demonstrated quite the opposite (De Laforcade and Shaffer 2015; Hirsch and van der Walt 2010; Maxwell and Craib 2015).

For them, Latin America has been a key laboratory to support claims that anarchism was (relatively) open to learn from different cultures since its early years. De Laforcade and Shaffer

[2] All textual quotations from the interviews and from texts originally in languages other than English have been translated by the author.

note that, in Brazil, quilombos and Afro-indigenous struggles "fuelled the historical imagination of prominent anarchist writers of 'native' Afro-Portuguese descent, such as Gabio Luz and Alfonso Henriques de Lima Barreto" (de Laforcade and Shaffer 2015:2), while historical anarcho-syndicalist unions had charismatic Black leaders such as Rio de Janeiro activist Domingos Passos, nicknamed "the Brazilian Bakunin" (Black Rose 2016:86). In São Paulo, the leading anarchist journal *A Plebe* responded to the accusation of mainstream press that anarchism was extraneous to Brazil as imported by migrants by noting that, in Brazil, everybody was a foreigner but the indigenous. "Tired of being stigmatised as an 'exotic plant'", the journal's editors "proclaimed in 1920 that the only 'authentic' Brazilians were indigenous peoples … an interesting preview of 'decolonial' discourses to come" (de Laforcade and Hirsch 2020:10).

These authors argue that a transnational approach is the only way to seize the networked nature and transcultural practices of Latin American anarchisms. In this methodological framework, Shaffer exposes how Central American early anarchism worked around a Caribbean circulation of activists, journals, and ideas, structured as a complex network which had hubs in places such as Cuba, Puerto Rico, Panama, Mexico, and even the United States. In Cuba, this hub included: "Men and women, old and young, black and white, Cuban-and foreign-born, skilled and unskilled workers" (Shaffer 2010:278). Although racial matters were not so central for Cuban anarchists, they released strong anti-racist statements and "praises for Afro-Cuban culture and the contributions of Afro-Cubans in the liberation struggles of the 1890s", while "several Afro-Cubans did rise to important leadership positions in the movement" (Shaffer 2010:282).

In Mexico, both Zapatistas and the anarchist circuits of the Flores Magón brothers gave great importance to the indigenous identity of most fighters for the Mexican Revolution in the 1910s, establishing an "alliance, which transcended the northern border, between Mexican *Magonistas* … and Purépecha/Tarascan, Yaqui and Mayo peoples" (de Laforcade and Hirsch 2020:7). The *Magonistas* eventually praised unruly peoples like the Yaqui, understanding indigeneity as revolt "against colonisation in order to be a free people in the larger international project to free all peoples from tyranny" (Shaffer 2010:308). While anarchists' indigenist commitment was not devoid of problems and contradictions, including this kind of romanticised essentialisations, and was not uniformly applied to all cases, there is room to claim that anarchism took some advantage in dealing with indigenous problems in relation to other "ideologies" of European origin.

One of the most relevant cases in this "indigenous/anarchist cross-fertilisation" (de Laforcade and Hirsch 2020:7) is Peruvian anarchism as studied by Hirsch, who demonstrated that: "Anarchists and syndicalists in Peru explicitly rejected doctrines of inherent racial inequality, championed the cause of indigenous emancipation, and developed a significant presence among Indian peasants and mine workers" (Hirsch and van der Walt 2010:lviii). For Hirsch, this case explains why indigenous-anarchist relations were underplayed by historiography: it was not because they did not exist, but because of the scarcity of written sources, as most indigenous accounts relied on oral cultures that are difficult to seize for traditional scholarship. Hence, the need for further investigation.

Available documentation shows how early anarcho-syndicalists from Lima already "displayed a keen interest in the emancipation of women and indigenous workers … reflected in union collaboration with the *Tahuantinsuyo* Pro-Indian Rights Central Committee and the 'indigenous liberation' agenda adopted by the Second Workers' Congress" (Hirsch 2010:246). In rural areas around Puno, Cuzco, and Arequipa, fruitful collaborations and mutual influences were established between Lima anarchists and indigenous activists. It was the case with "Carlos Con-

dorena (a.k.a. Carlos Condori Yujra), an indigenous peasant from Puno [who] developed close ties with anarcho-syndicalist leaders and read European and Peruvian publications on anarcho-syndicalism" (Hirsch 2010:262–263). Another indigenous activist, Ezequiel Urviola, brought an anarchist inspiration to "the Peruvian Regional Indian Workers Federation … bridging the divide between provincial indigenous peasants and the urban-based anarcho-syndicalist labour movement" (Hirsch 2010:264), which also included activists such as "Julio Reynaga Matute, an Afro-Peruvian" and "Adalberto Fonkén, a Chinese-Peruvian" (Hirsch 2020:55). For Hirsch, cultural and linguistic influences were reciprocal, as activist Adolfo Vienrich published a "bilingual periodical, *Aurora/Pacha Huarai*, in the city of Tarma … Likewise, Francisco Chukiwanka Ayulo, an anarchist-influenced indigenous leader from the southern department of Puno, developed a phonetic alphabet for Quechua and Aymara" (Hirsch 2020:58).

It is worth mentioning the figure of Manuel González Prada (1844–1918), the most famous historical anarchist in Peru, who published a pamphlet in 1908, *Nuestros Indios*, which had huge circulation as a manifesto of anarchist solidaristic engagement with indigeneity, encouraging indigenous people to revolt against all oppressors, including white settlers. A reader of anarchist geographers Reclus and Kropotkin, Prada first ridiculed a key aspect of the European science of his day, eventually the "invention" of "superior and inferior races, [thus] the recognised right, for the Whites, to monopolise the government of the Planet [through] the suppression of the Black in Africa, of the Redskin in the United States, of the Tagalog in the Philippines, of the Indio in Peru" (González Prada 1978:6).

Prada's encompassing definition of different non-white peoples as the targets of genocide and scientific racism, together with his sarcasm on the concept of "barbarity", chimed with Reclus's language blaming colonial crimes and calling the colonised to revolt (Ferretti 2013). Acknowledging the multi-ethnic nature of Peruvian and Latin-American societies, Prada denounced the racialised character of social domination and made a comparison between colonial and postcolonial oppression, anticipating some current decolonial concerns on internal colonialism. "Is the Indio suffering less under the Republic than under Spanish domination? … Spanish monarchists killed Indios when they pretended to shake down the yoke of conquistadores. We national republicans exterminate them when they protest" (González Prada 1978:13). Far from limiting his critique to denunciation and commiseration, Prada appreciated indigenous social organisation expressed by "collectivism and mutual aid (the village-based *ayllu*)" (de Laforcade and Hirsch 2020:10) and indicated subaltern agency and direct action as the ways to be followed for emancipation. That is, being unlikely that the oppressors concede rights to the oppressed based on their good hearth, it should be the "hearth of the oppressed that acquires sufficient strength to get rid of the oppressors" (González Prada 1978:19).

Today, quoting Nancy Postero's (2017) critiques to the Bolivian "indigenous state" for its attempts to coopt indigenous peoples as docile subjects of neoliberal exploitation with some "progressive" cosmetics, de Laforcade and Hirsch match Cusicanqui's criticism of current attempts to case indigeneity in niches of essentialised and orientalised original culture (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010). They instead argue that these communities operate constant reinventions of their cultures within daily practices of resistance, "creating new forms of thought, new languages of affiliation and belonging, new practices of civic intervention" (de Laforcade and Hirsch 2020:13) as Latin American anarchisms did by constantly reinventing themselves after having been in contact with different cultures (de Laforcade 2020).

This scholarship finds an empirical confirmation in my interview with the *Aurora Negra* activists, who highlight how their respective family origins include Black and indigenous ancestry: "Our movement was not only composed by Whites as several people use to say. We showed the opposite: anarchism is made by people of various ethnicities".[3] Originally based in Paulista favela Vila Dalva and committed to both Black and indigenous activism in Brazil, *Aurora Negra* comrades evoke the very anarchist tradition mobilising the example of Bakunin, who "already supported the struggles of Slavic peoples".[4] Their aim is to resume the tradition of "Black and indigenous warriors", which implies that "[a]narchism drinks from all these sources, it acknowledges peoples who were here since millenniums and joins the struggles of indigenous villages, of quilombos, of favelas, of peripheries",[5] wishing to be an acting force among others rather than a vanguard party, a concept that anarchists traditionally refuse.

For these activists, decoloniality does not mean winking opportunistically at "fashionable" approaches: they deem it consistent with a long tradition, one that commentators need to know to understand the anarchists' strategic investment in *afroindígena* struggles. In the next section, I discuss current anarchist engagements with *quilombola* struggles through the empirical case of Sapé do Norte in the light of Black Geographies (Hawthorne 2019), a key field that would benefit from including perspectives outside the Anglosphere, given the Anglo-American centring that is currently prevailing in much of this (although outstandingly valuable) scholarship.

Anarchist Geographies of Quilombo

In geography, the field of Critical Race Studies (Bressey 2011) is well developed and established, and it would be impossible to fully account for this burgeoning literature here. Yet, one can consider that, starting from the seminal works of Katherine McKittrick and others, "black lives are necessarily geographic" (McKittrick 2006:xiii) although marginalised by the same spatial apparatuses that underpinned colonial modernity (McKittrick and Woods 2007). Scholars committed to Black geographies such as Camilla Hawthorne stress "the need for more studies that provincialize North America and connect with Latinx and Native/Indigenous geographies" (Hawthorne 2019:1), linking "Black liberation movements … [to] the project of anti-capitalism" (Hawthorne 2019:4). There, the main problem is not to enhance the ethnic and gender plurality of the privileged classes in some country, but to question the world in which we live. Thus, "the idea that theory and political practice are inextricably intertwined" (Hawthorne 2019:2) is key to both Black and anarchist geographies.

Several authors arguing that Black studies should reshape geographical epistemologies call for linking activism and scholarship (Bledsoe and Wright 2019). Pat Noxolo identifies as a "starting point for such a reimagining … marronage or Maroon geographies, with its historical basis in Black people fleeing enslavement and living outside the bounds of whiteness, making places in unsurveilled territories" (2022:1234). That is, what in Brazil is called quilombo, a phenomenon that, for Adam Bledsoe, was not a mere reaction to slavery, but "one of the most creative and emergent methods of life-building found in the modern world" (2017:30), due to these communities' "long-standing commitment to recognising, promoting, and defending the humanity of

[3] AN, 2023.
[4] AN, 2023.
[5] AN, 2023.

everyone, regardless of race" (2017:32). Thus, quilombos are spaces for both Black resistance and intersectional struggles beyond single-axis approaches.

In Brazil, historical experiences such as the Quilombo of Palmares, a federation of rebel villages that survived for more than a century in the Northeastern state of Alagoas fighting against Portuguese and Dutch invaders, enjoy a long-lasting popular and scholarly myth. There, historian Clovis Moura, alongside radical geographers such as Manuel Correia de Andrade (2001), defined the action of creating quilombos (*quilombagem*) as: "A permanent weapon to counter the system, [introducing] the figure of the black rebel in Brazilian historiography to challenge Gilberto Freyre's notion of positivity" (Silva and Santos 2022:354). Freyre's paternalistic theory of lusotropicalism was denounced by anti-racist scholarship as "the ideology that rendered so effective services to colonialism" (Nascimento 2017). There is still a debate on how much quilombos were "parasitic" phenomena within the plantation system and how much they were effectively disruptive (Abreu 2018; Miki 2012; Reis and Gomes 2016). While I will not enter this discussion here, I would stress how quilombos' political and territorial heterogeneity exceeds anti-racist claims in a narrow sense. Such attitudes confirm anarchist ideas that decolonial activism should be extraneous to all forms of communitarianism, nationalism, and essentialism.

Among the Brazilian references that can help overtaking Anglo centralities in Black and decolonial studies, it is worth mentioning recent efforts to make known the life and works of a neglected but exceptional figure of Black feminism—Beatriz Nascimento (1942–1995). An Afro-Brazilian woman who dedicated her scholarly and activist life to the defence of the weakest in society, Nascimento was eventually assassinated while she defended a friend from an abusive partner (Smith 2016; Smith et al. 2021). Considering that "Black women from Latin America are more marginalised than their English-speaking counterparts" (Smith 2016:74), Nascimento's contribution was key in the introduction of Black studies in Brazilian universities, which paralleled the rescuing of some spaces of freedom in the last years of the 1964–1985 dictatorship, in which "her most substantive research was on *quilombos*" (Smith 2016:77), which she understood in their plural and complex spatialities paralleling those of the favelas. That is, these are places where racialised and socio-spatially marginalised people still suffer social stigma, but also spaces of resistance (Campos 2011).

Another Afro-Brazilian scholar and activist with the same surname as Beatriz who was especially active as an opponent to the 1964–1985 dictatorship, Abdias Nascimento (1914–2011), launched the definition of *Quilombismo* understood as a political programme opposing both "the genocide of the Brazilian Black people" and the hypocrisy of false "racial democracy" (Nascimento 2017:28). Importantly, *Quilombismo* embraces pan-African and transnational approaches grounded in the traditions of freedom, autonomy, and direct democracy characterising African traditions that Abdias identified in early quilombos. Like Bledsoe, Abdias claimed that: "Quilombo does not mean runaway slave. It means fraternal and free union, solidarity, living together … a step in human and socio-political progress in terms of economic egalitarianism … a Brazilian version of communitarianism or Ujamaa-ism in the African tradition [challenging] the predatory economy called capitalism" (Nascimento 2019:264). While Abdias proposed solutions that seem a far cry from anarchism, such as a *quilombista* state, it is worth noting that, in the field of Black anarchism, direct democracy based on traditional assemblies such as the Ujamaa is considered part of an African anarchist mindset (Mba and Igariwey 1997).

Today, Brazilian quilombos are committed to link ancestral traditions to matters of social and environmental justice (Alves and Oliveira 2023), including tackling the challenges of technology

(Zhang et al. 2022). They demonstrate how most commentators "underestimated the degree to which ancestral knowledge of tropical ecosystems and mastery of subsistence production" (Shore 2017:59) can mean in terms of food production that is respectful of environment and social justice (Roman and Westengen 2022). While only a small minority of the several thousand *quilombola* communities existing in Brazil has received the land that they should have according to the 1988 Constitution, they are still considered as actors of alternative territorialities and "geographies of resistance" (Creston 2020), which "transformed the landscape in ways that challenged the plantation and mining economies central to Brazil's social, political, and moral order" (Shore 2017:64). This disruptive potential is the reason for official and unofficial repression that indigenous and *quilombola* groups still endure from both illegal *garimpo* (extraction) and state apparatuses, not least the disastrous politics adopted by the Bolsonaro government during the Covid pandemics (Pimenta and Nascimento 2022).

In the *Black Anarchism Reader* produced by the North American Black Rose/Rosa Negra Anarchist Federation, quilombos are deemed parts of plural insurgent alternatives to oppression, alongside other South American cases such as Afro-Colombian anarchist struggles. These cases introduce a key matter for current anarchist engagement with *quilombola* and indigenous lands, that is, the problem of demarcating lands that are formally granted to ancient maroon and indigenous communities, although often "the law is not enforced" (Black Rose 2016:96). This raises both the problem of the relations between anarchist insurgent tactics and legal concessions, and that of diverging ideas of bounded territory. As Black Colombian anarchists note, "as a Black people, there is a difference with the state. The state corresponds to another logic" (Black Rose 2016:98). Significant explanations can be found in my interview with Espirito Santo activists, Ricardo and Linguiça.

The latter claims that, in supporting struggles of the *quilombola* network in Sapé do Norte, "key is the right to land". While anarchists "propose alternatives to the state for *quilombola* and indigenous people, the state has the obligation to accomplish its duties and it must do it".[6] Thus, Brazilian anarchists act consistently with classical Errico Malatesta's ideas that small improvements and concessions from public powers do not undermine revolutionary agendas if they are obtained through direct action from below (Malatesta 2014). This is what Espirito Santo anarchists try to foster starting "from the essence of daily life, of *Bem Viver*",[7] in the context of "the quilombo, a community that does not like to be ruled".[8] This extends Raúl Zibechi's (2012) idea that retaking the control of land is a key point for anti-authoritarian movements all over Latin America.

Sapé do Norte is an area of the Northern littoral of Espirito Santo, comprising 35 *quilombola* communities within the municipalities of "São Mateus and Conceição da Barra" (O S Nascimento 2019:2), currently settled by some 1,500 families over the 12,000 who lived there until the 1970s. The very fact of living there is deemed an act of "resistance" (O S Nascimento 2019:2) due to the tragic history of the area, marked by the abuses that indigenous and Afro-descendant communities still suffer from agribusiness and extractivism. Since the 1970s, this area was devastated by a big company planting eucalyptuses that are only good, as Linguiça sarcastically notes,

[6] Interview with collective *Motim de Teatro* (Ricardo and Linguiça), Saint-Imier, 22 July 2023 (hereafter MT, 2023).

[7] This notion is better known as *Buen Vivir/Sumak Kawsay*, that is, the indigenous ethics of lifestyle which is respectful of other human beings and of environments.

[8] MT, 2023.

to "produce towel paper for *gringos* cleaning their house".[9] This plantation had a socially and environmentally devastating impact that was called "The Green Desert" in a successful video-documentary produced with the participation of local anarchists.[10] In those years, Black and indigenous communities were evicted by trickery or force to make room for agribusiness.

In the oral memory of Sapé quilombos, transmitted by women who often play leading communitarian roles, these evictions are recounted as one of the historical catastrophes of Black people just after colonisation and enslavement (Souza and Bonomo 2021). As Linguiça recounts: "A big black man called Pelé [adding sardonically: 'Suggestive name, isn't it?'] was already corrupted by the firm. He talked to small owners convincing them that their lands would soon become worthless, so they needed to sell".[11] Linguiça recounts that his own family also had to leave their home to settle in the urban area of Vitoria-Cariacica as many others. On these grounds, anarchists from Espirito Santo claim that "we are not IN this movement, we ARE this movement as we are not an external body: we are indigenous, we are *quilombola*, we are people from the periphery in the process of resistance. There is no separation between people and leaders".[12] Combining *quilombola* antiauthoritarianism and the anarchist traditional refusal of a vanguard party, *Motim* activists stress how their participation in self-building, cultivation, and land occupation processes within quilombos distinguishes them from the politicians, who "come to the quilombo only in times of elections".[13] Then, Linguiça tells how the revolt arose.

In the early 2000s, after decades of rural exodus, "the last straw was the decision to plant eucalyptuses on the land of an important ancestral cemetery … that disappeared".[14] Then, in the urban area of Vitoria, protests were promoted by students and displaced people wanting to come back to the countryside, being the "Black movement a form of resistance that is both urban and rural".[15] This was disruptive, as Vitoria is a conservative city and these unprecedented demonstrations gave courage to the entire movement. Thus, in 2006–2007, there was the first *retomada*, that is, the occupation of lands to resettle *quilombola* people and resist future evictions reimplanting cultivations for self-consumption. This happened through forms of agency form below, independent from political parties, to which the anarchists contributed since the beginning.

Activists recollect how "[w]e remained camped in the forest days and days, surrounded by policemen, who attacked us".[16] From that moment, occupations continued. Today, urban activists make periodical sojourns in Sapé do Norte to collaborate in day-by-day settlement and liberation of lands. Cultivation for self-sufficiency was already considered by Abdias Nascimento (2017) as a key characteristic of *quilombismo*, against monoculture and latifundium, which are at the colonial origins of what Josué de Castro famously called geopolitics of hunger (Davies 2023). Thus, quilombos express unique social relations that are key to anarchist agendas fostering direct action and self-government from below.

Linguiça also mentions the stories of local indigenous communities after the eviction of Tupinikim people from their ancestral lands. Later, Guarani communities that had migrated there

[9] MT, 2023.

[10] Rede Alerta, 2002, "Cruzando o Deserto Verde", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3yeep1BNRw (last accessed 22 May 2024).

[11] MT, 2023.

[12] MT, 2023.

[13] MT, 2023.

[14] MT, 2023.

[15] MT, 2023.

[16] MT, 2023.

"retook the struggle of the Tupinikim and restarted to *aldear* [settle in traditional villages]".[17] As I discuss below, *aldear* corresponds to a political revendication of ancestral ways of life in indigenous villages, associated with claims for indigenous rights and the defence of environments. According to Linguiça, political activity in these communities is more difficult than in quilombos due to the strong influence of the Catholic Church and of the state. Yet, it worked better after that: "University anarchists founded the 'Indigenous Brigade'"[18] and are now considered as *Parentes* (Relatives), therefore allies, by these communities.

All these groups appreciate more concrete solidarity than scholarly fieldwork: as Linguiça humorously reports, their nickname for "Anthropologist" is *Trampólogo* (Trickologist). Thus, these struggling communities are not happy about being "studied", but are very grateful to activist solidarity. This is exactly what another group strictly connected, the collective *Aurora Negra*, makes in the São Paulo area, as I discuss in the next section.

"The common goal is freedom": Anarchist Indigeneity in Pindorama

While geographical scholarship addressing matters on anarchism and indigeneity first highlighted the numerous difficulties that this association implies, mainly in North America (Barker and Pickerill 2012; Sloan Morgan 2016), this section discusses the specificity of Brazilian and Latin American cases in indicating ways to anarcho-indigenous cross-fertilisation, more apparent than in other regions of the world. Anarchist definitions of *luta afroindígena* match quilombo scholarship highlighting the "sustained cultural interaction between Black and indigenous populations" (Abreu 2018:199). One of my interviewees, Júlio, is an activist from the Guató people who lives in São Paulo and militates in the aforementioned collective *Colibri* to connect urban activism with the struggles of indigenous villages. He discusses this *indígena-quilombola* alliance starting from his own ancestral identity and stressing the presence of "214 indigenous peoples, each one with their language … their cosmovision and society, in this land of Pindorama that people call Brazil. Indigenous struggles preceded the arrival of Black people, whom we welcomed to the point that all quilombos that existed here have been supported by indigenous people".[19] This importantly calls attention to a key aspect of this alliance, that is, the fact that these peoples do not recognise the territorialities of the state.

In geographical scholarship, the very notion of territory is questioned by critical and decolonial approaches stressing the difference between the bounded territory of nation-states, capitalism, and warfare, and the idea of territory as social relation fostered by social movements (Halvorsen et al. 2019). These questionings include feminist critiques to extractivism and exploitation of female bodies (Caretta et al. 2020; Zaragocin and Caretta 2021). Addressing controversies around the very notion of entitlement and delimitation of indigenous land, several authors note that, without the recognition of people's right to control their own resources, granting portions of territory delimited through practices informed by European cartographic reason would merely end in "incorporating new areas into capitalist market relations" (Hougaard 2022:1) since the very act of demarcation.

[17] MT, 2023.
[18] MT, 2023.
[19] Interview with Júlio Guató, São Paulo, 23 September 2023 (hereafter JG, 2023).

Endeavours to make indigenous people participate in self-demarcation and "counter-mappings" have led to ontological conflicts and tensions between communities, due to the intrinsically positivistic logic of notions such as mapping and private property (Anthias 2018; Oslender 2021; Prieto 2022; Radcliffe 2020; Vega et al. 2022). As Penelope Anthias (2021:268–269) contends: "Communal mapping and land titling perpetuate essentialist understandings of identity and insert indigenous territories into broader (state and capitalist) grids of legibility … Property *and* territory … work together to efface alternative indigenous ontologies of land and reinscribe state sovereignty over indigenous socio-natures". As a result, demarcation of lands in cadastre-like parcels often "dismembered Native Community Lands into hundreds of separate polygons and awarded the most valuable lands to non-indigenous claimants" (Anthias 2021:271). Against that, some communities developed strategies of resistance challenging the so-called logic of *Indio permitido*, that is the paternalistic recognition of some rights at the condition that indigenous peoples abide to the limitations that states and neoliberalism impose, "through a dialectics of refusal and engagement that transcends the limits of settler colonial law" (Correia 2021:227).

While these processes are quite complex and contradictory, a burgeoning literature on decolonial geographies stresses the need for addressing different ontologies against what Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2016) calls epistemicide, to foster ideas of pluriverse (de la Cadena and Blaser 2018) as an option to decolonise all branches of geography, including political (Radcliffe and Radhuber 2020) and education geographies (Stanek 2019). Latin Americanist geographers discuss indigenous environmental ethics as a qualifying political point to consider both human and non-human agents as actors of decoloniality (Hope 2021, 2022). While the feeling persists that we are still "a very long way away from decolonising geography" (Barker and Pickerill 2020:642), solidarities between indigenous and non-indigenous activists are needed to really accomplish this task, considering that non-academic knowledge passes "through solidarity practices" (de Leeuw and Hunt 2018:10). Indigeneity is now identified as a crucial point in the broader field of critical geographies, which should be freed from Western "epistemological patronising" (Radcliffe 2018:442). Anarchism offers key insights on that, especially considering the case of Guarani villages Takuá Ju Mirim and Yrexakã, which are supported by urban anarchist collectives in São Paulo.

As already noted by Anthias, the Guaranis have a completely different view of territory than Europeans, also being accustomed to migrating towards an "open land frontier": they do not "talk about their territory; they talked about their land" (Anthias 2021:272–273). Júlio extends this notion to all Brazilian indigeneity, as traditional communities: "Practice territoriality only as an element of self-organisation, of survival … It was the coloniser who established frontiers: we do not have such delimitations … Delimitation is a very cruel practice: you create a reservation and place people there".[20] Yet, matching what Linguiça argues about quilombo struggles, Júlio claims that critiques of mappings and geometric delimitation do not undermine the struggles for retaking land, which are a matter of survival before the violence of extraction, agribusiness, and the construction of infrastructures on indigenous and *quilombola* land. As for agribusiness, Brazilian indigenous activists claim that "each drop of soybean oil that is produced in this country

[20] JG, 2023.

contains indigenous blood",[21] as a part of the necropolitics which characterise the coloniality of power across the Americas (Ruette-Orihuela et al. 2023).

Thus, according to the most classical anarchist principles, people who are denied their rights shall take them directly. For Brazilian anarchists, retaking lands is the first step towards decoloniality, this latter being intrinsically associated with class struggle and gender struggles that explicitly acknowledge the idea of intersectionality. For Júlio, the main correlation between anarchism and indigenous ethics is: "Freedom: the defence of collective and individual freedom … that we call *Bem Viver*".[22] This reflects Guarani's refusal of the hierarchies characterising colonial societies, as their leadership functions do not correspond to posts of political power. For instance, the village spiritual authority, the *Payé*, is not someone competitively elected, but a person who is available to study "the science of plants and cultivation for the well-being of people".[23] Controversies are customarily settled by elders' meetings after "everybody is consulted", because "everybody respects everybody".[24] Once in the villages, my interviews with the respective leaders broadly confirmed Júlio's setup.

In Yrexakã village, *Payé* Nino tells me that their main concern now is with alimentary self-sufficiency to be independent from any external conditioning through the cultivation of *milho*, *mandioca*, and vegetables such as cabbages. Among all possible help, they would especially like to receive seeds and small plants, as "soils are quite acid here"[25] and they struggle daily to make their cultivations survive. The history of Yrexakã village is relatively recent, as its *retomada* took place in 2015, but it remains closely connected with Guarani histories and territoriality. There was an "ancient encampment; numerous indigenous circulated in these woods. Their gatherings took place at the waterfall [few hundred metres from the village] to cut *palmito* and exchange manufacts".[26] Indeed, Yrexakã and the associated village Takuá Ju Mirim stand in the middle of one of the few pieces of original *Mata Atlântica* (rainforest) surviving in the state of São Paulo, close to the sole non-polluted stream of the region. The ten families living in Yrexakã take seriously their role as defenders of this environmental and cultural diversity.

Yet, their idea of self-sufficiency is all but Malthusian, as these communities aim to populate all the available land, also by "clearing the most possible space to plant".[27] That is, they wish to feed more people without giving up their traditional agricultural techniques of stubble-burning, which are respectful of ecosystems and coexist with the forest instead of destroying it. For Nino, creating the conditions to allow people to stay in Yrexakã is crucial, as the lack of public transportation renders it impossible for residents to work in the city. When I interviewed Nino, the Brazilian Supreme Court had just rejected the *Marco Temporal*. Although satisfied for that win, Nino expresses awareness that "[h]ere we won, but the struggle continues … as we do not yet have any guarantee".[28] Therefore, like for anarchists, for Guarani people rights should be taken, instead of waiting for someone else to concede them.

[21] JG, 2023.
[22] JG, 2023.
[23] JG, 2023.
[24] JG, 2023.
[25] Interview with *payé* Nino, aldeia Yrexakã, 24 September 2023 (hereafter PN, 2023).
[26] PN, 2023.
[27] JG, 2023.
[28] PN, 2023.

Equally urgent is the need for a village school, as the numerous children living there cannot yet afford regular school attendance: "The bus does not come here. Sometimes children lose their didactic material, and the road is dangerous when it rains. Children may come back alone at seven in the evening [when it is already dark]".[29] To resolve that matter, the collectives *Colibri* and *Aurora Negra* are supporting the creation of a self-managed school serving both Yrexakã and Takuá Ju Mirim, to be informed by the principles of anti-authoritarian education and to recover Guarani language and traditions. Although challenging, this project is ongoing, with the expectation to restructure a nearby abandoned building to hopefully serve as the future school (Figure 1).

[29] PN, 2023.

Figure 1 The building identified as the future Guarani school at aldeia Yrexakã (photo by the author)

The same awareness is expressed by Luciana, the leader of Takuá Ju Mirim village, a few kilometres away from Yrexakã, at the very end of a precarious road where, "in case of rain, no vehicle can pass".[30] There, six families live with no fewer than 28 children. *Retomada* (retaken) only two years ago, Takuá Ju Mirim has inherited a female leadership as Luciana's mother was the *cacica* (female leader) of another village and was proposed to go there to create this new settlement. As a formal leadership is required to obtain a legal recognition for the village, she asked Luciana to go in her place. To make an example of how leadership roles are deemed a demanding onus rather than a privilege in these communities, Luciana recounts ironically that her initial idea "was to remain here only few months". To her initial astonishment, one day her mother told her that, if she did not remain, "there would be no village".[31] Thus, Luciana is still there, happy to carry out this struggle.

While Guarani activists claim that, in their cultural traditions, rigid gender roles are not conceived, as "patriarchy was introduced by the colonisers",[32] Luciana stresses the difficulties that she experienced as "a woman with children",[33] especially in her relations with the external world. At the end, their *aldeamento* (recreation of a traditional village) proved to be a place where they enjoy "a good quality of life: the place is beautiful, there is the waterfall, we managed to remain".[34] The very fact of living there is considered by Takuá Ju Mirim dwellers as a significant win, despite the lack of almost everything that would be considered as the basic "comforts" for an urban lifestyle. Takuá Ju Mirim is trying to reach alimentary self-sufficiency by cultivating bananas, potatoes, *milho*, and *mandioca* alongside poultry breeding, in solidarity collaboration with Yrexakã. In this vein, their common adhesion to the idea of mutual aid is exemplified by the presence of rooms for communitarian activities in both villages (Figure 2). Luciana discusses problems, including their continuing struggle to "save our language, our culture and our way of living",[35] giving special importance to the school project and to the support that they receive from São Paulo urban activists.

[30] Interview with *cacica* Luciana, aldeia Takuá Ju Mirim, 24 September 2023 (hereafter CL, 2023).
[31] CL, 2023.
[32] AN, 2023.
[33] CL, 2023.
[34] CL, 2023.
[35] CL, 2023.

Figure 2 Communitarian room of the aldeia Yrexakã (photo by the author)

Finally, in my interview with the collective *Aurora Negra*, one can find a synthesis of current anarchist *afroindígena* agendas in Brazil and beyond. Founded in the context of post-dictatorship anarcho-punk movements in the 1990s, *Aurora Negra* has been active in social and cultural activities with marginalised people in São Paulo favela Vila Dalva. Both born in the state of Bahia with Black and indigenous ancestry, Mahu and Johnny recount how, since those years, Brazilian anarchists "started to discuss a lot of Negritude, of Black and indigenous matters … many started to recognise themselves as part of indigenous or Afro-descendant families".[36] Since the beginnings of these discussions, they started acknowledging the traditional alliance between *quilombola* and indigenous communities. In linking indigenous thought and practices with anarchist traditions proceeding from Europe, these activists stress how "indigenous people are not claiming any statehood but only their own land and way of living". They confirm what other interviewees stated as for demarcation practices: "What indigenous and *quilombola* people claim is very simple: there is a recognition [of our lands] by the federal Constitution, so please let us in peace with our land. Ours is a free [idea of] territory".[37] For *Aurora Negra*, anarchist militancy means living among these people and being in their struggles, where "*autogestão* [self-management] and autonomy are already practiced".[38] These two definitions can be quite precisely identified with the tendencies of Latin American grassroots movements to disperse power that are discussed by Zibechi (2010).

Another original point of *afroindígena* anarchism is an empathetic attitude toward indigenous spirituality, which seems to clash to some extent with traditional anarchist secularism and anticlericalism. Yet, according to *Aurora Negra* activists, "it was the Church that oppressed African and indigenous beliefs",[39] and these forms of spirituality cannot be confused with what we may understand as "religion" based on Eurocentric ideas, a point that chimes with postcolonial geographical scholarship addressing similar matters on translatability (Jazeel 2018). As *Aurora Negra* activists report, inserting indigenous worldviews in anarchist ethics is not always seamless as, for them, it was not easy to convince everybody when making points such as spirituality in national and international meetings. While this specific matter cannot be fully dealt with in the space of this paper and will deserve further work, Mahu and Johnny are substantially happy with the international attention and solidarity that their work is receiving within the anarchist movement and beyond. Thus, it is through praxes and mutual crossbreeding that today Brazilian anarchism intersects with Black and indigenous agendas embracing notions such as *Bem Viver*, being part of marginalised communities and adopting pluriversal logics.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that intersectional understandings of anarchist, indigenous, and Afro-descendant thoughts, practices, and spatialities can serve decolonial and pluriversal approaches by enhancing an anarchist decolonial agenda. This latter's originality first lies in its challenges to racial or cultural essentialisms towards more-than-identitarian politics of emancipation inspired by internationalist and intersectional solidarities across countries, communities, axes of strug-

[36] AN, 2023.
[37] AN, 2023.
[38] AN, 2023.
[39] AN, 2023.

gle, and (urban or rural) environments. Thus, anarchism has been first impacted by *afroindígena* ethics through practices, in the context of the aforementioned bids for "decolonising methodologies", and can offer in exchange its emphasis on the consistency between theory and praxis and between means and ends. Furthermore, anti-statist anarchist approaches are productively interacting with *afroindígena* challenges to European ideas of bounded territory as a place to exert exclusive state sovereignty and capitalist exploitation of lands and people, towards broader notions of territory as an open space for struggles and experimentations of different social practices (Zibechi 2012).

Alongside the need for coherence of means and ends, other points that are peculiar to anarchist traditions such as the centrality of antiauthoritarian pedagogy and the refusal of hierarchies (including the leading roles of "organic" intellectuals or "vanguard" parties) well match traditional indigenous and *quilombola* logics of free federation and self-government. Consistency between theory and praxes also informed the methods used for this research, which aimed at breaking the divide between the researcher and the researched, showing the potentialities of reciprocal activist engagements beyond mere participatory "observation". Questioning divides between the "inside" and the "outside" of struggles helps address the problem of who can speak and who is allowed to speak on behalf of someone else. In an anarchist mindset, everybody should speak as everybody is in the struggle.

This implies creating solid links between scholarship and activism, to which some degree of voluntarism is indispensable as far as radical activism does not bring research funds. Without undermining the importance of ongoing struggles against neoliberalisation and for inclusion within universities, scholars should always remember that the world does not end with the walls of our campuses. In international cooperation, we should never forget that societies are divided into classes and that nationalism is not always better than colonialism: thus, it is not enough to work with "Southern" scholars and professionals, who are often members of local postcolonial elites. Concretely siding with the excluded remains a key task for decolonial agendas, and anarchism is once again well placed to give its contribution there.

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