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Summary

EDITORIAL

DOSSIER: SOCIAL MARKERS OF DIFFERENCE, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, AND CREATIVE ECONOMY

Editorial

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Dossier: Social Markers of Difference, Social Movements, and Creative Economy

Dossiê Marcadores Sociais da Diferença, Movimentos Sociais e Economia Criativa

Alexandra Cleopatre Tsallis[I], Flávia Ferreira Pires[II], Gisele Pereira Dias[III]

This dossier explores the intersections between social markers of difference, social movements, and creative economy, emphasizing how these areas converge to shape new social and economic dynamics.

The dossier includes eight articles that encourage reflection and constructive debate from innovative perspectives. The article "Us for Us: Black solidarity and creative economy" (Nós por nós: solidaridade negra e economia criativa), by Lia Vainer Schucman, Heitor Marques Santos, and Maria Eduarda Delfino das Chagas, examines how solidarity fairs in Florianópolis (SC) function as spaces for resistance and the reinforcement of black identity, emphasizing entrepreneurship as a vital tool for inclusion and cultural appreciation.

In the study "The social impact of the work of Brazilian hair braiders and intersectional black feminist activism" (O impacto social do trabalho das trancistas brasileiras), authors Ana Carolina Areias Nicolau Siqueira and Amana Rocha Mattos emphasize the crucial role of these women in preserving ancestral knowledge and contributing to black feminist activism. The study highlights how the practice of braiding serves not only as a means of subsistence but also as a tool for social transformation.

In "I make my destiny: an analysis of the social marker of gender in the film *Alice in Wonderland*" (*Eu faço meu destino: uma análise do marcador social de gênero no filme Alice no País das Maravilhas*), Deborah Luísa Vieira dos Santos, Emerson Nunes Eller, and Isabela Diamantino Braga dos Santos use the feature film to illustrate both the perpetuation and disruption of traditional gender narratives. The analysis reveals how the film aligns with contemporary struggles for gender equality.

The dossier also explores cultural and sustainable dialogues through articles that address the possibilities of sustainability and inclusion in Brazil. The article "*Ideas to postpone the end of the world*: Rede Cidadã strategies for a sustainable economy" (*Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo: estratégias da Rede Cidadã para uma economia sustentável*), written by Jackeline Aires, Fernanda Hallack, Danielly Pierre, Sonalle Azevedo, and Raiene Herculano, highlights the innovations proposed by the Citizen Network in the field of social work. The authors emphasize the use of integrative health practices and awareness-raising initiatives to promote social and economic inclusion in a sustainable manner.

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The study "Brazilian approach to creative city: potential for socially sustainable development" (Cidade criativa à brasileira: potencial para o desenvolvimento sustentável), by Andréa Virgínia Freire Costa and José Clewton do Nascimento, examines the potential of creative cities to foster socially sustainable development.

In "Sewing hope: projects with sewing and craftsmanship in Rio de Janeiro as a viable path to produce fashion items" (*Costurando esperança: projetos com costura e artesanato no Rio de Janeiro como um possível caminho para a produção de artigos de moda*), Bárbara Cruz, Rita Maria de Souza Couto, and Roberta Portas explore how fashion can serve as an agent of social change through responsible practices in sewing and crafts.

The analysis presented by Albano Francisco Schmidt, Luise Amaral, and Vanessa Ribeiro Couto in the article "Games legal framework: Exploratory analysis of the impact of regulation on the electronic games sector and its consequences for the Brazilian economy" (Marco legal dos *games*: análise exploratória do cenário econômico dos jogos digitais e sua relevância para a economia brasileira) examines the economic impact and regulatory challenges of the digital games sector in Brazil. The authors highlight the importance of effective public policies to stimulate this dynamic and innovative industry.

Finally, the article "Informality as deviancy: the problem of difference in the decent work agenda," by Alisson Rowland, provides a critical analysis of the International Labor Organization's Decent Work Agenda. The author questions how informality is addressed in global labor policies and advocates for more inclusive practices that take into account multiple intersectional identities.

This dossier encourages reflection on how the intersection of social markers and the creative economy can challenge established structures and open pathways to fair and sustainable development. It is hoped that the discussions presented will inspire ongoing engagement and innovation in the pursuit of more equitable societies that are rich in cultural diversity.

Enjoy your read!

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Cover image #27

A imagem da capa #27

Gabriel Moreira Mariquito de Sousa[I], Joana Martins Contino[I]

The invitation to design the cover for this edition of the magazine was received with immense gratitude and enthusiasm[1]. This graphic project holds significant meaning, as it provided an opportunity to convey, through design, the transformative power of creative economy in reshaping realities. The capacity for transformation, rooted in diversity and creativity, serves as a source of inspiration and motivation to persist in advancing research and striving for continuous improvement.

Admiration for creative economy extends beyond its recognition as a sector of significant economic importance. It also stems from its role as a platform for the expression of identities, where the cultures, traditions, and histories of diverse communities are given visibility and acknowledgment. Equally vital as economic metrics and job creation is the creative economy's function as a tool for resistance and inclusion. In an unequal world, it has demonstrated its capacity as a catalyst for social change, enabling artists, creators, and cultural producers to articulate the complexities of life and highlight issues that might otherwise remain overlooked by the broader public. It fosters a reevaluation of inequalities, amplifies marginalized voices, and underscores the potential of every contribution to effect meaningful social impact.

A clear example of this is the role of social movements, one of the central themes explored in volume 9, issue 27, of *Diálogo com a Economia Criativa*. These movements frequently utilize creative economy as a powerful tool to amplify their messages and reach broader audiences. Through mediums such as art, audiovisual production, design, and fashion, creative economy facilitates the dissemination of messages advocating for resistance and equality, often resonating deeply with individuals. By its very nature, creative economy celebrates diversity and underscores the value of different cultures and identities, fostering not only economic growth but also the empowerment and prosperity of marginalized social groups.

Creating art that encapsulated all this potential posed a significant challenge. From the outset, the phrase "Our differences make a difference" resonated in my mind like a mantra, serving as the foundation for the conceptualization of this work. Through my research on representation in technology and decolonial design, I had come to understand the critical importance of incorporating dissenting voices into all projects. These voices, often forming the majority, are frequently overlooked in design processes. Yet, their inclusion is vital not only for enriching discussions but also for introducing new perspectives and advancing the decolonization of design. This need is particularly

1 Graphic design and text conception: Gabriel Moreira Mariquito de Souza; text supervision and review: Joana Martins Contino.

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pronounced in Brazil, where, as Sergio Buarque de Holanda (1997) observed, diversity is a defining characteristic of national identity. Recognizing ourselves as a pluralistic society and integrating this understanding into design practices can transform social processes, making them more reflective of our cultures, our people, and the realities we inhabit.

In homage to this plurality, the cover art for the dossier *Social Markers of Difference, Social Movements, and Creative Economy* was conceived as a celebration of the richness of diversity and the intricate details that compose the whole. The composition was crafted to illustrate how seemingly small differences significantly shape the collective, highlighting that these unique particularities not only strengthen us but also render the collective dynamic and captivating.

Each module plays a fundamental role in the final composition, emphasizing that the multiplicity of parts creates a dynamic and harmonious visual whole, where every element is essential and contributes something valuable. Each module is unique, serving as a visual metaphor for the singularities that coexist in the world. Some differences are immediately noticeable, while others emerge only upon closer inspection. Certain modules exhibit subtle variations, small changes in details, color, or orientation, symbolizing the varying levels of visibility that individual characteristics may possess.

Another key aspect of the composition is the varying sizes of the modules, which introduce a false sense of order created by elements that are most similar to one another. This perceived order is fragile; even when arranged, the presence of the most contrasting modules challenges the harmony of the whole. It reveals an inherent vulnerability in any attempt to impose an order that claims to be homogeneous and absolute.

At the core of this illusion of order lie the most contrasting modules, which are responsible for disrupting the hegemonic order. Together, they form their own order, incorporating their differences into a circular arrangement: an alliance that symbolizes community. In this way, it is the group that emerges as the focal point, demonstrating that, while our differences remain both present and significant, when united in alliance, they can be harnessed as tools to create a resilient and sustainable order.

This cover, at its core, serves as an invitation to celebrate both our individual and collective potential. It is, simultaneously, a call and a challenge to examine ourselves more closely, recognizing our personal contexts as unique experiences and valuable contributions to the whole. It also encourages reflection on how we engage with those around us, considering how their individuality influences our own ongoing development, and how, in turn, our presence within the community impacts them.

May this edition of the magazine inspire you, the reader, to view the beauty of human differences with a fresh perspective and recognize the importance of striving to preserve and celebrate them. May this inspiration reveal the social and economic potential inherent in this plurality, encouraging your commitment to

a more inclusive economy. Most importantly, may you recognize, both in yourself and in those around you, the small yet profound power to make an impact. Enjoy your reading!

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Us for us: black solidarity and creative economy

Nós por nós: solidariedade negra e economia criativa

Lia Vainer Schucman[I], Heitor Marques Santos[I], Maria Eduarda Delfino das Chagas[I]

ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze the meanings attributed by black men and women, participants of solidarity fairs, to informal work and entrepreneurship. To this end, we interviewed black participants of solidarity economy fairs in the city of Florianópolis in order to analyze how their activities relate to social movements. To understand these practices, we categorized the contents of these interviews into two major thematic nuclei; Surviving on Your Own: Innovation and Creativity; and Subjectivity and Creative Economy. The results obtained in this research point out that social movements and the creative economy are like mobilization tools to generate access, income, strengthening not only bonds, but also the positive black identity; however, it is evident that the black worker carries a unique history of racial discrimination and exclusion not only in the formal market, but also in support for entrepreneurship and creative economy.

Keywords: Racism. Race. Creative economy. Social movements.

RESUMO

Este artigo teve como objetivo analisar os sentidos atribuídos por participantes negros e negras de feiras solidárias ao trabalho informal e ao empreendedorismo. Para isso, entrevistamos participantes negros de feiras de economia solidária na cidade de Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, com o intuito de analisar como suas atividades se relacionam com movimentos sociais. Para a compreensão dessas práticas, categorizamos os conteúdos dessas entrevistas em dois grandes núcleos temáticos: "Sobrevivendo por conta própria: inovação e criatividade"; e "Subjetividade e Economia Criativa". Os resultados obtidos nesta pesquisa apontam que os movimentos sociais e a economia criativa são como ferramentas de mobilização para gerar acessos, renda e fortalecimento não só de vínculos, mas também de identidade negra positivada. No entanto, fica evidente que a trabalhadora e o trabalhador negros carregam uma história singular de discriminação racial e de exclusão não apenas no mercado formal, mas também no apoio para o empreendedorismo e a economia criativa.

Palavras-chave: *Racismo. Raça. Economia criativa. Movimentos sociais.*

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INTRODUCTION

To think about the creative economy and the processes involving Black entrepreneurship today, it is important to historically contextualize the transition from the slave-based model to capitalism in Brazil and the legacy of slavery in the labor market. The history of Brazil is intrinsically linked to racism, and consequently, this is a relevant element in the country's social and economic structures. The labor market is one of the processes responsible for and foundational to shaping this reality, perpetuating inequalities and limiting opportunities for minoritized groups[1]. The consequences of slavery in Brazil are essential factors for understanding the current dynamics of the labor market and how they impact the creative economy. As mentioned by Moura:

> [...] The abolition preserved the landowner-oligarchic structure. This rigidly hierarchical structure within the slave model was necessary to guarantee an economy based on the export of primary products subordinated to the interests of the global market. This excluded the possibility of social, economic, and cultural integration of the large portions of freed labor force, who would then form the marginalized masses, emerging from the slave quarters (Moura, 1988, p. 25).

In the post-abolition period, the lives of formerly enslaved people were marked by obstacles and neglect, as, in addition to the existing racism in Brazilian society, there were no initiatives to provide social, economic, and civil conditions to those who had gained their freedom. Few options, if any, were viable in this context, as there were no public policies to guarantee rights such as land and access to education, which forced freed Black people to continue working in low-paying jobs, often analogous to slavery (Schwarcz; Gomes, 2018).

José de Souza Martins (2010) points out that the abolitionist issue was portrayed in terms of the replacement of enslaved labor with free labor, which, in that context, meant the physical replacement of Black people by European immigrants. The result of this was not only a transformation in terms of labor but also the replacement of the worker (Martins, 2010). While some of the people newly freed by the Golden Law were marginalized in society in a minimal attempt at survival, European immigrants were given work, land, and access to education to reside in Brazilian territory (Fernandes, 2008; Jaccoud, 2008; Theodoro, 2008). Therefore, the post-abolition period, which could have been characterized by freedom and inclusion, was marked by new forms of social exclusion, the consequences of which are still present and reinforce the structural racism existing in the country (Schwarcz; Gomes, 2018).

In this work, the concept of race will be articulated according to the definition proposed by Guimarães (1999). Thus, race will not be understood as a biological or essential category, but rather as 'social constructs, forms of identity based on an incorrect biological idea, yet socially effective in creating, sustaining, and reproducing

1 In this work, 'minoritized' groups will be referred to as people who have been historically marginalized for being outside hegemonic standards.

differences and privileges (Guimarães, 1999, p. 153). Although there is no biological evidence proving the existence of human races, Guimarães (1999, p. 153) points out that they are 'fully real in the social world, resulting from ways of classifying and identifying that guide human actions".

In this context, it is worth noting that the notion of race in the current popular imagination is still the same as that produced by modern science in the 19th and 20th centuries. This idea served to categorize human diversity into groups based on physical characteristics, which were considered responsible for determining people's psychological, moral, intellectual, and aesthetic traits, thereby establishing a hierarchy of unequal values (Munanga, 2004).

This hierarchy of values can be analyzed in the context of the job market. The false idea that physical traits are related to moral, intellectual, and aesthetic values has contributed to certain professional occupations being less accessible to racially distinguished groups. In this sense, some data indicate that entrepreneurship, the creative economy, and informal work have been the primary means of survival for Black men and women in this country.

INFORMAL WORK, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY IN THE LIVES OF BLACK BRAZILIANS

According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics – IBGE (2020), the Brazilian population is predominantly composed of people who self-identify as Black and mixed-race, making up 56.2% of the population. However, this number is not fairly represented in the job market when we examine aspects such as income, salary, unemployment rate, sectors of formal employment, access to educational opportunities, and participation in leadership positions. According to a study conducted by Cesario (2017), only 6.3% of managerial positions in Brazil's 500 largest companies are occupied by people from this group, with most holding technical and operational positions.

In light of this reality, it is evident that Black workers face challenges in sustaining and advancing professionally in the formal job market. Thus, the creative economy and entrepreneurship stand out as income options, with around 25 million people now working independently (Mick; Nogueira, 2023). This significant number reflects workers who operate autonomously, engaging with social movements, holding multiple occupations, and/or working under business contracts that intersect with the informal market.

We observed in the interviews conducted for this article that self-employment is connected to these individuals' personal experiences; in other words, the area of entrepreneurship for the interviewees involves aspects related to their life stories, as well as moments of transition in which they linked their subjectivity to the products to be marketed.

The process of subjectivation, or what we can also refer to as a process of identity construction, refers to the way in which an individual internalizes and reinterprets social norms and values to build their subjectivity. These processes are dynamic

and continuous, occurring through the interaction between the individual and the social environment in which they are embedded (Maheirie, 2002). In the Brazilian racial perspective, subjectivation is shaped by racial relations — Black individuals, for example, are constantly in a process of reinterpreting their Blackness and the place they occupy in society (Schucman, Gonçalves, 2020).

This phenomenon occurs uniquely among Black people on Brazilian soil. The dialectic surrounding the inclusion of Black individuals in the capitalist model revolves around the myth of racial democracy and the idea that we are all equal, while at the same time it hierarchizes and discriminates based on both physical traits and stigmatized values attributed to the origins of Black and mixed-race people. This dualism directly impacts the formation of these individuals' identities, as it imposes the need to navigate the stigmas and negative meanings associated with race in their identity formation.

It is important to emphasize that informal work for Black people has been a means of survival since the post-abolition period. The livelihood of these individuals was directly related to strategies that generated income. The former president of the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES), Carlos Lessa (2003), classified these 'skills' into distinct groups of temporary insertion for income acquisition. The main activities described by Lessa (2003) were related to the logistics of the city, involving manual laborers and delivery people, another group of artisans, such as confectioners and seamstresses, as well as groups of merchants, such as street vendors and peddlers.

These groups operated in the fissure that divided the slow transition from the slave-based model to the capitalist model in Brazil. In an effort to survive financially, Black workers sought strategies to generate income from the demands arising from daily life and formal jobs, which were mostly occupied by white people. This large group of individuals served as both a source of materials needed for the execution of informal labor and as consumers of the services, which were mostly provided by Black people.

Currently, informal work in Brazil is characterized by the absence of formal employment ties, such as the CLT (Consolidation of Labor Laws) regime, which implies precarious working conditions, economic instability, and a lack of labor rights. According to data from IBGE (2021), about 40% of the Brazilian workforce is engaged in the informal sector. This phenomenon is more prevalent during periods of economic crisis, when opportunities in the formal market are reduced, as occurred during the pandemic, when various professions underwent restructuring or even ceased to exist, forcing workers to adapt to new forms of work and support each other collectively to generate income.

In this sense, creative economy has been identified as an opportunity for economic and social development. In Brazil, this sector encompasses various activities, from cultural and artistic production to technological innovation used by the media. This interaction through communication channels and social movements aims to generate income; moreover, it can also be analyzed during the period of transition

from the slave-based to the capitalist model between the 18th and 19th centuries. However, as a foundation for economic sectors, the creative economy is not exempt from the structural inequalities that mark Brazilian society, particularly those related to gender and race.

The discriminatory mechanisms faced by Black men and women in Brazil's creative economy are a reflection of the structural inequalities that affect our society. The lack of representation and recognition of these individuals in the economic sector not only limits their opportunities to generate income but also the potential for innovation and diversity, which are essential for the development of the economy.

Although the model presented by Lessa (2003) was conceived during the transitional period from a slave-based to a capitalist economy, Black people developed their own survival methods. These strategies were passed down through generations and, even with limited integration into formal work, they continue to resonate today. In this sense, these activities are viewed as forms of resistance, creativity, and learning, passed from one generation to the next, which can be referred to as oral culture and ancestry. These phenomena have been and continue to be responsible for the processes of identity formation for Black individuals in Brazilian society. They have also been a form of creativity for this population, which is why we interviewed Black entrepreneurs to explore how they give meaning to this work.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

To understand how the creative economy and entrepreneurship produce subjectivity among Black people, we present here some analyses of statements from self-employed workers in the city of Florianópolis, Santa Catarina. For data collection, we used the interview method. The fact that the research focuses on the relationship between the creative economy and the subjectivity of the interviewees allowed us the freedom to establish only two criteria for selecting participants. The first was that the person identifies as Black, both by themselves and by us, as researchers. The second criterion was that the person resides in Florianópolis and participates in solidarity fairs.

At the beginning of the interviews, the informed consent form was presented and signed by the participants. We asked if there were any objections to the use of their statements and names, and without exception, all of them agreed to be identified. However, we chose to use fictitious names, as the aim of this research is not to portray the uniqueness of each individual. To this end, five interviews were conducted with people who were working at the weekly fair held at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC). The first interviewee, named Edna, is 50 years old, identifies as a Black woman, and works as an entrepreneur selling traditional sweets and treats from the quilombo cuisine of the region where she grew up in Bahia. The second interviewee, Eliana, is 42 years old, identifies as a Black woman, and works in the sale of spiritual items and supernatural consultation sessions. The third interviewee, named Sônia, is 33 years old, identifies as a Black woman, and her entrepreneurial work is in the area of ceramic artifacts. Her works are created

according to the events and fairs she is invited to participate in, which, according to the interviewee, are related to fairs focused on Black and gender-based social movements. The fourth interviewee, Ivani, is 35 years old, identifies as a Black woman, and works in a thrift shop. Finally, the fifth interviewee, Douglas, is 36 years old, identifies as a Black man, and works in massage therapy and holistic therapy.

To achieve the objective of this work, we chose a qualitative method because we believe that the processes constituting the creative economy and entrepreneurship for Black individuals are a social production. Therefore, it is not necessary to quantify the people working in this sector, but rather to qualify the ways in which the process of subjectivation occurs, as the numbers are already provided by research institutes such as IBGE and the Institute of Applied Economic Research (Ipea). Our concern is to understand and categorize how the creative economy relates to the subjectivity of these individuals; for this, we believe that in-depth interviews can provide the necessary answers. The interviewees were chosen based on primary relationships, as, according to Bourdieu (2001), close and personal social interactions and connections are essential for understanding the dynamics of social fields.

Finally, to complement this methodology, the Thematic Analysis (Dias; Mishima, 2023) was conducted, as significant reflections emerged on how social structures are constructed, maintained, and transformed over time in the self-employed labor market. This approach allows for a broad understanding of social processes, contributing to a meaningful investigation of the actions that contribute to the maintenance of discriminatory mechanisms in the development process of self-employed workers. The objective was to categorize two main thematic areas: "Surviving on One's Own: Innovation and Creativity"; and "Subjectivity and the Creative Economy." The categorization of these themes allowed us to analyze how and when processes of subjectivation occur among self-employed workers.

RACIAL INEQUALITIES IN WORK: CURRENT DATA

Data related to the unemployment rate, comparing the number of unemployed people from different racial groups, provide an initial view of the disparity in access to the labor market. Income and salary are also important indicators, as they reveal the difference in average wages between Black and white workers in similar positions with equivalent qualifications. Analyzing the occupations and sectors in which the population is employed is also relevant — if a group constitutes the majority in low-paying jobs, this is a way to identify inequality. Participation in leadership positions is also crucial, as the lack of Black individuals in these roles may indicate barriers to career advancement. Analyzing access to educational opportunities and qualifications reveals disadvantages in access to education, which can affect employment prospects. Another way to analyze this phenomenon is through the process of job advertisement, selection, and recruitment.

The Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socioeconomic Studies (DIEESE) published, in 2016, through its Employment and Unemployment Survey system, data on the Economically Active Population (PEA), participation rates of Black and

non-Black populations, unemployment rates, among other data, with the aim of researching Black people in the metropolitan labor market. Additionally, in November 2023, DIEESE also published a special report on Black Consciousness Day with more information on race and the labor market, making these the two most recent sources of quantitative data for verification.

The research analyzed the unemployment rate by race/color and gender and found that, in the second quarter of 2023, the unemployment rate for Black people was 9.5%, while for white people it was 6.3%. In the case of Black women, the unemployment rate is even more significant (11.7%), while the rate for white women is 7.0% and for white men it is 5.7%.

In the public sector, where entry occurs through competitive exams, DIEESE's (2016) research pointed to a low number of Black people in all regions investigated. When observed through the gender lens, the data is even more alarming, as the number of Black women in the public sector represents 8.7%, while their largest numerical presence is in domestic work, with 18.3%—compared to 4.7% for white people in the same role. The explanation for this difference can also be analyzed through the perspective that half of public sector employees have a higher education level, a determining factor for racial inequalities related to access to education and professional specialization.

According to the book *Trajetórias das Desigualdades* (Trajectories of Inequalities), organized by Marta Arretche (2015), between 1960 and 2010, research highlights gender and racial discrimination in the national labor market, helping to explain income and wage inequalities, even when these groups have the same level of education (Cacciamali; Hirata, 2005; Proni; Gomes, 2015). For example, strategic leadership and coordination roles continue to be predominantly occupied by men, making it more difficult for women to reach these positions (Comin, 2015). However, in order to highlight the minority of Black people in higher-income occupations, it is important to note that women are distributed across all social strata (Garcia, 2005). Although it is possible to observe an increase in the number of Black people in higher education, white individuals still make up 75% of the university population and dominate in careers of higher social prestige (Silva; Prates, 2015), factors associated with aesthetics, intellectuality, and morality. Thus, it is evident that the reduction of inequalities between white and Black people related to educational progress and professional development is slow and gradual (Proni; Gomes, 2015).

According to studies conducted by DIEESE (2016) on the white and non-white Economically Active Population (PEA) in 2009, 44.6% of Black and Indigenous workers could be classified as precarious informal workers, compared to 29.4% of white workers (including white and Asian individuals). By 2013, these percentages decreased in both categories: 38.7% versus 23.8%, but the ongoing racial disparity remains noticeable.

The most vulnerable labor situations, such as informal work, unpaid labor, and very low monthly income, are also predominant among Black people. In the case of informal work with low monthly pay (below the minimum wage), it is observed

that the economically active Black population in 2013 accounted for 17.3%, whereas the number of white people in the same group was 8.6%. That is, the proportion of Black people in this type of precarious occupation was twice as high as that of white people. The decrease in informal employment without a signed work contract for both groups continued to decline between 2009 and 2013, but the percentage was lower among white people than among Black people, at 2.9% versus 5.8% in the last year.

Based on studies of the Economically Active Population (PEA) (DIEESE, 2016), it can be observed that all cases of informal occupations with earnings lower than the minimum wage had a high probability of being held by Black workers (69% versus 31% for white workers). In the income range between one and less than two minimum wages, the differences were slightly smaller (59% versus 41%), but still significant. In summary, the majority of precarious occupations continue to be reserved for Black people.

The fact that the Black population represents the majority of workers engaged in occupations associated with precarious employment can be understood as a result of various mechanisms of racial discrimination still present in Brazilian society. Therefore, these issues deserve special attention from public policies aimed at promoting racial equality in the labor market (Proni; Gomes, 2015).

This disparity can also be observed in leadership positions within organizations. The prevalence of Black people in informal activities related to precarious employment is inversely proportional when compared to leadership positions in organizations. According to a study by Cesario (2017), only 6.3% of managerial positions in the 500 largest companies in Brazil are held by Black people, with the majority in technical and operational roles.

The aforementioned data also raise other important discussions to be considered at another time: if most of the people in strategic, prominent, and decision-making positions are white, under what conditions do Black professionals occupy these spaces? How do discriminatory mechanisms occur in these environments? What is the mental health status of Black professionals who access these spaces? It is important to note that the discussion on mental health is not limited to psychopathologies, as psychosocial factors precede issues related to health and illness, which are connected to the economic, social, political, and cultural aspects of each individual (Deon et al., 2020).

For this reality to be naturalized by the Brazilian population, false ideologies shape the collective imagination in social relations, and the idea that rewards and positions in society are distributed based on individual merit is one of them. It is believed that those who work hard or have talent are rewarded, while the failure of others is attributed to a lack of effort or skill, a paradigm known as the meritocracy myth. Another idea is the false representation of the country's racial democracy, in which it is believed that fair opportunities for access to education, housing, work, and social mobility are available to all people, as long as they put in enough effort to achieve them, without considering the transfer of inherited wealth across

generations (Fernandes, 1965; Guimarães, 2002). Despite the seemingly peaceful coexistence at certain moments between different racial groups, the reality is that Brazilian society is in constant conflict and the production of social and economic inequalities. As Lia Vainer Schucman points out, "Anyone who denies that the majority of positions of power are occupied by white people, due to structural advantages, can only truly believe in white superiority and, therefore, be using the racist key" (Schucman, s/p, 2021).

The dynamics of the labor market reflect the prevailing patterns of racial relations, which is why it is essential to highlight how public policies aimed at this goal play a crucial role in building fair opportunities for development and social mobility. Affirmative action policies aim to combat structural racism in the political, economic, and legislative spheres of institutions, with the intention of addressing practices that perpetuate racial discrimination in the workplace. They seek to reduce historical barriers that have prevented equal access to the labor market for Black people, as well as their retention and professional advancement.

However, for this reality within organizations to be validated and naturalized in the Brazilian social imagination, control strategies for explaining racial issues were disseminated. Ideological concepts tied to meritocracy and racial democracy propagated the idea that social and economic positions would be achieved based on individual merit, meaning that those who work hard and are talented would have the opportunity to succeed. The myth also persisted that Brazilian society was free from racial discrimination, with Brazil being a country where all races would coexist in harmony and have equal opportunities for access to education, housing, food, and, most importantly, employment, the central theme of this article.

However, the equality of opportunities has always been a fallacy, and self-employment and informality for Black or Brown people have historically been the way of survival for this group, who, despite the lack of rights, have reinvented the creative economy and given meaning to this social practice, as we can observe in the results of this research.

SURVIVING ON ONE'S OWN: INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

Even pointing to the individuality of the entrepreneurial process, as Edna refers to herself as *"euquipe"* (a blend of "*eu*" and "*equipe*" meaning "I team"), one of the points questioned in the interview addresses the contribution of social movements to these workers. This is because, within the process of solidarity economy, the importance of "mutual help, solidarity, and equality of rights within enterprises" is understood (Gadotti, 2009, p. 13). This factor can be seen as an agent that contributes to the process of subjectivity and identity formation for people who work independently.

We are struck by statements like Edna's, which point out that the participation of the Black movement goes beyond assisting in the process of work and income. The snack vendor, when asked about this aspect, says that the support comes in interpersonal relationships when it occurs:

> [...] Both with events, financially, and also to provide emotional support, because we often need to vent. In some of the Black women's groups I participate in, one of the pillars is this as well, for us to help each other emotionally, because sometimes we're not doing well and need to talk, and then there's someone who can help, whether it's a psychologist or something else that can assist.

According to Hirata and Zarifian (2003), the modern notion of work has two definitions: the first, which presents itself as an anthropological conception, defines work as a generic formulation of human action. This definition, the authors explain, is based on the theory of the theorist Karl Marx (1965, apud Hirata and Zarifian 2003), who describes work as an essential act that occurs between man and nature. Man himself plays the role of a specific natural force in relation to nature. He mobilizes his intelligence and his strengths to transform materials and give them a useful form for his life. At the same time that he acts by this movement on the external nature and modifies it, he modifies his own nature and develops the faculties that were dormant within him (Hirata; Zarifian, 2003).

The second definition redefines the first, as it adds the fact that this relationship between man and nature, mediated by labor, is also shaped by determining social conditions: are we talking about artisanal, slave, or wage labor? According to this definition, the advent of capitalism is considered, in which wage labor is controlled by the employer who hires workers. In this logic, labor is the substrate of life, which does not sustain itself in the arrangements of capital (Navarro; Padilha, 2007). However, even within these interludes, labor continues to organize life and surround relationships, serving as both cause and effect of the social structure that influences the process of subjectivation of individuals.

At this moment, the social structure presents us with new ways of looking at work and workers, beyond its pragmatic aspect. With the deregulation of labor and workers' rights, the precariousness of working conditions, the informalization of employment, and the retreat of union action, the consequences for workers' physical and mental health increase (Navarro; Padilha, 2007). Modes of production that differ from industrial ones — such as Fordist and Taylorist models — echo the lack of stability and acknowledge the insecurity of employment relationships. And here, we arrive at work as a psychosocial phenomenon.

The concept of a psychosocial phenomenon leads us to think about the associations between work and social movements, as they are mediators of the processes of subjectivation. When asked about the subject, Sônia, a ceramicist, responds that the relationship for her is like a "support network." She says that it is "among friends" where recommendations are exchanged and adds: "We have a network of people, and when I find out about an event, I call them, and it's a mutual exchange, right?" Since solidarity economy is based on networks of social and economic solidarity and cooperation, the involvement of Black people in this movement can be seen as a way to confront the discriminatory mechanisms of racism in formal work environments. Moreover, this process reaffirms the identity of the individuals involved, proposing a process of positive subjectivation through race.

Ivani, a thrift store owner, however, says that there are differences in participating in fairs that are linked to the Black movement compared to those that are not, mentioning aspects such as feeling "at ease" because she can make sales and meet people from the movement. She adds that it also helps "through the experiences and the exchange with people.

SUBJECTIVITY AND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

In the interviewees' responses, one of the meanings attributed to self-employment is its connection to lifestyle and subjectivity. This relationship between identity and work, through the lens of the solidarity economy (SE), shows how people experience and give meaning to their professional experiences. Interpreting the relationship between individuals and work places us in the context of the historical, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds of those who engage in self-employment, as each time and social context gives rise to different modes of subjectivation (Nardi et al., 2006). If we analyze the relationship between enslaved individuals and plantation owners during the Colonial period in Brazil, the employer-employee dynamic after the Industrial Revolution, the self-employed individual in the neoliberal economy, or those involved in projects within the solidarity economy — the focus of this article — we can observe that the meanings attributed to work change according to the time and space in which we find ourselves.

The SE, or creative economy, can be defined as a form of work, income generation, and professional insertion through collectives and social movements that shape the contemporary labor market. The SE itself can be understood as a social movement that combats the discriminatory mechanisms of formal work, as access to this form of income often involves social demands that are exclusionary, such as specific qualifications, previous experience in certain activities, and even living close to central urban areas — for those living in marginalized regions, this requirement will not be met. Thus, we can consider that the SE offers a solution for access to income and social insertion through self-employment opportunities (Nardi *et al*., 2006).

During the interviews, we noticed that the self-management of these workers is directly related to the social context in which they are embedded, as well as their identity process, which reflects not only in the way they run their businesses but also in the products they sell (Ultramari et al., 2022). In a conversation with Edna, we were talking about her pastry process for making and selling sweets when she commented:

> [...] what I see and study is that food for us is something sacred, because after the enslaved people were brought from Africa, it was something that was denied. So anything made for nourishment was considered sacred. It was made with love and care, so that it would nurture not only the body, but the soul. So my food, my recipes, are exactly for that – food made with affection, so that you are nourished not only in your heart, but also in your soul.

Furthermore, when we asked about the relationship between her methods of selling and her trajectory and identity, the interviewee responded:

> [...]during the pandemic, I also sent little notes. My advertisement was: 'Warm your friend's heart with an ancestral sweet,' 'My sweet tastes like a hug.' I wrote these phrases because quilombola food is very comforting, full of affection and love. It's food of oral tradition, but it's also family food, passed down from mother to daughter, to cousin — it's family food, it's affectionate food. So I also used this a lot to promote my brand.

Thus, it is evident that work has become a mechanism that is directly related to the individual's identity process (Ultramari et al., 2022). In this case, Edna connects the culture of oral tradition and quilombola cuisine with her methods of commercialization, so that the meaning attributed to her sweets characterizes a particular form of social interaction that directly engages with the interviewee's subjectivity. The same can be identified for Sônia. When we asked how she became interested in producing ceramic pieces with ethnic-racial prints of African peoples and others related to sexuality, she shared:

> [...] I think it's mainly because of the fairs I end up choosing to participate in, and also because I had to have a niche, but it's also something I address in my research, the issue of gender, African aesthetics, it's all connected. It's related to my life, and it's also a political issue for me. In my research, it's always been like this, my research has always had a political touch, since my first thesis, a long time ago, I've always been talking about racial issues, which is something that affects me, and I like to think politically in all my research. I wouldn't know how to research something that doesn't concern me, and it's the same with ceramics, right?.

Therefore, it is evident that work is intrinsically related to the subjectivity and the construction of racial identity of these interviewees. The solidarity economy is still present within specific social structures, which means it is not free from structural barriers that may hinder the financial return of self-employed workers, but it can provide new forms of social interactions that strengthen the identity and subjective process of entrepreneurs who find in social movements strategies for personal and professional development in their fields of activity (Ultramari *et al*., 2022).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout this article, we aimed to understand how the SE acts as a mediating agent in the subjectivation process of Black people who work for themselves. Each individual's experience crosses structural barriers to access formal labor markets, from entry to permanence and advancement within these professions. Discriminatory ideologies, such as the myth of racial democracy, contribute to a challenging identity formation process for Black people, as the idea of meritocracy is upheld, while discriminatory mechanisms act as mediators in the relationship between Black individuals and the much-desired opportunities.

These forms of exclusion not only affect economic opportunities but also the mental health and psychosocial well-being of individuals who have sought to find

in the creative economy a way to generate income. Moreover, it was observed that entrepreneurship is closely related to the formation of identity for these individuals, as the areas of work of the interviewees are connected to personal values and social movements that provide a space for resistance and empowerment (Schucman; Gonçalves, 2020).

In the analysis of the interviews, we can observe that social movements serve as mobilization tools to generate access, income, and the strengthening of not only connections but also a positive identity during the process of subjectivation for Black individuals who work on their own. However, these spaces are not immune to structural discriminatory mechanisms. The organization of fairs and events commonly occurs through power relations among individuals who are hierarchically above others, making participation in these spaces unfeasible. The exorbitant cost of participating in these brand-promotion events is an example of the structural barriers that ultimately hinder participation, as the amount invested does not correspond to the financial return.

We conclude this article by recognizing the dialectic inherent in the creative economy, as it has created a sense of belonging and ways to affirm Black identity. However, it is evident that Black workers carry a unique history of racial discrimination and exclusion in the formal market, as well as in support for entrepreneurship and the creative economy. Therefore, it is necessary to highlight the need for public and private policies that invest in the creative processes of the population that has built much of this country without support and on their own. This way, it will be possible to pave new paths that can contribute to processes of subjectivation free from racial and gender discrimination (Ultramari *et al.*, 2022).

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The social impact of the work of Brazilian braider and intersectional black feminist activism

O impacto social do trabalho das trancistas brasileiras e o ativismo feminista negro interseccional

Ana Carolina Areias Nicolau Siqueira[I], Amana Rocha Mattos[I]

ABSTRACT

The text discusses the black feminist activism of braiders in the African diaspora in Brazil and the social impact of their practice. Although the movement of black women braiders is still struggling to formalize this category, the effects of their actions are remarkable in society. Through intersectional black feminist thinking, we have built a theoretical-methodological foundation, focusing on what has been developed by different braiders, taking lived experience as the criterion for valid knowledge among black women. In this sense, this paper aims to present some aspects observed in the analysis of field research with braiders from different regions of Brazil. The results show that black women braiders preserve the ancestral knowledge of braiding, developing their knowledge connected to their historical time, expressing intersectional black feminist activism by guaranteeing individual and collective subsistence; participating in social transformation projects and dialoguing with their territory in different Brazilian institutions.

Keywords: Braids. Braiders. Black feminism. Intersectionality. Creative economy.

RESUMO

O texto discute o ativismo feminista negro de trancistas na diáspora africana no Brasil e o impacto social de sua prática. Embora o movimento de mulheres negras trancistas permaneça lutando para a formalização dessa categoria, os efeitos de suas ações são notáveis na sociedade. Por meio do pensamento feminista negro interseccional, construímos a fundamentação teórico-metodológica, enfocando o que tem sido desenvolvido por diferentes trancistas, tomando a experiência vivida como critério de conhecimento válido entre mulheres negras. Nesse sentido, este trabalho objetivou apresentar alguns aspectos observados nas análises de pesquisa de campo com trancistas de diferentes regiões do Brasil. Os resultados apontam que as mulheres negras trancistas preservam os saberes ancestrais do trancismo, desenvolvendo seus conhecimentos conectadas ao seu tempo histórico, expressando o ativismo feminista negro interseccional ao garantir a subsistência individual e coletiva; participando de projetos de transformação social e dialogando com o seu território em diferentes instituições brasileiras.

Palavras-chave: *Tranças. Trancistas. Feminismo negro. Interseccionalidade. Economia Criativa.*

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INTRODUCTION

We begin this writing by emphatically stating that, despite the fact that [still] there is no professional category called "braider" in the Brazilian Classification of Occupations (CBO), braiders do exist! They are people who work creating African braids, preserving and developing the ancestral history of braiding in the diaspora through an ethical commitment to offering care actions for racial trauma[1] to the black population.

We understand the diaspora as a broad field of theoretical and methodological studies that has been consolidated in the academia since the 20th century, encompassing analyses of the various forced and traumatic migrations to which different peoples have been subjected, including populations from different regions of Africa due to the transatlantic slave trade (Silva; Xavier, 2018).

Braiding in Brazil is a legacy of ancestral knowledge originating from the African continent that, over time, has branched out in different directions through the agency of the braid. Braids have a long history. This history, in Brazil, although deliberately erased (Nascimento, 2016), continues to be told and retold through the body (Nascimento, 2021) and oraliture (Martins, 2021). As we approach the tree of braiding[2], we observe the diversity of braid styles and techniques being used, while many others fall out of use by different braiders. As it is an ancient practice carried out anonymously as a form of resistance, outside the academic sphere, it is not possible to attribute pioneering status to any specific process in the development of braiding. However, it is important to emphasize that the evolution of braiding takes place through the relationships among Black women, shaped by their individual and collective needs within their historical context. This reveals a creative process inherent to each braider and the imprint of time on these transformations.

This creative process has been directed toward practices that seek to meet the needs of the Black population in the present, without disconnecting from its roots in the past. Braiders project themselves into the future through braids in different ways, while preserving the elements passed down by their ancestry — by their mothers, aunts, sisters, grandmothers, great-grandmothers, and great-great-grandmothers.

In this sense, over time, Black women who maintained the tradition of braiding their own hair or that of others as a form of care, without receiving payment for it, came to be called *trançadeiras* (braiders). The term *trancistas* (professional braiders) emerged in Brazil around the 2010s, primarily within Black women's movements, as a way of self-definition to distinguish the paid practice and professionalization of African braid-making.

1 This terminology has been used by different authors, such as Carter (2007), to specify individual subjective responses as a consequence of colonization and racism.

2 We use the term 'tree of braiding' as an intersectional metaphor to identify the different branches stemming from braids and the work of braiders, as well as the intergenerational and ancestral understanding embedded in this epistemology.

It is worth mentioning that, although the practice of African braiding was primarily developed among Black women, today, people from diverse social markers work as professional braiders. These individuals learn through braiders or through informal courses offered by other braiders, highlighting the diversity within this craft and the presence of multiple social markers of difference that can now be observed.

The art embodied in the work of braiders transcends the physical dimension and has been used as a way to communicate their philosophy and interests, even when transgressing morally accepted institutional logics. It establishes a language, a way of being in the world, of relating, and of communicating that constitutes Afro-Brazilian culture. In other words, it represents a fundamentally human condition that, like a web of meanings, shapes ways of being in the world (William, 2020).

The effort dedicated to this work aims to untangle the logics that uphold conceptions regarded as truths about this profession. As workers, what do braiders do? What is repeatedly heard is that braiders make "little braids," a construct permeated by racist stereotypes that infantilize, diminish, and devalue the many facets of this profession. Along the same lines, this promotes 'folklorization,' as highlighted by Nascimento (2016, p. 145). The understanding of the cultural aspect of this profession, when disconnected from its meaning, function, and the scope of braiders' work in the present, reduces braids to the status of empty folklore. It exploits folklorized braiders as mere commodities in the tourism trade, wrapped in an aura of entertainment, serving as objects of curiosity and commercialization by white consumers. These braids only receive "appreciation" and "recognition" when adapted to the concept of "Afro" or "ethnic" hairstylists, a subcategory of a profession hegemonically accepted by the dominant culture.

The meanings that have sustained this knowledge as a form of resistance for centuries have been emptied through cultural appropriation, with braids reduced to a product stripped of their intrinsic value. Thus, when braiders self-define in their uniqueness, specificity, and multiplicity of practices, they are compelled by original ethnocentrism, as Nascimento (2016) explains, to conform to classifications recognized by the dominant group. Otherwise, they are labeled as exotic, primitive, non-professional, and are overtly silenced and rendered invisible.

In light of the above, we propose to present some analyses being developed as part of a doctoral dissertation. These analyses focus on three fundamental characteristics present in the ethics of care practiced by Black women braiders as part of Brazilian intersectional Black feminist activism: ensuring the subsistence of braiders amid social oppression; the social impact of the actions of braiders; and the political and interinstitutional dialogue embedded in this craft.

INTERSECTIONAL BLACK FEMINIST ACTIVISM IN THE WORK OF BLACK WOMEN BRAIDERS

To reflect on the work of Black women braiders in Brazil, we must understand that Brazilian Black women have faced and continue to face nearly two centuries of intense injustice regarding race, gender, and other social markers of difference. According to

African-American scholar Patricia Hill Collins (2019, p. 33), oppression is the term "that describes any unjust situation in which, systematically and over a long period, one group denies another access to society's resources," encompassing three interdependent dimensions: the exploitation of labor, the denial of rights, and controlling images.

Historically, Brazilian Black women, through social stratification (Hasenbalg, 2005), were pushed into servile labor as a remnant of the colonial slave logic. For Brazilian Black intellectual Lélia Gonzalez (1984), the combination of racism and sexism in the country placed Black women in the role of "beasts of burden." Performing poorly paid and exploitative work, Brazilian Black women were subjected to various forms of labor after abolition that positioned them in a subservient state of invisibility, silencing, intellectual erasure, and more. This made them prisoners of stereotypes serving capitalist economic interests, such as the roles of domestic worker, wet nurse, and mulata of Carnival.

However, among Brazilian Black women, we find various actions that highlight strategies to "escape, survive within, and/or oppose the prevailing social and economic injustice" (Collins, 2019, p. 43). Among these actions in Brazil, we observe the work of braiders.

We observe in braiders the effort to navigate the intersectional oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, and other social markers of difference, using knowledge preserved and acquired through lived experience as a valid criterion of understanding. This reveals the presence of intersectional Black feminist activism in Brazilian territory. Whether individually or collectively, braiders have developed their activism through their practices.

Our statements are based on what was formulated by Gonzalez (2020) and Collins (2019) regarding Black feminist thought in relation to lived experience, through different news articles from the mainstream media that we had access to during the course of this research, concerning the work of Black women braiders in the country; and on social media, a space that various braiders have used as a tool to promote their work and ideas. We observe, in the actions of Black women braiders, the dimension of the struggle for collective survival and the pursuit of institutional transformation, constantly expressed in their ethics of care. On a daily basis, individually or collectively, braiders face racial domination by creating spheres of influence and tools to destabilize oppressive structures.

In this sense, we will present some data that allowed us to make these statements and consider that, as workers, the braiders define themselves by disconnecting from stereotypes and images of control, promoting emancipation and racial integration through the creation of different practices and opportunities, including the economic dimension that emerges from culture.

THE GUARANTEE OF THE SUBSISTENCE OF BRAIDERS AMIDST SOCIAL OPPRESSIONS

According to the indicators from the third edition of the study *Gender Statistics: Social Indicators of Women in Brazil* (IBGE, [2024]), Black women spend

1.6 more hours on unpaid domestic work than White women, and in 2022, 11.8% of women were unemployed, with 14% of them being Black or Brown and 9.2% being White.

Considering the data collected in the field, we observe that braiders develop a set of skills that can be considered essential to the maintenance of their own lives. This strategic development happens uniquely for each individual, but generally starts from a personally lived pain, which may be linked to psychological, emotional, social, and financial dimensions, as indicated by the data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), or spiritual.

This ethical commitment initially appears as a strategy for self-care or care for others, which can unfold into a strategy for financial sustenance; as the maintenance of self-image or as psychological/emotional strengthening.

The care and self-care of Black women, as Prestes (2018, p. 171) states, is specifically in the search to "combine the discovery of new strategies with the revival of old and ancestral ways of caring in the name of well-being," whose logic is based on the understanding of health, which is organized as a balance between community and nature in resistance to the coloniality present in society. Thus, the concept of care for Black women prioritizes the health of both their group and their environment, so that they can have health. The care and self-care present in the practices of braiders can become a way to generate income, by becoming a braider. When braiders generate income for themselves, they are creating a disruption in the feminization of poverty.

According to the *Dossier Black Women: A Portrait of the Living Conditions of Black Women in Brazil* (Marcondes et al., 2013, p. 128), poverty in the country "is much more prevalent among the Black population […] Black women access, in a differentiated way, both the income from work and the resources to obtain it".

Confirming this information, the Black intellectual and braider communicator Sara Mara Brisa, in an interview given to the podcast *Acessíveis Cast*, 10 years after the publication of this Dossier, in 2023, made the following statement:

> In my salon, I work with social value. The work we do is very time-consuming and very labor-intensive. It's a hell of a job! So usually, people charge between six hundred and seven hundred reais for labor. In this range, four hundred and fifty. But I'm charging two hundred and twenty! [At this point, the interviewer — who was a White woman — says: raise your price, woman! Sara Mara responds:] No... Because it's not about the price, it's that... Usually, who uses this hairstyle more? It's the Black woman, who often needs it because she has curly hair. This [touching her own hair] is still curly, you know?! But this hair here isn't my hair. It's hair that I added, that was similar to yours [pointing to the interviewer's hair], that someone took and made it into this. But when it's our own hair, really curly, sometimes at work they don't accept it, you know?! Or the person has to straighten it, or tie it up, or it has to be that undefined thing that the woman will spend three more hours a day taking care of her hair […] it's not just for aesthetics, it's for the needs of daily life. And then we know that Black women are the ones who earn the least money in the labor market. Usually, the women I work with are Black women, either single mothers, or a group that's hustling, going to college, doing internships and stuff... They're not making enough money. How can I charge this

> woman four hundred and fifty reais, when her salary is twelve hundred? Then she pays eight hundred reais for rent. Will she get braids? […] I work with this awareness […] the question of activism, of what I can do for my people, is this!" (Acessíveis Cast, 2023, emphasis added)

Sara Mara's words point to different dimensions of Black feminist thought present in the work of the braider. Sara Mara shows the interviewer how she takes care of her own hair, explaining that, unlike other Black women, she chose to use hair extensions[3]. However, Sara explains that she knows how difficult the financial situation is for most Black women, and based on this awareness, as she emphasizes, Sara states that she works with 'social value,' showing the strategies she has adopted to ensure her own subsistence as a Black woman and how she promotes the survival of other women like her.

However, despite such statements, for numerous reasons that can be considered effects of social oppressions on the braider profession — such as lack of professional recognition, devaluation, difficulty in entering and staying in the market, among others — many Black women who learn to braid choose not to become braiders, remaining in the position of hair stylists, using braids to maintain their own image or that of others, without profit. And the fact that, even carrying this knowledge, they choose not to pursue this profession is also a way of ensuring their own subsistence through care, and therefore, should be understood as a fundamental characteristic of their activism.

In this sense, we agree with the statements by Prestes (2018, p. 174):

> The care practiced by Black women will need to unite political struggle with self-care, and the politicization of self-recovery processes. It is a path where personal efforts are invested in self-care while maintaining a connection with a larger world of collective struggle.

Unlike hair stylists, braiders are people who are paid for the exercise of their professional activities, even though this profession has not yet been officially recognized as a professional category in Brazil. Distinguishing themselves from the work of hairdressers, braiders offer a service guided by their own ethics of care through the creation of African braids, combating the psychosocial effects produced by structural racism (Almeida, 2018) in Brazilian society, whether as a form of self-care or care provided to others. This knowledge/work, in many cases, serves as the main source of income for various families (Santos, 2013; 2022). However, we understand that ensuring individual and collective subsistence is not limited to the economic dimension. While this is a fundamental aspect of well-being, we recognize that, throughout the centuries, the braids made by braiders have played an important psychological role in survival amidst social injustices, as Nilma Lino Gomes (2020) affirms, and this must be recognized as a specific characteristic of their work.

3 It is a technique used for hair extension with human hair.

THE SOCIAL IMPACT THROUGH THE ACTIONS OF BRAIDERS

Among the data collected in the field, we observed that the actions developed by braiders impact those around them. This can be seen when their actions affect their family nucleus, either through income or employability, among others; or when they influence their community, the place where they are located, through participation or organization of events, contribution to existing projects, or the development of their own projects.

A practical movement that demonstrates the intellectuality of Black women braiders aligned with intersectional Black feminist thought can be observed through the story of the Black intellectual and braider Andreia MF, from São Paulo.

Our first contact with the braider Andreia was at the First Meeting of the Psychosocial Trauma Observatory, held on November 29, 2022, through the online platform Google Meet. As she began speaking, Andreia apologized and explained that she was in the middle of activities at her beauty salon but was listening to the discussions of the meeting while braiding and attending to clients arriving at her salon.

In her speech, visibly emotional, the braider stated that what the Black population needs is action because the reality is urgent: "We are dying. My words are a cry for help!" Amidst her narrative, Andreia paused and called over a client, a mother who had just walked through the doors of her salon, which is also Andreia MF's home. That woman shared her story in tears, saying that if it weren't for the work led by Andreia MF, she would be lost. Andreia thanked that mother, thanked the people at the meeting for listening to her, and said: "I learned to braid hair in prison because out here, I had no opportunities. That's how I survived, and through braiding, I began the Mothers of the Incarcerated Movement."

Later, in a video we found on her YouTube channel, Andreia MF says:

> I created the Mothers of the Incarcerated Movement. I have been the leader of the movement for 18 years. Today, I work with 4,870 women; I support the families of prisoners. I survived incarceration; I went through prison. I'm not theoretical; I'm practical. People started coming to me, asking: 'Andreia, what should I do? This and that happened... My son is a drug user, my son was arrested as a trafficker.' That's when I got to know the Public Defender's Office, which I had already been somewhat familiar with, and I started referring cases to them. One person would tell another, and another. I introduced people to the work that not everyone knew about — the work of the Public Defender's Office. That's how I started presenting and demonstrating it... *Doing the work of a social worker that the State does not pay for.*" (Andreia MF, 2020, emphasis added)

As can be seen, the work developed by Andreia goes beyond the act of braiding hair. Through her work in her home-beauty salon, she has developed a social struggle project for Black women and for the benefit of the community, explicitly embodying the activism present in Black feminist thought: the fight for social justice and institutional transformation, thereby revealing her intellectuality (Collins, 2019).

However, the intellectual work of Black women braiders cannot be reduced to the act of braiding hair. Not that braiding is something minor — on the contrary.

But being a braider is not limited to mastering braiding techniques. Likewise, one should avoid generalizations that obscure the countless creative possibilities developed through this practice.

Andreia MF's movement represents one perspective of the multifaceted work of braiders. In this sense, it is important to note that there are other viewpoints through which this intellectuality can be observed. For example, it can be seen in the intellectual production created by and about braiders through academic research, their role as communicators on social media, artistic production, and other avenues (Cunha, 2010; Santos, 2013; Santos, 2017; Souza, 2021; Santos, 2022).

From the mentioned example, it is possible to understand that the work of Black women braiders fosters actions primarily connected to the territory, often occupying conflict-ridden areas marked by urban violence and the so-called 'war on drugs,' which is not a balanced power struggle but rather the genocide of Black and marginalized populations.

The development of different social projects, such as the Mothers of the Incarcerated project, aims, undeniably, to address the countless failures of the State in these territories in terms of education, health, and social assistance: necropolitics (Mbembe, 2018). However, the boundaries have been dissolving, and braiders have expanded their knowledge through experimentation, with their practices traversing different territories, sometimes even transnational.

THE POLITICAL AND INTERINSTITUTIONAL DIALOGUE

Throughout the field research, we found that the actions of braiders also engage in partnership with educational institutes and schools, religious organizations, private and public institutions, military entities, and others. At this point, we understand that this action reveals one of the pillars of intersectional Black feminism, as described by Collins (2019): the struggle for institutional transformation.

Reflecting on the annual celebration of Black Consciousness Day on November 20th, a national holiday established through the sanction of Law n. 14.759/2023, can be a good exercise to exemplify this point. In general, braiders and other professionals who work in support of the anti-racist struggle are called upon on this date, primarily to conduct workshops, lectures, courses, and other events at various institutions. Some of the institutions are truly committed to the cause, others are trying to establish a commitment to racial issues, and some merely take advantage of the date to advertise their fulfillment of social responsibility, as there are benefits that can be granted to these institutions in this regard. And the braiders know this!

The issue is that regardless of the motivations driving the invitations from these institutions to the braiders, the work developed in partnership has proven to be very powerful, as demonstrated by the event held by the Brazilian Air Force (FAB). In celebration of Black Consciousness Day on November 30, 2023, FAB organized a training session called *Workshop: Tranças Nagô*" in partnership with braiders. Through press releases, FAB explained, without many details, that the Nago

braiding workshop was offered "free of charge by the Military Organization" as a training aimed at preparing personnel for "aesthetic adjustment" to the standards set by the institution's military regulations (Officers, 2023).

The news of this workshop went viral on social media, and various comments from different people, both military and non-military, were seen about the event. Among the numerous comments, many were mocking and rejecting the institution's stance, saying things like: "They can already open a salon..." and others asking, "Are they required to learn how to do nails too?".

From these sexist and misogynistic comments, it was possible to perceive the intersections of race and gender that emerged through the teaching/learning of braiding in the military forces. Military institutions have always trained their personnel to perform barbering tasks within their barracks, with the primary goal of maintaining disciplinary standards. As for the hygienic and aesthetic needs of female military personnel, the regulations have undergone changes over time, highlighting, through this action, how the combination of sexism, gender inequality, and racism has been confronted by the institution.

Despite the widespread reaction on social media and news websites, to the surprise of many internet users and readers, the Brazilian Air Force (FAB) clarified that it was merely adhering to its regulations. Nago braids were already included in the 2023 Aeronautical Uniform Regulation (RUMAER).

This example reveals the strength of interinstitutional dialogue in the work of Black women braiders. The presence of their knowledge in institutions, including military ones, promotes reflections, debates, and fosters necessary changes in racial relations in Brazil.

In a post on the Instagram profile *Fala Trancistas*, a project developed by Black intellectual and braider Michele Reis, different braiders shared their perspectives by commenting on the news in question. It was clear that the news was well-received by the braiders, with most highlighting the importance of this action as an example to be followed by other institutions. In one of the comments, the fact that the workshop was free for participants was questioned. However, other braiders commented that the context was not clear in the news, such as whether the braider who offered the course was also in the military or if she was invited externally, among other issues (Reis, 2024).

It is important to try and uncover the ambiguous relationship of exploitation and empowerment that occurs in dialogue with different institutions, as there are numerous issues present in this relationship that require a critical perspective, demanding more in-depth analyses that cannot be exhausted in just a few lines.

The reality for most Brazilian braiders reveals that only a few exceptions are paid when hired to participate in a project or event, as they are not considered a professional category but rather cultural activists. And when braiders are paid after being invited by an institution, the amount received is generally far below what is paid to similar professionals. From this perspective, we can observe the dynamics of the relationship between braiders and institutions in Brazil and its effects.

METHODOLOGY

The data analyzed in this research was collected through the selection of different news articles published in mainstream media, newspapers, electronic magazines, and social networks, where the prominence of the work of Black women braiders was highlighted.

To reflect on the work carried out by Brazilian braiders, this research was structured using intersectional Black feminism as its theoretical and methodological framework (Collins, 2019; Gonzalez, 2020), and the data was organized into three distinct categories:

1. The guarantee of one's own subsistence amidst social oppressions;
2. The social impact of the work of braiders;
3. The interinstitutional political dialogue that, as Collins (2019) states, shapes the epistemology of intersectional Black feminist thought.

The data analyses in this research were developed in dialogue with scholars who theorize about the creative economy and in connection with current news regarding the recognition of the work of Black women braiders in Brazil. In this sense, this study adopts a qualitative perspective (Minayo, 2007), examining the multiple spaces and territories where the actions of Black women braiders take place, emphasizing lived experience as a valid criterion of knowledge concerning their own narratives (Collins, 2019).

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS: POSSIBILITIES AND IMPASSES FOR THINKING ABOUT THE WORK OF HAIR BRAIDERS

In the scope of academic-scientific terminologies, we recognize that one of the ways to understand the Black feminist activism of hair braiders can be through the concept of the creative economy, since, in economic terms, the category of hair braiders as a profession emerges from a branch of unpaid practice culturally preserved by their ancestral braiders.

The term "creative economy" seeks to address the relationship between "culture, creativity, and innovation, presenting itself as an alternative for the economic and social growth and development of countries in the early 21st century" (Watanabe; Borges; Guilherme, 2024, p. 74). According to Miguez (2007), the creative economy is one of the fastest-growing sectors globally, but it presents a challenge for less developed countries. Miguez (2007) states that, due to its complexity, the issues related to activities rooted in the creative economy sometimes go beyond economic dimensions, presenting challenges for other fields of knowledge.

Considering the work of braiders as a creative economy, from the perspective of social psychology, we observe that the self-definition (Collins, 2019) of air braiders also emerges as a form of deliberate boundary-setting between the professional category of hairdressers. Although the practice of braiders clearly presents its own characteristics, it has been associated with the work of hairdressers over time in order to be validated in the market. This effort present in the movement of Black women braiders in Brazil brings to the forefront the specific demands of braiders,

which are often invisible when these professionals are portrayed as "Afro" or "ethnic" hairdressers, a framing permeated by a label that carries many stereotypes and prejudices.

On the other hand, regarding the power relations present in society, when these activities are named by the dominant group as cultural, there is a risk of them being encapsulated in a romanticized image of a lost past of African purity, constructed through essentialist conceptions about this identity that, in part, were also created by the gaze of the European white.

Despite the multifaceted nature of their profession — still not formally recognized —, braiders have been advocating for the right to speak in the first person about their real individual and collective needs and urgencies, without being reduced to and/or framed within formally established categories in the current paradigm exist. As we stated at the beginning of this work: braiders exist!

The fact that they exist and are claiming their rights implies a reorganization of the regulatory guidelines and theories that guide them. The opposite would be to remain in what we have seen happening: silencing, invisibilization, informality, denial of rights, illegality, ongoing cultural appropriation, devaluation of the profession, and other oppressions faced by braiders.

On July 25, 2024, in celebration of the Day of Afro-Latin American and Caribbean Women, the *17th Latinidades Festival* was held in Brasília with the theme "Come Be a Fan of Black Women." The opening panel of the event, titled "Braiders: Cultural Heritage, Creative Economy, and Work," featured Layla Maryzandra, a braider and researcher in the Professional Master's in Sustainability with Traditional Peoples and Territories (MESPT) at the University of Brasília (UnB). Also participating were Leandro Grass, president of the National Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN); Sergio Pereira, representative of the Social Participation and Diversity Advisory at the Ministry of Labor and Employment; Mariana Braga, advisor for social participation and diversity at the Ministry of Culture; and Cristiane Portela, historian, member of the MESPT/UnB Program, and advisor to the braider Layla (Afrolatinas, 2024).

We consider the holding of this panel to be extremely symbolic for the observations developed in this work. First, because it reveals the expressiveness of the Black women braiders' movement today; and second, because it serves as an example for reflecting on the scope of the work of braiders and its complexities, their action in different fields, and their inter-institutional social-political mobilization. And third, so that we can observe the intersectional relationships that permeate the recognition of this category, since it has been from the space occupied by braiders in academia and their scientific publications that government bodies have mobilized to take action, despite the multiple (r)existence projects that different braiders have developed in the country through their ethics of care, as the data presented initially demonstrates.

At the event in question, the Black intellectual, braider, and researcher Layla Maryzandra opened the panel by narrating her journey, presenting the partial

results of her research, which is currently ongoing, and questioning: "Can the braids made by braiders in the 21st century serve as escape routes for constructing public policies for braiders?". Her research has been developed in the Federal District (DF) and its main objective is to identify the practice of creating Afro-braided hairstyles as a craft, pointing out pathways for heritage recognition, as well as other public policies for Black women braiders in the DF through the construction of a sociocultural map. Maryzandra emphasizes:

> This is a practice that has been growing here in the Federal District, *particularly among young Black women, especially in urban contexts, with limited opportunities to enter other professional spaces*. However, many times it lacks this historical and cultural appropriation of the craft, associating it with a trend and fashion. And *this is something that empties the narrative of us being able to understand this practice as cultural heritage*. (Afrolatinas, 2024, emphasis added)

In her speech, Layla reports that she is building different maps to locate braiders in the Federal District (DF), and explains that it was necessary to produce an ethnographic collection with visual records of the braiders in order to create a participatory inventory to present to IPHAN and the Secretariat of Culture, aiming to facilitate the heritage recognition of braiders. While showing the photos in the slides of her presentation, she explains:

> This braid was made by Analice; she made this braid because she said that *in the past*, this braid was used in the weddings of the community. The braided headband, which is a simple braid that most of us use, could possibly be worn by someone in the audience... And this other set of photos shows Ana dyeing coast straw with natural spices, because *in the past*, we also used coast straw in our hair, right! We didn't start by using synthetic hair, right! (Afrolatinas, 2024, emphasis added).

Layla's speech highlights the importance of reclaiming memory and ancestral recognition in the work of braiders. However, we observe that the practice of braiders is a practice connected to the needs of the historical time in which these Black women are situated. Braiders preserve the knowledge of their ancestors and develop their practices considering their own subsistence and that of their community in the present. In this sense, we can affirm that, within the realm of beauty, there has always been, by the dominant white group, a capture of this practice, an ongoing cultural appropriation, in which braiders have been involved due to the lack of recognition of their professional category. This cultural appropriation has occurred since braiders were labeled as "ethnic hairdressers," and from then on, there has been an assimilation of their practices, parallel to the devaluation and disregard for the ways in which braids were made by Black women braiders. Thus, cultural appropriation can be defined as:

> [...] an action practiced by dominant groups and their individuals. It consists of appropriating elements from another minority or marginalized culture and using them without proper references or permission, erasing or altering their meanings, and disregarding the systemic oppression often imposed by the same dominant group. (William, 2020, p. 64)

When young Black women become braiders in an urban context, associating this practice with trends and fashion, it reveals both the strength of Black feminist activism and the intellectuality of these Black women in the face of social injustices, as well as the racism present in our society. In this sense, it is not the young Black braiders who empty the resistant cultural narrative; on the contrary, they are the keepers of this knowledge, recorded in their very bodies (Nascimento, 2021). In the power dynamics that structure racial relations in Brazil, young Black women could not empty the meanings of anything. This emptying has been occurring for a long time through the combination of racism and cultural appropriation.

As William (2020) explains, the Christian perception of colonization failed to grasp the meanings of African cultural expression in the diaspora, and as a result, it constantly alters the meanings of elements from African and Indigenous cultures for commercialization. On the other hand, Black people, witnessing the destruction of their cultural values, resist the system that devalues them by constructing more "acceptable" narratives that can guarantee their survival in the face of racism. For this reason, for so long, braiders have been labeled as "Afro" or "ethnic" hairdressers. Considering this, we can observe that these young Black women have developed survival strategies through braiding, which likely generates income for themselves and their families.

Continuing the panel discussion, the president of IPHAN, Leandro Grass, explains that at this moment, they are still discussing the heritage recognition of braiders, whether it should involve classification or registration, and he states:

> "It is not just about a status or some type of prestige for that cultural heritage, or historical center, or registered asset, or way of doing things, or celebration or craft, or a place... It is more than that; it is a commitment from the Brazilian state to the well-being of the people who represent that asset, the people who are the holders, the owners of that asset. And that is where the heritage recognition plan is established. In the case of intangible heritage, it is the safeguarding plan. This is where public policy objectives are set, with a focus on what I just mentioned — reducing inequality, freeing from discrimination, among other aspects. And that is where we start working together. Therefore, the construction has already begun, *and it started with you*. It is a construction that will lead us, and is already leading us, to a commitment to investment, a commitment to the application of the budget, and a technical-political commitment from IPHAN and all the other heritage institutions that form this system, which has a great responsibility." (Afrolatinas, 2024, emphasis added)

Leandro Grass emphasizes that academic work is of utmost importance because it is based on these works that knowledge is legitimized and recognition policies are made feasible. He explains that due to instabilities and changes in the government, some registrations that had been stalled within IPHAN were given priority in the current Lula administration (elected in 2022), including the registration of the midwives' craft in Brazil, the Tambor de Crioula, and the Baianas do Acarajé.

Considering Grass' speech, it is important to emphasize that most braiders move and express their activism in Brazilian society outside the academic space. The work developed by braiders in academia represents just one of the many fields they

can occupy, and it should not be viewed in a generalizing way, but rather as partial. That is, academic research can contribute to the development of the struggle for professional recognition, cultural heritage preservation, the guarantee of rights, and public policies. However, it can never be understood in a totalizing way regarding a practice that is multifaceted, such as the practice of braiders. There is much about braiders that has not been published in academic works, but it can be seen through the practice of these Black women.

In the panel in question, we can also follow the speech of Sérgio Pereira, representative of the Social Participation and Diversity Advisory at the Ministry of Labor and Employment:

> In the second half of 2024, the proceedings are already moving to the Ministry of Labor, so that in 2025, we can present to a group of people who will analyze the CBO, the work done... We will even rely on the scientific work of Layla Maryzandra, who is greatly helping us in this construction, to, in 2025, try to present it to the National Congress [...] And what does that mean? It means that braiders can organize themselves as professionals, can organize their unions, can set the value of braids, can have funds for the training of braiders, and can outline a course... (Afrolatinas, 2024)

Pereira's speech demonstrated that the Ministry of Labor and Employment has an interest in formalizing the profession of braider, including the category in the CBO (Brazilian Occupation Classification). As workers, braiders constantly face difficulties in exercising their profession, often having to fit into established professions such as hairdressers, artisans, and, at times, working informally, without labor and social security rights; without access to credits and financing for their social projects; and without institutional recognition and appreciation, among other challenges.

Like Leandro Grass, Sérgio Pereira emphasized the importance of scientific work in the stages of professional regulation, highlighting the significance of the academic perspective. In the panel discussion, it was possible to perceive the representative value that the speakers, in their speeches, attributed to Maryzandra's research for the heritage preservation and professional recognition of braiders in the Brazilian Classification of Occupations (CBO). While we can understand the importance of academic research for facilitating such actions in government bodies, we question the practices of non-academic braiders: what are the professional urgencies of young Black women braiders currently working in urban centers and the peripheries? What issues arise in the heritage preservation of a profession? When it is argued that heritage preservation should precede the professional categorization of braiders, what are the implications in terms of labor rights for braiders? Will it be a profession that is cultural heritage, a cultural heritage that is a profession, or a profession that works with cultural heritage?

These and other questions arose during the analysis of the data in this research. However, we assert that, in summary, every braider can become a *trancista*, not every braider is a *trancista*, but every *trancista* will always be a braider.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We constructed this writing to reflect on the social impact of the work of Black women braiders as creative economy and its complexities in the present day. We recognize that there are many risks when we analyze the work of braiders unilaterally, ignoring the multiple ways this work can manifest today. In acknowledging the breadth of this profession, we must be attentive to the dangers that arise in discourse, which may reinforce stereotypes, hinder the pursuit of social justice, delay the advancement of professional regulation, and complicate its recognition within the cultural realm.

In this sense, more than quick and simplistic answers to dense and complex issues, we pose the following questions: will we maintain the same paradigm that places braiders within the hegemonic Euro-Western culture? For only through a paradigmatic reformulation can we recognize that braiders are intellectuals who contribute to Brazilian intersectional Black feminist thought.

To address racial and gender inequality in the realm of work, we need to identify the continuations of labor informality, unpaid care work, precariousness, and the feminization of poverty imposed on Black Brazilian women, as well as the romanticization of individual entrepreneurship.

The issues presented in this work aim to reflect in an expanded way on the occupational formalization of braiders, understanding that such recognition in the labor market is necessary for braiders to continue developing their social justice projects fully, gain access to labor and social security rights, as well as receive state reparations and protection regarding their epistemology.

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I make my destiny: an analysis of the social marker of gender in the film *Alice in Wonderland*

Eu faço meu destino: uma análise do marcador social de gênero no filme Alice no País das Maravilhas

Deborah Luísa Vieira dos Santos[I], Emerson Nunes Eller[II], Isabela Diamantino Braga dos Santos[I]

ABSTRACT

The article analyzed the representation of women in Tim Burton's film *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) through the scene where the protagonist, Alice, receives a marriage proposal. The aim was to understand how the social marker of gender operates in this narrative from the producer's perspective and what the underlying message of the plot is for contemporary times. To achieve this, Textual Analysis and Image Analysis were applied as methodologies, both studied within Film Analysis. The analysis focused on the positioning of the character Alice in the scene observed. In this work, it was possible to observe that the social marker of gender appears in the way women are depicted as subordinate and tasked with becoming homemakers, prioritizing the needs of others over their own interests — something that the protagonist, Alice, disrupts throughout her journey.

Keywords: Social markers of difference. Gender. Cinema. Alice in Wonderland. Film analysis.

RESUMO

O artigo analisa a representação da mulher no filme Alice no País das Maravilhas *(2010), de Tim Burton, por meio da cena do pedido de casamento recebido por Alice. O objetivo é entender como o marcador social de gênero atua nessa narrativa e qual a mensagem oculta no enredo para os dias atuais. Para isso, foram aplicadas como metodologia a Análise Textual e a Análise da Imagem, ambas estudadas pela Análise Fílmica. Como categorias de análise, foi observado o posicionamento da personagem na cena. No filme, nota-se que o marcador de gênero surge na forma como a mulher é subordinada e destinada a se tornar dona do lar, colocando os desejos alheios à frente dos seus, algo que a protagonista Alice interrompe ao longo de sua jornada.*

Palavras-chave: *Marcadores sociais da diferença. Gênero. Cinema. Alice no País das Maravilhas. Análise fílmica.*

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INTRODUCTION

Entertainment has the potential to shape public perception, as the media provides content that often seeks to influence attitudes and consumption behaviors, particularly through audiovisual formats. According to Kellner (2001, p. 11), "the public can resist dominant meanings and messages, create their own interpretations, and develop their own ways of engaging with mass culture." In this context, *Alice in Wonderland*, released in 2010, offers audiences, especially female viewers, a unique opportunity to interpret and relate to the themes presented in the story. This is particularly significant as the narrative addresses issues that resonate with women, allowing communication to foster a sense of connection and identification.

In Tim Burton's film, Alice (portrayed by Mia Wasikowska) is depicted as a young woman caught between two worlds. She grapples with the challenges of real life while also embarking on the mission of saving Wonderland from the oppressive rule of the Red Queen. The heroine's journey centers around her quest to discover her own identity, free from the influence of others dictating how she should live her life.

The discussion surrounding Alice's role in the narrative highlights how the protagonist overcomes situations that challenge her courage and self-confidence. This article, a segment of the final course research, examines Alice's experience in the real world, particularly her obligation to accept an arranged marriage. In the Victorian Era, marriage was viewed as the ultimate "happy ending" for English society, especially among the bourgeoisie, who regarded it as a key mechanism for social stability and well-being. In this context, a woman married to a royal man was expected to be happy, socially respected, and serve as a model of family life, with the husband as the head of the household. The wife's role was primarily to bear children, and the children themselves were seen as a symbol of a stable union filled with social privileges (Zolin, 2010; Fabrício, 2015; Lopes, 1986).

To understand how marriage holds different significance for men and women, it is essential to consider gender as a social marker of difference. According to Zamboni (2014), gender plays a crucial role in shaping much of an individual's identity. The concept of social markers of difference is rooted in power dynamics and political hierarchies, where those deemed inferior or unworthy of occupying certain spaces are excluded from a pattern that benefits those in positions of power (Zamboni, 2014).

Accordingly, Mello and Gonçalves (2010, p. 3) point out that:

> These classification systems based on "social markers of difference" are social constructions that predate our birth — we did not create them — and they are articulated in ways that produce greater or lesser inclusion/exclusion, depending on how much they confront hegemonic social identities. Therefore, our position on the social map depends on our positions within the classification systems (stratification), what we represent (social roles), and the type of control exercised over us.

Thus, when individuals are placed into categories with which they do not identify, they are restricted from living in alignment with their own beliefs and thoughts. Within a discourse of domination, those who wield authority establish the rules, and compliance is often equated with being deemed sensible or worthy.

It is noteworthy that the term "social markers of difference" originated from academic observation when researchers recognized the need to examine issues related to race, gender, sexuality, and religion. However, even before this academic focus, various social movements advocating for struggle and representation, such as unions and feminist groups, played a significant role. Thus, to establish these markers as a legitimate area of academic study, it was crucial for individuals in vulnerable positions to value their voices and actively fight for their rights, publicly advocating for the collective good (Zamboni, 2014).

According to Zamboni (2014), it is not possible to specify the exact types or number of social markers, as all forms of identifying and classifying individuals with particular characteristics are collectively considered in this analysis. Zamboni explains that the way people relate to each other and assimilate knowledge promotes an exchange of experiences, which can influence others to varying degrees. This implies that the worldview of one group may align with that of another if both exist within a shared environment, encompassing similar thoughts, beliefs, ideologies, and so forth.

This construction of identity outlined by the social merchants of difference aligns with the purpose of cinema, as, according to Bernardet (2008), cinema has become a vehicle for disseminating numerous social issues. In this context, the research explores how cinema, as a cultural medium, facilitates reflection on social movements, even if presented in an anachronistic manner.

Given that gender is the central theme of this study, it is essential to clarify its role as a social marker of difference. Gender extends beyond an individual's biological characteristics, encompassing the identification of behaviors and personal interests. In other words, it reflects how a person identifies and defines themselves as a human being.

The debate around gender is extensive and complex, as it also encompasses the concept of "place of speech." According to Djamila Ribeiro (2019, p. 89), "thinking about place of speech would be breaking with the silence instituted for those who have been subalternized," meaning that those who experience oppression and discrimination should have the right to speak rather than merely listen. Indeed, there is no one better suited to discuss a subject than someone who has lived it firsthand.

When addressing gender issues, the concept of "place of speech" clarifies that when individuals position themselves socially and express aspects such as their sexual orientation, especially if it deviates from heteronormative standards, they are often judged by those who claim the authority to define what is socially acceptable. Furthermore, the concept of gender exposes the social construction of masculinity and femininity, which is rooted in hierarchical structures and the dominance of one over the other (Miguel; Biroli, 2014).

It can be inferred that Tim Burton, in adapting Lewis Carroll's original book published in 1865, intentionally included scenes such as the wedding to guide viewers toward a critical understanding of the societal norms of 19th-century England. Furthermore, these scenes suggest that the gender marker continues to influence contemporary society. In this context, the research focuses on Hamish's marriage proposal to Alice (from minutes 3 to 12). This analysis revealed that the gender marker is prominently represented in Burton's film, as it portrays power dynamics that favor the male gender and its imposition on the female gender. This is evident in the portrayal of Alice, a woman chosen to take on the responsibilities of the home, abandon her personal aspirations, and live according to the conditions imposed by her husband.

In light of the above, this study focused on gender inequality issues presented in the film *Alice in Wonderland* (2010). Using Film Analysis (Penafria, 2009) and complemented by Still Image Analysis (Mendes, 2019), the research examined the dialogues and the marriage proposal scene. The objective was to observe how the social marker of gender is represented in this particular episode, within the context of 19th-century British society. Additionally, the study aimed to explore how this marker transcends the historical period of the plot and resonates with contemporary society.

It is essential to recognize that when analyzing an audiovisual work, it must be considered that the production aims to reflect the society of the period it represents. Therefore, the work often addresses the thoughts, behaviors, and experiences of that time through its characters, costumes, and settings. However, the director, exercising artistic freedom, may use this historical representation to contextualize the current societal scenario in which the work is created. In this sense:

> [...] there are two interchangeable dimensions in the History-Cinema relationship: the historical reading of the film, in which the film is taken as a direct historical testimony of contemporary society, and the cinematic reading of history, in which films that address historical themes or figures offer an interpretation of the past, creating a parallel historical consciousness to History, but outside the analytical perspective inherent to it (Macedo; Mongelli, 2009, p. 20).

This contextualization is crucial for understanding this study, as the analyzed work portrays Victorian society's views on marriage. From Tim Burton's perspective, it not only addresses the decision to marry during that period but also highlights the ongoing oppression faced by women today, marked by the expectation that marriage is a necessary condition for happiness and the formation of a socially accepted family.

WOMEN AS A SOCIAL MARKER

In patriarchal societies, women were often labeled as being in service. This was the expectation for women in 19th-century England, also known as the Victorian Era. Under the rule of Queen Victoria, British society saw women primarily as individuals

who were meant to submit to household chores and family care. As a result, the social role of women as being in service was reinforced, with obedience to the husband, meekness, docility, and attention to clothing and posture being regarded as key virtues (Fabrício, 2015).

According to Zolin (2010), the Victorian Era was characterized by female indoctrination and discrimination, as women had no rights to intellectual property or the freedom to make decisions. Consequently, their social, financial, romantic, and other forms of independence were unthinkable. Additionally, women were subjected to arranged marriages, where families in British high society made agreements between their members. In these arrangements, the father, as the head of the family, often promised his daughter in marriage, frequently without her consent.

Throughout history, women have been confronted with the necessity of fighting for their rights, highlighting how society has created and maintained social roles assigned to the male and female genders in a binary manner.[1] The concept of social roles is based on the principle that society categorizes what is deemed appropriate for each gender. According to Goffman (2011), the social role is closely linked to how a person presents themselves, adopting a certain personality and allowing themselves to be represented in everyday life through characteristics that define their social identity. This identity, however, is not always recognized or valued, as the conservative patriarchal society seeks to limit the diverse forms of representation that individuals can experience.

Goffman (1988) further encourages reflection on what is deemed appropriate for women as a social standard, through the concept of stigma. As the author points out, stigma refers to the way society attributes prejudices to individuals, imposing characteristics that limit who they are or what they can become. As a result, individuals who do not conform to the established norms are often categorized as deviant and discredited. This concept is also tied to patriarchal and conservative societies, which reflect colonial thinking, where men are seen as the dominant gender and positioned as authority figures, while women are presented as beings destined to fulfill domestic roles.

Given the above and considering the current social context, it can be concluded that, in contemporary times, women are still stigmatized and associated with traditional social roles of mother, housewife, and wife. "Women have ovaries, a uterus; these are the unique conditions that enclose them in their subjectivity" (Beauvoir, 1970, p. 10). The ability of women to generate life confines them within the social context as their primary purpose. "The female organism, subjugating women to the reproductive function, would be one of the foundations on which women's subordination has been built" (Franchetto *et al*., 1981, p. 20).

To clarify the marker studied in this research — gender —, it is essential to consider the perspective of feminist authors. They argue that the application of this

1 The term "gender" goes beyond the male and female binary. The acronym LGBTQIAPN+ reflects diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, including trans, *travestis*, and non-binary individuals, emphasizing the need to encompass all forms of human expression and representation.

concept reinforces a sexist and hierarchical structure in the social context, placing men in a position of superiority over women. From a post-structuralist perspective, Butler (2018, p. 54) states that "[...] gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory structure, which crystallizes over time to produce the appearance of a substance, of a natural class of being." In addressing performativity, the stereotype based on biological gender and binary differentiation helps maintain a system that ascribes to men and women behavior patterns considered inherent to their personalities.

Strathern (2006) and Scott (1986) share a similar perspective, concluding that categorizing individuals by gender labels reinforces the perception that men and women possess distinct individualities in social life. Therefore, when society classifies individuals by gender, it strengthens oppression, domination, and power, often perpetuated by the masculine, while automatically excluding other beings. This conflict, arising from resistance to gender classification, can only be understood through the study of history, as it clearly demonstrates how men have gained greater space and prominence in all spheres of social life (Beauvoir, 1970).

Women have been labeled as being at the service of this domination, as "in the case of women, there is no feminine model *per se*; women are what men are not" (Monteiro, 1998, p. 13). This supports Beauvoir's (1970) assertion that women are the "other" of men, that is, privileges and rights are granted to the male gender, while women are left with only the remnants of their condition as the shadow cast by the male mirror.

Stereotypes associated with the female gender have also been perpetuated and transmitted through cultural products. Smelik (1999) discusses how Hollywood films from the 1960s used stereotypes to reflect the social role of women. These films often depicted women in supporting roles, romanticized as mothers and wives. Over time, they began to be portrayed as sexual objects of desire and male satisfaction, as seen in the works of director Alfred Hitchcock, who introduced sensual characters to challenge the Hollywood standards that had previously represented women as modest, homely figures (Marques; Weinmann, 2019).

It is important to remember that the role of women in cinema was historically conditioned by the dominance of the male gender, with all the focus and protagonism centered on male characters.

> The structural narrative of traditional cinema establishes the male character as active and powerful: he is the agent around whom the dramatic action unfolds and the visual is organized. The female character is passive and powerless: she is the object of the man's desire. (Smelik, 1999, p. 353)

Zwier (2012) offers important insights into how cinema shapes the social role of women throughout its narratives: "All the work falls on the male character. Once again, this promotes a patriarchal agenda in which women are taught to be stagnant, to question themselves, and to wait for a man to appear to lead them" (Zwier, 2012, p. 115). Furthermore, Santos (2021, p. 28) states that "whether sexualized or

sanctified — depending on the plot of each work — women find themselves limited to roles that condition their existence to dependence on a man."

For many years, cinema represented women through the lens of female inferiority and male dominance. However, in contemporary times, it is evident that this scenario has evolved, as demonstrated by the subject of this study, which features a female protagonist who challenges the standards of the time depicted in the film. The protagonist of *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) questions various societal norms, from rejecting the expectation to wear long stockings to opposing the notion of an arranged marriage, even though it was widely encouraged by the Victorian society, in which the story is set.

ALICE IN BURTON'S COUNTRY: MARRIAGE AS A RUPTURE OF EXPECTATIONS

Alice in Wonderland (2010) showcases Tim Burton's distinctive style. The eccentricity of the characters, the visual impact of the scenes, and the dialogues that drive the narrative reflect the director's approach to reinterpreting an existing work with a modern flair. Despite the film being inspired by a book from 1865, Burton's treatment of the material gives the audiovisual product a contemporary appeal that captivates audiences today.

Tim Burton's Alice is portrayed as a 19-year-old girl who finds herself in an arranged marriage, compelled to accept the situation for the economic benefit of the families involved. In just a few minutes of the narrative, the protagonist realizes that the world being offered to her is far too small compared to the vast possibilities she wishes to explore. In 19th-century English society, arranged marriages were commonplace, often viewed as business transactions. The romantic love associated with contemporary marriage is an idealization that emerged during the Modern Era (Toledo, 2013). It was uncommon for women to reject such unions, as the patriarch had the authority to make decisions, and if a daughter was expected to marry for the "greater good," it was simply accepted as necessary (Lerner, 2019).

According to Lerner (2019, p. 290), "women themselves became a resource acquired by men as much as the lands acquired by them. Women were exchanged or bought in marriages for the benefit of their families." What Alice did not anticipate was that the marriage proposal would serve as the perfect opportunity for her to embark on a journey of self-discovery.

When analyzing this adaptation, it is important to consider that the marriage proposal scene does not appear in Carroll's original book (2002). One must then question whether this inclusion reflects feminist struggles or, as Januário (2021) terms it, "market feminism." This concept refers to a mercantilist logic in which feminist discourses, which have gained media attention, are co-opted to create a version of feminism that is commodified for consumption. Januário highlights concerns that this process may dilute feminist agendas in favor of profit. For the author, this is one of the ways advertising appropriates the cause, transforming it into a marketable product to enhance its commercial position.

In the wedding scene, aware that her freedom would be restricted, Alice refuses Hamish's proposal. A woman with desires for freedom and a personal pursuit of her own interests, free from social interference, was not the ideal for a Victorian marriage, as going against the patriarchal authority of the family head was unacceptable (Costa, 2013). Therefore, it can be inferred that Tim Burton intended to convey a message through this scene, highlighting not only the oppression of women in British society, which forced them to accept marriages against their will, but also a modern reinterpretation. By doing so, Burton underscores the idea that women are the masters of their own destiny, challenging and breaking away from the patriarchal system.

Based on this, the research examines the social marker of gender in Burton's film, specifically through the marriage proposal scene (minutes 3 to 12), utilizing Film Analysis (Penafria, 2009) and the *Methodology for the Analysis of Fixed Images*, by André Melo Mendes (2019), as complementary frameworks.

Film Analysis as a methodological approach

According to Penafria (2009), there are four types of film analysis: text analysis, content analysis, poetic analysis, and image and sound analysis. In this research, text analysis and image analysis will be employed. Text analysis will focus on the dialogues of the characters central to the study, while image analysis will examine the frames that compose the structure of the scenes. To strengthen the theoretical framework for image analysis, the *Methodology for Still Image Analysis*, proposed by Mendes (2019), is also applied.

Penafria's (2009) reasoning, combined with Mendes' (2019) understanding, will serve as the foundation for the entire film analysis in this study, as this approach combines the objective interpretation of each frame with the interpretation of the analyst. Thus, both the explicit evidence of the scene, which represents its objective nature, and the critical understanding of the analyst, reflecting a synthetic nature, will be considered.

Alice ahead of her time: marriage as an unpleasant surprise

The quote "Arranged marriage was very common in the 19th century, when women generally had their marriages negotiated regardless of their wishes" (Leandro; Freire, 2018, p. 93) highlights the social norms of that era. During this period, it was common for women to be denied the right to make choices about their marriages, a theme also explored in the film *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) (Figure 1).

— *Does everyone know?*

— *It's why they've all come. This is your engagement party. Hamish will ask you under the gazebo. When you say "yes"...*

— *But I don't know if I want to marry Hamish.*

Source: Frame taken from the film *Alice in Wonderland* (2010).
Note: Timestamp: 07min30s and 07min41s.

Figure 1. Alice Kingsleigh disappointed upon learning of the marriage proposal.

Figure 1 depicts the moment when Alice learns that a proposal is imminent. Her sister, Margaret (played by Jemma Powell), emphasizes that everyone at the party already knows, yet the "bride" herself is caught by surprise. Not only was Alice unaware of the news, but she is also pressured into accepting the proposal. Margaret insists that Alice would say "yes," but Alice expresses uncertainty about marrying Hamish. In response, her sister dismisses her doubts, asserting that a lord would be the best option for Alice and urging her to consider the passage of time, so as not to grow old alone.

It is important to note that Alice was only 19 years old and had many aspirations. However, marriage was not one of them, it was not part of her plans. The dialogue between the sisters illustrates that, in Burton's film, the idealization of marriage is portrayed as an imposition: an unwanted and solitary consent that women were expected to bear, weighed down by the obligation to say "yes" for others and the burden of saying "no" to their own dreams. Alice symbolizes how women, particularly, endured psychological pressure. Society discriminated against young, unmarried women, valuing only those who accepted the role of "ladies of the household." For many, the best option was a forced marriage, and it was their families who benefitted from this arrangement.

Objectively, in Figure 1, Alice's facial expression serves as a point of tension in the plot. The close-up[2] shot is particularly notable, as it brings the audience closer to the protagonist's face, conveying her unhappiness and lack of interest in accepting Hamish's proposal. This interpretation is further supported by Mendes (2019), who refers to the "contextualization of the image in time and space."

For him, interpreting an image with consideration of history, art, and culture enables a more precise understanding, particularly since each historical period is defined by specific customs. However, this does not imply that these customs were ideal or acceptable. When analyzing an image in any context, such as in audiovisual media, it is essential to understand the historical, political, educational, social, and economic context of the Victorian Era. This understanding helps justify elements such as the construction of the script, costume choices, the setting, and other key aspects.

2 A filming technique used to bring the audience closer to the characters' expressions, conveying a sense of intimacy.

By confronting the social reality of 19th-century England, Tim Burton conveys a contemporary message through the character of Alice: it is not wrong to feel discomfort about rejecting the choices of others or what is imposed by societal conventions. What can truly be harmful is agreeing with others' desires while neglecting to live the life one truly wants. Alice's facial expression (Figure 1) underscores how women were treated during the Victorian Era, as their wishes were often disregarded. What mattered most was making a good marriage, managing the household, and safeguarding the husband's reputation.

This statement is proven by the words of Christiane Lopes:

> This issue of sexual inequality is important for the 19th century because, during the Victorian era, a process of individuation begins through which women become aware of their inferior position in relation to men, recognize all their sufferings as human beings, admit their contradictions, and become enraged, seeking a solution to their existential problem (Lopes, 1986, p. 1).

The author also discusses how the prevailing mindset of the time was rooted in the belief that women were dependent on men and were considered fragile. It was the image of femininity that contributed to the husband's success and earned him public respect. Additionally, the author reflects on the conditions in which women lived, as everything was socially imposed. Their purity had to be maintained at all times, and their primary responsibilities were managing the home and caring for the family. In other words, considerations of personal identity, career aspirations, or desired romantic relationships were not part of Victorian society.

In the marriage proposal scene, Margaret advises Alice to avoid three problems that, according to her, lead to women's unhappiness: growing old alone, upsetting her mother, and failing to achieve what she wants, which ultimately means not getting married. The Victorian lifestyle structure had a profound influence on women's thinking, making them feel "wrong" for not adhering to these three principles, which in practice, converged into one: forming a family. It is important to note that this family model followed the conservative norms of the time: the father, who dictated the rules; the mother, who was devoted to the home and her husband; and the children, who were expected to honor their parents and fulfill the family's plans, such as making a good marriage and starting a new family. A woman who did not conform to this standard would be socially excluded, as seen in the case of Aunt Imogene (played by Frances de la Tour) (Figure 2).

> — *You don't want to end up like Aunt Imogene. And you don't want to be a burden on Mother, do you?*
>
> — *No.*
>
> — *So you'll marry Hamish. You will be as happy as I am with Lowell, and your life will be perfect. It's already decided.*

Source: Frame taken from the film *Alice in Wonderland* (2010).
Note: Timestamp: 07min53s and 08min07s.

Figure 2. Aunt Imogene.

In Figure 2, Margaret uses the representation of her Aunt Imogene to illustrate to Alice that growing old alone would be equated with illness, as Imogene is portrayed in the film as a lonely woman waiting for her Prince Charming. Moreover, Margaret suggests that without a man by her side, Alice would become a burden to her family, since, during the Victorian Era, women who did not marry were socially condemned. This view stemmed from the belief that such women would continue to be both a social and financial burden to their families (Nelson, 2015).

It is important to understand that the Victorian woman was also a product of her Era, as her life, habits, behavior, and everything she was expected to be and to appear arose from standards imposed by society (Lima, 2018). In other words, women's decision-making power was conditioned by others, including other women, who, under the Victorian regime, learned that the best course for them was to submit to marriage. This is precisely what is striking in the dialogue, as Margaret asserts that Alice would indeed marry and confirms that this union had already been decided for her.

In observing Figure 2, it is possible to identify what Penafria (2009) refers to as "points of view," which encourages the analyst to examine the visual composition of the scene. This concept aligns directly with the studies of Mendes (2019), which are also applied in this analysis. In conducting an objective analysis, that is, describing the scene, it is evident that the viewer's gaze is directed toward Aunt Imogene, who is portrayed as the eccentric character in the film. Surrounding her are various couples engaged in conversation, and the scene is dominated by light tones, with darker shades highlighting the natural setting of the ceremony.

As a synthetic character, it can be concluded that Aunt Imogene leads a lonely life, a reality reflected in her facial expression. Despite being surrounded by a party, she remains isolated, with all other characters in the scene turning their backs to her. There is a table with two chairs, but the remaining seats are unoccupied. The long shot used in the filming plan[3] emphasizes the vastness of the scene and highlights the

3 Its purpose is to give meaning to the scene by incorporating the human figure as a fundamental aspect of the storyline.

character, effectively conveying Aunt Imogene's loneliness. This visual choice serves to symbolize for Alice her potential future should she reject the marriage. Alice's facial expression during the scene further reinforces this idea, as she is depicted with an unhappy expression in most of the sequences leading up to the marriage proposal.

In the continuation of the scene, Alice, upon realizing that her aunt was not mentally well, suggests that she should see a doctor. The societal isolation of women without a husband led to Aunt Imogene being labeled as crazy. Silva (2022) examined the Victorian Era through literary works and concluded that, during this period, women were often portrayed as insane for disobeying their husbands or pursuing their own ambitions. "The idea of the angel of the home began to be propagated as the perfect archetype of a virtuous woman. Anyone who behaved in a way that deviated from this model was considered crazy and transgressive" (Silva, 2022, p. 22).

Finally, the viewer is presented with the scene of Hamish's (played by Leo Bill) marriage proposal to Alice (Figures 3 and 4). In each of the scenes where the character realizes she will be proposed to, Burton portrays the young woman as sad and hopeless, reflecting the fact that her freedom is being stripped away.

> — *Alice Kingsleigh, will you be my wife?*
>
> — *Well, everyone expects me to, and you're a lord. My face won't last, and I don't want to end up like... But this is happening so quickly.*
>
> Source: Frame taken from the film *Alice in Wonderland* (2010).
> Note: Timestamp: 11min13s and 11min45s.
>
> — *She left me standing there, without an answer.*
>
> Source: Frame taken from the film *Alice in Wonderland* (2010).
> Note: Timestamp: 1h37min01s and 1h37min03s.

Alice's expression in Figure 3 provides an implicit response to the question posed by Hamish. While the question is brief and direct, it is far from simple from the perspective of the "bride." Upon interpretation, it becomes clear that Alice already

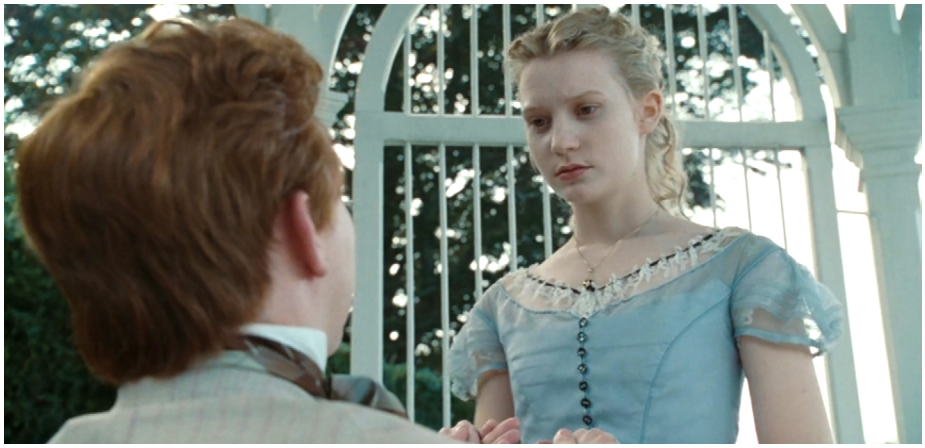

Figure 3. Hamish Ascot proposing to Alice Kingsleigh.

Figure 4. Alice Kingsleigh chasing the White Rabbit.

knows her answer. She certainly does not want to marry Hamish, nor is she sure she ever wants to marry at all. The image, along with the sequence of the scene, plays a crucial role in a deeper analysis of the true emotional undercurrent conveyed. It is important to note that image analysis in this context involves selecting specific frames to understand and interpret the feelings and ideas expressed throughout the scene, thus reflecting the inherent flow of videos or moving images (Mendes, 2019).

Objectively, the viewer observes Hamish kneeling and holding Alice's hands, a traditional gesture, formalized by society, for proposing marriage. Subjectively, the low-angle shot (*contra-plongée*[4]) stands out as the primary filming technique, emphasizing Alice's elevated position relative to Hamish, suggesting that the choice to accept or reject the proposal was entirely hers. Additionally, her gaze avoids his, implying a level of dissatisfaction so profound that she cannot bring herself to look him in the eye. Her expression conveys that this was not where she wanted to be.

In this scene sequence, the audience witnesses Alice's response to everyone present at the ceremony. She echoes her sister Margaret's remarks: the assertion that marrying a lord was her best option and that growing old alone would lead to a fate like that of Aunt Imogene. However, it is crucial to note that Alice had no certainty about what her future held; what she did know was her right to pursue her own path. Once again, freedom surfaces as a pivotal theme in the narrative, as the protagonist holds firm in her belief that others' choices cannot define her story.

Psychologically and emotionally, Alice was led to believe that declining a marriage proposal would be her worst possible fate. She lacked the time to consider what would truly be best for her, yet she recognized that her boundaries were being disregarded, as events unfolded too quickly, pushing her toward an unprepared and undesired commitment.

In the following scenes, Hamish remains on his knees, stunned and unable to comprehend his rejection. Subjectively, this moment may evoke a sense of euphoria

4 The *contre-plongée* shot refers to a camera angle where the subject is filmed from below, looking upward. This framing gives a sense of power or growth to the character being viewed from below. In contrast, the *plongée* (or high-angle) shot captures the subject from above, looking downward.

in the audience, as it represents a positive triumph: the young woman, once seemingly condemned to a life of loneliness without a man, has left behind the one who believed he was beyond rejection.

The subsequent frame (Figure 4) reveals Alice's "no," and, in an analytical sense, she is seen running through the garden. However, in a synthetic analysis, although it may seem that she runs only to catch up with the White Rabbit,[5] her action, in addition to publicly stating her "no" to Hamish, clearly affirms her "yes" to her own life. This shows the viewer that it is okay not to follow the impulses of others, as something far greater was destined for her. Thanks to her courage in breaking societal norms, Alice was able to achieve what her heart truly desired: freedom and self-discovery.

Alice's choice notably reflects a contemporary stance on the actual limitations faced by women in the Victorian Era. In the narrative, it is clear that women had minimal or no right to make their own choices, with the repercussions of their actions impacting both themselves and their families. This aspect parallels the advances achieved by social and feminist movements, and it can be interpreted as a representation of market feminism (Januário, 2021). This term suggests an appropriation of feminist values by the film industry, serving as a strategy to attract audiences.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The dialogues and scenes analyzed in this study reveal the presence of gender as a social marker in *Alice in Wonderland* (2010). Through the examination of characters' dialogues and visual frames, it becomes evident that women in 19th-century English society faced numerous inequalities, particularly concerning marriage. The theoretical framework supporting this research highlights that women of this period were not only subjected to various forms of violence but were also repressed and compelled to conform to a pattern of male dominance for the benefit of the families involved in marriage alliances.

This study demonstrates that the social marker of gender manifested in the following feminine aspects: arranged marriage, solitary aging, and the right to freedom. These dimensions share the commonality that women were reprimanded and regarded as inferior to men. Additionally, the analysis reveals that the social role of women in the 19th century was conditioned by the social role of men, as everything of value was attributed to the male gender, while the female gender was relegated to obedience, conformity to societal norms, and the suppression of freedom. Women were raised with the understanding that marriage, children, and domestic duties were the only commitments deserving their full attention and that they should strive to satisfy their husbands. In contrast, men were allowed to display their privileges, power, and infidelities without facing societal repercussions.

It can also be inferred that Tim Burton's work not only sought to depict British standards of the 19th century but also served as a representation of contemporary society, particularly the reality of women. As discussed in the analysis, several issues highlighted

5 The first character in the film who appears to Alice in real life and ultimately drives her to discover Wonderland.

in the filmmaker's plot remain present in the 21st century. Women must assert their place more forcefully, as if they have no right to be heard, while society continually attempts to silence them. It is never enough for women to simply be who they are.

By portraying English society, Burton drew public attention to issues that are often overlooked. For instance, he suggested that female independence must be earned daily, and that women need to constantly fight to prove their worth. In contemporary times, many women still lack the right to make their own decisions and are rarely asked about their desires. Society has conditioned them to think in this way, fostering a sense of powerlessness. However, many Alices continue to use oppression as a catalyst to create their own Wonderland.

Tim Burton created a work that transcends the mere representation of the Victorian Era. The scenes depicting Alice's wedding are filled with symbols and hidden messages. This is the brilliance of Burton's audiovisual approach: it allows the true meaning of the work to be interpreted by the viewer. Even without any prior knowledge of the Victorian Era, anyone watching the film can recognize that Alice is dissatisfied with the world offered to her, as sacrificing everything she desired was not part of her plan. By placing a 19-year-old female protagonist in a 19th-century English setting, the director enables women in contemporary society to feel represented. Furthermore, they come to understand that oppression and sexism have persisted for years, continuing to haunt history, yet it is possible to resist and challenge these forces.

Tim Burton, while contextualizing the scenario of the time, did not overlook the importance of women asserting themselves in the present. Alice is the character who demonstrates that women cannot remain silent. She is the one who defied unquestionable values and principles, refusing to allow her story to have an ending that would satisfy everyone but herself. Alice not only broke societal patterns but also showed that it is acceptable to say "no" without fear, and to pursue happiness and self-discovery along the way.

Finally, it is hoped that this research will be expanded so that all forms of inequality, such as those addressed in this study, are not normalized, but instead gain visibility and become subjects of discussion across all spheres of society. It is also hoped that each reader, upon understanding that indifference harms and diminishes the will to fight for what truly matters, will contribute to building a better world, one in which all people have the right to be and feel free. After all, there is no value in striving for a more just and inclusive society if the changes necessary for this do not begin within each individual.

In the work analyzed here, only one character was able to express the desire for independence, potentially resonating with many women who may feel repressed by society in terms of their attire, choices in love, and professional life.

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"Ideas to postpone the end of the world": Rede Cidadã strategies for a sustainable economy

"Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo": estratégias da Rede Cidadã para uma economia sustentável

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ABSTRACT

This article aimed to present the work of the Civil Society Organization (CSO) Rede Cidadã and its contributions to the field of social inclusion based on the findings of a doctoral research, carried out under an immersion regime, which accompanied the work of the facilitation "Consciousness Expansion Therapists," one of the CSO's action and transmission fronts. With this articulation, it was possible to integrate the academic debate with the interior of companies that propose to innovate in social inclusion work. Data collection consisted of descriptions in field diaries, bibliographical survey and problematizations about the difference social markers according to the theoretical-methodological approach based on the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and the PesquisarCOM methodology. It was identified that Rede Cidadã intends to promote innovations in the field of Brazilian social assistance through awareness expansion techniques and Integrative and Complementary Health Practices (*Práticas Integrativas e Complementares em Saúde* – PICS). By presenting contributions to health care integrated with training and professional training practices, it was concluded that the CSO has been offering an innovative employability process, connected to the need to generate alternatives for sustainable economic growth and development.

Keywords: Social inclusion. Creative economy. Rede Cidadã. Integrative and Complementary Health Practices. Difference social markers.

RESUMO

Este artigo teve como objetivo apresentar o trabalho da Organização da Sociedade Civil (OSC) Rede Cidadã e suas contribuições para o campo da inclusão social a partir dos achados de uma pesquisa de doutoramento, realizada em regime de imersão, que acompanhou o trabalho do curso de facilitação "Terapeutas de Expansão da Consciência", uma das frentes de ação e transmissão da OSC. Com essa articulação, ensejou-se integrar o debate acadêmico com o interior das empresas que se propõem a inovar no trabalho de inclusão social. A coleta de dados foi composta das descrições em diários de campo, levantamento bibliográfico e problematizações sobre os marcadores sociais da diferença conforme a aposta teórico-metodológica fundamentada na Teoria Ator-Rede (TAR) e na metodologia PesquisarCOM. Identificou-se que a Rede Cidadã pretende promover inovações no campo da assistência social brasileira por meio de técnicas de expansão da consciência e das Práticas Integrativas e Complementares em Saúde (PICS). Por apresentarem contribuições nos cuidados em saúde integrados às práticas de formação e capacitação profissional, concluiu-se que a OSC vem ofertando um processo de empregabilidade inovador, conectado à necessidade de gerar-se alternativas para o crescimento e o desenvolvimento econômico sustentáveis.

Palavras-chave: *Inclusão social. Economia criativa. Rede Cidadã. Práticas Integrativas e Complementares em Saúde. Marcadores sociais da diferença.*

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ANALYSIS

According to Roberto Agune (2014) and Sergio Bolliger (2014), globalization, technological advancements, economic liberalization, and privatization have contributed to the growing prevalence of cooperation agreements and strategic alliances for innovation policies. These partnerships often involve companies seeking access to new markets and technologies and governments aiming to enhance internal capabilities, optimize public spending, and stimulate economic growth. Additionally, in the current context where knowledge serves as an economic asset, challenges are becoming increasingly complex, and the pace of change is accelerating. As a result, the demand for high-quality public services and policies tailored to a connected, networked society is rising, as noted by Agune (2014).

Thus, the capacity for innovation has become essential in the private sector and is increasingly recognized as vital in the public sector. Addressing complex scenarios and navigating budgetary constraints now depend on integrated knowledge, the exchange of ideas, creativity, collaboration, and the development, prototyping, and implementation of new business models (Agune, 2014). Innovation has evolved into an open process characterized by participation and collective intelligence, encompassing the evaluation and monitoring of public policies (Bolliger, 2014).

Universities have increasingly served as entrepreneurial instruments of innovation policies, fostering networks that facilitate technology transfer. Henri Etzkowitz and Chunyan Zhou (2017) highlight the growing implementation of collaborative environments among universities, organizations, and governments to promote the generation, dissemination, and application of knowledge. In this context, discussions surrounding the creative economy have gained prominence in academia over recent decades. Jefferson Watanabe, Larissa Borges, and Luciana Guilherme (2024) emphasize this trend in studies tracing the evolution of the field. Creative economy, rooted in a modern understanding of the relationship between culture and sustainable economic growth, emerged in the 21st century as a significant concept, in each "[…] creative economy activities have been highlighted as alternatives for the growth and economic development of countries around the world" (Watanabe; Borges; Guilherme, 2024, p. 73).

As a relatively new concept, creative economy has been defined and refined through various frameworks. Samira Chedid (2017) notes that the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), an intergovernmental forum established in 1964 under the United Nations General Assembly, proposed categorizing the creative industries into four main axes: heritage, arts, media, and functional creations (Chedid, 2017). Later, at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in 2012, creative economy was recognized as the fourth pillar of sustainable development (Chedid, 2017). Building on this foundation, the concept has expanded to include alternatives for fostering networks aimed at driving social transformation. These networks integrate popular knowledge, social organizations, and technical-scientific expertise to promote economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Frequently referred to as "appropriate technologies" — or, more

commonly in Brazil, as social technologies — these encompass a set of innovative, effective, and re-applicable techniques or methodologies. Developed collaboratively by and for communities, these technologies address specific local needs, aiming to drive transformative actions that reduce inequality, promote social inclusion, and enhance quality of life, as outlined by the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (*Ministério da Ciência, Tecnologia e Inovações* – MCTIC) (Brazil, [n.d.]a).

The four dimensions of the concept of Social Technology align with the United Nations' 2030 Agenda (UN, [n.d.]) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These dimensions include: the introduction or generation of innovation within communities; the promotion of citizenship and democratic participation; fostering dialogue between popular and scientific knowledge; and addressing social problems through environmentally sustainable solutions (Brazil, [n.d.]a). Such initiatives are often carried out by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), which facilitate cooperation between society and the state to drive social change. These changes typically focus on the promotion of rights, raising socio-environmental awareness, and combating social exclusion, particularly among marginalized populations, as noted by the Federal Revenue website (Brazil, 2022).

These institutions became a significant channel for organized political action in the Brazilian public sphere from the 1970s and 1980s onward, uniting various agendas and aspirations. During this period, they were established as vehicles for the implementation of the participatory principles outlined in the 1988 Constitution, which emerged in response to popular pressure and demands. According to Mariana de Castro Moreira (2014), the Constitution promoted and legitimized citizen participation, both in the formulation and implementation of public policies, with the goal of ensuring and universalizing basic rights.

Among Brazilian CSOs is Rede Cidadã, a social assistance entity recognized as one of the first to invest in social work through networks. Since 2002, it has brought together companies, public agencies, social organizations, and volunteers to continuously develop programs and projects aimed at generating employment and income. Based in Belo Horizonte and operating nationwide, Rede Cidadã promotes social inclusion by facilitating the integration of young apprentices, interns, the aged, LGBTQIAP+ individuals, people with disabilities, and others into the labor market. It provides employability opportunities through partnerships with various institutions and social actors.

Its activities in the field of social assistance focus on providing priority support to individuals identified in Law No. 8.742/1993 – the Organic Law of Social Assistance (*Lei Orgânica da Assistência Social* – LOAS). In line with the regulations governing the National Social Assistance Policy, Rede Cidadã advocates for the social inclusion of people in situations of social vulnerability, facilitating their integration into the workforce while ensuring social protection and the guarantee of rights, as outlined in Resolution No. 33/2011 of the National Council for Social Assistance (*Conselho Nacional de Assistência Social* – CNAS). This information is publicly available on the official website of the organization.

The organization emphasizes that its management invests not only in the technical training of participants in its courses but also in the revitalization of their dreams and their socio-emotional development. With the slogan "Life and work, one value," (*Vida e trabalho, um só valor*) the CSO believes that both life and work must go hand in hand to foster the professional and personal fulfillment of individuals. Consequently, in addition to professional training, the organization offers practices they refer to as the "expansion of consciousness," which include socio-emotional training for all participants. This approach promotes a more comprehensive preparation for entering the job market, increasing the likelihood of long-term success. The organization aims to understand the unique life stories of its participants and address their socio-emotional needs.

This article presented the results of a doctoral research project that has already passed the thesis qualification exam, titled *Integrative and Complementary Health Practices (Práticas Integrativas e Complementares em Saúde – PICS) and Social Inclusion: Articulations of the Citizen Network* (*inclusão social: articulações da Rede Cidadã*) by Jackeline Sibelle Freires Aires. The aim was to highlight the work of CSO and its innovative proposals as contributions to the field of creative and sustainable economy. Through this articulation, the goal is to integrate the academic debate with the practical initiatives within companies that seek to innovate in the realm of social inclusion. To achieve this, an excerpt from an immersive research conducted by Jackeline Aires in the context of one of the CSO's facilitation courses for collaborators, called "Therapists of Expansion of Consciousness" (*Terapeutas de Expansão da Consciência* – TEX), will be presented. This excerpt aims to showcase her proposal and provide analyses and reflections on its potential contributions to the field of creative economy.

The study is the result of a research collaboration between Rede Cidadã, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), and the afeTAR Laboratory, a technological development unit of UERJ. It involved three researchers working within Rede Cidadã across different lines of inquiry. Two researchers, Dandara Chiara Ribeiro Trebisacce and Fernanda Sansão Hallack, participated under the auspices of the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (*Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico* – CNPq) Notice No. 12/2020, issued on May 15, 2020, aimed at fostering innovation within the Master's Program in Comptrollership and Public Management at UERJ. The present study, *Integrative and Complementary Practices in Health (PICS) and Social Inclusion: Articulations of the Citizen Network* by Jackeline Sibelle Freires Aires, is linked to the Doctoral Program in Social Psychology at UERJ. This program is supported by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (*Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* – CAPES) and Rede Cidadã, which provided a full scholarship for Jackeline Aires to participate in the TEX course.

The afeTAR Laboratory, coordinated by Professor Alexandra Cleopatre Tsallis, PhD, at UERJ, is a collective of researchers from across Brazil specializing in social sciences, psychology, and related fields. Its members range from undergraduate

students to PhDs, contributing to a wide array of research focuses. The laboratory develops projects guided by the ideals of fostering a world where diverse ways of being and existing are embraced, promoting social engagement, and advancing innovation within ethically grounded scientific processes.

The methodology adopted for this research aligns with the approaches utilized in the laboratory, namely *PesquisarCOM* and Actor-Network Theory (ANT). The *PesquisarCOM* method was developed based on the work of Professor Márcia Moraes (2010), a faculty member in the Psychology program at Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF) and a specialist in studies on disability and processes of social exclusion. The writing of field diaries was informed by ANT, as articulated by Bruno Latour (2008; 2012; 2020), a French anthropologist, sociologist, and philosopher of science, recognized as one of the foremost thinkers on environmental sustainability.

Both approaches emphasize a unique way of conducting research, where the researcher enters the field as a participant who engages WITH the actors being studied, considering both humans and non-humans as contributors to the narrative. This is why they are referred to as "actants in Actor-Network Theory." The concept of *PesquisarCOM* leans more toward the action of a verb rather than a static noun. It suggests that to truly understand a given reality—such as gaining deeper insights into the TEX course, for example, it is essential to follow this process in motion, unfolding within the daily practices of those who live it. We have termed this process "immersion."

We also adopted a policy for naming research participants by presenting authors with their first and last names in the body of the article — first using feminine pronouns, then neutral language (in Portuguese: *e/ie/es/ies*), and finally masculine pronouns. This approach aimed to make diversity visible and emphasize gender equity. Additionally, we provide a brief biographical summary of the authors who are essential to our methodological approach.

We believe that being attentive to social markers of difference can contribute to social movements as a tangible step toward creating a new social order of belonging, framed as a sustainable commitment. This aligns with the research of Alexandra Tsallis et al. (2020) in the text *Politics of Names*, which challenges the conventional practice of anonymizing research participants. In their work, they seek to "[...] explain alternative paths that are methodologically committed to the research process itself" (Tsallis et al., 2020, p. 183). Similarly, Monique Brito advocates for the political and ethical choice of writing in the feminine, arguing that "[...] for a long time, we were named as masculine, with the Portuguese language being held responsible for this" (Brito, 2021, p. 14).

Thus, in this work, we also aim to reflect on inclusion by highlighting the diversity of bodies within the context of a CSO that seeks to support the LGBTQIAP+ population, people with disabilities, homeless individuals, those involved in the penal system, and others. This organization strives to challenge the hegemony of the masculine. Our goal is for these voices to actively participate in the research process, aligning with the argument of Ana Claudia Lima Monteiro, Maria Paula Borsoi

Raimundo, and Bárbara Gerard Martins (2019) that our research frameworks must be designed to recognize our subjects as capable of producing agency.

In this context, the work of Heloisa Starling and Lilia Moritz Schwarcz (2006) informs the discussion on race, gender, sex, age, and class as classificatory categories that can be understood as local, historical, and cultural constructions. These categories influence both social representations and the material world, shaping the production and reproduction of collective identities and social hierarchies. Thus, "social markers of difference" do not derive meaning solely in isolation, but primarily through the relationships they establish with one another. "In fact, such markers serve to establish relationships of relationships" (Starling; Schwarcz, 2006, p. 219, emphasis added).

In conclusion, emphasizing these distinctions in the present work expands the scope of the text, allowing for an academic discussion that critically engages with new epistemologies. These epistemologies seek to ensure that the diversity of individuals contributing to the academic debate is not rendered invisible.

REFLECTION

According to Gilson Dobbin (2022), in an article published on the Chamber of Deputies Portal, Brazil has the highest number of murders of LGBTQIA+ individuals. The 2021 *Atlas of Violence* from the Institute of Applied Economic Research (*Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada* – IPEA), based on a study by Daniel Ricardo de Castro Cerqueira and Danilo Santa Cruz Coelho (2017), indicates that violence is the leading cause of death among individuals aged 15 to 29, accounting for half of all homicides in the country. Additionally, high suicide rates among young people aged 15 to 29 represent a major public health issue both globally and in Brazil, with an alarming increase in recent years, particularly within groups facing greater vulnerability. This trend is highlighted in the Epidemiological Bulletin from the Health Surveillance Secretariat of the Ministry of Health (Brazil, 2021), based on data from 2010 to 2019.

These are just a few examples, among many other unfortunate cases. We desire that these individuals live, thrive, and find fulfillment! In this regard, we echo the words of Emerson Merhy, a Brazilian public health physician and researcher: "Any life is worth living. And life must be radically defended" (Rede Unida, 2011, n/p). Brazil is committed to addressing this vital need.

In the context of inclusion in Brazil, people with disabilities had participation rates of 28.3% and formalization rates of 34.3% in the labor market in 2019, significantly lower than those of individuals without disabilities (66.3 and 50.9%, respectively). The unemployment rate within this group (10.3%) was also higher than that observed among people without disabilities (9%) (IBGE, 2022). Regarding inclusion in the workforce, the population aged 65 and over, according to the 2022 Census, has grown by 57.4% over 12 years. A study by Irene Gomes and Vinícius Britto (2023) indicates that, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* – IBGE), by 2060, there will be more aged people than young people in the country. The Continuous National Household Sample Survey (*Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua* – Pnad),

conducted by IBGE and referenced by Amanda Silva in her work on aged individuals in the labor market, shows that they make up the group with the lowest participation (Silva, 2024). For young people, Vitor Abdala (2020) reports that the unemployment rate for Brazilian women aged 18 to 24 was 27.1% in the first quarter of 2020, well above the national average of 12.2% for the same period.

According to the discussion by Adriane Shibata Santos et al. (2023), social inclusion is defined by the existence of a society in which individuals are recognized as members. However, this society does not always understand or embrace the inherent diversity of each person, often leading to the exclusion of those deemed "different" (Santos et al., 2023). Reflecting on this with Sofia Favero (2022), it becomes evident that we undergo extensive training to avoid offering simplistic solutions to complex problems. In the face of diversity, why would it be any different?

From this perspective, we enrolled in the facilitation course TEX, an initiative of the CSO Rede Cidadã, to experience its in-depth practices and explore the outcomes of its effects. This training is offered by the organization to its partners and collaborators with the goal of contributing to their self-knowledge and development, enabling them to become multipliers of the technique within the institution's areas of action. Through this process, we identified that the organization invests in what it refers to as "consciousness expansion," aiming to enhance the effectiveness of its social inclusion efforts.

This commitment is based on the potential of the personal improvement process to transform the social reality of those served, by working on their sensitive and reflective expansion. It aims to awaken in the body the expression of "[...] emotions and their energies, integrated intuition and thought, the effects of ancestry, reconnection with nature, and the generous language of non-violence toward oneself and others" (Curadoria TEX, 2020, p. 1)[1]. Thus, the CSO incorporates into its methodological approach the promotion of the participant's existential integration, "[...] oriented toward increasing the level of awareness of the way of thinking, feeling, acting, being, and existing, seeking to bring about intense and profound changes in the way of perceiving life, relationships, and oneself" (Curadoria TEX, 2020, p. 3).

The entry into the research field also revealed that TEX incorporates several PICS, which contribute to the promotion of care within the Brazilian public health system. PICS have primarily been used in Primary Care services within the Brazilian Unified Health System (*Sistema Único de Saúde* – SUS), which serves as the entry point for users in the context of disease prevention, health promotion, and recovery, with an emphasis on ongoing, humanized, and comprehensive care (Brazil, [n.d.]b). One of the central concepts of this approach is an expanded view of the health and disease process, derived from ancient practices, such as Traditional Chinese Medicine. In this sense, we associate these practices with the idea that they are resources that recover ancestral knowledge, both from our own culture and from other countries.

1 Present in the introductory text of the teaching material provided by the TEX Curatorship to the students of the course.

By offering expanded resources for care and prevention, such as acupuncture, phytotherapy, art therapy, biodance, among others, these practices present alternatives to medicalization. They provide opportunities for self-care, participation in collective practices, the exchange of knowledge, and other strategies that contribute to the process of rebuilding ways of living. Most of the resources used aim to restore the connection between human beings, the environment, and society. A vivid example from the field of research comes from one of the TEX modules, where we engaged in Tai Chi Chuan practices. In a group, barefoot, we exercised our bodies by performing animal postures inspired by nature, always with the invitation to focus on our breathing.

In a systematic review study by Fernanda Costa, Rosangela Greco, and Neusa Alexandre (2018), discussing the benefits of Yoga, a PICS offered by SUS and incorporated into TEX, improvements were found in psychosocial aspects, physical symptoms, stress, anxiety, tension, depression, irritability, social dysfunction, concentration, endurance, and balance. Additionally, there was an increase in comfort, calm, joy, clarity, stillness, and energy, along with a decrease in the use of medications. CSO, aiming to ensure its results reach its broad audience, found that individuals served in its socio-emotional training courses remained employed for longer, based on empirical findings over a year with control groups, as reported by Fernando Alves (Alves et al., 2021), executive director and one of the founders of Rede Cidadã.

Thus, TEX aims to promote the expansion of consciousness as an inward journey, with the potential for its benefits to radiate outward to others. The course curators emphasize their focus on facilitating the necessary movements for the expansion of personal and professional consciousness, as well as the existential presence of each individual in the world. This process of transformation is referred to as a "legacy." They propose that new professionals embrace people management as a pathway to expand both personal and professional consciousness, thereby fostering the growth of companies and businesses. As they state, "Only those who expand their consciousness transform reality, their personal life, and the company where they work" (Curadoria TEX, 2020, p. 1).

According to CSO, investing in expanding the awareness of its collaborators, and consequently its users, through the practices learned in the course would be an effective way to enhance the social inclusion work. This approach would enable students to be better equipped and more resourceful in transforming their own reality. Additionally, the importance of continuity in projects and social management is highlighted by Dandara Chiara Ribeiro Trebisacce (2023), a master's graduate in Public Management who wrote a dissertation on Rede Cidadã. She argues that ongoing training, mediation with job opportunities, post-hiring monitoring, and team support in cases of employment contract termination must be established. In other words, lasting training, combined with communal support and monitoring, is essential for reinforcing and restoring family ties, creating a supportive environment for inclusion in both the social sphere and the world of work and income generation (Trebisacce, 2023).

To this end, the Network created the "User and Family Development Path," with a core focus on socio-emotional development and networking. This initiative prepares individuals to achieve personal and financial autonomy while expanding their support resources. Career continuity connections are established throughout the course, from preparation for becoming a young apprentice or intern to securing employment in partner companies. This long-term project is developed by coordinating a network of local actors, including municipal administration, public social assistance policies, the Children and Adolescents Council, other social organizations, and partner companies.

These areas of action, along with their multiplier effect, have the potential to generate convergence, bringing together bodies, lives, experiences, and resources to form new systems and foster new economic, cultural, and symbolic exchanges. As Antônio Bispo dos Santos, known as Nego Bispo, farmer, poet, professor, environmental political activist, quilombola, and land rights activist, teaches us: "When we converge, we do not stop being ourselves; we become ourselves and other people — we yield. Confluence is a force that yields, that increases, that expands. That is the measure" (Santos, 2023, p. 4-5).

Although Rede Cidadã does not explicitly use the concept of confluence in its TEX syllabus, its practices and methodological principles exemplify it by emphasizing the importance of integration. In this sense, CSO seeks to align sociocultural relations with the economy, underscoring the need to expand the developmental foundations of those working with social inclusion. This approach fosters practices aimed at personal and environmental connection.

The networking aims to create conditions for the sustainability of a long-term social project, one that provides continuous support for personal development, integration into the workforce, and professional career growth. Gradually, the work and income generation networks establish and multiply connections within the local ecosystem, creating pathways for new work and income alternatives grounded in the principles and practices of the creative and sustainable economy.

CONCLUSION

In a social context marked by significant challenges in access and inequality, such as the Brazilian scenario, social assistance organizations like Rede Cidadã can play a strategic role. According to Mariana de Castro Moreira (2014, p. 64), "today, faced with the complexity of social demands, many actors are beginning to act and become part of what is called organized civil society, forming a field of forces and disputes [...]", a shift from the 1960s and 1970s, when the boundaries between the State and other entities were more clearly defined.

According to Mariana de Castro Moreira (2014, p. 63), "experiences have shown that the local and decentralized actions of these organizations allow for a certain informality, agility, and capillarity that is often not achieved by state action." This shift toward privatization of the public sector and the transfer of responsibilities blurs the boundaries between public and private, leading to new issues, such as

the weakening of collectives fighting for rights (Peroni, 2017). Nevertheless, this has undeniably become the new face of democratic action, operating within a fluid network interconnection model aimed at solving problems, rationalizing resources, and overcoming challenges.

In this context, the CSO Rede Cidadã operates in challenging environments, addressing issues such as the employability of young people, aged people, people with disabilities, LGBTQIAP+ individuals, and other vulnerable groups, while confronting barriers such as ableism, ageism, and homophobia, among others. Facing resistance, conflicts, and prejudices necessitates continuous inter-organizational and interdisciplinary political coordination, which the organization actively fosters to drive innovation, transfer technologies, and assume a leadership role in the Brazilian healthcare sector. This is highlighted by Fernanda Sansão Hallack (2023), a master's graduate in Public Management, who researched the organization's work with young apprentices at Rede Cidadã.

Practices that expand consciousness and reclaim ancestral knowledge as part of the necessary work for social inclusion aim to challenge the limits of imposed restrictions, unlock the potential and creative insights of all those involved, and broaden the range of possibilities. They seek to connect sensibilities, knowledge, and ways of being and fighting in the world. These practices tell stories, and by telling stories, they suspend the rushed and monetized time dictated by capitalist dynamics.

This postponement is what Ailton Krenak, an indigenous leader, environmentalist, philosopher, poet, and Brazilian writer, proposes in his book *Ideas to Postpone the End of the World* (*Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo*). In the book, he suggests alternatives for development, connection with nature, and the embrace of ancestry in the present day as means for our continuity and survival. According to him, our current situation creates absences: "[...] of the meaning of living in society, of the very meaning of the experience of life. My provocation about postponing the end of the world is precisely to always be able to tell one more story" (Krenak, 2020, p. 26-27).

From this perspective, the title of the environmentalist's work serves as an inspiration for our own, illustrating the efforts of Rede Cidadã. The work of the CSO can also be seen as an alternative "to postpone the end of the world," as it invites individuals to engage with their peers, participate in collective experiences in circles, connect with nature, and care for families and institutions, among other initiatives. We venture to weave this metaphor, suggesting that, in an innovative way, Rede Cidadã is presenting a strategy to postpone the end of the world by telling new stories, with at least 130,877 people served to date (Rede Cidadã, [n.d.]).

We align ourselves with this vision, believing that by exercising it more intensively and broadly, we will be postponing our own end, preventing social and environmental destruction. The commitment to valuing new aspects of inclusion practices enables diverse vulnerable individuals to share their stories and create new narratives about themselves and the world they inhabit. This process connects popular knowledge, social organizations, and technical-scientific expertise to foster economic, social, and environmental sustainability, thus articulating networks for

social transformation. In this way, the process of social inclusion will progressively weave new stories: of access to rights, political and economic participation, achievement of autonomy, and citizenship. As Krenak (2020) states, it is by telling new stories that we will "postpone our end."

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Brazilian approach to the creative city: potential for socially sustainable development

Cidade criativa à brasileira: potencial para o desenvolvimento sustentável

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ABSTRACT

Since the end of the 20th century, the use of the city's cultural resources has been expanding and expressed in various discourses. Among which, the idea of a creative city stands out, that focuses on the strengthening and development of creative industries as a strategy for urban development. The objective of this article is to analyze the appropriation of the term creative city in Brazil, regarding its potential to design a more socially sustainable city model that incorporates creative individuals and groups. To achieve this, a bibliographic review of the creative city concept was conducted and the proposals for the implementation suggested by the northeastern Brazilian cities that are members of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network were examined. The results indicate that these cities present a greatly reduced version of the concept; however, the proposed strategies for the implementation of a creative city consider social groups within the creative sector and aim to promote social development, which can contribute to outlining a more inclusive concept of a creative city.

Keywords: Creative cities. Unesco Creative Cities Network. Social movements. Suistanable development. Brazil.

RESUMO

Desde o final do século XX, a utilização dos recursos culturais da cidade vem sendo ampliada e expressa em vários discursos, destacando-se, entre eles, a ideia de cidade criativa, que foca no fortalecimento das indústrias criativas como estratégia para o desenvolvimento sustentável. O objetivo deste artigo foi analisar a apropriação do termo "cidade criativa" no Brasil, quanto ao seu potencial para construir um modelo de cidade socialmente mais sustentável, que incorpore os sujeitos e os grupos criativos. Para isso, fez-se revisão bibliográfica sobre o conceito de cidade criativa e verificaram-se as propostas de implementação indicadas pelas cidades brasileiras nordestinas integrantes da Rede de Cidades Criativas da United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco). Os resultados apontam que essas cidades apresentam uma versão bastante recortada do conceito; entretanto, apontam estratégias para a implementação de cidade criativa que consideram os grupos sociais do setor criativo e visam à promoção do desenvolvimento social, o que pode contribuir para delinear um conceito de cidade criativa mais inclusivo.

Palavras-chave: *Cidade criativa. Rede de Cidades Criativas da Unesco. Movimentos sociais. Desenvolvimento sustentável. Brasil.*

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INTRODUCTION

At the end of the 20th century, economic restructuring resulting from the deindustrialization of countries, the urban decline of large parts of cities, fiscal austerity, and the rise of neoliberal governments were observed (Harvey, 1996; Vivant, 2012; Grodach, 2017). In parallel and related to this, the crisis of modernist urban planning (Maricato, 2015) intensified and, as a consequence, culture began to be used as a means to promote urban development (Arantes, 2002; Yúdice, 2004; Grodach, 2017; Couto, 2023), which can be referred to as "urban entrepreneurialism" (Harvey, 2014).

Since then, the use of the city's cultural resources has been expanded and expressed in various discourses, proving to be a long-lasting influence on urban and cultural policies (Grodach, 2017; Segovia; Hervé, 2022). Among these discourses, the idea of the creative city has recently stood out (Duxbury et al., 2012; Grodach, 2017; Segovia; Hervé, 2022), which focuses on strengthening and developing creative industries as a strategy for the city to reinvent itself from urban and economic perspectives (Segovia; Hervé, 2022). The emergence of this term is situated within a context of economic change, where creativity is established as an important resource (Vivant, 2012), along with the rise of creative activities that make up the field of the creative economy (Unctad, 2012).

The term "creative city", although initially met with severe criticism in academic circles (Peck, 2005; Scott, 2006; Grodach, 2017), has been adopted by politicians and urban planners worldwide and is now widely circulated (Duxbury et al., 2012; Vivant, 2012; Pratt, 2017). It has been developed both empirically and conceptually through applications in different contexts (Duxbury *et al*., 2012; Segovia; Hervé, 2022).

But what exactly is a creative city? Various authors unanimously highlight the vagueness of the term (Peck, 2005; Scott, 2006; O'Connor; Shaw, 2014; Grodach, 2017; Matovic; Del Valle, 2020/1), as well as the multiple meanings and ways the concept is applied (Reis; Urani, 2011; Vivant, 2012; Segovia; Hervé, 2022). At times, it is associated with attracting the creative class and fostering the creative economy (Florida, 2011; Landry, 2012a); in others, with what a good city should be, emphasizing diversity and urbanity (Landry; Bianchini, 1995; O'Connor; Shaw, 2014). There is also the perspective that focuses on the transformative potential of artists for urban cultural life (Miles, 2012; Grodach, 2017), and, finally, the idea of using creativity for sustainable social and economic development (Vivant, 2012; Unesco, 2020; Segovia; Hervé, 2022).

With this in mind, the main objective of this study was to analyze the incorporation of the term "creative city" in the Brazilian context as a potential contribution to building a socially more sustainable city model that includes creative individuals and groups. To achieve this, the study first describes the emergence of the term, its dissemination, and attempts at operationalization, as well as the current framework and possibilities stemming from this concept. Next, it presents the trajectory of the "creative city" concept in Brazil, addressing the conflicts surrounding the term and

analyzing the proposals made by six creative cities located in the Northeast of Brazil[1]. Finally, the concluding remarks based on the research conducted are presented.

CREATIVE CITY: EMERGENCE AND EVOLUTION

Brief history of creative cities

The term "creative economy" was first used in 2001 in the works of economists John Howkins and David Throsby (Reis, 2006). From that decade onward, the term "creative economy" became consolidated and popularized, particularly through its adoption by international agencies such as UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) (Miguez, 2007).

In Brazil, the Ministry of Culture (Minc) sought to solidify a national understanding in the Plan of the Secretariat of Creative Economy (2011) by stating that: "Creative sectors are all those whose productive activities have as their main process a creative act that generates symbolic value, a central element in the formation of price, and results in the production of cultural and economic wealth" (Brasil, 2011, p. 22).

The understanding of creative economy, in addition to revealing the place that culture has come to occupy in the contemporary world, helps to understand how much it has come to dictate public policies. As Yúdice puts it, "culture is being increasingly directed as a resource for sociopolitical and economic improvement" (2004, p. 25), or more specifically, "as a resource to achieve an end" (2004, p. 52). Therefore, we observe the use of culture as a "cure for all ills": improving social conditions, stimulating economic growth, creating jobs, and promoting sustainable urban development.

This centrality of culture and the rise of creativity as a resource to be incorporated into various fields, when related to urban planning, will underpin new propositions about interventions in urban space (Arantes, 2000; Fernandes, 2006; Seldin, 2016). Thus, alongside the first propositions about the term "creative industries" in Australia and the United Kingdom in the 1990s, the idea of the creative city will emerge. Therefore, an intimate relationship between economy, city, and culture began to establish itself in both academic and empirical spheres.

The first records of the term "creative city" occurred at two events held in 1988, one in the United Kingdom and another in Australia (Matovic; Del Valle, 2020/1). The term "creative city" also appeared in a study developed by the English urban planner Charles Landry for Glasgow (1991), which aimed to foster the economy by considering cultural aspects. This same idea was revisited by the author, in partnership with Franco Bianchini, in the book *The Creative City* (1995). In 2002, the American economist Richard Florida released *The Rise of the Creative Class*, in which

1 This article is part of an ongoing thesis on urban planning based on the concept of creative cities, in Brazilian cities that are part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, located in the Northeast of Brazil (Salvador/BA, João Pessoa/PB, Fortaleza/CE, Recife/PE, Campina Grande/PB, and Penedo/AL).

he introduced the idea that economic development is promoted when cities attract the creative class (Florida, 2011). The ideas of Landry and Florida were disseminated and put into practice through lectures and consultancy in cities by the authors, being built upon in both theoretical and practical perspectives (Peck, 2005; Vivant, 2012; Matovic; Del Valle, 2020/1).

However, this initial moment was also accompanied by criticisms, which pointed to gentrification; economic competitiveness; the instrumentalization of culture and art; an elitist view of the creative class; neglect of inequality and poverty; exclusion of minority cultures; theoretical inconsistencies of the concept; and the use of the term "creative city" as marketing (Peck, 2005; Scott, 2006; Duxbury *et al*., 2012; Vivant, 2012; Grodach, 2017; Pratt, 2017; Matovic; Del Valle, 2020/1).

The search for the operationalization of the concept marks the second phase of the creative city. A key point was the adoption of the term by UNESCO in 2004, when it established the Creative Cities Network (UCCN), now composed of 350 cities, which applied in the fields of Craft and Folk Art, Design, Cinema, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts, and Music (Unesco, 2023). Defines creative cities as "[...] those that recognize creativity as a strategy for sustainable development [...] and place creativity and cultural industries at the center of their development plans at the local level while actively cooperating at the international level" (Unesco, 2020, p. 2).

This institution played a central role in promoting the tourism-cultural renewal model across Europe and other continents, presenting an agenda that advocates the alliance between culture and development (Couto, 2023). Thus "the creative city policy proposal managed to connect with the perspective of sustainable development and, from there, transitioned towards international urban and cultural agendas" (Segovia; Hervé, 2022, p. 8, our translation). The concept was also adopted by other international agencies, such as Unctad and the World Bank Group (Yúdice, 2004; Reis; Urani, 2011; Couto, 2023).

In this article, while acknowledging the debate surrounding the term "sustainable development" (Ratiu, 2013; Segovia; Hervé, 2022), we adopt UNESCO's perspective, which understands it as growth that occurs across spatial, economic, and social dimensions; promotes social inclusion and poverty reduction; is concerned with environmental preservation; and seeks to create a vibrant urban environment that fosters well-being (Unesco; World Bank, 2021).

Regarding contributions to the concept of the creative city, it is important to highlight Landry's extensive work (Landry, 2000; Landry & Hyams, 2012; Landry, 2012b) and various research analyses based on empirical studies (Evans et al., 2006; Hartley et al., 2012; UNESCO; World Bank, 2021; Montalto et al., 2023), which sought to operationalize the concept, proposing strategies for its application and identifying indices for measuring and evaluating urban creativity.

Creative city: a contested term

The analysis of the term "creative city" from a chronological perspective allows us to assert that it was gradually adopted by urban managers and government

agencies, particularly in Western Europe and North America (Miles, 2012; Pratt, 2017; Montalto et al., 2023). This sparked intense academic debate (Miles, 2012; Pratt, 2017; Montalto et al., 2023), including the establishment of the field of cultural and creative economy studies. It has since been researched in universities and research centers, which have established undergraduate and postgraduate programs (Pratt, 2017).

Thus, it is evident that the concept has been in circulation for more than two decades and that: "Far from being a passing trend, the concept of the creative city has been embraced by various types of cities, despite seemingly fatal academic criticism, a policy with vague goals, and questionable political outcomes." (Grodach, 2017, p. 82, our translation).

However, over time, the criticisms have made the negative aspects related to the creative city increasingly evident, highlighting the need for "more multidimensional, nuanced, and participatory strategies that are sensitive to local cultures and differences and pay greater attention to the redistribution of benefits, which are growing demands" (Duxbury *et al*., 2012, p. 6). Several authors point out that the concept of the creative city is evolving and carries the potential for a different approach to art and culture in the urban context (Grodach, 2017; Vivant, 2012), or even for discussing a post-creative city, where artistic and everyday productions establish new foundations for urban existence (Miles, 2012).

Thus, after more than two decades of circulation, it is possible to observe that the imprecision of the term has evolved (and been transformed) into different visions of the creative city, with the term still being contested (O'Connor; Shaw, 2014; Grodach, 2017; Segovia; Hervé, 2022). Therefore, "in recent years, there has been a silent shift in the discourse of the creative city" (Grodach, 2017, p. 86, our translation). From the 2010s onwards, the criticisms pointing to the negative effects of implementing the creative city began to receive more attention (Matovic; Del Valle, 2020/1; Duxbury et al., 2012), and the strategy of applying the same model, focused on the international market and global flows, was no longer seen as the only possible approach (Duxbury *et al*., 2012).

More recently, there has been an attempt to reposition the creative city (O'Connor; Shaw, 2014; Grodach, 2017; Segovia; Hervé, 2022), as the term "largely functions as an empty signifier that depends on who assigns meaning to it. Therefore, the positive use of its political potential is a contested issue". (Segovia; Hervé, 2022, p. 11, our translation).

Based on the literature on the topic, it is understood that the initial focus of the creative city is still present, but the term continues to evolve and is currently being placed in a broader perspective, encompassing aspects previously not considered and exploring alternative ways of developing urban cultural policy (Grodach, 2017; Segovia; Hervé, 2022). Therefore, some points of contention of the term can be identified, which have the potential to lead the creative city down paths different from those it has followed so far, more aligned with the promotion of sustainable development. These are:

- The need to outline strategies open to participation and valuing local cultural diversity, benefiting those economically disadvantaged (Duxbury *et al*., 2012);
- Development of studies that address aspects related to the negative impacts of the creative city (Duxbury *et al*., 2012; Matovic; Del Valle, 2020/1);
- The emergence of the maker movement, linked to the production of cultural goods on a small scale and creative placemaking (localized urban interventions made by the community) (O'Connor; Shaw, 2014; Grodach, 2017; Segovia; Hervé, 2022);
- A broader view of culture, beyond its instrumentalization, considering the actors involved and their way of existence in the city (O'Connor; Shaw, 2014; Segovia; Hervé, 2022);
- The search for a new form of governance (Duxbury et al., 2012), combining short-term targeted actions with long-term initiatives (Segovia; Hervé, 2022);
- Strengthening the premise of the right to the city: whether related to urban creativity (Segovia; Hervé, 2022); or focused on the community and inclusion (O'Connor; Shaw, 2014);
- Alignment of the creative city discourse with the concept of sustainable development (Segovia; Hervé, 2022).

These points of contention of the term enable the emergence of new, more comprehensive and multidimensional perspectives (Duxbury et al., 2012; Grodach, 2017; Matovic; Del Valle, 2020/1), which allow a return to the roots of the creative city (in terms of urban diversity), without forgetting the operational strategies built to make a city creative, while assimilating the criticisms made.

In summary, the literature on the topic suggests that to respond to the criticisms and reposition itself, the concept of the creative city should: encompass the entire urban space, without neglecting aspects such as social and economic inequality; align with the principles of sustainability; respect local cultural aspects, valuing individuals and groups that are truly creative (artists, artistic groups, and local cultural producers); establish a new form of governance, open to community participation; consider the inherent aspects of creativity; and, in short, ensure the right to the city (Duxbury *et al*., 2012; O'Connor; Shaw, 2014; Grodach, 2017; Matovic; Del Valle, 2020/1; Segovia; Hervé, 2022). From this scenario, a question arises: what, then, would be the future of the creative city?

Possible paths for a creative city

Initially, when formulated by its pioneers (Florida [2002]; 2011; Landry; Bianchini, 1995), the concept was closely linked to the strategy of making a city attractive to the creative class, through the creation of an appealing and diverse urban space. The application of this idea around the world was, for the most part, aligned with the thinking of neoliberal urban development, rather than policies aimed at supporting creative and artistic activities (Duxbury *et al*., 2012; Grodach, 2017). On the other hand, the appropriation of the term by international agencies reshaped

the concept into a more objective definition aligned with sustainable development, enabling its dissemination worldwide (Couto, 2023; Unesco, 2020).

In this sense, Vivant (2012) emphasizes the contribution of the creative city concept to thinking about urban space, highlighting the role of the city as a space of diversity and contradiction. Meanwhile, Miles points to the emergence of "[...] a new alliance between artistic production and everyday cultures," which could be "a starting point for the post-creative city. [...] There is, therefore, an alternative to the current state of affairs". (Miles, 2012, p. 26). Thus, there would be space for urban project proposals more connected to cultural diversity and to local, environmental, social, and economically sustainable needs, which do not aim for the mere appropriation of cultural resources within the neoliberal logic, but rather seek social equity (Miles, 2012).

Harvey (1996) argues that neoliberal approaches to urban planning (to which the creative city is often aligned) can lead to a result that produces true urban development, stating that "[...] it remains an open question whether urban entrepreneurialism and intercity competition will or will not lead to socialist and progressive transitions in the future" (Harvey, 1996, p. 50).

This possibility arises from the fact that, despite all attempts to turn art and culture into products to be sold, urban creativity does not remain confined to predetermined locations and, due to its nature, operates in its own way (Vivant, 2012). To explain how creativity establishes itself in the city, the author uses the concept of serendipity, which "expresses the role of chance in discoveries" (Vivant, 2012, p. 82). "Creativity feeds on serendipity, [...] on unprecedented associations and fortuitous encounters [...]," thus, "A formatted and planned scenario does not allow for this space of the unexpected" (Vivant, 2012, p. 83-84).

In summary, as Fernandes (2006) suggests, in general, two relationships are possible between city and culture: one of rupture, based on a hegemonic process of urban space production, which views the cultural attributes of the city as marketable objects; and one of promise, focused on anti-hegemonic actions in the production of the city, tied to the premise of the right to the city. These spheres intermingle, at times presenting themselves as overlapping. The promises come from the constant tension resulting from urban dynamics, with particular emphasis on the relationship of certain cultural groups with the territory they occupy and build; the actions of traditional communities in the face of the discussion of heritage preservation of places; and what the author refers to as "mobile urbanism," derived from commercial activities such as fairs and similar events. We move from this perspective of the dual relationship between "city and culture" to "city and creativity". It can be understood that the concept of the creative city, if it has so far been used from a market-oriented perspective, carries with it the possibility of a different understanding, "for creativity cannot be planned or programmed [...], it arises from the friction between otherness and unexpected encounters" (Vivant, 2012, p. 87). Therefore, the relationship between city and creativity could oscillate from rupture (of the urban fabric) to promise (concerning the exercise of the right to the city).

Therefore, regarding the future of the creative city, "reaching a new horizon or the progressive encirclement until its disappearance are two plausible possibilities that will be determined over time" (Segovia; Hervé, 2022, p. 12). In this sense, let us now analyze the concept of the creative city in the Brazilian context.

CREATIVE CITY IN BRAZIL: FROM STRATEGIC PLANNING TO CREATIVE CLUSTERS

Path of the creative city in Brazil

Based on the literature on creative cities in Brazil (Reis, 2006; Brasil, 2011; Reis, 2012; Teixeira, 2013; Barreto, 2016; Leitão, 2016; Barreto, 2018), it is evident that the topic reached the country alongside the concept of the creative economy and subsequently to it. The debate on the creative economy in Brazil began in the 2000s (Miguez, 2007; Reis, 2008; Barreto, 2016). In 2011, the Ministry of Culture (MinC) created the Secretariat for the Creative Economy and published the Plan for the Secretariat of the Creative Economy (Barreto, 2018). Additionally, it is worth noting the emergence and the progressive increase of university courses in Brazil related to the cultural sector. (Costa; Pessoa, 2016). This overview indicated the recognition of the importance of Brazil's creative economy and the effort to strengthen its creative sector (Reis, 2012; Barreto, 2018), but it did not progress as expected. Furthermore, in 2016, with the dissolution of the Ministry of Culture (MinC) and the dismantling of Brazilian cultural policies, there was a weakening of the cultural agenda in general, including the creative economy (Rubim, 2017).

Alongside the Ministry of Culture, the term 'creative city' faced challenges, and when researching within the Ministry of Cities, it becomes evident that the term 'creative city' remains absent from its programs. It seems that the discussion about creative cities within the Brazilian Federal Government, which initially emerged under the sphere of the Ministry of Culture (MinC) (Reis, 2012; Barreto, 2016), was transferred to the Ministry of Tourism (Mintur) in 2019, when the MinC was downgraded to a secretariat within Mintur. Thus, in some way, the instability of the MinC is reflected in the lack of definition regarding the field of the creative economy and, consequently, the concept of creative cities. Today, it is dispersed across the portfolios of culture and tourism (Brasil, 2011; Brasil, 2013; Brasil, 2022) and does not align with UNESCO's concept and objectives related to sustainable development.

The dissemination of the term in Brazil occurred slowly, with the need for adaptation to the Brazilian context being highlighted (Barreto, 2018; Emmendoerfer, 2018). Thus, '[...] we will not only produce a different concept but also create policies that value Brazilian culture in its various aspects and, most importantly, in its original characteristics, which are the Indigenous and African peoples" (Barreto, 2018, p. 32).

Based on the studies analyzed regarding Brazil, it is evident that when addressing creative cities, there are three possible pathways for recognizing a city as creative. The first is through municipal management, using the designation as

propaganda, based on criteria related to the creative sector or not. It can also occur when scholars of the subject attribute the label to cities, considering the concept of a creative city or the presence of a strong creative economy, or even through the city's trajectory, regarding the use of its creative and cultural assets in urban restructuring, even if the city does not label or recognize itself as such. Finally, there is the designation granted by UNESCO through the inclusion of cities in the UCCN.

When analyzing this concept in Brazil, without limiting it to the cities that are part of the UCCN, Barreto (2018) suggests that Brazilian creative cities may be linked to:

- Historical and heritage aspect: they feature creative territories and cultural elements that can be leveraged for tourism, such as the city of Paraty, with the International Literary Festival (FLIP);
- Economic aspect: the city uses culture and creativity as economic assets. However, regarding traditional cultural elements, such as dance and music, state subsidies would be necessary; whereas creative goods and services (such as fashion and video games) would constitute profitable creative sectors;
- Urban aspect: related to what is called "creative urban planning," derived from urban transformation actions, marked by the renovation of facades and streets, new centralities, followed by gentrification processes (Barreto, 2018).

That being said, it is considered that, both in terms of the conceptual dimension and the empirical object of study, a field is emerging in Brazil marked by imprecision and confusion of terms and concrete examples regarding the creative city.

Creative cities in Brazil: conflict and fragmentation

In the Creative Economy Secretariat's Plan, there is no mention of the term "creative cities," which only appears in a complementary text written by Fonseca (2011). When addressing the goals, the plan refers to creative territories, defined as "neighborhoods, productive hubs, cities, and creative basins," on which actions will be developed to "enhance job creation, employment, and income Generation" (Brasil, 2011, p. 42). The National Culture Plan defines creative territory as "neighborhoods, cities, or regions that present creative cultural potential capable of promoting integrated and sustainable development, combining the preservation and promotion of their cultural and environmental values" (Brazil, 2013, p. 38). It also emphasizes that creative territories encompass both traditional cultural industries (artistic activities) and new sectors (creative activities such as advertising and architecture). For his part, Fonseca (2011) points out that creative territory refers both to a specific creative space and to a city.

This concept is related to creative clusters, defined as areas within cities where the production and consumption of cultural products occur (Reis, 2011). These locations would serve as both living and working spaces, always open for work and leisure; they feature an environment with local cultural diversity, but are also connected to the world. Considering the economic cycle of the creative economy, composed

of production, distribution, and consumption, creative clusters would be the space where this flow begins to occur more intensely, facilitating the establishment of a creative sector (Reis, 2006). In this understanding, "clusters can be seen as a first step towards what the authors characterize as a creative city" (Teixeira, 2013, p. 37).

Similar to the concept of creative clusters, the term "creative districts" appears in national literature, presented as "urban spaces where there is a significant concentration of creative businesses and activities [...]. The location of such districts typically occurs in areas that were previously degraded or abandoned" (Testoni; Wittmann, 2019, p. 21). These spaces can be spontaneous or created; they are characterized by mixed-use for living, leisure, and work; and diversity is a fundamental characteristic. The authors point out the existence of some of these spaces in Brazil, such as Distrito C and Vila Flores in Porto Alegre (RS), and Centro Sapiens in Florianópolis (SC).

At the governmental level, the reorganization of the cultural sector and the actions derived from it, such as the announced creation of the National Creative Economy Development Policy (PNDEC), may foster the revival of creative economy support in Brazil and, consequently, progress regarding creative cities through the Ministry of Culture (Brasil, 2024). On the other hand, alongside the Ministry of Tourism (Mintur), there is currently an incentive for cities to join the UCCN, with the creation of the Brazilian Network of Creative Cities (RBCC) in 2023 (Brasil, 2022).

Today, Brazil is the third country with the most creative cities (Brasil, 2023), and joining the network is one of the goals of the National Culture Plan. However, it is important to highlight that "[...] it is possible to perceive that the management of some Brazilian creative cities is enabling reductionist actions, prioritizing the economic dimension over an expanded and multidimensional approach to creativity, that is, deviating from their purpose of becoming a creative city." (Silva; Muzzio, 2023, p. 214).

This and other studies conducted on Brazilian cities that are part of the UCCN conclude that they exhibit negative effects, such as: failing to respect local cultural identity; promoting gentrification; experiencing failures in implementing good governance; and not achieving the sustainable development goals advocated by UNESCO (Cardoso *et al*., 2016; Barreto, 2018; Pinheiro; Ipiranga; Lopes, 2023; Siqueira; Lucas, 2023).

These impacts ultimately affect creative individuals and groups. This is because urban creativity draws from intangible urban aspects, such as cultural practices, artistic expressions, and lifestyle. And it is the creative individual who plays a fundamental role in the creative environment of urban spaces, as they, "through their own body, revitalizes neighborhoods and the local economy [...] A body that clusters in specific urban centers and that, precisely because of this, and without fully realizing it, triggers processes of gentrification, exclusion, and sanitization" (Barreto, 2018, p. 33).

This process does not occur peacefully, and the discourse of the creative city fails to impose itself in a homogeneous way: the clash between urban agents (real

estate developers, landowners, the state, artist groups, citizens) has been ongoing (Cardoso et al., 2016; Barreto, 2018; Pinheiro; Ipiranga; Lopes, 2023). Studies often point to the tensions arising from the implementation of the creative city. It is also observed that these conflicts stem from the opposition between two facets of creative cities, which are particularly evident in Brazilian cities: one that is desired and planned by businesses and the public sector, resulting from significant financial investments and large projects; and another, spontaneous, composed of the creative individuals of the city and arising from their microactions.

Thus, it is possible to understand the Minc decision to work with the idea of creative territories, as well as concepts like creative clusters or districts. Given that this is a concept that is not uniform, the selection of elements to be applied is expected. Therefore, in Brazil, once the impossibility of adopting the idea of a creative city as a whole is recognized, a Brazilian version of the creative city is created, which will be marked by urban, social, and economic inequality. In this way, for a country with deep economic and social conflicts, the gap between the concept and its implementation will be even greater than in Europe and North America, with the choice of what will be implemented or discarded guided by this context.

Brazilian-style creative city

In Brazil, 14 cities are currently a part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (RCCU), six of which are in the Northeast region (Chart 1).

Chart 1. Brazilian creative cities in the Creative Cities Network (with a focus on those located in the Northeast of Brazil).

Year of Entry - UCCN	City	Field – Creative City
2014	Curitiba (PR)	Design
2014	Florianópolis (SC)	Gastronomy
2015	Santos (SP)	Cinema
2015	Belém (PA)	Gastronomy
2015	**Salvador (BA)**	**Music**
2017	Paraty (RJ)	Gastronomy
2017	Brasília (DF)	Design
2017	**João Pessoa (PB)**	**Craft and Folk Art**
2019	Belo Horizonte (MG)	Gastronomy
2019	**Fortaleza (CE)**	**Design**
2021	**Recife (PE)**	**Music**
2021	**Campina Grande (PB)**	**Media Arts**
2023	**Penedo (AL)**	**Cinema**
2023	Rio de Janeiro (RJ)	Literature

Source: the authors, based on information from the website of Unesco (2024).

The identification of some actions adopted by Brazilian creative cities reinforces our argument that, in Brazil, the appropriation of the creative city concept occurs through the selection and use of specific strategies: hosting events (FLIP, in Paraty/RJ); implementing cultural facilities (Rio de Janeiro/RJ); creating creative districts (Florianópolis/SC); boosting tourism based on cultural assets (Belo Horizonte/MG);

and incorporating as public policy the spontaneous actions of creative individuals and traditional cultural practices (Belém/PA).

However, returning to the possible future paths for the concept of the creative city, whether a new format or its disappearance (Segovia; Hervé, 2022), the urban contradictions present in Brazilian creative cities are often related to the anti-hegemonic actions in the city's production process, more aligned with the right to the city (Fernandes, 2006). For this reason, these cities hold within them the potential to develop another proposal for a creative city, if not completely distinct from the neoliberal urban development models, but one that recognizes these social tensions, incorporating the participation of social movements, especially of the groups and individuals engaged in creative activities, thus enabling sustainable social and urban development.

Focusing on the cities within our spatial scope (northeastern Brazil), we observed the strategies indicated by these creative cities in their application to the UCCN, as their contribution to the network (available on the UNESCO website). Each city outlined between 4 and 7 desired goals, including: the creation of cultural spaces or creative services; hosting exhibitions, fairs, and international events for UCCN member cities; developing strategies to strengthen the RCCU; proposing actions related to urban planning; and conducting assessments to map local creativity.

After this initial analysis, we focused on proposals that could contribute to the implementation of a creative city that recognizes social movements and uses the creative economy and its networks to promote social development. Thus, we sought to identify proposals whose ultimate goal was: the creation and strengthening of creative individuals and groups; the recognition and appreciation of local uniqueness; or those aimed at sustainable development. The following propositions were identified:

- Campina Grande/PB: share new methodologies for mapping the creative economy and charting cultural uniqueness (Unesco, 2024);
- Fortaleza/CE: share local best practices on the web platform of the Fortaleza Criativa Program (Unesco, 2024);
- João Pessoa/PB: create a Design and Innovation Laboratory for Handicrafts and Small Businesses, to provide technical assistance to communities and artistic groups; map cultural uniqueness through research, with its methodology and results shared with other UCCN cities; generate jobs for marginalized and vulnerable groups in the handicraft market through the Social Handicraft Factory; implement a cross-cutting project to promote traditional gastronomy, design, and handicrafts (Unesco, 2024);
- Penedo/AL: promote and support local artists and filmmakers; provide support to culture through public policies, strengthening engagement and mobilizing local actors, in accordance with the MONDIACULT 2022 declaration (Unesco, 2024);
- Recife/PE: in the long-term plans, highlight creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development; promote professional training to improve the

production, distribution, and diffusion of cultural expressions, especially for professionals from marginalized communities; encourage the development of urban and cultural activities in the city center, aiming at access to and participation in local cultural life (Unesco, 2024);

- Salvador/BA: create the Museum of Music, showcasing the diversity of Brazilian music, serving as an open space for professional musicians; promote access to and participation in cultural life and social cohesion, supporting musical events held in public spaces through public-private cooperation; encourage the mobility of artists within the UCCN, with training programs and artist residencies (Unesco, 2024).

Analyzing the proposals from northeastern cities that are part of the UCCN, it was identified that all the cities proposed strategies with the ultimate goal of strengthening creative individuals and groups, local uniqueness, and sustainable development. Some cities, such as Campina Grande, Fortaleza, and Penedo, did so more modestly, with one or two proposals; while others, like João Pessoa, Recife, and Salvador, took a broader approach, present in most of their proposals. This points to the possibility of a new model for the creative city, where, alongside large cultural and urban projects with high economic value, there is space for supporting and valuing the everyday microactions of creative individuals and groups, related to urban serendipity. In this way, it is believed that there are conditions for urban creativity to be effectively recognized as a strategy for sustainable development, as pointed out by UNESCO (Unesco, 2024).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Initially, when formulated by its pioneers (Landry; Bianchini, 1995; Florida [2002]; 2011), the concept was closely linked to the strategy of making a city attractive to the creative class, through the creation of an appealing, diverse, and creative urban space. The application of this idea in various cities around the world has, in most cases, been aligned with neoliberal urban development thinking, rather than policies focused on supporting creative and artistic activities (Duxbury *et al.*, 2012; Grodach, 2017). Thus, the authors established parameters, actions, and strategies to make a city creative. Furthermore, the appropriation of the term by UNESCO and other international agencies reshaped the concept into a more objective definition aligned with sustainable development, enabling its global dissemination (Unesco, 2020; Couto, 2023).

What is observed today is that, despite the fruitful academic debate and the impacts suffered by the population, this model of the creative city has ensured its persistence after more than two decades (Duxbury *et al.*, 2012; Grodach, 2017; Pratt, 2017; Matovic; Del Valle, 2020/1). Thus, while some point out the problems of the creative city, such as promoting gentrification and ignoring poverty and urban inequality (Peck, 2005; Scott, 2006), others argue that the term offers the possibility of a different approach to art and culture in

the city, where artistic and everyday production establish new foundations for existence (Miles, 2012; Vivant, 2012; Grodach; 2017; Matovic; Del Valle, 2020/1; Segovia; Hervé, 2022).

In the Brazilian context, studies indicate an extremely fragmented version of the creative city concept. However, the northeastern cities that are part of the UCCN point to various strategies for implementing the creative city, considering the social groups in the creative sector and aiming at promoting social development. If implemented, these proposals could help shape a more inclusive concept of the creative city, one that respects social movements, enables the organization into networks, and ultimately leads to sustainable development.

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Sewing hope: projects with sewing and craftsmanship in Rio de Janeiro as a viable path to produce fashion items

Costurando esperança: projetos com costura e artesanato no Rio de Janeiro como um possível caminho para a produção de artigos de moda

Barbara de Oliveira e Cruz[I], Rita Maria Couto[I], Roberta Portas Gonçalves Rodrigues[I]

ABSTRACT

This article intended to reflect on different alternatives to the traditional and mass production model that prevails in the system production of fashion articles. To this end, this involves analyzing and studying two social enterprises engaged in sewing and handicrafts located in Rio de Janeiro: Pipa Social and Rede Asta. Through this analysis, it was intended to understand whether this local and responsible production has a significant representation in the fashion sector and whether designers can undertake a socially responsible posture and represent as an agent capable of improving the problems of the fashion production sector. The dialogical opening of anthropology favored the reflection on the social meanings of design. The theoretical foundation was strengthened by anthropologist authors, serving as a guideline for the analysis of the cases presented.

Keywords: Fashion. Sewing. Craft. Pipa Social. Rede Asta.

RESUMO

O presente artigo busca refletir sobre diferentes alternativas para o modelo de produção tradicional e massificado que prevalece no sistema de produção de artigos de moda. Para isso, parte da análise e do estudo de dois negócios sociais com atividades de costura e artesanato localizados no Rio de Janeiro: a Pipa Social e a Rede Asta. Por meio dessa análise, pretendemos entender se essa produção local e responsável tem representatividade no setor da moda e ainda se o designer *é capaz de assumir uma postura socialmente responsável e representar um agente capaz de melhorar os problemas do setor de produção em moda. A abertura dialógica da antropologia favoreceu a reflexão sobre os sentidos sociais do* design *e a fundamentação teórica foi fortalecida por autores da antropologia, servindo de fio condutor para a análise dos casos apresentados.*

Palavras-chave: *Moda. Costura. Artesanato. Pipa Social. Rede Asta.*

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INTRODUCTION

This article stemmed from the doctoral research conducted by one of the authors. Drawing on extensive experience in the fashion industry, the researcher explored alternatives to the prevailing traditional and mass-production model in the sector. With 25 years of experience in the national fashion market, particularly in Rio de Janeiro, she witnessed significant transformations in clothing production and consumption. These changes were further accelerated by the deterritorialization of production at the end of the last century. Familiar with the challenges within the industry, the researcher sought answers to critical questions, such as why most fashion retail brands in Rio de Janeiro do not engage in local production.

In seeking answers to these questions, the researcher chose to investigate social businesses[1] engaged in craft and sewing activities in Rio de Janeiro, thereby defining the research object. Given the broad scope of this topic, the study focused its analysis on four examples,[2] adopting a multiple-case study approach. However, as the analysis of all four examples could not be accommodated within this article, only two are presented. While all four cases are of similar relevance, the two selected were chosen for their more explicit connection to fashion retail brands.[3]

The research began with an extensive bibliographic survey structured around two main theoretical axes. The first axis focused on analyzing the fashion production sector to identify and understand its key challenges. The second axis explored concepts of social responsibility in design. The decision to examine social businesses involved in sewing and craft activities in Rio de Janeiro emerged from the preliminary theoretical framework of the study. While other, more conventional production models in the sector, such as local factions and clothing factories, could have been considered, the theoretical foundation revealed the existence of groups engaged in local sewing and craft activities. These groups, when collaborating with socially responsible designers, suggested an alternative, socially engaged approach to fashion article production.

The primary objective of this article was to analyze two examples of social businesses engaged in sewing and craft activities in Rio de Janeiro to determine whether this model suggests new production methods with social engagement in the creation of fashion articles.

Although there is a distinction between the definitions of artisans and seamstresses, the research revealed that in these examples of non-mass production, the differences are quite subtle. The work performed by these seamstresses differs significantly from that of sewing machine operators in clothing factories. Despite sharing the title of "seamstresses" and utilizing semi-industrial or even

1 Social enterprises are ventures that use market mechanisms with a focus on minimizing socioeconomic inequalities, combining economic viability with social impact. They can be structured as private companies or nonprofit institutions.

2 The other two businesses analyzed in the research were: *Ecomoda* and *Mulheres do Sul Global*.

3 During the research, a survey was conducted on businesses in the fashion sector with socio-environmental responsibility practices. It was observed that in the social enterprises where sewing and craftsmanship activities were practiced, there was a greater social engagement in production.

industrial equipment, their work closely resembles the manual craftsmanship of artisans. Therefore, the work of these seamstresses is defined as semi-artisanal.

The bibliographic survey conducted as the foundation for the research will not be presented in full in this article, as it would not fit within the scope. Although the survey is comprehensive, the originality of this proposal lies in the presentation and description of the examples. The theoretical framework was primarily informed by interviews conducted by the researcher with key actors representing the cases analyzed. Additionally, works exploring the relationship between anthropology and design, such as those by Ingold (2012; 2015; 2018) and Anastassakis (2010; 2012), served as theoretical guides for the article. These were complemented by important references from the field of design, including Berlim (2021), Contino (2019), and Cippola and Bartholo (2014).

This is applied research driven by the need to generate knowledge for the practical application of its results. It is a social research study in which the problem was addressed qualitatively, with the objectives achieved through descriptive and exploratory methods. The data presented were obtained through the researcher's exploration and interaction with the study's object.

The dialogic approach in anthropology has facilitated reflection on the social meanings of design. Contemporary anthropology is evident in the exploration of emerging worlds, aiming to understand and explain human actions in society through theoretical frameworks. These theories are developed from field research, where the researcher immerses themselves in local populations, gaining insight into their values, habits, ways of life, and other aspects of social life (Anastassakis, 2012).

As this is a case study, the research methodology presented in this article prioritized procedures such as field research. Through this approach, social businesses involved in sewing and crafts in Rio de Janeiro were investigated and analyzed. However, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the research process, requiring a shift to new methods of data collection without in-person fieldwork. Due to the social isolation imposed by the pandemic, certain procedures had to be adjusted. In-person interviews were replaced with online sessions via the Google Meet platform, and participant observations were substituted with systematic research on social media platforms. The limitations imposed by the pandemic affected the development and results of the research, particularly in terms of social interactions with artisans and seamstresses, which were limited.

The article is structured in three parts. The first part provides a brief overview of the issues associated with the mass production model of fashion articles. The second part presents an analysis of two social businesses engaged in sewing and craft activities. The article concludes with considerations and reflections on the cases studied.

PRODUCTION OF FASHION ITEMS: ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

The hegemonic model of fashion production is an oppressive system, characterized by the predominance of outsourcing practices aimed at securing cheap labor while concealing irresponsible practices, such as poor working conditions and

environmental harm. This informality, embodied by outsourcing, has long been a feature of the sector, which benefits from an informal network of service providers to reduce costs, responsibilities, and risks. The production chain remains labor-intensive, despite advancements in mechanization and technology.

Since the end of the last century, the world has experienced significant transformations, particularly in the methods of producing and consuming goods, driven by technological advances. Globalization and late capitalism, as described by some authors, have had widespread consequences across various domains. In the cultural sphere, there has been a process of massification, with culture being repositioned as a commodity, prioritizing its financial value over its symbolic meaning. In the social sphere, there has been a deterioration of labor conditions and a rise in social inequalities. Jameson (1997) referred to this period as "postmodernism," emphasizing that it marks a systemic shift in capitalism.

On this issue, Giddens (1990, p. 6, our translation) emphasizes: "As different areas of the globe become interconnected, waves of social transformation reach nearly every part of the Earth." The author highlights an identity crisis caused by globalization, which leads to a departure from the classical sociological notion of society as a bounded system. This crisis results from global processes that extend beyond national borders, linking communities and creating new combinations of space and time. Practices such as fashion production and consumption are shaped by broader social structures, influenced by a globalized market driven by those who control the forms and processes of production to accumulate capital.

This oppressive model of fashion production reflects the capitalist system in which society operates, a system that prioritizes profit and economic growth. Many authors argue that fashion is a product of capitalism. In this context, this production model illustrates the stagnation and rigidity of social mobility, often leading to a pessimistic outlook. However, alternative models of fashion production exist, ones that are not tied to the current system.

In the fashion sector, these aspects are clearly demonstrated by the production model known as fast fashion. Fast fashion introduced a new production model that reflected the cultural, political, economic, and social changes of the time. The goal of this model is to accelerate capital turnover by boosting consumption, which leads to lower sales prices and higher profits. This is achieved through the devaluation of production elements, including the exploitation of workers (Contino, 2019).

The concept of fashion is generally associated with novelty and linked to consumption. However, do production and consumption practices necessarily have to be irresponsible? Are there ways to produce and consume in a more conscious and sustainable manner?

The goal was to explore whether it is possible to find an alternative approach to producing fashion articles that is not tied to the prevailing fast fashion model. Additionally, what role could the fashion designer play in this process? Could they serve as a social facilitator, acting as an agent capable of addressing and improving the issues within the sector?

We found that answers to these questions could be uncovered by analyzing social businesses engaged in craft and sewing activities in Rio de Janeiro, with the designer positioned as a facilitating agent in this context.

A new (desired) model of fashion production with social engagement aligns with the principles of the slow fashion movement. According to Berlim (2021), this movement is grounded in the principles of sustainable development and emerges as an alternative to conventional production and consumption practices, offering an ideological shift that breaks away from traditional market structures.

> However, more than a market strategy, the movement presents itself as a set of ideas that aligns with all the reflections on global risks and the anxiety of postmodernity that emerged in the 20th century (Berlim, 2021, p. 133).

Slow fashion proposes solutions that address the human aspects of fashion, including creativity, local production, sharing, environmental and social activism, and the ethical redistribution of financial capital. It revives artisanal techniques while respecting local culture. Products created through this local, artisanal, or semi-artisanal production model, using sewing machines and other equipment, typically incur higher costs and, consequently, higher prices compared to those produced through mass production (Berlim, 2021).

> Thus, the movement attributes to craftsmanship the form of a resistance activity against the hegemonic modes of production, as craftsmanship, in addition to confronting the technologies present in industry, allows for closer control over the conditions of production (Berlim, 2021, p. 145).

The appreciation of local production and culture, articulated through networks, is a key aspect in the current context of globalization, where the creative economy serves as a catalyst for local transformation. Social businesses, such as those investigated in this article, are particularly relevant in this scenario, as they generate a positive impact in various areas, including the economy, society, and citizenship.

Guided by the principle of social responsibility, the approach taken in this research and article demonstrates that the production of fashion articles can be collaborative, responsible, ethical, and, above all, transformative.

A new, suggested (or desired) model for fashion production becomes more apparent when there is a connection between designers (classified here as "socially responsible") and groups of seamstresses and artisans. In such cases, participatory methodologies from the field of design are applied, fostering connections among individuals and promoting collaboration, often through pre-industrial production models. As Anastassakis (2010, p. 39) states, "deepening interdisciplinary dialogue and reflection on what we do and how we do it is not only productive but fundamental." The relationship between people and objects emerges as a key aspect of the interdisciplinarity between anthropology and design, which serves as the central framework of this article.

Anthropology has enriched the field of design by broadening the discussion on its social role and the social responsibility of designers. This dialogue has shaped the teaching and practice of design in Brazil over recent decades and served as the impetus for the researcher to explore this topic in search of answers to her questions and dissatisfaction with the fashion sector.

Cippola and Bartholo (2014), drawing on the principles of Ezio Manzini, view socially responsible design as a form of social innovation and sustainability. They define a socially responsible designer as an individual who engages with their local context, fosters dialogue with the community, and drives changes or transformations within that environment. The designer supports groups in identifying and implementing solutions to address local challenges.

The significance of designers adopting an ethical and moral stance toward society gained prominence in the 1970s through the ideas of authors such as Victor Papanek, Tomás Maldonado, and Gui Bonsiepe. According to Papanek (2014), designing with moral and social responsibility requires a deep understanding of people and the target audience.

SOCIAL BUSINESSES WITH SEWING AND CRAFTS IN RIO DE JANEIRO

The decision was made to analyze social businesses utilizing sewing and craft activities connected to design, based on the belief that these initiatives could pave the way toward a more socially engaged production model for fashion articles. Additionally, Rio de Janeiro, with its unique spatial dynamics, was recognized as a promising setting for the development of such projects. The interdisciplinarity between design and anthropology serves as the guiding framework for the analysis of the cases presented in this article: Pipa Social and Rede Asta.

This interdisciplinarity was explored through the principles of designer Zoy Anastassakis, who emphasizes the significance of anthropology in the field of design. Ingold (2018) supports Anastassakis's (2012) concept of anthropology's dialogic openness, highlighting the discipline's generosity in seeking answers through the actions and narratives of individuals. Anthropology opens the world to researchers, offering not definitive solutions but possible paths forward, with a focus on inclusion.

Another essential characteristic of the interdisciplinarity between anthropology and design, as highlighted by the authors, is the relationship between people and things. According to Ingold (2015):

> It seems that the movement of a human life — perhaps in contrast to the lives of non-human animals — is temporally extended. We are always, so to speak, constitutionally ahead of ourselves. Upstream, simultaneously with the emergence of things, lies imagination, while downstream is our perceptual apprehension of a world that is already established, where things are present to appear (Ingold, 2015, p. 31).

Miller (2013) emphasizes that, in anthropology, the relationship between people and things extends beyond the notion that objects merely represent those who

create them. It equally explores how objects shape and influence people. "This theory also gives shape and form to the idea that objects make people. Before we do things, we ourselves grow and mature in the light of things that have been passed down to us by previous generations" (Miller, 2013, p. 83).

"Is a tree an object? [...] How would we define it? [...] Where does the tree end and the rest of the world begin?" (Ingold, n/p, 2012). The author draws an intriguing distinction between object and thing, asserting that the world consists of things rather than objects. Using the "object" tree as an example, he emphasizes the life that flourishes within and around it, such as moss growing on its branches, birds building nests, and roots penetrating the earth. Ingold (2012) concludes that the tree is not merely an object but an aggregate of vital threads, perceived as a thing.

> The object presents itself to us as a *fait accompli* [...] the thing, in turn, is an "event," or rather, a place where several events intertwine. Observing a thing is not being locked out, but being invited to the gathering (Ingold, n/p, 2012).

According to the author, an object can become a thing, and things are brought to life. He illustrates this idea through an experiment with his students at the University of Aberdeen when they made a kite. "The kite that had been lying lifeless on the table in the room had become a kite-in-the-air. It was no longer an object — if it ever was — but a thing" (Ingold, n/p, 2012).

To think of the kite as an object is to omit the wind — to forget that it is, first and foremost, a kite-in-the-air. The flight of the kite, it seems, is the result of the interaction between a person (the one who flies it) and an object (the kite). However, it can only be explained by imagining that the kite is endowed with an internal animating principle, an agency, that sets it in motion, often against the will of the person flying it (Ingold, 2012).

Pipa Social

The NGO Pipa Social, which was discussed in this article, represents more than the object kite that rested lifeless on the table and goes even further than the thing kite that flies in the open air from the action of an individual flying the object, as in Ingold's experiment. Pipa Social, founded by Helena Rocha in 2012, represents an imaginary object that transforms into a thing when it causes integration between people, institutions and objects.

The name Pipa was chosen by Helena because the object symbolizes the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. The formation of favelas on the city's hills favored the activity of flying kites, a practice that is very common among their residents.

The Social Kite flew over Rio's favelas with the aim of forming, through the collaboration of residents, a collective creative and production center aimed at professional positioning and social inclusion. The goal would be achieved through coexistence between members and other people through the development of collaborative projects.

The researcher and one of the authors of this article interviewed Helena Rocha in August 2019. The interview was conducted where the NGO operated, in an old house in the Botafogo neighborhood, in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro.

In 2012, when she founded Pipa Social, Helena intended to develop work with residents of the Santa Marta favela and looked for an address within the favela. Helena realized early on that the project would expand to other favelas, as the seamstresses and artisans themselves promoted Pipa's work and brought residents from other communities.

The connection between academia and the market often occurs through volunteering. It is common for design interns to collaborate with NGOs. Pipa Social fosters this integration between academia, the market, and favela residents by forming partnerships for the creation and development of products. In addition to design interns, professionals also contribute through volunteering.

Initially, Pipa's production occurred on two fronts. The first involved the creation and manufacturing of products under the Pipa Social brand, which were sold in multi-brand stores. Pipa Social also had points of sale at the Rio Sul shopping mall and the Light cultural center. The second front focused on production for other brands. Although these brands did not sell Pipa Social products, they sought to create items with a focus on social engagement.

This business model began to encounter challenges in 2018, as Pipa lost several points of sale. During this period, the company made its first export to Portugal, partnering with the heirs of Tarsila do Amaral to produce bags featuring embroidered designs inspired by the artist's paintings.

After this first export, Helena recognized the potential for growth in this direction for the NGO, and they began developing a sample for export. The products were created through collaboration between seamstresses, artisans, and designers. While continuing to produce for other brands, the income generated from this type of business remained below expectations. The clients seeking production at Pipa came in two forms: small brands that prioritized reduced and responsible production and were willing to pay higher prices for this work, and larger clients who produced corporate gifts and valued the concept of social responsibility.

Regarding the connection with fashion retail brands in Rio de Janeiro, Helena explains that they developed and produced 600 bags for Rio Ethical Fashion using scraps donated by Farm, as well as products like toiletry bags made from leather scraps for the footwear brand Soulier, with the scraps supplied by the company itself. This suggests that the connection with fashion retail brands is not particularly significant.

Returning to Ingold's ideas (2012):

> Finally, I will show that the paths or trajectories through which the improvisational practice unfolds are not connections, nor do they describe relationships between one thing and another. They are lines along which things are continuously formed. Therefore, when I speak of a tangle of things, it is in a precise and literal sense: not a network of connections, but a mesh of intertwined lines of growth and movement (Ingold, n/p, 2012).

Pipa Social not only represents connections between things, people, and institutions, but it also continually transforms and reconstitutes itself in an ongoing effort to tie up the loose ends.

The analysis is concluded with the testimony of a seamstress from Pipa Social, taken from Instagram during the period in which the research was conducted:

> [...] I'm already in Pipa, although I'm away with this pandemic, but I've been in Pipa for about seven years [...]. Pipa has given me many things, one of them is where I am now, in this penthouse, which is on my roof, my studio, all my work materials are here, my husband built this little corner for me. [...] when I went there to work, we received a scholarship, and from that scholarship I was able to reduce my spending on materials, and with this reduction, I managed to set up this penthouse with my husband's help [...] we were able to set up my studio in this penthouse where I live, because all of it used to be in my bedroom [...] thanks to Pipa, I have my fresh little corner here [...]. I hope we fly even higher, further ahead, I have faith that this pandemic will pass and we will meet again and continue flying, the kite will not come down, the kite will go up higher and higher [...]. (Testimony from Rosa Maria, NGO Pipa Social, 2020)

Rede Asta

The Asta Network is an open, collaborative system created and developed with the purpose of extending design beyond traditional solutions, exploring new fields such as services and transformative processes. Within this open collaborative model, design applies its expertise in diverse areas, including citizenship, as an example.

Rede Asta was established in 2005, born from the vision of lawyer Alice Freitas. During a trip aimed at exploring innovative business models, Alice identified crafts as an alternative form of production and mapped locations where this approach was prominent. She partnered with Raquel Schettino, a lawyer with extensive corporate market experience, and together they founded Rede Asta.

In November 2019, one of the authors of this article conducted an interview with Angélica Oliveira, an employee of Rede Asta. The interview was held at Asta's headquarters in Rio de Janeiro.

Oliveira (2019) explains that Rede Asta has undergone various business models over time. Currently, the business is divided into two main activities: the market/products area, which focuses on product development, primarily gifts, and the impact/services area, represented by a business school for artisans.

At the start of the interview, Oliveira (2019) makes it evident, through her choice of terms, that the social business has adapted to the corporate market. She provides a detailed account of the various phases Rede Asta has experienced over its 15 years of existence, with each stage described and classified as a distinct business model. Izidio, Lana, and Moraes (2019) caution that social projects often risk replicating mechanisms of domination inherent in market-driven and capital-based processes.

Rede Asta began as a partnership with a recycling cooperative in the Campo Grande neighborhood, located in the West Zone of Rio de Janeiro. Products

developed through this collaboration were sold at a kiosk in Tijuca Shopping Mall, in the North Zone of the city. The kiosk operated for several years, selling handmade items created by artisans and serving as a testing ground to gauge public acceptance of the products. The business functioned as follows: products and collections were initially developed in collaboration with the cooperatives, sold, and tested at the kiosk. The best-selling items were then refined with some modifications and produced in larger quantities for wholesale distribution at events such as the Gift Fair.

This initial phase, marked by retail sales at the kiosk, was referred to as "1.0." The subsequent phase, labeled "2.0," was characterized by the sale of products through a catalog, a retail model widely used in the cosmetics sector. During this phase, Asta registered 70 resellers across the country. This model lasted five years, contributing significantly to Asta's growth and increasing its national recognition. Simultaneously, wholesale sales expanded through the production of corporate gifts, fostering partnerships with various companies.

In the following phase, referred to as "3.0," retail operations were expanded to include two additional points of sale. However, it became evident that retail was increasingly unsustainable, as it failed to generate sufficient financial returns for the associated cooperatives or ensure the self-sustainability of the business. Consequently, the decision was made to close the stores.

At that time, Rede Asta operated under two CNPJs: one for sales-related activities and the other, referred to as "Instituto Asta," for projects and services. For many years, sales constituted Asta's primary activity. However, during the transition from model 3.0 to 4.0, the projects and services offered by Instituto Asta gained prominence and became the organization's main focus. The expertise acquired in producing and marketing corporate gifts using sustainable production models played a crucial role in this shift, while also fostering stronger relationships with companies and clients.

This approach, along with the strengthening of relationships with partner companies, paved the way for Instituto Asta's projects. The first project was launched in 2011 in collaboration with Coca-Cola and involved an entrepreneurial training course for a group of artisans from a riverside community in the Amazon. During this period, Asta began transitioning from the 4.0 model to the 5.0 model.

In model 4.0, classes were delivered through PowerPoint presentations supplemented by printed materials. In model 5.0, content is presented through video lessons on a digital platform, allowing for a wider reach among artisans. Asta has developed an application that can be downloaded onto smartphones, providing access to the complete history of interactions with artisans, including information about the artisans themselves and their locations across the country. The app is accessible to anyone: artisans who can showcase their work and buyers seeking handmade products.

The companies that approach Instituto Asta are large, well-established firms from various sectors, including oil and gas. These companies aim to invest in

sustainability and outsource this initiative through Asta. The products developed in these projects are not directly related to the companies' core activities. The projects typically include entrepreneurship education courses and, at a later stage, involve the creation of a capsule collection that highlights the partnership between a guest designer and the artisans.

By the time of the interview, Instituto Asta had conducted eight courses in partnership with companies from various industries. Oliveira (2019) explains how this process works in practice through a partnership with Porto Sudeste. The company approached Asta seeking sustainable solutions for the disposal of its employees' uniforms. Using the upcycling technique, bags were created as gifts to be given to the company's customers.

> Porto Sudeste, located on Madeira Island in Itaguaí, RJ, is a private port with a sustainable development policy. The company partnered with Rede Asta to execute a project that would benefit artisans in the surrounding area as a form of compensation for its impact on local communities. The main objective of the project is to enhance the entrepreneurship of 10 local artisanal businesses, directly impacting approximately 70 artisans. The methodology employed in this project is divided into four main stages: training in entrepreneurship specifically for artisans/seamstresses through the Artisan Business School; revitalizing the local market; forming a network of artisan leaders; and innovating artisanal products through Design facilitation (Medtsch; Oliveira, 2019, p. 61).

The course lasted ten months, with the first four months dedicated to digital classes. For the remaining six months, the digital classes were supplemented with in-person sessions with a designer. During this period, a capsule collection was developed in collaboration between the artisans and the designer. Finally, an analysis of potential buyers was conducted, starting with the local region.

Oliveira (2019) highlights several partnerships between Rede Asta and fashion retail brands. One such partnership was established through a call for proposals by Instituto Lojas Renner, which led to the development of a capsule collection in collaboration with two communities in Niterói. Renner sponsored the course, while Asta handled the sales of the products. Another partnership with the Rio de Janeiro-based women's clothing brand Dress To involved creating products from scraps donated by the company. These products were used as gifts and for visual merchandising in the stores. Instituto C&A funded a study developed by Asta on family economics and new generations. Additionally, Asta manages scraps donated by the company Farm, receiving the material and distributing it to artisans while overseeing the impacts generated by this process.

The Asta Network positions itself as an open collaborative system that connects things, people, and institutions, fostering diverse possibilities for interaction. It can be understood as a network of connections, described as "a mesh of intertwined lines of growth and movement" (Ingold, 2012, n/p.). This model is constantly evolving, striving to unite and resolve the loose ends.

In the open collaborative system represented by Rede Asta, the focus is on sharing information, promoting important aspects for a more democratic design, through participatory design, valuing a local culture and favoring more conscious consumption.

We conclude with the testimony of a seamstress who participated in the "Máscara Mais Renda" project, carried out by Rede Asta during the period in which the research was conducted, as shared on Instagram:

> Participating in this project was very important to me, not only in preventing the virus but also in terms of our financial survival [...] I had the opportunity to catch up on some bills [...] our team and group were always very united, and it was great to work together [...] (Testimony of Kalilma, Rede Asta, 2020).

Considerations and reflections on Pipa Social and the Asta Network

The social businesses analyzed have different structures: one is a private company, and the other is a non-profit institution. Their commonality lies in the principles of sustainability they defend and practice, aligned with the objectives of sustainable development. However, their actions diverge in several areas. A table has been developed to clearly present the key points where these differences were identified.

It can be concluded that the differences presented in Table 1 primarily stem from the varying levels of maturity between the businesses, which provided valuable insights for reflecting on the two cases analyzed. The maturity level demonstrated by Rede Asta is attributed to its longer duration of existence, being operational for seven years longer than Pipa Social. As observed during the case descriptions, Pipa Social's processes are more empirical in nature, in contrast to the more systematic processes of Rede Asta.

This difference in maturity between the businesses extends to various other aspects, including the activities they carry out. Pipa Social's business model is centered on the manufacture and sale of products. In contrast, as previously mentioned, Rede Asta has sought new solutions "beyond traditional design ones, considering new fields, including services and transformations." This shift has resulted in a more structured business model focused not only on the manufacture and sale of products but also on education and social impact.

Rocha (2019) highlights the disadvantages of producing for small fashion brands, stating that "brands that sought production with social engagement, but in this type of business, the income generation was below what was desired." Similarly, Rede Asta decided to abandon the retail model when it recognized that it was unsustainable.

The shift from retail-based businesses to service-based businesses is a growing market trend, particularly since the global economic crises at the start of this

Table 1. Comparative table between Pipa Social and Rede Asta.

	Pipa Social	Rede Asta[4]
Start Year	2012	2005
Main Incentives	The NGO's funds primarily come from clients, mainly companies that hire the services of seamstresses and artisans. Pipa also seeks funding through incentive laws.	The primary source comes from large companies hiring services from Asta's business school. Asta also seeks resources through incentive laws.
Main Activities	Production of sewn and handcrafted products. Workshops are also offered to the beneficiaries.	The main activity is the entrepreneurship school offered to artisans and seamstresses. Asta focuses on education, not product manufacturing.
Target Audience	Residents of communities in the capital and Baixada Fluminense, mostly women.	Artisans and seamstresses from all over Brazil.
Retail and Product Sales	The NGO primarily sells products in bulk to companies; retail sales also occur through e-commerce or at events like fairs and bazaars. The brand has had a point of sale and sold products in multi-brand stores.	The sales of products made by artisans occur through an app, but it is clear that when a product is purchased or a service is contracted, the funds go directly to the artisans, with Asta only acting as an intermediary for promotion. In previous business models, several forms of commercialization were reported by Angélica Oliveira, such as kiosks, stores, and catalogs.
Operating Locations	The NGO does not operate in specific locations, focusing on communities in the capital and Baixada Fluminense.	The scope of Rede Asta's operations is quite broad, covering all of Brazil; this network of operations is initially shaped by the companies that hire Asta's services, and the network expands to other locations.
Presence of Designers	Although not a designer, Helena mentions the intense participation of designers in the NGO through volunteering, from interns to internationally recognized professionals.	The founders of Rede Asta are not designers, but the presence of designers in projects is highly valued.
Presence of Volunteers	Volunteer presence at Pipa is common, with individuals of various ages, including youth and elderly, working in different areas like design. Pipa Social frequently recruits volunteers on social media.	According to Angélica Oliveira, the only volunteer at Asta is Lu, who works at the Rio de Janeiro office.
Connection with Fashion Companies	Pipa Social, in some cases, assumes the role of a supplier for fashion companies, which, according to Helena, are small-scale companies with ethical purposes; for larger companies, it has only produced promotional items using the brands' own raw materials. The connection also occurs through donations of materials from these companies.	According to Angélica Oliveira, the connection with fashion companies occurred mostly through material donations. Asta has rarely acted as a supplier to these companies, only occasionally making promotional items or gifts. The connection with the sector focuses on empowering artisans, teaching them to value and sell their services.

Continue...

4 In this comparison, we will focus on the latest business model of Rede Asta, as the business has gone through many phases, and it would be difficult to cover all the models in this analysis.

Table 1. Continuation.

	Pipa Social	Rede Asta[4]
Technology and Computerization	There is no significant mention of technology and computerization in the activities, aside from messaging and group chats via WhatsApp.	Technology and computerization play a key role in Asta's processes, with their importance increasing due to the pandemic.

Source: the authors.

century. As social businesses, the cases discussed reflect these market mechanisms, which aim to reduce socioeconomic inequalities.

Another point to highlight in this context is that, in the case of Rede Asta, there is a connection with companies from sectors beyond retail and fashion. These companies operate in areas with greater capital circulation, such as Coca-Cola and Porto Sudeste.

The case study was initially planned to focus solely on Pipa Social. In early 2020, the researcher began participant observations, with only four visits to the NGO, during which she observed the routine and interactions between the seamstresses/artisans, the designer, and the volunteers. However, these observations had to be interrupted due to the delicate moment, and the researcher was no longer able to interact with the project participants. As a result, she decided to expand the scope to a multiple-case study, aiming to gain a deeper understanding of the participants through testimonials on social media. Given these limitations, the field research did not yield in-depth data on the economic and social impacts of the businesses. Nevertheless, through the testimonials collected on Instagram, it became clear that the businesses analyzed contribute to sustainable development and that their impact on the citizenship of their members is evident.

The locations where businesses operate, or their scope, have also been influenced by the different degrees of maturity. While Pipa Social expanded from residents of a single favela to several others, eventually reaching Baixada Fluminense, Rede Asta has a broader reach, with national coverage. This expansion began with the catalog sales system and was further facilitated by technology, particularly through key tools such as the smartphone app.

Regarding the interactions between designers and groups of seamstresses and artisans, two important aspects stand out. At Pipa Social, this interaction occurs through volunteering, with designers working without payment, and the processes are more empirical in nature. In contrast, at Rede Asta, designers are compensated for their work, and the methodologies are more structured and outlined.

It is important to highlight that, in 2023, when the research that led to this article was already concluded, Pipa Social developed the project "*Pipa no ar*." This educational initiative offered both online and in-person classes for the group. The classes were taught by professors from various fields, aiming to

broaden the participants' knowledge in areas such as design, culture, art, entrepreneurship, and citizenship. This project reaffirms the reflections on business maturity discussed in this section.

CONCLUSIONS

The Covid-19 pandemic impacted the research, and it is essential to mention the consequences and strategies employed by Pipa Social and Rede Asta to navigate this period. The pandemic exposed social inequalities globally and heightened awareness of the value of local production, themes central to the research. The significance of artisans' and seamstresses' work, as well as local production models, became evident early in the pandemic. The world was unprepared, with a shortage of basic protective equipment and materials. The production of homemade protective masks played a critical role in helping science save lives and enabling society to navigate that challenging time.

Rede Asta launched the "mask finder" campaign on its social media, allowing customers to locate seamstresses producing masks across Brazil. The organization also participated in two significant projects: the "*Heróis Usam Máscaras*" initiative, supported by Itaú and Santander banks, and the "*Máscara mais renda*" project, backed by Fundação Vale. Both projects encouraged and supported seamstresses and artisans in producing protective masks, thereby facilitating income generation during this challenging period. Pipa Social raised funds to benefit its members through campaigns on social media and Rede Globo's digital platform "for those who donate" and also participated in the "*Heróis usam máscaras*" project.

Returning to the objective of this article: local production models involving crafts and sewing activities point to new ways of producing fashion items with social engagement. From the cases analyzed, we conclude that, despite some connections between these models and fashion retail brands in Rio de Janeiro, they do not represent an alternative production model in fashion with social engagement. Berlim (2021, p. 138) makes an important observation about the difficulty traditional fashion businesses or large companies face in incorporating concepts and practices from what the author calls the "slow fashion movement": "because, basically, products originating from slow fashion do not respond financially as well as those from fast fashion." Slow fashion contrasts with the dominant production and consumption patterns, inspiring what we define as "a broader form of sustainable and ethical fashion." The author highlights that the movement extends beyond alternative production and consumption practices, engaging with the fashion phenomenon in a unique way through a set of values.

According to Berlim (2021), slow fashion is capable of fostering connections between workers, managers, consumers, and designers, with the latter serving as agents of change by contributing to the creation and leadership of

projects. This concept aligns with the idea of the socially responsible designer defined by Cippola and Bartholo (2014) and discussed in this article. While no clear representation of this production model with social engagement was identified within the fashion sector, it became evident that an alternative path exists for designers who wish to distance themselves from the traditional market.

An alternative solution for connecting these social businesses with fashion retail companies, which was not mentioned in the cases and has been adopted by some corporations, is collaborations (collabs). In this model, there is a strategic partnership between two brands aiming to achieve common or even distinct goals. Perhaps the solution does not lie in incorporating these groups/social businesses as traditional suppliers to fashion retail companies, but rather as partners. This approach would allow both brands to coexist, complementing each other without one overshadowing or negating the other.

As the field research was interrupted by the pandemic, the researcher intends to further deepen this study in the future, focusing more closely on the work of these seamstresses and artisans to better understand their true desires.

The relevance of the research discussed in this article lies in the description of the cases. However, no final solutions were found, but rather paths that facilitate inclusion, as demonstrated in the article based on the ideas of Ingold (2018) and Anastassakis (2012). We conclude from the analysis of the cases that, although the production model with social engagement based on groups of artisans and seamstresses is not yet representative in the sector, it points to an alternative and inclusive path to be followed.

There is still a long way to go, and even without definitive and conclusive results, this article aimed to highlight different solutions for managers, designers, and individuals who take on the risk of this endeavor.

We conclude, drawing from Ingold's words (2012, n/p), that: "Life is always open: its impulse is not to reach an end, but to keep moving forward. The thing, however, is not just a thread, but a certain aggregation of threads of life."

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After the Legal Framework for Games: an exploratory analysis of the economic scenario of digital games and their relevance for the Brazilian economy

Marco Legal dos Games: análise exploratória do cenário econômico dos jogos digitais e sua relevância para a economia brasileira

Albano Francisco Schmidt[I], Luise Amaral[I], Vanessa Ribeiro Couto[I]

ABSTRACT

This article presents an exploratory analysis of the Legal Framework for Electronic Games (Law n. 14,852/2024 – LFG), emphasizing the economic scenario of the digital gaming sector, specifically between 2010-2023. The study's focuses on the period prior to the year of promulgation of the LFG (2024). Following the enactment of the law, there is a need to explore the economic data of the digital gaming sector to identify its potential and challenges. It is based on national legislation, data from the Federal Government's Transparency Portal, and the main media in the digital games industry. The method used was deductive-quantitative, regarding the evaluation of economic data in the period, highlighting its importance for promoting the economy and growing development. As a theoretical reference for the analysis, the article uses the precepts of the economic analysis of Law, in its neo-institutional vision. The first identified problem was the lack of State incentive; the second problem is intrinsically related: the high tax burden. The first stage for the advancement of the sector has been completed; however, the following ones are challenging, and there are still some hypotheses that can be raised: whether the LFG solves the problems or if it will only solve them partially, not being able to remedy the high tax burden. With the LFG, the expectation is to encourage the Brazilian gaming sector and promote national industries in the field. But support is necessary so that, in addition to the Law, the State enforces legal provisions. The economic and legal environment is essential so that, based on the Legal Framework for Games, the market can grow, and the years of legislative absence can be covered.

Keywords: Electronic games. Creative Economy. Games Legal Framework. Law and economics. Regulatory impact analysis.

RESUMO

O presente artigo apresenta uma análise exploratória do Marco Legal dos Games — MLG (Lei n. 14.852/2024) dando ênfase ao cenário econômico do setor de jogos digitais, especificamente entre 2010 e 2023. O recorte é anterior ao ano de promulgação do MLG (2024). A partir da promulgação da lei surge a necessidade de explorar os dados econômicos do setor dos jogos digitais para identificar o seu potencial e desafios. Baseia-se na legislação nacional, nos dados do Portal da Transparência do Governo Federal e nos principais veículos do setor de jogos digitais. O método utilizado foi o dedutivo-quantitativo, no que tange a avaliação dos dados econômicos no período, evidenciando a sua importância para o fomento da economia e o crescente desenvolvimento. Como referencial teórico da análise, o artigo valeu-se dos preceitos da análise econômica do Direito, em seu viés neoinstitucional. O primeiro problema identificado foi a ausência de incentivo

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do Estado, e intrinsecamente relacionado está o segundo problema identificado: a alta carga tributária. A primeira etapa para o avanço do setor foi concluída, entretanto as próximas são desafiadoras, e ainda há algumas hipóteses que podem ser levantadas: se o MLG solucionará os problemas levantados ou apenas resolverá em parte, não podendo remediar a alta carga tributária. Com o MLG, o esperado é o incentivo ao setor de jogos brasileiros e a promoção das indústrias nacionais do ramo, sendo necessário o devido amparo para que, além da Lei, o Estado faça cumprir os dispositivos legais. Os ambientes econômico e legal são fundamentais para que a partir do MLG o mercado cresça e os anos de ausência legislativa sejam supridos.

Palavras-chave: *Jogos digitais. Economia Criativa. Marco Legal dos Games. Análise econômica do Direito. Análise de impacto regulatório.*

INTRODUCTION

Bill n. 2,796 became Law n. 14,852, published in the Official Gazette of the Union on May 6, 2024. Hereinafter referred to as the "Legal Framework for Games" (LFG), this is an important step for the Brazilian digital games industry. The LFG regulates the commercialization, development, importation, commercial exploitation, and better distribution of resources. The law aims to implement measures for the growth of the digital games sector's business environment.

The regulation of the sector represents a significant step toward the future of digital games, as the LFG inherently recognizes the importance of a strong relationship between the public sector and the gaming industry to drive the country's development. Reaffirming the importance of this sector, the Minister of Culture stated:

> The gaming sector is one of the fastest growing in the country and worldwide, with around 75% of Brazilians playing games. Having this instrument that regulates the sector is crucial for ensuring that the production chain generates even more jobs, stimulates the business environment, and drives innovation and investment in technology, culture, and audiovisual products. (Ministry of Culture, 2024b, s/p)

An important aspect of the enactment of the law was the veto by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who signed the LFG into law with a veto on Article 19, which provided for a 70% reduction in Income Tax (IT):

> Income taxpayers on remittances abroad of earnings from the exploitation of digital games or licensing derived from digital games in the country may benefit from a 70% reduction in the tax due, provided they invest in the development of projects for the production or co-production of independent Brazilian digital games (Brazil, 2024, s/p).

The text of the vetoed article was about the tax incentive for remittances abroad of earnings, a mechanism that generates interest among major investors in the cultural sector, as it encourages individuals or legal entities to invest in the development of independent Brazilian game projects, fostering the domestic game development market. Through the LFG, in this specific provision, there would have

been a movement in the cultural sector, acting as a public policy tool to attract resources to the highlighted sector.

The justification for the veto is based on a threefold argument, stating that it would create a revenue waiver without the presentation of the budgetary and financial impact required by Article 113 of the Transitional Constitutional Provisions Act[1] (Brazil, 2016). The second argument is based on the lack of compensatory measures, also pointing out the absence of a maximum validity period of five years. The final argument concerns the absence of a statement on the budgetary and financial impact for the years 2024, 2025, and 2026 (National Congress, 2024).

The final argument results in the failure to comply with the provisions of Article 14 of Complementary Law n. 101, of May 4, 2000 — the Fiscal Responsibility Law, which stipulates:

> Art 14. The granting or expansion of tax incentives or benefits that result in revenue waivers must be accompanied by an estimate of the budgetary--financial impact for the fiscal year in which the measure is to take effect, as well as for the following two years. It must comply with the provisions of the budget guidelines law and at least one of the following conditions:
>
> I - The proposer must demonstrate that the revenue waiver was accounted for in the revenue estimate of the budget law, in accordance with Article 12, and that it will not affect the fiscal target goals set out in the specific annex of the budget guidelines law;
>
> II - It must be accompanied by compensatory measures, within the period specified in the caput, through an increase in revenue, derived from raising tax rates, expanding the tax base, increasing or creating a tax or contribution (Brazil, 2000, s/p).

It also results in the failure to comply with Articles 132, 133, and 142 of Law n. 14,791, of December 29, 2023 — the Budget Guidelines Law for 2024 (National Congress, 2024, n.p):

> Art 132. Legislative proposals, as referred to in Article 59 of the Constitution, its amendments, and the infralegal acts that involve revenue waivers or the creation or increase of mandatory, continuous expenses, in accordance with Articles 14 and 17 of Complementary Law No. 101, of 2000 — the Fiscal Responsibility Law, must be accompanied by a statement of the budgetary-financial impact for the fiscal year in which they are to take effect, as well as for the following two fiscal years, and comply with the provisions of this article.
>
> Art 133. In order to assess the compatibility and adequacy of the budgetary and financial aspects, legislative proposals and decrees related to the provisions of Article 132, within the scope of the federal Executive Branch, must be forwarded in advance to the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning and Budget.
>
> Art 142. Legislative proposals that grant, renew, or expand tax benefits must:

1 Art. 113: The legislative proposal that creates or modifies mandatory expenditure or revenue waiver must be accompanied by an estimate of its budgetary and financial impact

> I - include a validity clause of no more than five years;
>
> II - be accompanied by goals and objectives, preferably quantitative; and
>
> III - designate a responsible managing agency for monitoring and evaluating the tax benefit in terms of achieving the established goals and objectives.

Beyond the procedural aspects of the enactment of the LFG, it is important to highlight that the law provides for the use of the Rouanet Law as a mechanism for raising funds for the sector, stimulating the production and co-production of Brazilian games (Ministry of Culture, 2024b). State incentives are a driving force for the sector, as 'there is no development of the gaming sector without effective induction and the State acting as a partner' (Filho; Zambon, 2023). This article specifically underscores the significance of achievements for the digital games sector.

For an introductory understanding of what is encompassed within the term "digital games," as defined by the LFG, it is necessary to define the terminology used in this article.

The main terminology that must be abolished is "electronic games," due to the frequent reference to the term "gambling electronic games," which refers to bingo and slot machines, currently prohibited under Brazilian law. As a result, even though the popular media uses the term "electronic games," it is essential to dissociate it from gambling games due to the negative connotation and in order to avoid potential confusion (Schmidt; Gonçalves, 2014).

As a result, the terminology 'digital games' was chosen to refer to the market in general in this article. Digital games are an interactive digital method that promotes an experience of interaction between players and the characters or environments within the games. They follow rules and have some objectives that are pre-defined by the game's regulation, and can be played on various electronic devices, such as smartphones, computers, tablets, and video game consoles (Battaiola; Elias; Domingues, 2002). From this understanding onward, Law n. 14.852/2024 defines what is encompassed by the term "digital games" as:

> Art 5. For the purposes of this Law, the following are considered electronic games:
>
> I – the interactive audiovisual work developed as a computer program, as defined by Law n. 9,609 of February 19, 1998, in which images are altered in real-time based on the player's actions and interactions with the interface;
>
> II – the central device and accessories, for private or commercial use, specifically designed to run digital games;
>
> III – the software used as a mobile app and/or website, console video game games, and games in virtual reality, augmented reality, mixed reality, and extended reality, consumed via download or streaming. (Brazil, 2024, s/p)

From the understanding of what is encompassed in the concept of digital games, the analysis of the sector begins. The digital games sector is an economic

activity with the potential to drive the job market, and could contribute to the overall growth of the Brazilian economy (Mello; Zendron, 2015). Beyond the economic impact generated by the development of games (formal employment, partnership contracts, the creation of new companies focused on programming and 3D modeling, etc.), digital games also drive the Brazilian economy through major gaming events. For example, Gamescom, the world's largest gaming event, took place for the first time in Latin America in 2024, in São Paulo, with an expected audience of over 100,000 people (Consolin, 2024).

Another important example is the Stun Game Festival, held in Santa Catarina, which is the largest gaming industry event in the South of the country. Since its first edition in 2018, the Stun Game Festival has aimed to connect those interested in games and geek culture, capturing new ideas and products, and strengthening the creative ecosystem in the region (Economia SC, 2023).

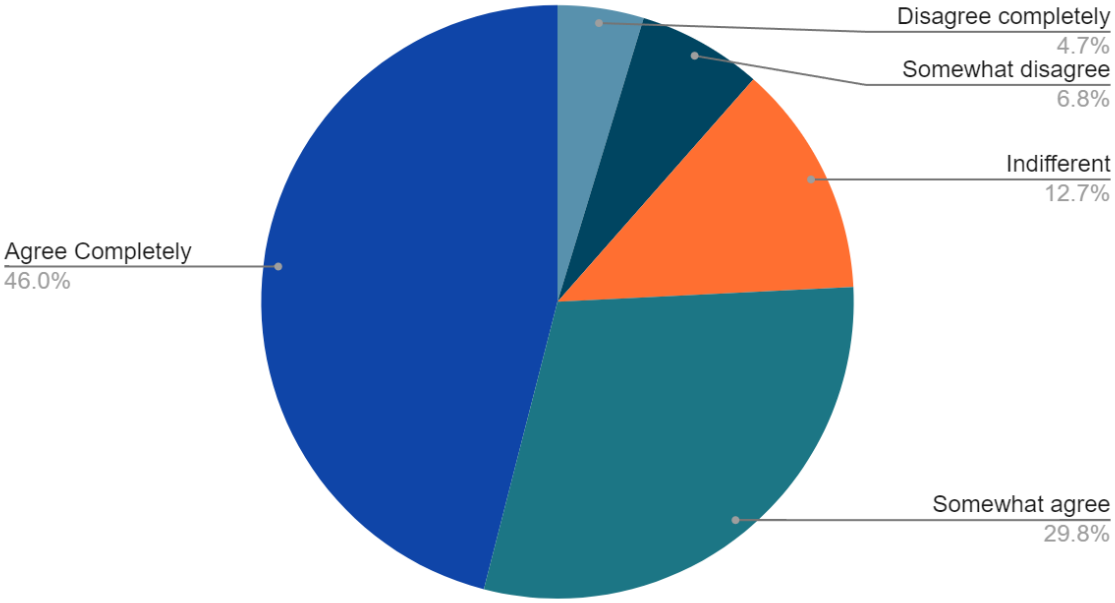
Based on the above, the first observation is the importance of the digital games sector for the Brazilian economy, particularly within the context of Brazil's creative economy. The regulation of the digital games sector has an impact on the future of the industry. The Executive Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Márcio Tavares, made a statement about the expectations for the legislation:

> Games now have a legal framework that will strengthen the production chain and the development of this important industry. Seventy-five percent of Brazilians play games. What we need now is to ensure the protection of children, which the law guarantees, and to create the conditions for fostering and developing this creative sector in our country. (Ministry of Culture, 2024a, s/p)

To demonstrate the economic potential of the sector, the study conducted by the Brazil Games Export Program and Homo Ludens Research and Consulting, in partnership with the Brazilian Association of Game Developers (Abragames) and Apex Brazil, titled 2022: The Brazilian Games Industry, reveals that the digital games sector generated around USD 2.3 billion in Brazil in 2021. It is estimated that there are currently more than 1,000 studios operating in the country, employing approximately 12,441 people directly (Fortim, 2022).

The path leading to the significant increase in market numbers occurred across various spheres, such as the professionalization of developers in the field and the transition of professionals from the illegal digital games market, both of which are key areas of the sector that have undergone significant changes.

A turning point for the advancement of the digital games market was the COVID-19 pandemic, which was responsible for part of the sector's growth due to changes in people's routines, making this type of game more attractive for consumption. Social isolation led society to seek other ways to consume culture and entertainment, and in this context, digital games became the solution. Highlighting this finding, a survey conducted by Pesquisa Game Brasil (2024b) asked respondents if their digital game consumption increased during the pandemic, and the responses are shown in Graph 1.



Source: elaborated by the authors using data from Pesquisa Game Brasil (2021).
Graph 1. Percentage of players interviewed about the Covid-19 period.

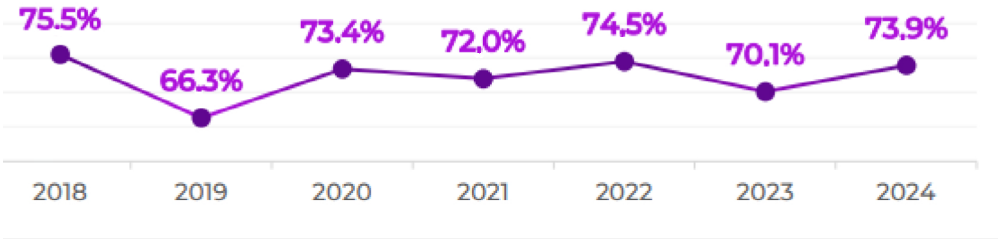
Even in the face of the public health emergency, digital games provided an alternative for entertainment and for maintaining connections with those who were far away. After all, digital games made possible scenarios that the pandemic did not allow — precisely because of the changes brought about by COVID-19, there was a significant increase in consumption. To demonstrate the sector's growth in 2020, according to a study by Wijman (2020), the country generated approximately USD 2.19 billion, noting that in 2024, the exchange rate for the dollar is R$ 5.44. Table 1 highlights the sector's growth between 2018 and 2021:

Table 1. Revenue generated by the digital gaming sector, in billions of USD, between 2018 and 2021.

2018	2019	2020	2021
US$ 1.5	US$ 1.7	US$ 2.19	US$ 2.3

Source: elaborated by the authors with data from the research by Wijman (2020).

Corroborating the statement about the increase caused by the pandemic, the CEO of Brasil Game Show, Marcelo Tavares, explains the phenomenon: "The pandemic triggered a natural effect, as people sought entertainment options within their own homes. One of the great advantages of games is that they offer the chance to experience virtually what you cannot experience in the real world." (Ícaro; Tavarez, 2021). Furthermore, regarding the significant growth of the digital games market, in 2020 the habit of playing digital games increased by 7.1% compared to 2019 (Graph 2).



Source: Pesquisa Game Brasil (2024a).
Graph 2. Data about the habit of digital games (2018-2024).

Several sectors were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic; however, the gaming sector went against the trend. Specifically in Brazil, between 2018 and 2022, there was a 169% increase in the number of game development companies, indicating the growth of the sector and its potential as a driver of economic development (Main Leaf, 2024). After this initial analysis, there arises the need to understand the theories used in the article, to comprehend the framing of the concept of digital games within the field of creative economy, as well as to conduct an exploratory analysis of the sector's data.

THE CREATIVE ECONOMY AND THE ROLE OF DIGITAL GAMES

In order to understand how digital games fit into the creative economy, it is essential to cover the concept of it. The creative economy is an important concept for research on the role of digital games in economic development. Professor John Howkins defines it as "a process that uses creativity to enable people to explore a certain economic value" (PUCRS online, 2024). Based on this initial concept, it is evident that the creative economy is based on two factors: Factor A, where creation is linked to economic value, and Factor B, where the creation of the new is interconnected with creative and subjective factors (PUCRS online, 2024). By deepening the concept, it can be understood as all services and products developed from human creativity, skill, or genius (Schmidt; Gusso; Carelli, 2020).

Continuing the development of the understanding of the creative economy, according to the United Nations — UN (UNCTAD, 2010), the creative economy aims to organize the cultural sector, along with the producers and consumers involved in it. Historically, the first time the term "creative economy" appeared, as noted by Miguez (2007), was in 2001 in the cover story of the August special edition of Business Week magazine, titled The Creative Economy – The 21st Century Corporation (UNCTAD, 2010). The relevance of the creative economy in the cultural field, as highlighted by the UN, and the late first mention of the term 'creative economy' allow for a preliminary observation of the slow recognition of the sector. After all, between the first mention and the reference year of this article, 2024, there are 23 years in the process of recognition.

To highlight the importance of the creative economy in Brazil, the Federal Senate published a report stating that it is responsible for 3.11% of the Gross

Domestic Product (GDP), surpassing the automotive industry, which accounted for 2.1% during the same period. Furthermore, the sector employs approximately 7.5 million people in formalized companies, and in 2022, it generated 308.7 thousand new jobs compared to 2021. Additionally, in 2020, there were over 130,000 creative industry businesses operating in the country, representing 7% of the total workforce in the Brazilian economy (Menezes, 2023). These collected data highlight the prominent economic position that the creative economy sector in Brazil occupies, as well as emphasize its importance in exploring the topic.

Within the concept of the creative economy, several fields are included, such as fashion, literature, design, and music, with digital games being one of them. Digital games combine creativity, entrepreneurship, and the rise of the economy. Defending digital games as a form of art, Waller (2012) argues that they 'are entertainment, an educational platform, a social media, and a form of expression. This multiplicity of functions opens up a great possibility for understanding them also as art. Thus, it is possible to understand that digital games are both art and a form of culture. Based on this preliminary consideration, they can be analyzed from the perspective of the creative economy, allowing for an economic analysis of this specific field: digital games.

ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF THE DIGITAL GAMES SECTOR IN BRAZIL

When conducting an economic analysis of the digital games sector, it is essential to consider the broader economic analysis of law and the issues raised by this field of research. The economic analysis of law is important for its predictability; it allows the examination of factual scenarios by including variables, and from this context, new results can be derived, observed, and assessed. It is at this point that its relevance stands out when studying government policies (Schmidt; Gonçalves, 2014). Moreover, these aspects make the economic analysis of law a solid approach, as it explores the efficiency of changes in the legal system based on economic behavior (Gico Jr., 2012).

Given the economic analysis of the digital games sector proposed, and the goal of understanding the context in which the LFG was enacted and its challenges within the Brazilian economy, the economic analysis of law (EAL) is the chosen method for this analysis precisely because its concept aligns with the objectives of this article. EAL can be defined as "the use of economic approaches to try to understand law in the world and the world in law" (Gico Jr., 2011, p. 20). From the study of law in society, and how society behaves toward law from an economic perspective, it is possible to visualize various scenarios. Economic data, for example, materialize the consequences generated by the enactment of a specific law in sector X. This is the main focus of the exploratory analysis of the LFG and the search for economic data on the digital games sector.

Measuring the impact of new legislation on a sector is possible through EAL — with a focus on its neoinstitutional perspective — as it allows for the comparison between the scenario before and after the law is enacted, exploring how society

behaves in this second moment. All these scenarios can be compared to understand how to promote the effectiveness of law in society. Furthermore, to support this, Williamson emphasizes that various human interactions can be analyzed economically within the collective field, organized by the institutional structure (rules), with the goal of promoting social well-being (Williamson, 2012). In this observation of possible scenarios, law and economics scholars seek the answer to two questions: "(i) what are the consequences of a given legal framework, that is, a given rule; and (ii) which legal rule should be adopted?" (Gico Jr., 2011, p. 20).

Posner (1992) emphasizes that the interdisciplinarity between law and economics, which resulted in the EAL, can be considered the most impactful in terms of influencing legislative and judicial decisions free from the biases of those who judge and legislate, making them more objective. This is the reason for studying the digital games sector from an economic perspective; by exploring its data and studying what Law n. 14.852/2024 predicts, it is possible to obtain an objective result regarding the relevance of the LFG for the sector.

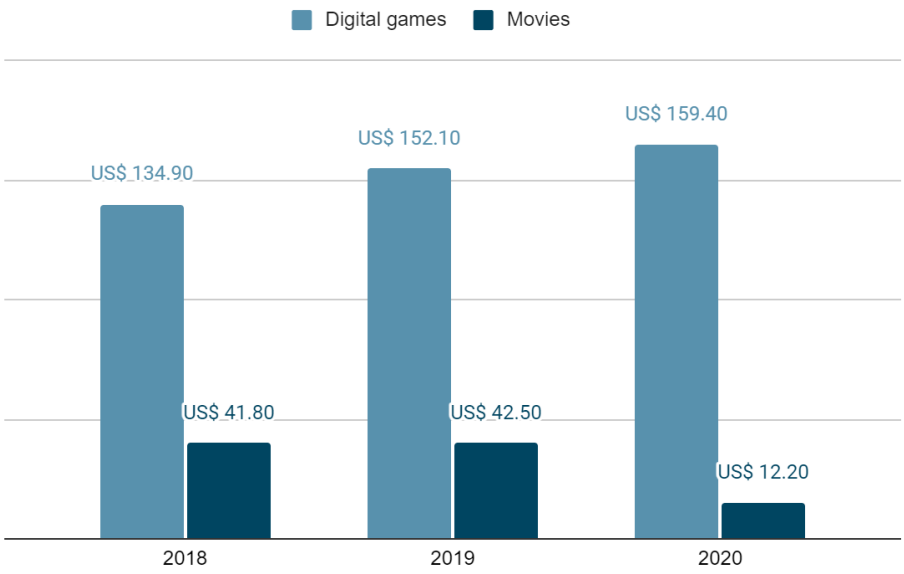
In addition to the need to focus on EAL when analyzing the economic sector of digital games due to the LFG, there is another fundamental area of research: regulatory impact analysis (RIA). ENAP (2020, s/p) explains the concept: "RIA examines and evaluates the likely benefits, costs, and effects of new or amended regulations." This is a tool that works to improve effectiveness and make regulation efficient, through a series of procedures to be used in order to ensure that the regulatory process occurs in the best possible way. (Salgado; Borges, 2010). Clearly, it is essential to understand this concept, as the LFG represents a new legislation to be explored and investigated for its impact on the country. EAL serves as the theoretical foundation for understanding the economic consequences of the law under study; simultaneously, RIA applies this data in practice to determine the best way to implement it. The integration of both approaches makes the regulatory process more efficient.

Based on the understanding of EAL and RIA, and using these two analyses as the theoretical foundation throughout the article, the first problematic point identified due to the delayed legislation is the existing slowness in recognizing that for the digital gaming sector to develop, a partnership with the public sector is necessary. After all, the regions with the greatest development of the gaming industry, which concentrate billions of dollars, were designed and planned based on public policies (Filho; Zambon, 2023).

To solidify the conclusion that the future of the sector lies in a partnership with the public sector, here are some examples from countries that highlight public support in the digital gaming field: In Canada, the sector employs 200,000 people and generates $3 billion for the country's GDP; in the United Kingdom, 1,640 games were produced with a 20% tax credit on production expenses, resulting in a return of £4.4 billion for the country (Filho; Zambon, 2023). The countries mentioned demonstrate the success that the digital gaming sector achieves with proper public support, and, most importantly, the return to the State. Once the State recognizes the sector's potential and the two-way street of economic growth, both sides have

room to develop. Therefore, this is the first aspect to explore: the lack of government incentives for the digital gaming sector, and with the advent of LFG, there is an expectation that the sector will begin to be recognized by the State.

The collection of economic data emphasizes that, despite the high figures, the State remains negligent in engaging with the digital gaming sector to turn it into a partnership for innovation and progress in the country. The gaming sector has generated more revenue than both the film and music industries, increasingly becoming a key focus in the economy, raising the question of what is needed for the State to take notice of the digital gaming industry (Filho; Zambon, 2023). To support the claim that the digital gaming sector has grown more than the film industry, Graph 3 provides a comparison between the digital gaming sector and film box office revenue from 2018 to 2020.

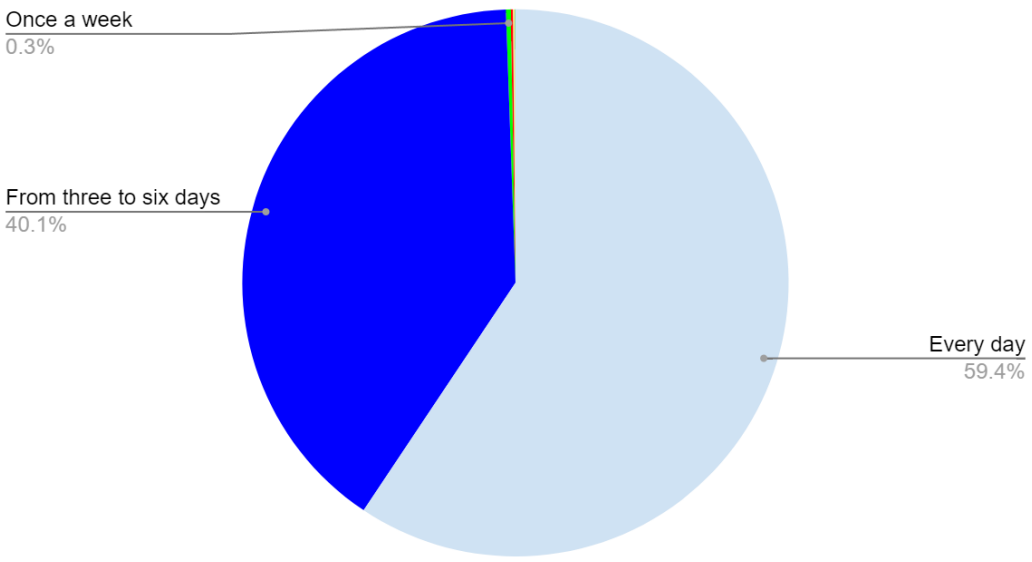


Source: elaborated by the authors using data from Wijman (2020) and Scoutas (2021).
Graph 3. Revenue generated in billions of USD between 2018 and 2020.

According to the analysis by Santos and Stein (2017) and Superdata Research (2014), in 2013, Brazil was the leader in digital game sales in Latin America. In this segment overall, $4.4 billion was generated, with nearly $1.5 billion in sales coming from Brazil, representing 34% of the entire Latin American market. These figures raise the question of what is still needed for the sector to be recognized; LFG emerges with the hope that this is the first step toward the State recognizing digital games.

Based on the importance of demonstrating the sector's potential in 2023, PricewaterhouseCoopers published the Global Entertainment and Media Outlook 2022-2026, which points out that the digital gaming sector accelerated globally in 2020, with a 21.2% increase in revenues. A year later, in Brazil, there was a 27.4% increase, demonstrating how the growth of the national digital gaming market mirrors the growth of the international market (Sebrae, 2023).

In Brazil, the total revenue from digital games and e-sports — the latter defined by Minamihara (2020, p. 24) as 'the professionalization of electronic gaming competitions, drawing a parallel with traditional sports' — reached $1.4 billion in 2021 and is expected to exceed $2.8 billion by 2026, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 15.2%. By 2026, it will account for 47.4% of the total digital gaming market revenue in Latin America. Continuing the search for data that highlights Brazilian interest in digital games, the survey conducted by Pesquisa Game Brasil (2024a), when asking respondents how often they play online digital games, produced the responses shown in Graph 4.



Source: elaborated by the authors based on Pesquisa Game
Graph 4. Frequency of access to online digital games per week.

These data highlight how well the national digital gaming market is positioned to enter the international market, provided it receives the necessary support through public policies in the country.

In summary, government support for the sector, aimed at fostering economic expansion through digital games, drives technological and cultural advancements as well as the development of professionals in the field. The data presented demonstrate the return that the digital gaming sector brings to the State. In Brazil, despite the lack of a national policy, the sector generates R$ 13 billion annually; the expectation for the future is that, with LFG, Brazil will position itself to compete in the global market (Filho; Zambon, 2023).

Based on the data gathered, it is evident that digital games are significant drivers of economic growth and need to be recognized as such. It is important for the market to be well-established in order to continue generating economic and technological profits. Entertainment is only one aspect, given the numerous opportunities the sector can bring to the country's creative economy through a partnership with the public sector. Based on the analysis of the data and the recognition

of the sector's economic potential, it is necessary to explore the challenges faced in the digital gaming sector, starting with the first issue identified earlier — the lack of government support — which, even with the enactment of the LFG, continues to have consequences for the sector

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR GAMES AND THE CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE OF DIGITAL GAMES

With the sanctioning of the LFG, the culture as a whole benefits, which means progress for a new period of incentives, technological advancement, and economic growth in the sector. Brazil is the largest power in the digital games industry in Latin America and the second largest in the Global South, surpassed only by South Korea (Coelho, 2024).

Despite holding a consolidated position in terms of positive development in the Brazilian market, digital games may face some challenges or continue to experience issues that have persisted over time. One example is piracy, which currently occurs to a lesser extent due to the protection policies employed by brands, but remains a relevant topic of discussion. The research "Infodemia and its impacts on digital life," conducted by Kaspersky, one of the companies recognized as a pioneer in cybersecurity, established in the market since 1997 (Bergmann, 2020), in partnership with Corpa, found that 91% of Brazilians agree that using illegal software and digital games represents a security problem. However, 26% admitted to having used pirated software. Brazil ranks third in the regional piracy ranking. According to data collected by the National Forum Against Piracy and Illegality (ETCO, 2021), since 2014, Brazil has lost billions due to the illegal market, a figure that encompasses all sectors, including the gaming market. Beyond its legal implications, it also impacts the country's economy.

However, as previously illustrated, according to data from Fortim (2022), the main challenge is related to project financing and securing resources, both of which are linked to the lack of financial incentives and support in generating visibility for the national gaming industry, a result of the lack of state support—as explored in the section 'Economic Analysis of the Digital Games Sector in Brazil.' Directly related to the first identified problem is the issue of the high tax burden.

Emphasizing the issue of the high tax burden, which absorbs a considerable portion of company revenues, it is argued that on June 10, 2024, a public hearing of the Economic Development Commission took place in Minas Gerais, where several entrepreneurs from various regions of the state raised the issue that the high tax burden and the complexity of the tax system act as deterrents for entrepreneurs in Brazil. They highlighted the fact that the system causes the poor to pay higher taxes than the wealthy (Legislative Assembly of Minas Gerais, 2024).

Also, in this public hearing, Marcelo Nogueira de Morais, a counselor for the Federation of Commercial Associations of Minas Gerais, pointed out: 'In 2022, a total taxation rate of 33.56% on GDP was recorded' (Legislative Assembly of Minas Gerais, 2024, n.p.). Finally, to emphasize the impact of high taxation, Roberto Ellery (2021, n.p.) discusses:

> That's right: Brazilian companies pay the fourth highest income tax rate among the 108 countries evaluated by the OECD. And it gets worse: no country in the OECD has a higher rate than Brazil. Some come close, like France, but none exceed it. It's worth repeating to emphasize: Brazil taxes companies more than any of the wealthy OECD countries.

Consequently, this high tax burden, according to Silva (2021), does not lead to an increase in tax revenue; instead, it ends up discouraging the taxable events and may result in greater tax evasion. This argument, within the context under study, highlights that the high tax burden acts as a suppressor to the development of digital game companies.

These are two of the main challenges that the digital gaming market has faced and will continue to face. However, with the LFG, what is expected from the sector is the assurance that the state will recognize these issues and be willing to address them, recognizing the sector's potential. The challenges initially identified by this paper require the state's attention and a thorough study to find the best solutions. It is important to emphasize that complex problems like the lack of state incentives and the high tax burden— the latter being directly related to the state's power to (dis)incentivize the digital gaming sector—require equally complex measures, with a proper balance in state intervention to combat them. Digital games go beyond mere entertainment: they represent job creation, economic advancement, and, most importantly, the opportunity to position Brazil competitively in the international digital gaming arena.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The article aimed to explore the digital gaming market as a significant driver of the creative economy in Brazil between 2010 and 2023, specifically demonstrating, through the economic data of the analyzed period, the sector's potential for the country. It was preliminarily found that, despite the lack of regulation, the sector has established its place in the market over the years. Law n. 14.852/2024 was explored through the EAL.

The starting point was the analysis of the LFG, followed by an understanding of the concept of the creative economy and the view of digital games from the perspective of the creative economy. From this initial analysis, it is observed that, even in the absence of regulation, the sector developed over the years with a growth rate of 10%, making the Brazilian digital gaming market one of the ten largest in the world. Based on these initial understandings, economic data was collected, which highlighted the sector's economic potential. As a result, it was possible to identify the main issue: the lack of state incentives for the digital gaming sector. Data from other countries that have planned their digital gaming sectors based on public policies show that they are now the largest players in the digital gaming market, while Brazil, throughout all these years, has acted as an exporter of talent from Brazilian developers, despite its significant numbers in the sector.

The first issue identified was the absence of state incentives, and in the continued identification of the challenges in the context in which the LFG was enacted, the problem of the high tax burden was observed.

The sanctioning of the law was the main step toward overcoming the challenges of the past. The preliminary finding is that the scenario after the sanctioning of

the LFG is positive for the digital gaming sector, as the security provided by the law brings optimism to the industry. However, hypotheses are being formulated about the future: whether the LFG alone will be able to address all the issues; whether it will solve them in part; or if, due to the second identified problem (the high tax burden), it will not be enough to remedy the challenges.

After so many years without proper regulation, there is a gap between the expectations of the legal provisions and how they will be applied in practice. Therefore, in addition to sanctioning the law, it is the state's responsibility to ensure the effectiveness of the provisions of the LFG, fulfilling its constitutional duty to promote access to culture for all (Brazil, 1988).

In this regard, a possible solution for the post-sanction scenario of the LFG to succeed is the support of the state and its relevant ministries for the proper implementation of the legal provisions, so that what was proposed by the legislator becomes effective and real. Thus, through specific legislation, issues such as the lack of public incentives and high taxation will be addressed.

All the research conducted within the time limitations should be used for future studies aimed at continuing the exploratory analysis of the topic. The article sought to analyze the context in which the LFG was born, making it possible to understand the need that led Bill No. 2,796 to become Law n. 14,852/2024. It aimed to contribute to the better utilization of the sector, which, until 2024, operated within the creative economy without having proper regulation. The LFG reflects the recognition of the digital gaming sector in the Brazilian market, and for it to fully benefit from the guarantees provided in the law, it is crucial that it is not neglected. This was just one step toward development after so many years of undervaluation, and it requires full state support to sustain its gradual growth.

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Informality as deviancy: the problem of difference in the Decent Work Agenda

Informalidade como desvio: o problema da diferença na Agenda Do Trabalho Decente

Alisson Rowland[I]

ABSTRACT

More than half of workers globally are informal workers; operating in non-standard, temporary employment that is often, but not always, poorly paid and unprotected. The Decent Work Agenda (DWA), pioneered by the International Labor Organization (ILO), has been broadly adopted to bridge the concerns of workers and states by pursuing "Decent Work for all". A core component of the DWA is the reduction of informality. Almost ten years later, however, informality is increasing in many countries. In this paper, I explore the conceptual foundation of the DWA by asking: how does the ILO understand "work" in their 2015 Decent Work Agenda? What are the consequences for those whose rights are protected within global governance projects? I compile a corpus of 36 ILO documents to demonstrate three interlocking discursive schemas: development, paternalism, and colorblindness. While the DWA progressively shifts regulatory discourses, its conceptualization of work constitutes informality as a condition of deviancy. This positions informal workers, who often occupy other vulnerable intersectionalities, as outside the scope of contemporary social protections. Gender, race, class, location and more factor into the formation of global and national labor policies; achieving equitable conditions for all workers requires grappling with the complexity of informality.

Keywords: Decent Work Agenda. Labor standards. Discourse analysis. Informal work.

RESUMO

Mais da metade dos trabalhadores em todo o mundo encontra-se em situação de informalidade, atuando em empregos não padronizados e temporários que, frequentemente, mas nem sempre, são mal remunerados e desprovidos de proteção social. A Agenda do Trabalho Decente (ATD), idealizada pela Organização Internacional do Trabalho (OIT), foi amplamente adotada com o objetivo de conciliar as demandas de trabalhadores e estados, promovendo o "trabalho decente para todos". Um dos pilares centrais da ATD é a redução da informalidade. Contudo, quase uma década após sua implementação, a informalidade está em ascensão em muitos países. Este artigo examinou a base conceitual da ATD ao realizar os seguintes questionamentos: "Como a OIT compreende o conceito de 'trabalho' na sua Agenda do Trabalho Decente de 2015?", "Quais são as implicações para aqueles cujos direitos são protegidos dentro de projetos de governança global?". A análise compila um corpus de 36 documentos da OIT para demonstrar três esquemas discursivos interligados: desenvolvimento, paternalismo e indiferença à cor. Embora a ATD represente um avanço nos discursos regulatórios, sua conceituação de trabalho configura a informalidade como uma condição de desvio. Esse enquadramento posiciona os trabalhadores informais, que frequentemente enfrentam outras interseccionalidades vulneráveis, fora do alcance das proteções sociais contemporâneas. Gênero, raça, classe, localização e outros fatores influenciam diretamente a formação de políticas trabalhistas globais e nacionais. Alcançar condições equitativas para todos os trabalhadores exige enfrentar a complexidade inerente à informalidade.

Palavras-chave: *Agenda do Trabalho Decente. Normas trabalhistas. Análise do discurso. Trabalho informal.*

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> There can be little doubt that in the next fifty years the main challenge facing the International Labor Organization (and UNO) will be the widening gap between the rich and poor nations, a gap given an ugly dimension where it coincides with differences in "color" (Drake, 1969)

INTRODUCTION

While supranational governance has contributed to monumental reductions in global poverty, 55% of the world's workers have zero social protections (ILO, 2019a). This vast disparity in social safety nets is curious when considering that such a deficit can be targeted through coordinated policies, as in the case of poverty reduction strategies (Lockwood, 2020). However, the proliferation of jobs and the geographic spread of employment has not led to commensurate increases in social protections for workers. In fact, global labor relations are overwhelmingly informal, with over 60% of workers in precarious forms of employment (ILO, 2019a). For some countries in the Global South, informality is higher than 90%. The conflation of flexible labor arrangements with greater economic freedom is part and parcel of a marked shift from economic growth as not just the means, but the end goal of development (Broembsen, 2012).

The contemporary world of work has been shaped by national and corporate interests, but is also influenced by global discourses framing what constitutes work (Nam, 2018; Thomas; Turnbull, 2017; Langan, 2014; Ribeiro; Silva; Figueiredo, 2016). The International Labor Organization (ILO) has been at the forefront of this conversation through its Decent Work Agenda (DWA). In 2015, leaders from the United Nations (UN) met and confirmed 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) aiming to promote economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The SDGs "are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere" (UN, 2024, s.p.). They represent ambitious multilateral efforts to address the most pressing global challenges. SDG 8, which is under purview of the ILO, aims to "promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work[1] for all" (GOAL #8, 2024, s.p.).

Given the pivotal role SDG 8 plays in the future of global labor regulation, how the ILO conceptualizes "Decent Work" is essential to understanding the proliferation, or lack thereof, of social protections for workers. Its discourse defines global boundaries for who should be protected and how, with material, social, and political consequences. I conducted an interpretive analysis of 36 ILO documents of the following interrelated questions: *How does the ILO understand "work" in their 2015 Decent Work Agenda? What are the consequences for those whose rights are protected within global governance projects?*

I demonstrate that, while the ILO's DWA progressively shifts global regulatory discourses, it constructs informality as a deviant condition. Three interlocking discursive schemas, development, paternalism, and colorblindness suggest the ways the DWA relegates millions of informal workers as problems on the way to

1 Decent Work is capitalized to signify the ILO's understanding of the concept as distinct from other international organizations (IOs) or agencies.

modernization. While the DWA advocates for governments to provide social rights for people, it does so by connecting these rights to formal employment. Through its conceptualization of work, it produces particular power relations which favor workers employed in "standard", "formal" working arrangements. While there is a demonstrated need for global labor coordination, the ILO does so in ways that maintain the status quo of previous capital/labor configurations.

There are several implications of this research. It suggests the need to reconsider conceptual divides between economic and social spheres in the study of informality. It also urges greater consideration of the ways power relations structure the international political economy. This includes considering the impact of colonial legacies, changing capital/labor configurations, and intersectionalities such as gender, class, and location on whose rights are considered worth protecting.

THEORY

Though representing an opportunity to achieve greater peace and prosperity for precarious workers, the Decent Work Agenda falls short of engaging with the materiality of people's lives. I argue the DWA reproduces a neoliberal understanding of economic empowerment and capital/labor relations that inadequately captures the global reality of precarious workers, particularly informal women workers, for two reasons: first, informal economic activities are viewed as deviant from 'acceptable' formal forms of labor, rather than necessarily constitutive of one another; and second, by perceiving informal workers as deviant, they are cast as inferior, which prevents them from being extended similar rights as their formally employed counterparts unless and until they transition to the formal economy. I draw on social reproduction literature and the works of critical criminology and critical race scholars to guide my empirical analysis.

There is an established scholarship on the ways informal workers are often left behind, ignored, or otherwise sidelined by global governance projects (Arslan, 2022; De Almagro and Ryan, 2019; Tornhill, 2016; Elias, 2010). Informal work, also referred to as 'vulnerable employment' by the ILO, refers to own-account income-generating activities, reproductive labor, and subcontracted work (Chant, 2014). At its core, it emphasizes people's survival strategies. All industries and countries have some level of informality and it is primarily women and children who are engaged in informal labor. Inherent to many governance projects addressing informal labor is a taken-for-granted economic linearity; workers are progressively shifting from informal to formal employment relations, and this transition brings with it improved material conditions. Critical political economists contest notions of linearity built into development narratives (Mezzadri; Majumder, 2022).

Social reproduction complicates prior divisions between labor and work (Mezzadri; Newman; Stevano, 2022). It refers to both the literal reproduction of societies, the everyday practices this entails, and the labor needed to sustain it. Feminist international political economy scholars, though considering social reproduction through various theoretical lenses and substantive issues, largely agree it

coincides with, and is constitutive to, relations of production (Mezzadri; Newman; Stevano, 2022; Arslan, 2022; Prugl, 2020; Steans; Tepe, 2010). Social reproduction contends with the ways the gendering of labor impacts women's social, economic, and material prospects. Regardless of whether labor is informalized or not, capitalism as an economic system maintains gender and racial oppression (Ferguson, 2023). Thus, according to this perspective, the DWA's goal of promoting gender and racial equality cannot be achieved through formalization.

Two insights of this literature are helpful when considering the shortcomings of the ILO's conceptualization of labor in the DWA. The first is the gendered and racialized nature of labor, particularly unpaid for and unaccounted for productive and reproductive labor (Alami; Guermond, 2023; Barchiesi, 2016; Elias, 2010). Second is the differentiation of employment trajectories among working women themselves across time and space (Stevano, 2022; Mezzadri; Majumder, 2022; Rai; Brown; Ruwanpura, 2019). Taken together, these depict a relationship between gender, race, and location that is accounted for in discussion of informal employment but is often remiss from the proscriptions of economic development projects.

While feminist IPE scholars have long tackled the dilemmas of dividing labor in terms of production/reproduction, public/private, and formal/informal, these conversations have yet to be explicitly bridged with parallel scholarship on race and deviance. As research on IPE has come to engage more heavily with the racializing and gendering of labor relations, and with the ways capital/labor arrangements are configured across geographies and temporalities, it becomes more urgent to consider how race and deviance are configured into these relations.

Across the world, women and girls increasingly occupy prisons faster than men (Hadi; Chesney-Lind, 2020). Feminist criminology seeks to explain this shift in the criminalization of women and identify the specific ways women and girls are labeled deviant (Upadhyay, 2021). Scholars in this field emphasize intersectional analyses that incorporate lived experiences of race, gender, class, and location, among others. They also consider the connections between systems of re(production) and how specific penal practices emerge and are sustained (De Giorgi, 2018). The relationship between capital/labor configurations and the criminalization of women, people of color, and other precarious people remains an understudied dimension of when and how people are ascribed deviancy. Assessing how particular economic policies and agendas replicate colorblind practices can provide insight into this relationship.

Colorblindness refers to a host of economic, social, and legal practices in which race is present through its supposed absence (Crenshaw, 2019). Advocates for a colorblind approach view the consideration of how race affects social issues as divisive, unimportant, or otherwise a distraction from achieving improved conditions. Increasingly, however, critical race scholarship recognizes only an intentional consideration of race in addition to other factors such as gender, class, geography and so forth can promote better conditions for precarious communities globally (Crenshaw 2019; Hua; Nigorizawa, 2010; Vosko, 2000). These scholars recognize how people's social experiences are influenced by their identities (Woods, 2014).

How the ILO conceptualizes work in its DWA fails to grapple with the material realities for many precarious individuals; particularly informal women workers. By reinforcing development narratives which perceive informal labor as deviant, it fosters colorblind policies which do not account for the historical and contextual necessity of informal work for many marginalized communities. This creates hierarchies amongst workers themselves that further complicates existing tensions within capital/labor relations. Those perceived to be on the informal side of the divide are not contributing to the state in the same way as those formally employed, and are thus less valuable to the state. This is not merely an economic valuation; this is also a social and legal valuation, wherein informal workers are not recognized by the state for their labor despite conducting work which sustains the state. Increasingly, societies have pegged the extension of state rights to employment. Within this framework, informal workers are not extended rights which were previously viewed as inalienable to all peoples. The meaning produced by global economic initiatives structures people's livelihood. Thus, understanding how the ILO's DWA configures work provides insight into the material and social reality of marginalized workers' lives.

METHODOLOGY

The ILO's creation of a DWA speaks to its privileged position in shaping the discourse, and thereby the social practices, surrounding labor. To analyze how the DWA contributes to this discursive project, I draw from 36 Decent Work research papers, issue briefs, and recommendations listed in Appendix A and interpret them using critical discourse analysis (CDA).

Text Selection

SDG 8, titled "decent work and economic growth", is part of the 2030 development agenda and has ten subgoals and 24 thematic areas. The DWA embodies the ILO's efforts to achieve SDG 8, and has four pillars: "Promoting jobs and enterprise, guaranteeing rights at work, extending social protection and promoting social dialogue…with gender as a cross-cutting theme" (ILO, 2016). While there are many publicly available documents, or discursive fragments, associated with the DWA available on the ILO website, this paper narrows the scope to a key few. I draw on 36 ILO documents; texts were chosen for several reasons; each addresses a subgoal and thematic area of SDG8, they represent the array of ILO-published work on the DWA, and they are all dated from DWA implementation date (2015) and onwards.

Text Analysis

I utilize CDA to gain insight into how particular meanings produced within the DWA create, sustain, or otherwise alter power relations. According to Fairclough (2012, p. 67), "discourse as a political practice establishes, sustains and changes power relations...as an ideological practice constitutes, naturalizes, sustains and changes significations of the world from diverse positions in power relations". In both political and ideological forms, power relations are central in shaping the ability of discourse

to stabilize—and destabilize—particular meanings over time. These meanings are analyzed as part of the dialectic relationship between social practices and semiosis (Wodak; Meyer, 2001). Here, semiosis refers to "all forms of meaning making" represented in social practices (Wodak; Meyer, 2001, p. 122).

CDA's attention to power relations positions it as a powerful methodological tool to consider how issues are framed. Hansen (2006, p. 68) speaks to the function of 'discursive encounters', stating they "inevitably evolve around constructions of inferiority and superiority and hence a particular distribution of discursive and political power". Applying this to the ILO's DWA, the function of "decent" paired with "work" illustrates a specific representation of work—that which is decent is juxtaposed against that which is indecent. The term itself does little to specify what work fails to meet its criteria, leaving such distinctions to be configured by the social structuring of semiotic difference (Fairclough, 2012). In this instance, the ILO's role in crafting particular notions of work inherently required marginalizing other representations. The DWA therefore consists of diverse themes structured into a particular network of social practices, and disentangling those themes will foster greater understanding of [mis]alignments with the notions underpinning the agenda itself.

I use close reading, coding, and memoing to ensure an interpretation grounded in the texts, with particular attention to themes of "gender", "race", "location", as well as fundamental rights and informality. I employ coding strategies from Saldaña's (2013) coding manual with two cycles of coding. The first cycle utilizes what Saldaña calls structural and descriptive ways of coding. The former is attentive to "content based phrase(s) representing a topic of inquiry to a segment of data to both code and categorize the data corpus", and the latter "summarizes in a word or short phrase—often a noun—the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 56). This first pass through the data focuses on what the DWA *is*, that is, how it is described and understood procedurally and how it is meant to operate in practice. The second cycle of coding utilizes versus codes to delve into how the DWA *comes to be*, that is, the binaries and contradictions within social life which create and reproduce asymmetric power balances within ILO discourse (Saldaña, 2013). Pattern coding is used in conjunction with versus coding to identify how meaning is discursively produced. This type of coding "pull[s] together a lot of material into a more meaningful and parsimonious unit of analysis" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 58).

After these coding cycles, I theme the data to make sense of the coding. These themes extract significant statements and interpret the meaning-making process undergirding the data. Once themed, schemes within the DWA can be identified. Schemas, borrowed from sociologist William Sewell Jr. (1992), denote the ideological and cultural operations of language within the DWA, and global governance regimes more broadly. Figure 1 below provides an example of the process described here, from initial coding cycle to abstracted schema[2].

2 This is a visual to highlight the abstraction process of this paper, but actual analysis included back-and-forths between close readings of the text, coding, and memoing not exhibited here.

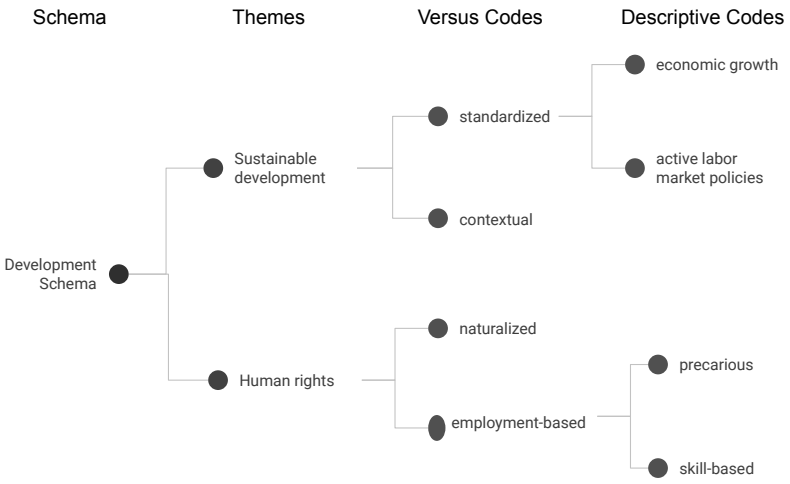
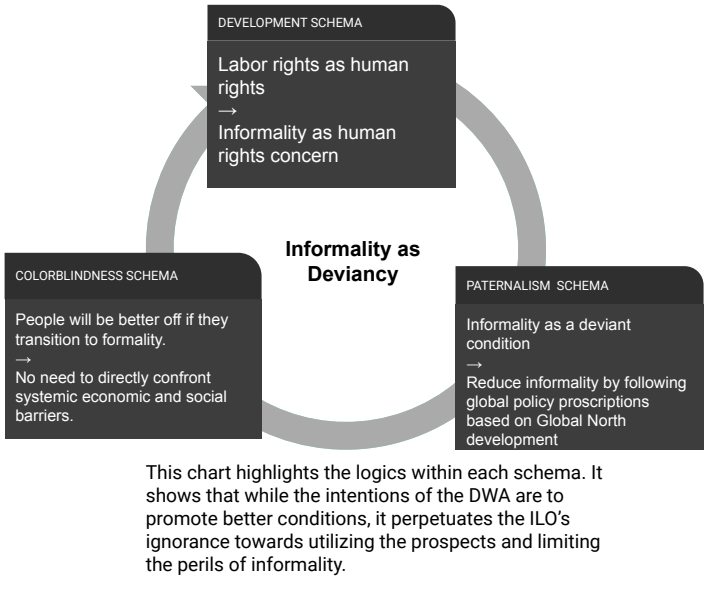


Figure 1. Critical discourse analysis coding strategy sample.

THE DECENT WORK AGENDA AND ITS SCHEMAS

By forming the DWA, the ILO is able to reassert its position as the creator and enforcer of labor standards. Its four strategic objectives, known as "the four pillars", are the institution's attempt to meld development and human rights discourses into a singular narrative. Though the ILO seeks to grapple with the complexity of informality, the DWA's construction of work maintains boundaries between formal/decent or informal/indecent, which mitigates its societal potential. I highlight the ways the DWA both deviates, and maintains, the status quo of previous ILO efforts through a discussion of three schemas: development, paternalism, and colorblindness. In the following three sections, I describe how these schemas operate and appear within the text. Figure 2 summarizes my argument; the visual is cyclic to illustrate the mutually constitutive nature of the schemas I identify.



DWA: Decent Work Agenda; ILO: International Labor Organization.
Figure 2. Informality as Deviancy.

Development Schema

Schema Operation

This schema communicates how the DWA has conflated development and economic empowerment narratives with achieving rights for precarious workers. Improved material conditions are a necessary, but not sufficient, means through which to promote workers' rights. Unintentionally, the DWA advocates for standard—i.e. formal conditions—of employment in order to have a person's fundamental, human rights respected. This is due to the increasing global linkage between *form* of employment and *level* of social protection. More than half the global population is engaged in informal, or non-standard, employment relations ("informal economy"). This is an increasing reality for many, and it is the reality the ILO seeks to address as part of its DWA. However, its conceptualization of labor cannot reach those outside formal relations because it prioritizes state-sanctioned employment. When "labor rights as human rights" are understood as being a positive or negative relationship to state operations, it creates a narrowing coverage of *whose* labor rights are human rights.

Textual Analysis

In its advocacy for a new, transformative agenda, the ILO expresses "an urgent need to reinvigorate the commitment of the international community to social justice and equality" (ILO, 2019b, p. 39). To this end, the ILO and partner agencies developed a "dynamic interlinkages framework" that promotes sustainable development in the economic, social, and environmental realm (ILO, 2016). In its plan on the 2030 Agenda, the ILO states, "the concept of sustainable development embraces three dimensions—economic, social and environmental—in a balanced and integrated manner. Decent work features prominently in the Agenda, not only mainstreamed across the Goals and targets, but also as part of the vision of the new Agenda" (ILO, 2016, p. 2).

Figure 3 offers a visual of this framework, wherein achieving SDG 8 and progress on the other 17 SDGs, particularly "Goals 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), 7 (affordable and clean energy), 1 (no poverty), 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions)", is described as mutually reinforcing, with progress in one promoting progress in others (ILO, 2019b). This framework illustrates the push by IOs to "link" aspects of policy-making to each other because the ILO, which is committed to improving worker conditions, must also account for the concerns of development agencies committed to economic transformation. This graphic places three areas of policy, "social inclusion and Decent Work", "environmental integrity" and "sustained growth", in a balanced fashion to indicate they must be pursued in a constitutive fashion. This relationship between sustainable development and Decent Work is most clearly articulated in "Time to Act for SDG 8":

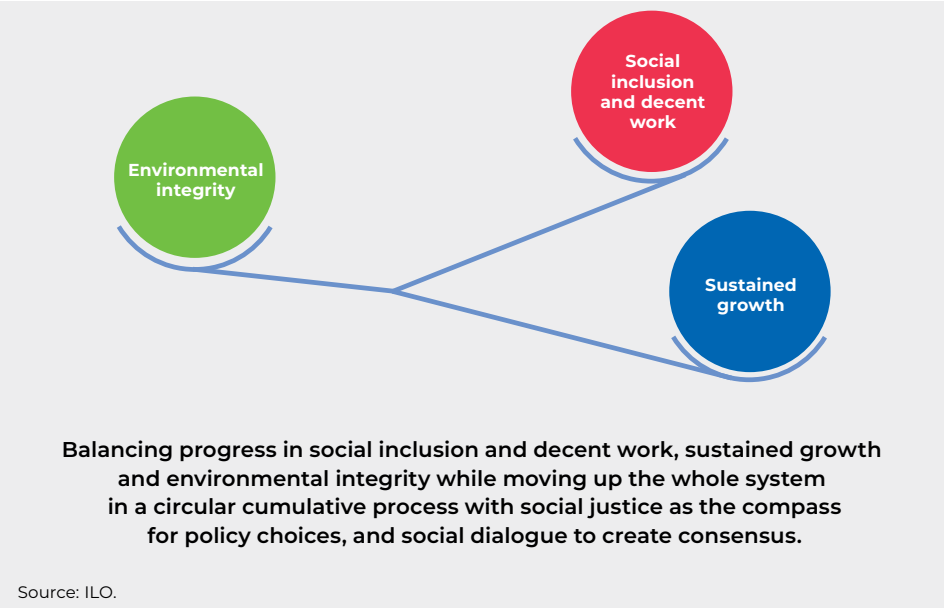


Figure 3. Dynamic Interlinkages Framework.

> The SDG 8 targets are closely intertwined with the goals of the International Labor Organization (ILO). Thus, the reference in SDG 8 to "full and productive employment and Decent Work for all" borrows terminology from the ILO's Decent Work Agenda (1999), while the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2019) borrows the SDG 8 phrasing of "promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth" in its strategy for a human-centered approach to the future of work. By emphasizing the needs of society and the environment, this strategy opens up a transformative path towards economic growth and development. (ILO, 2019b, p. IX)

This framework's three-pronged approach recognizes the mutual influence between the environment and people, but by including "sustained growth" and "social inclusion and decent work" it maintains a separation between these categories while at the same time upholding that pursuing one is pursuing the other. This is an effect of linking; the more areas of consideration regulatory bodies are beholden to, the more convoluted it is to achieve purported goals. Though linkage is not the most immediate or effective means of transformative change, the ILO pursued it because having the language for Decent Work incorporated into SDG 8 accomplished three strategic goals (Frey, 2017; Vosko, 2002). It created legal precedent for ILO policies in broader global governance conversations, it imbued social justice into the determination process for employment policies by all IOs, and tied the ILO to prioritize "sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth" in its push for Decent Work. A double-edged sword, the dynamic interlinkages model attempts to reconcile several threads into a singular path; compared to other frameworks, this might be an advantage, as there can be no sustainable development without employment and Decent Work. Sustaining people's livelihood is a prerequisite to any further development; it is a goal which should be fundamental (ILO, 2015a). The ILO articulates that the welfare of people is a necessary

precondition for development to take place, and that Decent Work is a necessary part of sustainable development.

On one hand, this widens the scope of the ILO's influence in global governance discussions. It also places Decent Work and social justice as a priority in those conversations. Since the late 1990s, the ILO has championed the view of labor rights as human rights. By growing its influence, it succeeds in this shift. In an ILO research paper on globalization, Emmanuel Reynaud describes this shift "as an attempt by the ILO to link formally its standard-setting approach to the human rights framework, which had gained in credibility over the labor rights perspective…the inclination of the times had become to talk about "protecting labor rights as human rights" (ILO, 2018e, p. 3). This allowed the ILO to pursue policies outside of its strict domain of the workplace and increased its influence in global governance. The commitment to promoting formal employment is to increase social protections and eradicate extreme poverty globally. The DWA, its relations to sustainable development, and the application of the dynamic interlinkages framework are the pathways promoted by the ILO.

This conception of Decent Work has important implications for the future of human rights policy-making. In a 2016 speech on the conditions of global employment, Director-General of the ILO Guy Ryder stated,

> The conclusion we have to draw from that rather harsh reality is that ending poverty and promoting Decent Work are two sides of the same coin. We believe that by putting Decent Work SDG 8 at the center of the 2030 Agenda, the international community has recognized something which the ILO has been arguing for a long time: that Decent Work is both the major instrument to make development happen and also in effect, the central objective of sustainable development. (Ryder, 2016)

In several locations, ILO documents have referred to Decent Work as the *means* and the *ends* of development ("ILO implementation plan", "a just transition for all"). This is echoed here in Director-General Ryder's statement that it is the "instrument" and the "central objective" of development. It is a pervasive belief within the ILO that the promotion of Decent Work means sustainable development, and that sustainable development will achieve Decent Work. The use of linkage in the DWA implies these are complementary outcomes and the statement above indicates not only are they "two sides of the same coin", but achieving one will be achieving the other. This indicates there is a singular pathway to promote both simultaneously, and that policies do not have to be tailored towards one or the other goal.

The dynamic interlinkages framework is predicated on a cyclic understanding of change, which is highlighted in the ILO's discourse. In "Time to Act", the interactions between each part—sustainable development, Decent Work, and poverty alleviation—are described here, "sustained growth requires structural transformation, diversification and innovation to support long term growth in productivity, income levels and Decent Work opportunities. Structural transformation, in turn, results from the enrichment and enhancement of a society's knowledge base, including

socially shared mindsets and technical knowledge and skills." A key feature of sustainable development is recognizing the connection between economic and social spheres of life. This is an important divergence in the ILO's prior discourse which focused exclusively on objectives, rather than quality of life. Despite this recognition, the ILO advocates for structural transformation, diversification, and innovation as key avenues for growth and Decent Work.

Figure 4 provides a chart of specific policies and recommendations in line with this view of policy coordination. Goal 8.3 explicitly mentions formalization, but other goals such as industrialization and SME development similarly prioritize formal employment relations. In the ILO's call to action for the SDGs, it presents these foci—structural transformation, diversification, and innovation—as distinct from prior pathways of development. While goals 8.3, 9, and others on the left side of Figure 4 are intended to promote structural transformation, the changes prioritize the economic sphere rather than the social sphere. The goals related to the social sphere on the right side of the figure are directed at the transformation of knowledge and beliefs. This figure shows greater explication of the ILO language shown in Figure 3. The pursuit of policies to achieve economic transformation (in blue) is supposed to incentivize pursuit of policies to achieve social transformation (in red). However, this increases the horizon of change for people's well-being in ways contrary to the ILO's espoused commitments. There are ways to promote sustained economic growth while simultaneously advocating for policies that provide immediate relief. Systems of direct wealth redistribution are an example of such means, but this has never been prioritized in ILO discussions. Such a policy would also provide greater incentive and a buffer for workers transitioning into the formal economy, which is often a time-consuming and costly process.

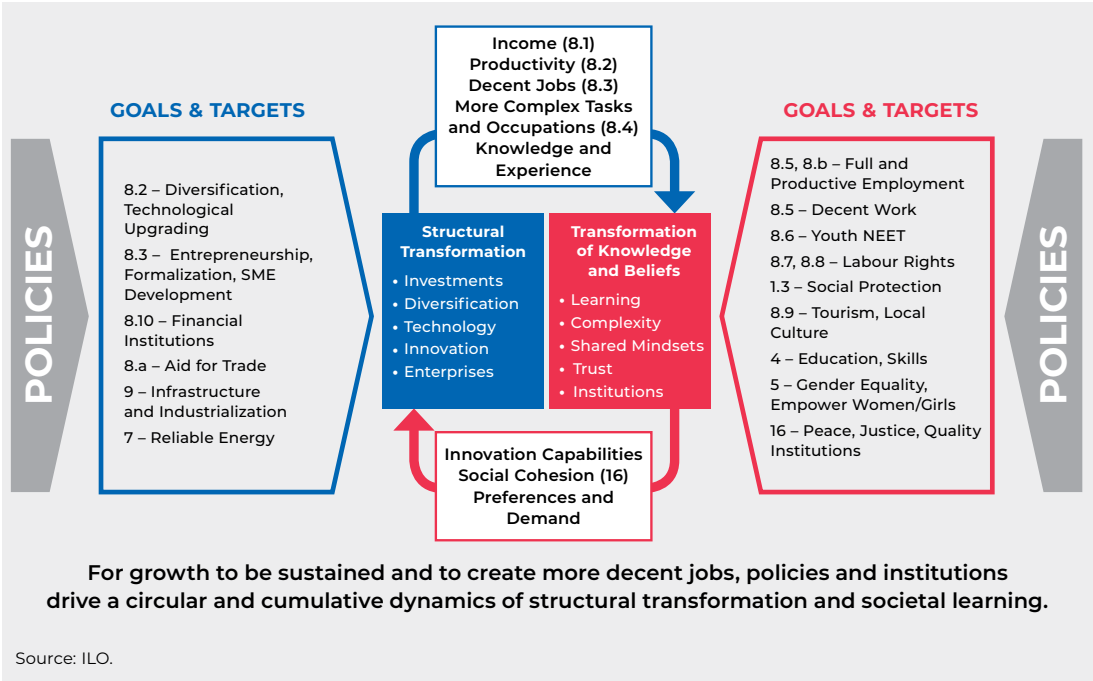


Figure 4. Specific goals, targets, and policies of the Dynamic Interlinkages Framework.

Kinyanjui (2012) argues that people use alternative institutions to those proposed by neoliberal development. These collective arrangements draw from culture and tradition to mobilize resources, invest, and distribute gains. There are alternative systems to Western neoliberal policies, wherein communal and unwritten rules are in place to ensure shared prosperity (Kinyanjui, 2021). The informal economy offers alternative pathways toward sustainability than what is possible in the regulated market economy (Ruzek, 2015). Comparing the DWA's discourse to its call for "people-centered" policies prioritizing human welfare highlights the mismatch between intent and outcome as economic growth continues to hold precedence in its policy-making.

Championing social justice language and objectives into global governance discussions is a demonstrable outcome of the DWA, and it has expanded the realm of applicability for ILO policies. Despite its reframing and increased scope, however, the DWA exhibits continuity with the ILO's past mediation tactics that reduces its effectiveness. Decent Work as the means and the ends of sustainable development does not itself push the pendulum towards achieving equitable welfare. The DWA's linkage between development and human rights encourages policies that tie protections for vulnerable populations to formal employment measures. For those who are undocumented, who engage in criminal labor such as sex work, or who otherwise find themselves unable to secure traditional employment opportunities, this furthers the state violence they face. The ILO is in the position to advocate for securing the needs and dignity of all peoples through its labor rights advocacy. Yet, this will take prioritizing social protections in the immediacy over development goals. Informality as a survival strategy is here to stay, and that reality must be dealt with seriously[3].

Paternalism Schema

Schema Operation

A core component of the DWA's construction of labor is positioning informal labor as a condition of deviancy. In the DWA's discourse on labor policies for Decent Work, and by extension sustainable development, the Global North becomes conceptually and empirically privileged. By constructing certain employment relations as deviant, the DWA fosters paternalism towards countries with highly informal, or "indecent", work. While there are risks associated with informality, the ILO discusses it not as the necessary reality for many, but as a condition that can be fixed through higher rates of development. This leaves the underlying conditions pushing workers to seek out informality unaddressed in the shift to state-sanctioned, "formal" labor. For instance, developments in the gig economy depict how formal employment does not translate to social gains. Many industries are increasingly adopting an

3 Increasingly, scholars of informality view have shifted from it as a condition that should be solved to an alternative reality of economic and social organization that neither can nor should be eradicated.

independent contractor model of employment in order to formalize employment relations, such as in the service industry (Zwick, 2018; Levitt, 2021; Easterbrook-Smith, 2022). However, independent contractor status often does not include worker benefits or consistent hours, and is still susceptible to the harms of workplace harassment. The increasing use of flexibilized formalized labor is an example of how the intent of policy and its outcome can be mismatched. This loss of context in policy-making severs a person from their community in ways that often do more harm than good in the long-run (Kinyanjui, 2010). Within this schema, there are themes of labor policies, upgrading, and integration.

Textual Analysis

One way the DWA exhibits paternalism is through the discussions of labor market policies. The high rates of informality in the Global South are evidence to the international community that they require intervention. The technical assistance services of the ILO have increased drastically in the last few decades, primarily funded by the US. In some instances, the local governments petition the ILO for assistance. In 2001 Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates among others asked for technical support in providing labor standards data (Elliot; Freeman, 2003, p. 108). Even in these instances, the services provided utilize language and operations that do not take into account the strengths and weaknesses of the target nation, but pursue the end goal(s) in a manner modeled after the Global North. This is due in part to the global context that ILO recommendations are formed in: elite representatives of member nations, in conversation with world-renowned trade unions and corporate representatives.

Additionally, the conditions which lead to informality amongst people are geographically dependent, and vary accordingly. Labor market policies are one method utilized by the ILO to promote Decent Work, which incidentally makes it easier to promote paternalistic North-South relations. There are two forms commonly utilized: passive and active labor policies. Passive refers to "income maintenance when workers are out of employment", whereas active refers to "policies aimed at increasing or improving the employment opportunities of unemployed or inactive persons to get or return to a job" (ILO, 2018b, p. 2). With the DWA, the combination of active and passive policies recommended have become more contextualized to local needs.

According to the ILO, "low unemployment in conjunction with high labor participation rates results in large swathes of the population being engaged in vulnerable employment and many people in working poverty" (ILO, 2015b, p. 4). To the ILO, informality is a manifestation of social vulnerability, in opposition to formal and secure employment; informal employment is undesirable because workers engaging in it often have worse conditions than formal workers. However, it is not the type of labor either worker engages in that matters—it could be the same type in both instances, in fact. What matters is a person's juridical relationship; if their employment is nationally protected then they are (mostly) assured. But the form of

employment should not matter more than the type of labor, and a person should be assured of their rights regardless of either. If labor policies only consider formal employment because the ILO assumes formality as such (as a move from formal to informal sector), then it will continuously fail to protect those engaged in informal employment. Research by Mary Kinyanjui (2010) suggests informal workers mobilize themselves to address fundamental concerns, and advocate for their strategies to be taken seriously rather than adopting formalization strategies that do not easily map onto informal relations. Kinyanjui discusses the importance of social networks and associations as an example of strategies used by informal workers, and how interventions often do not appropriately leverage these existing networks of relations. The ILO's notion of development, embedded with legacies of colonial power asymmetries, has historically precluded what informal workers are doing and saying (Maul, 2009; Bhambra, 2021).

The ILO has dedicated attention to informality in various industries and geographies (Kanbur, 2019). A progressive shift in recent years emerged from its 2014 recommendation, "Resolution on Transition from the Informal Economy Recommendation," which recognized the multiplicitous forms of labor that exist. In addition to recognizing various labor arrangements, the ILO acknowledges various paths towards development; "the current projection suggests that their manufacturing employment share is unlikely to increase and the development path and process of structural transformation is likely to be very different to that taken by developed countries in the past" (ILO, 2018b). Despite this attention, most of its measures are based on analyses rooted in the realities of advanced industrialized economies and not in countries that have been colonized and/or are developing. Its current recommendations espouse structural transformation but have failed to adequately address decades in the making of premature deindustrialization occurring in many countries. An ILO research paper conducted a meta-analysis of previous labor market policies that took into account packages implemented in both developed and developing countries, and concluded that active labor policies provide only short-term results and are overall less effective in the latter ("Boosting youth employment"). The explicit move towards reckoning with these differences indicates the ILO, and by extension other global governance organizations, are interested in seriously contending with how to advocate for Decent Work and sustainable development in varied national contexts.

This shift in perspective highlights the ILO's ability to alter global norms pertaining to human rights and development. While this is a strength of the ILO's conception of Decent Work, it is merely the prerequisite condition of recognition, and does not itself lead to permanent shifts in discursive sentiment. Indeed, the ILO has strayed from universal policy proscriptions; "there is no unique unemployment benefits design or combination of passive and active measures for an effective activation. With national variations, an individual action plan is widely used. These individual plans are designed in collaboration with specialized counselors and include

different interventions considering the labor market problems and the local economy context for each individual" (ILO, 2018b, p. 14).

The ILO's recognition of the contextual needs of individuals promotes more people-centered policies. Yet, collaboration with specialized counselors refers to national officials the ILO consults to make its suggestions. In many countries governmental officials are members of the political and economic elite and are often far removed from the contexts of informal workers. Thus, rather than resort to bureaucratic measures, it is important to be in direct consultation with the workers themselves to identify their needs. Even informal workers, who often lack institutional access, actively mobilize for their grievances (Hummel, 2022).

Consulting with local leaders in addition to national elites would better serve the mission of the ILO's four pillars. Otherwise, it continues to perpetuate an asymmetry between who is deemed worthy of policy decision-making and who must follow those decisions.

The ILO was created prior to the decolonial process, with asymmetric power relations as a founding feature[4]. Though it has sought to ameliorate this over time, these relations remain imbued in its legacy of agricultural regulation. In 1919 at the ILO's initial agenda-setting meeting, there were no agricultural representatives present, and this "was raised as one of the reasons why those Conventions would not apply to agriculture" (ILO, 2015b, p. 10). The fact that there were no representatives to express the grievances of agricultural workers, despite it being the dominant condition of employment for most peoples in the Global South, perpetuates colonial power asymmetries (Webster; Forrest, 2020). Since then, the ILO has returned many times to the issue of regulated agricultural production. Even a short two years later, it was brought to the agenda:

> During the discussions in 1921, several governments objected to the adoption of any standards relating to agriculture, as they considered that the Treaty of Versailles did not apply to this sector. Other governments considered that the Treaty did indeed apply equally to agricultural and industrial workers; the principle of freedom of association was referred to as "one of the most important objects of [the] Conference" (ILO, 2015b, p. 10).

Privileging a certain *form* of work, namely industrial conditions of labor, cannot be considered incidental when global employment trends and colonial relations are brought into context. Countries that had been colonized either had not achieved independence, or were grappling with colonial legacies, and these countries relied heavily on agricultural production due to being precluded from the industrial process. While this asymmetric relationship has ameliorated overtime through decolonization, it nonetheless persists. In a research paper on agricultural worker's agency, efforts by the ILO to redress this legacy are evident:

4 This, combined with the fact that most funding for the ILO comes from advanced economies, creates a pressure to conceptually and empirically favor policy-making based on the conditions of peoples in the Global North.

> The 2008 ILC discussion on the promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction, which culminated in the adoption of a resolution and conclusions concerning promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction, set a mandate for renewed ILO involvement in rural development issues (ILO, s.d, p. 1).

This decision was decades in the making, and importantly occurred years after the beginnings of the decolonial process. While this can be a testament to the workings of social dialogue, it took several global economic and financial crises for the ILO to consider the conditions of workers in non-industrial employment relations. This highlights which workers, in which locations, the ILO has historically favored. It took a few more years for the ILO to *prioritize* the distinct policy needs of workers in the rural economy (ILO, 2015b, p. 98).

The ILO has established the relationship between informality and agriculture. The DWA shows that one of the means of sustained growth the ILO prefers as an alternative to informal employment or agricultural work is global value chain (GVC) integration. It promotes this with the hope of increased worker empowerment, rural development and increased provision of "basic services". The former and latter are conditions of humanity the ILO advocates for all workers, regardless of geography or employment type, and that are deemed essential to ensure gains are equitably shared. However, the ILO's promotion for global supply chain integration as a preferable alternative to local enterprises has little relation to existing research on precarity rates in GVCs. ILO support for integration is best exhibited here: "enterprises, as well as countries, can benefit from participation in GVCs…Participation in GVCs offers opportunities for developing countries to participate in global markets, enabling them to diversify exports" (ILO, 2018d, p. 3).

As noted previously by the ILO, institutions play a pivotal role in sustaining developmental projects. Developing countries face a disadvantage in that their institutional capacity is severely limited from historical legacies of colonialism and asymmetric power relations with the Global North. Additionally, there are high rates of labor precarity and exploitation even in GVCs, so this does not address the fundamental problem with informality identified by the ILO. In Phillips' (2017, p. 444) article on inequality in GVCs, she argues,

> "the current vast and expanding extent of global inequality is not a 'bug in the system' of a GVC world, but is rather foundational to the functioning of a global political economy built around the form of industrial organization associated with GVCs—an outcome that arises from the interactions of market, social and political power in underpinning this global economic order. To this extent, the inescapable conclusion is that incremental change will not be sufficient to address the distributional implications of the GVC world".

Despite research which indicates some countries will have worsening conditions from integration (Posthuma; Rossi, 2017; LeBaron et al., 2022), the ILO still advocates for this measure holistically for developing countries growth. This is despite its own recognition that mutual gains are *not* assured, especially for developing countries:

> There is a risk that the entry of new low-wage producers will precipitate a downward spiral of competition, in which increases in exports produce ever-diminishing returns (Kaplinsky, 1998; UNCTAD, 2013). Under this scenario, the potential social gains that arise from an increase in exports will be more than offset by lower prices (ILO, 2018d, p. 3).

Considering the higher levels of informal and contractual labor relations in developing countries, the higher likelihood to be targeted for offshoring, and the decreased institutional capacity to combat declining labor conditions, the insistence that GVCs are one of the primary paths for developing countries to sustainably develop presents a fissure with prior ILO aims ("Sectoral studies on Decent Work"). Even should these countries foster the "correct" conditions for development, skepticism for sustainable gains still exists: "a significant challenge will be whether and how low-income countries will be able to improve their working conditions in the face of competition not just from other low-income countries, but also from robotics in high-income countries" (ILO, 2018d, p. 3).

There is a mismatch between the ILO's efforts to foster more nationally tailored recommendations and its general promotion of GVC integration. While GVCs may be beneficial to some, there is not enough long-term evidence of its success in increasing the quality of work and livelihood for people. As countries in the Global South have only recently decolonized, or may still be in the process of doing so, the ILO must be cautious of basing its metrics on advanced economies which have benefited from forms of asymmetric economic gain (i.e. colonialism, coercive trade).

Colorblindness Schema

Schema Operation

By conceptually and empirically privileging the Global North while simultaneously viewing informal work as deviant, the ILO operates with a form of colorblindness.

Colorblindness shows as an erasure of the experiences and needs of informal workers in policies by conditioning how and when workers are viewed as worthy of protection. This perpetuates harm against already economically and socially marginalized people. The discursive meaning within this schema underscores themes of deviancy, precarity, and difference, as well as a dichotomy between informality as coercive or as chosen.

The ILO also recognizes the value in multilateral coordination. To preserve its discursive commitment to people-centered policies while also enabling countries to more comfortably coordinate on transnational issues, the ILO prioritized standardizing national labor policies. In the DWA implementation plan, the ILO describes how it extends its standard setting into its push for Decent Work for all with "national reviews [that] "will be open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people and will support the reporting by all relevant stakeholders" and "will be people-centered, gender-sensitive, respect human rights and have a

particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind" (ILO, 2016, p. 7).

The ILO considers this push for increased transparency between countries as an operational issue and a measure to increase accountability. However, the ILO's means do not align with its ends. While this plan calls for "particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind", the focus in the DWA's policy recommendations prioritize economic measures that support formalization as a precondition for the securing of rights. So rather than prioritize the conditions of people in precarious work by advocating for innate rights rather than employment-based rights, the ILO seeks to bring them into formally recognized employment relations regardless of whether this immediately ameliorates their precarity.

Textual Analysis

In its most recent call to action, the ILO expands on the importance of SDG 8 for improving worker conditions by stating:

> Unemployment is too high in many countries, and there are persistent gender wage gaps and Decent Work deficits across the world. In addition to women, young people and persons with disabilities are also at a great disadvantage. Even in countries with a low risk of unemployment, these population groups face severe challenges when it comes to finding employment and enjoying equal access to Decent Work and equal pay for work of equal value (ILO, 2019b, p. X).

This paragraph shows how certain people face higher precarity, including "women, young people and persons with disabilities". These higher levels are not due to innate characteristics of any of the above groups, but from systemic conditions which prioritize some people to the exclusion of others (Hooks, 2000). This hierarchization maintains conditions which make it easier to prey upon already systematically disadvantaged people, such as racial minorities, women, and those in conditions of poverty.

Largely, the ILO recognizes the association between precarity and informality is higher for people facing other forms of exclusion. Informality is the dominant condition for workers worldwide, yet the goals of the ILO and the methods it advocates to achieve its goals serve to maintain a firm division between formal and informal labor. The latter, however, is only informal so long as it is not sanctioned by the state, or not regulated. Regulation necessarily improves conditions of work by formalizing the conditions of work, not by shifting the worker to the formal economy but by ensuring the work they are currently engaged in is adequately remunerated, their hours are fair, their workplace conditions safe, and so on. Here, I am not saying the ILO is antithetical to those changes. Rather, its role as norm and standard setter means it plays a privileged role and has the leverage to advocate for extending existing national labor protections to provide immediate relief to workers (Hauf, 2015). Instead, the ILO encourages workers to shift to the formal sector by offering technical knowledge, such as business development services, market

access and credit access conditionally based on transitioning. This may be feasible for some workers, but it will not be for all. The ILO creates and maintains divisions that preclude informal workers from social protections afforded to formal workers[5]; "Some countries explicitly exclude workers in non-standard forms of employment from labor protections against violence and harassment" (ILO, 2018a, p. 17).

While the reality of informal workers is such that, on average, their conditions are worse off than those of other workers, this has less to do with the type of work they do (informal/indecent) and more to do with the condition of their work (protected versus unprotected). In other words, informal workers face precarity and poverty because they are often precluded from the social welfare nets by virtue of the conditions of their employment. Informality fundamentally challenges the ILO's conceptualization of work in the DWA, as it assumes formalized employment is the best avenue to achieve social rights. The ILO's emphasis on formality as a precondition to social rights ignores that some workers willingly engage in informal work as a preferred method of economic survival and community care (Kinyanjui, 2010).

In the current global economic order, with protections increasingly tied to forms of employment, informal workers are neglected, or otherwise explicitly excluded from consideration. To combat this, the ILO promotes informal workers' transition into the formal economy; but it also helps to maintain the precarity of informal workers by denouncing it as a condition to be eliminated ("Informal economy"). Eradicating poverty, promoting Decent Work and ensuring sustainable development will occur if and when informality is eradicated.

Along this line of reasoning, it is the ILO's responsibility to teach workers how to be "decent" by moving them into the formal economy. This conception of non-standard employment as deviant is illustrated in the DWA's discussion of informality and gender:

> Women working in the informal economy face a number of structural constraints which prevent them from accessing decent paid work. As they often bear the brunt of unpaid childcare and domestic work, they may have little choice but to take on low-quality jobs that allow them to attend to these care responsibilities (see Issue Brief No. 3). A range of discriminatory social norms may limit their access to: property, assets and financial services; opportunities for education and skills development; and social protection (ILO, 2018c, p. 1).

The reality of informal work today is such that people engaged in it are more likely to be exploited, to face violent or unsafe conditions, to have lower pay and less agency over their terms of employment (ILO, 2018c). The ILO's objective to take local needs into account requires a more nuanced approach to understanding the needs of people engaged in different *forms* of employment, rather than deeming some jobs decent and acceptable and others indecent and unacceptable. There should be

5 For some categories, such as domestic workers (who are frequently excluded from labor laws and the majority of whom are women), the gap in protection may affect women disproportionately. In 20 of the 80 countries studied, domestic workers are excluded from the labor laws, and in eight countries contributing family workers are excluded ("Violence and harassment").

a concerted effort to know when and why workers turn towards informality, and the variation in opportunities and challenges facing workers of different intersecting identities (e.g. women, people of color, queer people, people with disabilities).

By critically considering the implications of gender for working conditions, the DWA begins to move away from a dichotomized understanding of employment. Its explicit reference to structural constraints and social norms that sustain conditions of poverty for some workers and not others alludes to the systemically perpetuated nature of poverty. But while the ILO recognizes these nuances implicitly in this discussion, it is not explicit in calling for change. This is to its own detriment, as identifying structural barriers is the first step to addressing them.

While economic policies matter, the ILO only pushes for social change in so far as it promotes economic change. For social welfare systems to reach those who need it most, they must be accessibly created with differential barriers in mind, including those presented by informality. On the issue of mitigating structural and social inequalities, an ILO issue brief recognizes the dual burden women face that often leads them to seek flexible labor arrangements (ILO, 2018c, p. 5). Issue brief number 4 advocates for shifts in social norms and the provision of public care services. These are useful recommendations, but they still presume that such shifts should occur only when workers are "formally" employed. It cannot be assumed that it is always coercive or harmful to workers (Anyidoho, 2013). For instance, a study of informal vendors in Ghana indicates 88% of households rely on informal work. This study also suggests that it is primarily macroeconomic conditions that negatively impact informal workers. For instance, one of the ILO's four pillars guarantees workers freedom of association. Yet, this right is often not respected at the national level and especially for informal workers. While informal workers do organize, they will only do so where state officials encourage them to (Hummel, 2022).

Countries profiting from labor exploitation have a vested interest in maintaining informality in a way where the workers are not politically activated, meaning not unionized. There is little the ILO can do on their own to redress these macroeconomic concerns; but it is important to advocate on behalf of workers to policies at national and sub-national levels that not only address the risks of informality through knowledge sharing and diversification but that promote social changes that mitigate the losses incurred during transitions to formality. These losses include, but are not limited to, a reduction in income, flexible work hours, and employment autonomy (Aleksynska; La; Manfredi, 2023). Though many of these losses are seen as necessary to achieve gains in the form of increased job security and access to social benefits, these are not promised gains, and the transition can have a significant impact on people who are already experiencing financial precarity. Without attention to the particular needs and conditions of informal workers, the people most economically and politically disadvantaged will remain engaged in precarious work, regardless of informal or formal employment, and generational poverty will persist.

It is important for the ILO's mission that they do not simply assume informality should be eradicated, but that it takes a concerted effort to understand it in order

to promote better conditions for those engaged in it. By deeming it "informal", and by extension "indecent", both the labor itself and the person engaging in it become viewed as deviant. This paper argues that the ILO has made strategic choices to further its mission within global governance, but that it has unintentionally made it more difficult to come to a consensus with its stakeholders-states, employers, and workers—on matters regarding informal employment. It has promoted attention to certain aspects of employment, such as the ability to collectively mobilize, to be working "full-time", to have a physical place of employment separate from the home, among others, that do little to address conditions perpetuating unsafe work unless workers are formally employed.

If the ILO hopes to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030, it should implement strategies to provide people with tools to sustain themselves and their communities regardless of whether it will have a sustainable, i.e. long-term, effect on development. There are a few ILO issue briefs that come close to this conclusion. On the topic of gender and informality, one asks:

> How can the voices of workers in the informal economy be better reflected in policy making? When it comes to choosing priorities for public spending, how can we ensure that the interests of women working in the informal economy are represented, so that we can guarantee them an adequate provision of services, infrastructure and social security?
>
> • How can technology be used more effectively to facilitate access to credit?
>
> • How can we extend social protection to all those working in the informal economy, including those who are engaged in unpaid work? (ILO, 2018c, p. 10).

This section of the brief shows a promising direction in the ILO's DWA. Though this language is not incorporated in any other texts and it is tacked on at the end without being followed up on or fleshed out, it shows how the ILO's discussions of working conditions illustrate *who* its agenda is meant to prioritize; namely, workers in industrial sectors engaged in full-time, highly skilled, highly remunerated employment in a state with strong institutional capacity. For most people globally, these are not their current conditions. While the ILO has continued to refine its DWA, it will require a concerted pivot towards understanding and improving conditions for peoples regardless of their form of labor. Certain recommendations, such as universal basic income and institutional building, are beneficial regardless of occupation status. Others, such as minimum wage, maximum work hours, and social security may need significant adaptation to meet the needs of the most vulnerable workers (Andoh; Segbenya, 2024; Okolo et al., 2024). It will take time and effort to redress the persistent tensions outlined here for the DWA's mission to become reality.

CONCLUSION

The DWA is an ambitious project that serves as a case study in the strengths and weaknesses of transformative global discourses. The ILO's codification of labor standards, while presenting an expansion of protections for formally employed,

full-time workers, fails to account for the conditions of millions working temporary, contracted, casual jobs. The schemas within the DWA's discourse-development, paternalism, and colorblindness indicate a conceptualization of work that constructs informality as deviant from "ideal" formal employment. This view of progress sustains, rather than challenges, hierarchical power relations. Already marginalized individuals become excluded from achieving greater social protections by virtue of their occupation. This is especially true for those who are criminalized in many countries for the type of labor they engage in, such as for sex workers and street vendors. There is also a greater need to consider how pressing global issues, such as health and migration crises, affect the rise of flexible labor arrangements. For instance, COVID-19 has exacerbated the gig economy and how this impacts the ILO's push for Decent Work needs to be considered.

The questions and concerns expressed here seek to push scholars and practitioners to push the boundaries of how informality is regulated and understood. While this is only a preliminary excavation of global efforts to promote Decent Work, it can serve the basis for further research into how the ILO, as well as other IO's, perpetuate, assimilate, and/or challenge modern power asymmetries. For it to present a true turning point in global labor discourses, it must acknowledge both the historical legacies of colonialism in the world of work and the impact of global regulation in sustaining systemic inequalities between countries and peoples.

Future studies engaging with this topic can branch off in numerous ways. This complexity can be better served if researchers and practitioners recognize the necessity of informal labor for societies (Mhando; Kiggundu, 2018). The ILO must grapple with the persistence of informal work not only through research but through continuous dialogue with informal worker collectives. One way to do so is to not only represent differentially racialized and gendered workers but to have global initiatives recognize and incorporate the strengths of these workers.

Understanding the strengths and barriers facing informal workers requires processes of *listening* and *learning* to understand how informality presents in different geographies, and how workers negotiate their own conditions of employment in the broader world of work. Informal workers are amongst the most marginalized in the global economy, and if the DWA fails to speak to their conditions then it remains a limited project. Taking seriously the ways informal workers organize, mobilize resources, promote job creation, and more can further global governance efforts toward sustainable development.

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APPENDIX A

1. ILO Implementation Plan—2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
2. ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work
3. Work for a brighter future
4. 5 of 8 Research Papers on the Future of Work pertaining to social protections and inclusive work
5. 12 Future of Work issue briefs
6. Time to Act for SDG 8: Integrating Decent Work, Sustained Growth, and Environmental Integrity
7. The ILO and Globalization: Fundamental Rights, Decent Work and Social Justice
8. MNEs and Inclusive Development: Harnessing national social dialogue institutions to address the governance gap
9. Violence and Harassment against Women and Men in the World of Work—Trade Union Perspective and Action
10. The Right to Social Security in the Constitutions of the World: Broadening the moral and legal space for social justice
11. Boosting youth employment through public works
12. Technical report: ILO workshop on labor administration reforms and innovations: efficiency and outreach
13. Sectoral Studies on Decent Work in Global Supply Chains
14. Illustrated guidelines for gender-responsive employment and intensive investment programmes
15. Social protection for domestic workers: key policy trends and statistics
16. Collective bargaining- a policy guide
17. Improving working conditions for domestic workers: organizing, coordinated action and bargaining
18. A just transition for all: can the past inform the future?
19. Tripartite Declaration concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy
20. Promoting Decent Work for migrant workers
21. Giving a voice to rural workers